

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Romans: The Man and the Message**

Scripture: Romans 1:1

Code: 45-01

Take your Bible now and open to the first word of the book of Romans. We'll be kind of getting a little bit of an overview tonight, I trust, so you'll need to be looking at the book.

We embark, I believe, tonight on a life changing adventure. I'm convinced that people will be utterly transformed in mind and heart as we move through this very special journey in the book of Romans. The reason I have that confidence is because that is what has happened in the past. It's amazing if you just go back in history and see how the book of Romans affected people's lives. The greatest reformations and revivals that we know about were results of the power of this book.

For example, in the summer of A.D. 386 a man named Augustine, a native of north Africa, who had for two years been the professor of rhetoric at Milan, sat weeping in the garden of his friend, Alpeous(?). He was almost persuaded to begin a new life and yet he found it impossible to break with his old life. As he sat, historians tell us that he heard a child singing in a neighboring yard, "Tolei Legae, Tolei Legae(?)" a little melody that says "Take up and read...take up and read."

It struck him that perhaps that was something he should do and so he picked up a scroll which lay at his friend's side, that scroll contained a portion of the book of Romans. He read it, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof."

"No further would I read," he said, "nor had I any need, instantly at the end of this sentence a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away." And in that very moment from one sentence in the book of Romans the church received the great Augustine...the framer of much of its theology.

In November, 1515 there was a priest by the name of Martin Luther who himself was known as an Augustinian monk, who was the professor of sacred theology in the Catholic university of Wittenberg(?). And to his students he began to expound the epistle to the Romans. And from November of 1515 to the following September of 1516, he daily spent himself in the understanding of that epistle. And as he daily prepared his lectures, he became more and more appreciative of the centrality of the Pauline doctrine of justification by...what?...faith. He writes, "I greatly longed to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, 'the righteousness of God.' Because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. Night and day I pondered until I grasped the truth that

the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby through grace and sheer mercy he justifies us by faith. There upon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise, the whole of Scripture took on a new meaning and whereas before the righteousness of God had filled me with hate, it now began to fill me inexpressably with a sweet love. The passage of Paul became to me the gateway to heaven." And need I say what contribution Martin Luther made?

It was the evening of May 24, the year was 1738. There was a man by the name of John Wesley. His biographer says that he went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where a man was reading Luther's Preface to the epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine he wrote in his journal while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, "I myself felt my heart strangely warmed." Wesley goes on, "I felt I did trust in Christ and Christ alone for my salvation and an assurance was given me that He had taken my sins away, even mine and saved me from the law of sin and death." And so it was in Aldersgate Street at the reading of the book of Romans that John Wesley was redeemed. And we all know the contribution he made.

Luther said, "Romans is the chief part of the New Testament and the perfect gospel." John Calvin said, "If a man understands it, he has a sure road open to him to the understanding of the whole of Scripture." The brilliant commentator Godeau(?) called Romans the cathedral of the Christian faith. Coleridge(?) said "It is the most profound work in existence." Dr. John Cairns(?) of Scotland wrote this, "The gospel tide nowhere forms so many deep dark pools where the neophyte may drown as in the book of Romans. You will have something like a glimpse of the divine depth and richness."

In the history of the church there was a very important man by the name of William Tyndale who also wrote regarding the epistle to the Romans. And in the prologue to the epistle to the Romans which he wrote for his 1534 edition of the English New Testament, he wrote this, "I think it meet that every Christian man not only know Romans by rote and without the book but also exercise himself therein ever more continually as with the daily bread of the soul," end quote.

Dr. John A. McKay for 23 years the president of Princeton Seminary said this, "It seems increasingly clear that the chief need of contemporary Christianity and of society in general in this confused and revolutionary time is an evangelical renaissance, by that I mean a rediscovery of the evangel, the gospel, in its full dimension of light and power together with the elevation of the gospel to the status that belongs to the gospel in the thought life and activity of all persons and organizations that bear the name Christian." And for him that affirmation came in the epistle to the Romans.

Now you can go through history far beyond what I did and you will find transformation after transformation in individual lives, in nations and across the world that came when men discovered the realities of the book of Romans. It is deep, it is profound, it is divine and yet it is within the grasp of all of us.

Dr. Barnhouse had a great thought on Romans. And by the way, he wrote four or five volumes on it. He said this, "A scientist may say that mother's milk is the most perfect food known to man. And the scientist may give you an analysis showing all of the chemical components. He may give you a list of all the vitamins in the milk and an estimate of the calories in a given quantity. But a baby will take that milk without the remotest knowledge of its content and will grow day by day. So it is with the profoundest truths of the Word of God. Some of us may be able to analyze it, some of us may not, but all of us do well to drink and to grow."

Two great scholars applied two adjectives to Romans. The first great scholar was a man named Sandae(?) who wrote perhaps the most definitive commentary ever written in the English language on the book of Romans. And Sandae said that the book of Romans is testamentary. And he meant by that that it is Paul's last will and testament. In it he distills the essence of the last word on the Christian faith. It is the last will and testament of Paul. It says all that he intends to sum up and say about the gospel. Burton(?), another brilliant commentator said, "It is prophylactic," and prophylactic means something that guards against infection. He said that the epistle to the Romans is the prophylactic for the church, it ever and always is that which saves the church from heresy, it is the guardian of the church.

And so, this is a marvelous book. And we could go on and on just talking about all of the things that it accomplished. It quotes the Old Testament more than any other New Testament book, 57 times. The most common words in Romans are the word God--153 times, the word law--72 times, the word Christ--65 times, the word sin--48 times, the word Lord--43 times and the word faith-- 40 times. It's about God, the law, Christ, sin, the Lord, faith and all the ramifications of those terms.

Now stay with me, this is going to go by real fast. The teaching of this book is absolutely breathtaking. It is breathtaking what is in this book. It answers all of the important questions, all of them. Let me give you the ones that it answers just as an initial look and this only scratches the surface. Now don't try to write these down, find yourself under the bed saying the Greek alphabet, I'm going to go too fast.

Here are the questions that it answers. This one epistle...what is the good news of God? Is Jesus really God? What proves He is God? Why did He come? What is a saint? What is God like? How can God send people to hell? What will happen to people who have never heard the gospel? Why do men reject God and Christ? Why are there false religions and idols? What is man's biggest sin? Why is there sex perversion, hate, crime and those other things and why are they so rampant? What is the standard by which God condemns people? How can a person who has never heard be held responsible? Are Jews more responsible to believe than Gentiles? Who is a true Jew? Is it any advantage to be Jewish? How good is man? How bad is man? Can anyone keep God's law? How do we know we're sinners? How are we justified and forgiven? How is a Christian related to

Abraham? What is the importance of Christ's death? What is the importance of His resurrection? What is the importance of His present life? For whom did Christ die? Where can men find real peace and hope? How are we related spiritually to Adam and how are we related spiritually to Christ? What is grace? And what does it do? How does a person die spiritually to be reborn? What is the Christian's relation to sin? How important is obedience? How are law and grace related to one another? Why is it such a struggle to live the Christian life? How many natures does a believer have?

Have I hit any that you're interested in? What does the Holy Spirit do for us? How intimate is a Christian's relationship to God really? Why is there suffering? Will the world ever be any different? How can I pray properly? What does predestination mean? How secure is a Christian? What is God's present plan for Israel? What is His future plan for Israel? Why have the Gentiles been chosen? What is our responsibility to Israel? How is a person saved? And what is the basic bottom line for Christian commitment? What is the Christian's relationship to the world, to other Christians, to the unsaved, to the government? What is love and how does it work? How do we deal with neutral things, things that are neither right or wrong? What is true freedom? How important is unity in the church?

Now those are just a few. But I just ran you from chapter 1 to chapter 16. Those are a few of the questions the book answers. Is it any wonder that Godeau say, "O St. Paul, had thy one work been to compose an epistle to the Romans, that alone should have rendered thee dear to every sound mind."

You want to know what the key to the book of Romans is? Chapter 1 verse 17, the last line, "The just shall...what?...live by faith." That's the key...that's the key.

Deisman(?) writing in the Expository Times said, quote: "Fire, holy fire shows between the lines of Romans. This holy divine flame is what warms and inter-penetrates us. The deep understanding of human misery, the terrible shuddering before the power of sin, yet at the same time the jubilant rejoicing of the redeemed child of God, this is what for all time assures to the Roman epistle a victorious sway over the hearts of men who are sinful and thirst for redemption," end quote. This letter will delight the greatest logician. This letter will captivate the mind of a consummate genius and yet will bring tears to the humblest soul and refreshment to the simplest reason. The book, get ready, will knock you down and then lift you up. It will strip you naked and then clothe you with eternal elegance. It could take a Bedford Tinker like John Bunyan and turn him into the master who penned the Holy War and Pilgrim's Progress.

And Romans speaks to today. It speaks to the issues we face today morally for it speaks about adultery. It speaks about homosexuality. It speaks about perversion. It speaks about killing and hating and lying and civil disobedience. So it speaks to us morally. It speaks to us intellectually. It

tells us why man is so confused because he possesses a reprobate mind. It speaks to us socially. It tells us how we are to relate to one another. It speaks to us psychologically. It tells us where true freedom comes to deliver men from guilt. It speaks to us spiritually for it answers our despair with a hope in the future. It speaks to us internationally for it tells us the ultimate destiny of the earth and specially the plan for the nation Israel. It speaks to us nationally for it tells us our responsibility to the government. It speaks to us supernaturally for it defines for us the infinite power of God. And it speaks to us theologically because it teaches us relationships between flesh and Spirit, law and grace. But most of all, it brings God to us profoundly.

An anonymous poet wrote these marvelous words, listen. "O long and dark the stairs I trod, with trembling feet to find a God. Gaining a foothold bit by bit, then slipping back and losing it. Never progressing, striving still with weakening grasp and faltering will. Bleeding to climb to God while He serenely smiled unnoting me. Then came a certain time when I loosened my hold and fell thereby, down to the lowest step my fall as if I hadn't climbed at all. Now when I lay despairing there, listen, a footfall on the stair. On that same stair where I afraid faltered and fell and laid dismayed and lo when hope had ceased to be, my God came down the stairs to me." And that is Romans. It is God finding the desperate sinner.

Well, I hope those thoughts give you a sense of anticipation. You're never going to be the same. Now with that we'll get into the book.

First word, "Paul," and, beloved, I have to tell I just couldn't get pass that word. I no longer said it and read it then I just kept saying, "Paul." How could you ever understand Romans if you didn't understand Paul? How could you feel his heartbeat if you didn't know something about him? And so in giving you somewhat of an overview tonight, I want to deal just from the vantage point of Paul. The very word just fills my heart. I spend hours with this individual, reading what he wrote, dissecting every word that he wrote, trying to emulate him. The very name speaks to my heart.

And I don't know if I've ever preached a sermon just on Paul to put him in perspective. And I'm not sure this is the kind of sermon that ought to be preached on him, he deserves far more than I'm able to do, but just to give you a little glimpse of this incredible man...Paul.

That wasn't always his name, you know. That was his new name. His old name was Saul. And he was a good Jewish boy named for a good Jewish king...Saul. He was born in Tarsus. Tarsus because his father, though a Jew, was involved in the Roman culture as a Roman citizen. He was born in Tarsus and Tarsus was a university town. It was a center of Greek culture. Tarsus was located in Cilicia and that is at the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea. You go east by Spain and north Africa as far as you can go toward the coast of Israel and up in that northeast corner was Tarsus. He also received a portion of his education in Jerusalem under the most distinguished doctor of the law, a man by the name of Gamaliel who was, by the way, the grandson of perhaps the

most famous rabbi who ever lived, Hillel. He studied under this very distinguished doctor and so he was not only erudite in matters of Greek culture and philosophy but also in the matters of Jewish law.

It is said in those times that there were three great universities in the Greek world, one at Athens, one at Alexandria and one at Tarsus. They were the Harvard, Yale and Princeton of their day. And he was educated at Tarsus and then further educated in the Jewish school of Gamaliel.

Now also in keeping with the tradition in a Jewish family, he had to learn a trade. And so he grew up learning the trade of his father. He was taught to work with hides, to be a leather worker, a tent maker. And history tells us that that was a rather common occupation in Tarsus. He was educated up until the age of about 13 and apparently at 13 was packed off to Jerusalem to study with Gamaliel who, by the way, was called quote: "The beauty of the law," because he so personified the law, the Mosaic and the traditional law of Israel.

Now the kind of education he would have had under Gamaliel would have been a memorizing and interpreting of Scripture between he and Gamaliel in a question and answer format. So from the time of 13 he was in an interchange with this greatest of Jewish minds. Since he never met Jesus in his earthly life, he probably completed his education and then returned back to Tarsus. And some historians believe he became probably the leader of a synagogue there. No matter where he was he always became the leader...didn't matter where. And it seems very obvious that that is what would have happened in Tarsus.

And so, there he is in Tarsus. He's had a consummate Greek education. He's had a consummate Jewish education. He's got all of the credentials to move around in the Roman world. His father is a Roman citizen and that makes him one and yet he has all the Jewishness that gives him access to that whole area. And so he is marvelously prepared. And he becomes a zealous Jew, extremely zealous, utterly zealous, utterly committed to the Judaism that he was given. In fact, in Philippians 3:5 it says he was circumcised the eighth day. He was of the stock of Israel. He was of the tribe of Benjamin. He was an Hebrew of the Hebrews. As touching the law, he was a Pharisee. And you couldn't get more committed than that. He had zeal to the place where he began to persecute the church. And as touching the righteousness which was in the Jewish law, he was blameless. He was a first- class legalist...kept the law.

Sometime probably when he was up in Tarsus this thing with Jesus happened. And he began to hear about the fact that Christians were filling the city of Jerusalem with teaching about this Jesus being the Messiah. He was angry at this heresy. He was angry at this affront to traditional Judaism. And so we find him in the city of Jerusalem early in the book of Acts. A persecution breaks out and he is right in the middle of it.

Now turn with me to the book of Acts and I just want to point out several things...chapter 8 verse 1. You have to get a little background before we go into chapter 8 and it comes in the testimony that he gave before Agrippa in chapter 26. Just listen, this is what he said to Agrippa. He said, "I verily thought within myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He said, "I determined in myself that I was going to put a stop to that cult around Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem and many of the saints that I shut up in prison having received authority from the chief priests and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them and I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme. And begin exceedingly mad, or furious against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities."

Now he is really really angered. And we find in verse 1 of chapter 8 that Saul was consenting unto his death. Whose death? The death of Stephen...the death of Stephen. For in chapter 7 you have Stephen being stoned. And if you look at verse 58, "They cast him out of the city and stoned him and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was...what?...Saul...Saul."

That was typical stuff for him, to be involved in the execution of a Christian. Luke literally says that he laid waste the church. At that time verse 1 says there was a great persecution against the church at Jerusalem and they were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Verse 3, "And Saul made havoc of the church. He entered into every house and hailing men and women committed them to prison. The result, they were scattered everywhere." He literally cleaned them out of Jerusalem.

Now he had an organized approach. By the way, the word "he made havoc" or "laid waste" is a Greek word describing a wild boar rampaging through a garden. It also is used to speak of an army devastating a city. The man was just as fanatical then as he became later on the behalf of Christ.

Well, while he was in Jerusalem and got everybody scattered, he says in Acts 26, "I even persecuted them to foreign cities." He got word that there was a big group of them in a city called Damascus. Go to chapter 9. "And Saul," verse 1, "yet breathing out threatening and slaughter." And he's like a wild bull, just snorting and breathing out fury. And he's breathing this out and he's after Christians. And verse 2 says, He went to the high priest and desired letters which would give him the right, kind of like some kind of an affidavit that would give him permission to arrest these Christians in another city, letters to the Damascus synagogue so that they would give him permission to come in and bind these men and women and drag them back to Jerusalem. So he isn't content with just cleaning Jerusalem, this has become a literal vendetta with the man. He is consumed with capturing and executing Christians...like a war horse with the smell of battle in his nostrils, he's breathing out fury and looking for new fields to conquer. His sin is like that of Haman the Agagite who wanted all Jews to be exterminated.

So he headed for Damascus. That is an incredible city, by the way. It still exists, I've been there. Maybe the oldest city in the world. It predates Abraham. And there was there a population of about 150 thousand people, as best we can tell. It was 160 miles northeast of Jerusalem. And a caravan took six days to get there. So he put together his entourage and for six days he went northeast and up, of course, because it's a more mountainous area, he would go down first, and down the Jordan valley perhaps and then up the Golan Heights and then on across to Damascus. And there was as far as we know a large Jewish synagogue there.

But you'll notice in verse 2 a most interesting phrase. He desired letters to Damascus, chapter 9, to the synagogues that if he found any of this way...interesting phrase...this way, that became a title for Christians. They were a part of the way. And he said if he could find any..didn't care who they were..he would bind them and bring them back. Then something very amazing happened. Verse 3, "And as he journeyed he came near Damascus and suddenly..." And, people, with the word "suddenly" the whole course of human history changed dramatically.

"There shown round about him a light from heaven." And if you read Acts 22 and 26 where he recites the testimony, it says there that it was noon and at noontime in the middle of the day in that part of the world, the sun itself is bright enough to blind you. And this must have been some light to surpass the sun. "And he fell to the earth and he heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

You know, some people really have to have a dramatic thing happen to get their attention. That was him. He said, "Who art Thou, Lord? The Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest, it's hard for thee to kick against the goads." Goads were long sticks and in the end of it they had a pointed nail and if they wanted the ox to move a little faster with the plow, they just gave him a good shot with the goad. Sometimes they would apply it to the heel of the ox and he would keep his feet moving so he wouldn't get poked in the delicate portion, the back of the heel. It's hard for you to do this, isn't it? And verse 6 says, "He trembling and astonished..." And there's no way that those little English words are going to convey to you the absolute panic that's in his heart. I mean, he has been killing Christians all over everywhere and now he is facing the one whom he has been persecuting, Jesus the Lord, and he is panicked. There's no way to understand the horrifying reality of hearing "I am Jesus whom thou persecutes."

The Jesus, who went about doing good, who went about healing, who took out the demons and delivered people from death. Jesus who was crucified, rejected by Israel. Jesus whom Stephen had called upon in his own death. Jesus whom he hated. Jesus whose followers he had mercilessly killed. Jesus was alive. And all the bloodshed drowned Saul in a sea of sorrow. He was shattered. He was penitent. He was broken. He was devastated. He was destroyed.



And then you pick up some hair-brained guy who says he had an epileptic fit...cause he doesn't want to admit to a miracle. One other writer said, "If this is epilepsy, oh sweet epilepsy." His sin was enormous, people. It was enormous. His total life was wrapped up in the annihilation of the church. And had his plan succeeded the church would have been smothered in its very birth. It would have been drowned in its own blood. And, you know, he never forgot the enormity of his sin. He never forgot it. I can imagine that when he looked back on all those Christians whose lives he had taken that there was just a shuddering in his heart. That's why in 1 Timothy he says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who enabled me that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry who before was a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious. But I obtain mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief and the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love. And this is a faithful saying, he says, of all the sinners, I am...what?...chief." He never forgot that. He meant that.

But on that road he was marvelously transformed. He was blind. He was speechless. He was utterly devastated. Verse 9 says he was three days without sight and didn't eat or drink. He committed his life to Christ. And I remember when I taught the book of Jude saying that there wasn't any human Christian who could deal with him, you understand that? You see, if a Christian got near him, it would be all over. The only way you could get to this guy was God had to do it alone. Even when he became converted and tried to have an audience with the Apostles, the Apostles were too afraid to let him in. Nobody could get to him. He was a bran plucked from the burning. God had to do it. He was marvelously transformed.

I love this, verse 20, just love this, this is him...this is him...this is all there is to say about his personality, "And immediately he preached Christ." I mean, if you just said, "Paul and immediately," that would fit. He did everything that way. He was utterly and totally committed to whatever it was. And just as soon as he was transformed, he was wholeheartedly committed to preaching Christ in the synagogue and he was preaching that He is the Son of God. So he began the work of evangelizing Damascus.

Well, verse 21, "All that heard him were amazed. They said, Isn't this the one that destroyed them who called on this name in Jerusalem? And he's come here for that intent that he might bring them bound to the chief priests? I mean, what's going on here?" The guy has changed boats in mid-stream. "Saul increased the more in strength and he confounded the Jews who dwelt at Damascus by proving that this the Christ." They couldn't handle it.

You say, "Where did he get all that information so fast?" Divine inspiration, God gave it to him. Didn't take long, verse 23, "After many days were filled, the Jews decided to kill him." You know what he did then? He got out of town, the first thing he did. And then the text tells us he spent some years in Arabia. And if you read Galatians 1, I'm not going to take the time to do that, it tells you that he went to Arabia. And it's probably likely that he spent nearly three years there. Those were the years, I think, when he got his seminary training and he got it directly from the Lord. I think he was imputed

with direct revelation from God because in Galatians he says I didn't get my message from any man, I didn't go to Jerusalem and get it, I didn't get it from the other Apostles, I didn't get it from anybody but the Lord Himself. And that's what qualified him, I guess, to be an Apostle. First, he had seen the resurrected Lord, and secondly, he was given the Word of God personally from the Lord Himself.

After those years, you know what he did? He decided to go back to Damascus and preach some more. And you know what happened? They tried to get him again. Second Corinthians 11 says they let him out of the town with a basket over the wall. And then he finally went to Jerusalem. And as I said earlier, when he got to Jerusalem he tried to join the other Apostles. Look at verse 26, "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples but they were all afraid of him and they didn't believe he was a disciple. They said, Wait a minute, that's an old trick. He says, I'm one of you, I'm one of you." And he gets in with all the disciples and we're all done...he'll kill us all. They said we're not going to do that. But Barnabas took him, brought him to the Apostles, declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way and how He had spoken to him and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus and he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. Barnabas became his escort. They took him. And what did he do in verse 29? He spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Grecians and they went about to do...what?...to kill him.

He's really quite a guy, isn't he? He just can't stay out of trouble...just the way he is. And finally the dear brethren sent him away. They had about all they could handle...he created so many problems. So they sent him back to Tarsus, verse 30. From Galatians 1 I think we can conclude that he only spent 15 days with Peter. It's hard sometimes to put all of these places like just when it was that he went to Arabia and some of these parts of the puzzle, but it seems best from Galatians 1:18 to assume that he spent 15 days with the Apostles and with Peter and then right back to Tarsus. And according to Acts 15:41 most likely in Tarsus he founded a church and probably founded several churches. He really was always founding churches and evangelizing and being busy, but in Acts 15:41 it says he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches which if he went to confirm them they would have had to have been founded and the only time he was there was when he went back there after being in Jerusalem.

Now, stay with me and we're going to see very important transition, after his marvelous ministry of founding churches in the area of Cilicia, Tarsus, Barnabas decided that it would be well to bring him to Antioch. Seven years after the Jerusalem church had really been formed they sent to establish a church in Antioch which was far north of there in Syria. And Barnabas felt that Paul would make an excellent pastor for the Antioch church. And so, he went to Antioch. And he and Barnabas sort of became cohorts there. And we find in chapter 11 and verse 30 Barnabas and Saul together ministering by bringing relief to Judean Christians during a time of famine.

So they ministered together from Antioch. Now after the relief of chapter 11, they returned to Antioch and Paul maintained his ministry there. Now come to chapter 13 and here's the key. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch," verse 1, "certain prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch and Saul...and Saul." He was one of those five elders, five leaders, five shepherds. And you'll notice they were ministering to the Lord, verse 2, and they were fasting and the Holy Spirit said, "Separate Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I've called them. When they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them away and they were sent forth by the Holy Spirit and departed," and that's all you need to say. And then began the ministry to which the man was called to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

And from chapter 13 through chapter 21, Paul takes three great missionary journeys. Finally in the third journey he goes all the way to Ephesus, stays there for several years. He leaves Ephesus and he goes to Macedonia and finally to Corinth for the third time. And there in Corinth he writes the epistle to the Romans. And so in just a brief view you've seen the sweep of his life.

Now listen. Why did he write Romans? Go back to the book and let's see. Why did he write it? First of all, he wanted to go there for several reasons, for their sake...chapter 1 verse 11, "I long to see you." Why? "Well I want to impart unto you some spiritual gift. I want to minister to you. I want to establish you." He wanted to go there for their sake because they had not been founded by an Apostle for he says in chapter 15, "I wouldn't go and build on another man's foundation." They had not been founded by an Apostle but most likely had been founded by some travelers who had come from Judea. In fact, if you read Acts 2:10 it says in the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended there were sojourners from Rome there. And in the marvelous conversion of the 3,000 and then the 5,000 and who know how many thousand that happened in a few weeks, some of those sojourners from Rome, no doubt, took the gospel back. That's perhaps the best explanation. So there had been no apostolic establishing. And I think in Paul's heart he sensed the tremendously strategic location of the Roman church in the heart of the Empire and he knew they needed to be solidified and he said, "I want to come in order to impart to you some spiritual gift in order to establish you."

Also, verse 15 says, "I want also to preach the gospel to those that are at Rome." Not only for the church do I want to come but for the lost. His heart literally could see the tremendous potential of reaching Rome for Christ. And then I think he thought about himself, too. Chapter 15:32 he says, "I want to come to you with joy by the will of God so that I can be refreshed." I mean, I just want to fellowship with you. So he wanted to go for the sake of the church, for the sake of the lost, for his own sake. And I think, too, he wanted them to know him for several reasons. First of all, so they could pray for him. Chapter 15 verse 30, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the love of the Spirit, strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." He wanted people praying for him. He wanted them praying for him.

I think also he wanted them to know him because he had another plan in mind. Verse 28 of 15, "When I have performed this and sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain." He had this great dream of going on to Spain. And he was saying "I'd like to know that when I get as far as Rome you'll give me the supplies I need to get to Spain." So there was spiritual reasons to build the church, establish the church, win the lost, refresh himself, to gain their prayer support. He wanted them to know him. He longed to go there. And he wanted them to provide resources. He wanted to build up that strategic church.

And so, the letter really was to be an introduction of himself as an Apostle, of his doctrine so they would have no question about it. And so he pens a monumental treatise to establish them in the truth to show that he was truly an Apostle, to give them confidence in himself, and just in case he never gets there, to give them the absolute last word on the gospel of Jesus Christ so they will be established. And so he writes.

He got there, you know. But he got there at the expense of the Roman government who took him as a prisoner. And his ministry in Rome was as a prisoner, wasn't it? But from his prisoner's platform he had a marvelous ministry. And as he said to the Philippians, "All the saints in Caesar's household greet you." God put him right in Caesar's household. And he was winning those people to Christ. Finally he had his head chopped off in Rome for the testimony of Christ.

Beloved, the triumph of the gospel during those three journeys of Paul is beyond words to express. The man was incredible. Energized by the Spirit of God he accomplished things far beyond what any of us could imagine. Do you know history tells us that at the close of the apostolic period it is believed that there were one half million Christians? Pretty amazing...one half million. Heaven only knows how many were the result of Paul...what an effective tool and without the printed page and without the media, with his reproductive life. Truly he was separated from his mother's womb to proclaim the gospel.

And he wasn't a whole lot to look at. I looked up a second century description of Paul written by some presbyter somewhere. And this was the description. "Small of stature...and there's an unconfirmed report that he was three cubits which would be four feet six...bald with crooked legs, a hooked nose, scars all over his face from his stonings and beatings." And the writer said, "Full of friendliness." He'd have to be or he'd scare you to death if he looked like that. If you study the account of the New Testament, it's very likely also that he had a very difficult oozing eye disease that made him less than pleasant to behold.

Not your typical Charismatic leader. Not your typical superstar. What made him great? Can I close with this? What made him great? Three things and they are the things I want you to learn tonight. Three things, listen carefully.

Number one, he had a biblical mind...he had a biblical mind. The man was absolutely saturated in the Word of God. To start with, he had a great intellect. He was deeply knowledgeable in the Old Testament and it comes through. He knew the Word of God.

Can I illustrate that to you very fast? In the book of Romans, for example, he talks with great facility about Abraham. He talks with great facility about Adam. He understands law and grace. He understands flesh and spirit. Listen to this, he quotes Moses, he quotes Hosea, he quotes Isaiah, he quotes David, he quotes the Psalms, he shows familiarity with Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He quotes Malachi. He quotes Jeremiah. He alludes to Daniel. He quotes from Joel chapter 2, Nahum chapter 1. He refers to 1 Samuel, refers to 1 Kings, and builds on Ezekiel 37. Fifty-seven times he uses the Old Testament. His thoughts just constantly intersect with the Old Testament...most dominantly with Isaiah which indicates to me that he probably had mastered Isaiah's prophecies.

What made him great? I think what made him great was a biblical mind. His mind was saturated with the Word of God. I mean, it just comes out all the time as you go through Romans. I wish we had time to just develop it but it's just everywhere, this biblical mind, this just facility with it. For example, in 9:33, "As it is written, behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone, a rock of offense and whosoever believes in Him shall not be ashamed." He just freely speaks from Isaiah.

You find in the tenth chapter just repeatedly he does this. Verse 11, "The Scripture says..." that's verse 11. Verse 15, "As it is written..." Verse 17, "Faith comes by hearing a speech about Christ..." Verse 20, "Isaiah is very bold and says..." "To Israel," verse 21, "he says..." Very very free with this. It says in verse 2 of chapter 11, "Know you not what the Scripture says..." Verse 8, "According as it is written..." And it goes on like that. I'm just picking them out as I can look down the line. Verse 26 of 11, "As it is written there shall come out of Zion a deliverer." Chapter 12 verse 19, "As it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And it just goes on, 14:11, "For it is written," 15 also has some quotes from the Old Testament as well...chapter 15 verse 3, "As it is written..."

In other words, he just thought biblically. And I guess 15:4 would climax it. "Whatever things were written in earlier times were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Everything was based on the Scripture, had a biblical mind.

Secondly, he had a resolute will. He had a determined will, maybe that's a better word. He had a determined will. A biblical mind and a determined will...you couldn't put the man off his track. I mean, he was indomitable. You could throw him in prison and it didn't even phase him. He just started an evangelistic meeting in the prison. You could stone him as they did in the book of Acts and throw him on the dump and God would raise him from the dead and he'd go right back in town and finish his sermon. He'd be preaching in the middle of the night, a guy fell out of the window and died, fell all the

way down to the bottom, broke his neck and died. Just went down and raised him from the dead, brought him back up and made him listen to the rest of the sermon. A determined will...he was committed to the task. I mean, he went everywhere from Jerusalem to the eastern shore of the Adriatic, opposite Italy, and he preached over and back time and again. He was always a foundation builder...15 years of labor, planting seeds, working and working and working. So faithful...so faithful.

He said, "Oh," he said, "they keep telling me in every city, "Acts 20:23, "that bonds and afflictions await me, but none of these things move me." I like that. "What do I care about that? I just want to finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify of the gospel of the grace of God. Don't tell me about that, I don't care about that." Said in 1 Corinthians 9, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." And you could...they tried everything to stop him. This is what he says, he says in 2 Corinthians 11, "I was in labors far greater, in prisons more often, in scourgings above measure, in exposure to death, of the Jews five times I received 40 lashes minus one, three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I had been the deep, in journeyings often, and then this, perils of rivers, perils of robbers, perils of mine own countrymen, perils from the Gentiles, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils at sea, perils among false brothers in labor, toil, watching, hunger, thirst, fasting, cold, nakedness and besides this I have to take care of the church. Phew...

And he experienced all that before he wrote Romans. He never deviated from his conviction. And he said to Timothy, he said, "Timothy, preach the Word, be instant in season and out of season." He says, "And you've got to do it and pick it up because the time of my departure is at hand. I'm ready to be offered. I need somebody to take the mantle." Oh, what resolute determination...what a man...active, animated, determined, dynamic. And in the midst of all he was gentle, he was humble, he was meek...incredible.

A biblical mind, a determined will...thirdly, a loving heart...a loving heart. You can't say anything about Paul unless you say that. Oh how he loved. He had a great sense of God's love, Romans 5:5 he said, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." In Romans 8 he says, "What shall separate us from the love of God?" He had a great sense of God's love. And he also had a great love for God. You find in Romans 15:30 he says, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the love of the Spirit." And he says it to the Corinthians, "The love of Christ constrains me." He understood God's love and he loved God in return. He also had a great love for Israel. In chapter 9 he said his love for Israel was so profound that he could almost wish himself accursed from Christ if it could mean the salvation of his brethren. Oh what love.

He had a great love for the church. You reach chapter 16 you see his love for the church. He lists all those dear people that helped him in the ministry and that chapter just oozes with his love for the saints. And he had a great desire to see others love, too, and that's why in chapter 13 he says that the one commandment God wants you to keep is to love one another. Filled with love.

Now you show me a man with a biblical mind and a determined will to obey God's plan at all cost and a man filled with love and I'll show you a man that will turn the world upside down. Now I just want to come to the pinnacle and then I'm going to close and that's this. Over everything else the thing the man lived for was to glorify God. Isn't that the greatest thing of all? That's it. He lived to glorify God. Look at chapter 11 verse 36, he says, "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever amen." Chapter 15 verse 6, "That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 9, "That the Gentiles might glorify God." Oh that was his passion. Chapter 16 verse 27, "To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ forever amen."

That's...that's what he lived for. He lived for glorifying God and that demanded of him a biblical mind and a determined will and a loving heart. He is the man who wrote this book. What a man. He never could forget the pit from which he had been digged. And so he always maintained his humility. And yet he was the greatest of men. The words of John Chrysostom, that early church father and golden-tongued preacher of Antioch, pay the greatest tribute to Paul. Chrysostom wrote a homily on the letter of Paul to the Romans and this is what he said, "John Chrysostom loved the city of Rome most of all because there Paul died and there he would be raised up to meet the Lord in the air." And Chrysostom said, "He would like to see the dust of Paul's body that sowed the gospel everywhere, the dust of that mouth which lifted the truth on high, and through which Christ spake great and secret things and greater than his own person... the dust of those hands which...of which off which the serpent fell into the fire and through which the sacred writings were written...the dust of those feet which ran throughout the world and were not weary...the dust of those eyes which were blinded gloriously but which recovered their sight again for the salvation of the world...the dust of that heart which a man could not do wrong to call the heart of the world, a heart so enlarged that it could take in cities and nations and people, yet which burned at each one that was lost which despised both death and hell and yet was broken down by a brother's tears." So the tribute of Chrysostom.

What does all this say to you? What does it say to you? Here's what it says to you. Let Paul speak. First Corinthians 11:1, listen, don't look it up, just listen, he said this, "Be ye followers of me." First Corinthians 4:16 he said, "Be ye followers of me." Philippians 3:17 he said, "Be followers together of me." Same verse, "You have me for an example." Second Thessalonians he said, "For you know how you ought to follow us and to make ourselves an example unto you to follow." Let him speak.

What does he say? It would be like me. What is he like? A biblical mind, a determined will, and a loving heart whose highest goal was to glorify God.

Our Father, we thank You tonight that we've had such a wonderful time just getting started looking at this man and this book, incredible book. O fill us, Lord, with the will and the desire and the love of

Paul. May we experience in some small way what this man was knowing that we possess the self same Holy Spirit. Give us that biblical mind, that determined will, that compassionate loving heart. Help us to live for Your glory no matter what the cost. Use us, if not an extent in whatever extent You have planned for us for the advance of Your Kingdom and we'll praise You in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).