And Now for the Good News
Romans 1
1269

Tonight I want to share with you something of the truth of the significance of the Lord Jesus Christ from Romans chapter 1. And if you have a Bible with you, I'd like you to look with me for just a very brief few moments, Romans chapter 1. If you're visiting with us and you didn't happen to bring a Bible along, there should be one in the back of a pew or you can look on with someone near you and follow along as we read verses 1 through 7.

Romans chapter 1 verse 1, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God which He had promised before by His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead, by whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ, to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

In just six verses at the beginning of the epistle to the Romans, Paul outlines for us the gospel of God. You'll notice in verse 1 that phrase closes the verse, "the gospel of God." The term "gospel" means good news. Paul is about to write some good news, good news.

I was traveling in the Midwest this week and I was listening to a Christian radio station and every hour on the hour, I was driving for about three or four hours so I kept hearing it, every hour on the hour as I was driving along there were several Christian stations obviously plugged into a syndicated news broadcast and they would give all of the news of the world and it would close with this statement, "And now for some good news." And then they would quote a verse from the Bible. God has brought to man some good news. And that's what Paul wants to share.

Basically people struggle in four areas or four categories, as I look at it, to which the good news is a tremendous blessing. You might say that people struggle with the problem of wrong desire, for one thing. People have a problem with not being able to control their...their desires, their lusts. And it leads them into all kinds of problems. We have a society drowning itself in sex and pornography and the result of it is the destruction of the home and the destruction of morality that is going to take a terrible toll, as it already has, on the young people of the children, the families of the future, a society literally allowing itself to be guided by its own impulses and its baser feelings. The problem is it's a terrible task master. I remember reading of Oscar Wilde, who allowed his lusts to drive him into homosexuality, and he said at the end of his life, "I forgot that what a man does in secret he will someday shout aloud from the housetops." His life came to dissolution and ruin. People in our society struggle with this problem of wrong desire, out of control, it destroys their lives, their

marriages, their homes, their children, their jobs, sometimes even takes their life.

As a result there's a second problem that man faces. He not only struggles with wrong desire but he struggles with the consequence of that which is guilt. Most psychoanalysts, psychologists and psychiatrists tell us the major problem of man is guilt. And if you want to know what the Bible says about it, the reason man is guilty is because he's sinful. And guilt is simply God's way of directing man to see the sin of his soul. A good parallel for it is pain. Now most people think of pain as a bad thing, but in fact if you think about it a second time you'll recall that it's really a good thing. If you didn't feel pain you wouldn't know how ill you were. If you didn't feel pain you wouldn't know that you were hurting and harming yourself. And so pain helps you to stop what you're doing that is injuring your body. I remember in college when I had injured my knee, I wanted to play in a certain game and so I got my knee shot full of Novocain so I wouldn't feel anything and the end result was that I harmed it even greater. God’s given us pain to show us we have a physical problem, and God has given us guilt to show us we have a moral problem. And the fact that you have these vivid memories of sin and you have this great amount of remorse over what you have done and what I have done is because God is showing us the disease of sin in our hearts, and guilt is there to remind us of it so that we can avoid that which causes that pain.

I think a third thing that people suffer from is meaninglessness. You know, if you're following wrong desires and if you're living with sin and guilt, you begin to ask yourself the question, what is life really all about? I mean, it doesn't really seem to matter, nothing makes much sense. Edna St. Vincent Millay said, "Life must go on, I just forget why." Arthur Miller in his play *After the Fall* has a character sitting at the table reading the newspaper and his wife says, "You never talk to me." And he says, "There's nothing to talk about." And Miller says, "Life had deteriorated to a discussion of how many miles to the gallon they get on their Volkswagen," that's it. And so, we come to the place where man doesn't really understand why he lives and in our society that's why suicide is at an all-time high. Life is so empty and so pointless and so meaningless. They tell us now, and I just heard this recently, that one out of three people is known to be severely depressed through loneliness; meaninglessness, no purpose for life.

And that leads to a fourth problem and that's hopelessness. There seems to be no way out. There seems to be no escape. There seems to be no potential. You know, you grow up when you're young and it's all so much fun and then you get into school and you have a great time and maybe have a few disappointments, you don't get the grades you thought you might get, or you don't make the team, or you don't get the girl, or the guy that you had your sights on. And then you finally get going and you get a job but you never get the promotion you wanted and your marriage turns out to be a little sour. And you do your best with the kids and it's all sweetness and light until they hit junior high and all of a sudden everything starts to kind of rot away and...and they turn on you and you don't know what's wrong. And the fulfillment in your job potential seems to be eluding you and you're getting older and nothing seems to make much sense. And you get trapped in the fact that is there ever going to be anything that I've really dreamed come to pass.

And so, we look at man and man exists guided by his evil desires in many cases and then leading

himself into sin, living with guilt and guilt piling up a sense of meaninglessness to life which ultimately ends in hopelessness. And man becomes so hopeless he'll drown himself in drugs or in alcohol or in sex or in work or in recreation or in money or materialism or in whatever.

And you say, "Well what do you say to a world like this?" And Paul says, "Hey, world, I've got some good news, some good news." And the good news doesn't come from a human source. Aren't you glad? It's God's good news. God has some good news for you. You say, "What is it?" Well first of all, in verse 2, it's old good news. It's not even new good news, it's been around. He promised before by His prophets in the holy Scriptures that He'd give us this good news. This is the good news that God's been giving since God first talked to man in the Garden. Good news, good news for a man driven by sin, experiencing guilt and meaninglessness and living without hope in the world, good news that's been around for a long time.

What's the good news about? What's it really all about? Look at verse 3. Well the good news is concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Now that's the good news. Now listen, people, the good news that God brings to the world is not some religious system. It's not eighty-four spiritual pushups. It's not some exercise in righteous behavior induced by human effort. The good news is not about a religion. The good news is not about a system. The good news is not about a denomination. It's not about a particular church. The good news is about a person. It's good news about God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. That's the good news.

Have you been made aware of that good news? Do you know the good news about Jesus Christ our Lord? This is the good news that God's been telling man. Do you know that even before Jesus came God was telling them the good news that He was coming? And that when Jesus finally did enter the world, God spread the good news that He was here? And when Jesus died and rose again, God spread the good news that He was risen? And now that it's in the past that He came and went back to heaven, God has given us the news that He's been here and He's still alive. It's the same good news. And you know something? Jesus Christ is the one who offers an answer to man's evil desires. The Bible tells us that when we know and love the Lord Jesus Christ we can set our affections on things above and not on things on the earth. We are no longer victims of the lust of the flesh but we can produce in our lives the fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.

The Bible tells us that when we know the Lord Jesus Christ, no longer are we under the burden of guilt because He washes away every sin, He cleanses every sin and every defilement and replaces our guilt with a sense of absolute and total eternal forgiveness. He takes away our meaninglessness and He gives us a reason to live and He takes away our hopelessness and promises us a forever place with Him in heaven. And that's good news and it's good news about Jesus Christ.

Now Paul anticipates that somebody is going to say, "Well who is Jesus Christ our Lord? Who is this?" Let's find out. First of all, says Paul, He was a man. Look at verse 3, "He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." What he means is that God actually became a man, that God

entered into the world and was born of the seed of David. David was a man, a man in the history of Israel. Oh a very special man, a king, but not any more than a king, just a man. And through his lineage came this one, the Lord Jesus Christ, born as the son of a king, born in the royal line, but born of the seed of David. He was a man. Jesus Christ was a man.

I used to illustrate it in this way. Imagine a little box and imagine that in that little box we live. That's our little world. And two things qualify life in that box, one is time and one is space. We live in a space-time world. We cannot imagine existence apart from time and space. It's always a certain hour and we're a certain place. And in our little space-time box we have a sort of a gnawing feeling in our hearts that there's something outside our box, but nobody's ever been there. And so we try to imagine how it might be and we stand on the edge of our little box and imagine that we can see out. And so man decides, well, I'll invent some things about what's out there. And so he invents some religions and religions are simply man's way of trying to escape his little box and find who's really out there. And some people have said it's "the great hunter in the happy hunting ground." And some people have said it's...it's Allah. And some people have said it's Buddha. And some people have said it's some ethereal, philosophical, floating, mystical logos, that was the old Greek thought. And some have said it's a myriad of gods and goddesses and there have been myriads of suggestions about who is out there.

But you see man is confined in his little box in time and space, trying to figure out what's outside where there's no time and no space and no knowledge. How is man going to know what's out there? Can man escape his time and space confinement? Can you go in to a phone booth and take off your clothes? Yes. Can you come out Superman? No. You can't do it. You can't lift yourself, transport yourself into another world. Listen, if man is ever to know what's outside his time-space sphere, he'll never discover it on his own. Whoever is out there has to come into his little world. Do you know that every religion in the world offers itself as man's explanation of what's outside, but Christianity says we have a message that God, who is on the outside, brought to the inside. And when God entered into human life, God came into a time-space world. He entered our dimension of living as a man. He became what we are in order that He might bring Himself to us because we could never have gotten outside.

First He wrote us a letter telling He was coming and the letter is the Bible and then...the Old Testament...and then He came and the New Testament tells us the story of His coming. And so the good news is that God came into the world. The good news is that Jesus was God in human flesh and He came here not only to tell us what God was like but He came here to die as a sacrifice for our sins so that we someday could go out of this little box and enter into the eternal presence of God. Yes, says the apostle Paul, He was made of the seed of David; according to the flesh, He was a man. And listen, as a man He knows what we feel. The writer of the book of Hebrews says He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He went through every trial and temptation. He understands, says the writer, the feeling of our infirmities. He is therefore a sympathetic and understanding priest to whom we can pray and He'll say, "Oh yeah, I understand, I cried tears, I walked the same roads you walked, I was tempted the same way you were tempted, I was disappointed in the same things that disappointed you, I fought the same battles you fought with Satan, I've been through all of the struggles and trials of life only I never failed and never sinned and I know the way to victory."

Listen, Jesus Christ was a man, a real man in this world, total man, royal man, but nonetheless total man, suffering in your place and my place. To bear the wrath of God against the human race, He became a man.

But He was more than that. Verse 4, and in verse 4 Paul says not only was He a man but He was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead. And Paul says He wasn't just man, He was also God. He was God in a human body. And the supreme proof of His deity was the fact that He went into the grave and went out the other side. And only God has that power.

Listen, if I'm looking for somebody to follow, I would like to follow one who was a man. I would like to follow somebody who can say to me, "John, I hear you, I know your heartache, I know your pain, I know your sufferings, I know the anxiety, I know what it is to be tempted, I know what it is to have trouble fulfilling your aspirations, I know what it is to be a man and I understand and I'm sympathetic." Ah, that's great. I don't want some mystical, foggy deity floating around in space who doesn't know what it's like down here.

But I'll tell you something else. I want more than just a man. I not only need understanding, I need power to get me out of this mess. I need something to take me through the grave and out the other side. I need something to blast the walls of the time-space box so that I can ascend to the glory of the kingdom of God. I need more than an example. I need more than a friend. I need that, but I need more than that. I need more than one who simply dies in my place. That happened in *A Tale of Two Cities*. I need more than that. I need one who is God and by His power conquers Satan, conquers sin, conquers death, conquers hell, and takes me out of my world into the very presence of God forever.

And so, says Paul, here's the good news, He is a man, a royal man but nonetheless a man. More, He is God. The proof of it is in His resurrection from the dead.

Listen, this is the good news, people, that God in the form of Jesus Christ not only understands where you hurt, He not only understands the problem of temptation and evil desire, He understands the problem of sin, He bore all the sins of all the world in His own body on the cross and the guilt of every sin ever committed, He not only understands the meaninglessness of life in this world and its purposelessness and hopelessness as He saw it when He was here, but more than that He has the power to do something about it. That's the good news. That's the good news.

You know, you can go and plug in to every kind of religious system that's running around the world and they might give you sympathy and they might give you understanding, but they'll never give you resurrection. They'll never take you through the grave and out the other side. They'll never give you

eternal life in heaven because they don't have the power. That resides alone in Jesus Christ.

And so we say this, Jesus is not just a good teacher. Good teachers don't claim to be God. He's not just a good example. Good examples don't hang around with prostitutes and dirty politicians. He's not a religious mad man. Mad men don't speak the words He spoke and attract women and children. He's not a fake. Fakes stay dead. He's not a phantom either. You can't nail a phantom to a cross or touch a wound in his side. And He's not a myth. You don't set calendars by myths.

Who is He? He's the God-Man and that's good news, good news. And Paul says in verse 5, "It is through Him that we have received grace." Stop right there. You know what grace is? That's giving you what you don't deserve. You know something? It is because Jesus came in the world and died that God doesn't give us what we deserve. You know what we deserve for our sin? You know what we deserve? We deserve punishment. We deserve death. “The wages of sin is death.” But God poured out all of that vengeance on Christ and to us He gives grace and forgiveness.

That's the good news. I don't know how well you've known the good news before. I hope you understand it now. Jesus died for you. He rose for you. He bore your sins and He says if you want the life that I offer, just by faith receive Me. As many as received Him to them gave He the right to be called the sons of God.

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