The Preacher of the Good News
Scripture: Romans 1:1
Code: 45-02

Romans chapter 1. And I want to read for you verses 1 to 7, not under any illusion that we're going to cover them all, but we'11 read them. "I, Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called 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 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 at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

The thrust of Paul's introduction to the epistle to the Romans is in a phrase at the end of verse 1. The phrase is "the gospel of God." That is really the theme of the entire epistle, the good news from God.

A quick look at any newspaper, a passing glance at any weekly magazine reminds us that in our world the news is bad and getting worse. And what is happening on a large scale is only the multiplication of what is happening on an individual level...bad news. In fact, that has become a colloquialism in our time ... bad news.

You see, menand women are in the grip of a terrifying power. And that power grips them deep inside their own being. And it pushes them to self-destruction. That power is sin and sin makes for bad news. Just by way of capsulizing our thoughts about this, I see four major areas where sin produces bad news for the human race, and they're somewhat sequential. And I don't offer these as exhaustive or comprehensive but just to provoke your thinking.

The first bad news that sin brings upon an individual is selfishness. It's bad news in human existence that every one of us is bent on fulfilling our own particular desires at any price. The basic element of sinfulness is the dominance of the I the ego, the self. It all even began that way when Satan fell. He said, "I will ... I will ... I will ... I will ... I will," five times. Man has inherited this propensity with the coming of sin. He is utterly self-centered. He will do his own thing, if permitted. And whatever a society will permit, he will do. He will go as far as society's toleration will allow. Man will consume everything in sight on his own lust. He will consume things and he will consume people and he will consume himself. When a friend or a spouse or a lover or a family member ceases to provide what an individual wants, they are discarded like an old pair of shoes that are useless. We live in a world

where people are demanding their rights. And this is nothing but the manifestation of what is deep in the heart of man, self-destructive selfishness. Everybody wants rights.

And the ultimate goal of life is to achieve self-satisfaction ... self-satisfaction, whether you're in business or marriage, or whether you're in love, man winds up perverting everything because of his selfish lust for gain, for fame, for dominance, for popularity, for money, for physical fulfillment. And so, sin pushes humanity in to a selfish self-consumption. Somebody said we ought to use things and love people, but instead we love things and use people. The end of it is that man is unable to sustain a meaningful relationship. He's unable to really love. He's unwilling to give and thus he forfeits that which is the most obvious source of true joy, selflessness. Man becomes dominated by a selfish greed that alienates him from every one and every thing.

And the result of all of this is that man really comes to a place of utter loneliness and despair. And he finds that all of the things he consumes on his own lusts bear the law of diminishing returns in them so that the more he gets the less it satisfies. And so the first thing that sin has produced by way of bad news is that we are selfish and it is a trap that leads us to despair.

Now that bad news that sin produces selfishness leads to a second thing that's also bad news. Man is not only selfish, he is guilty. Self--consumption, using people, abusing people, doing whatever is necessary to gain your own ends brings about guilt because God has designed man to feel something when he sins otherwise man could never prevent himself from going to hell. It's like pain. God has given you pain so you know whenyour body is injured and you'll get help for your body. God has given guilt as a way to tell us that we are on the wrong road and something has to change. And so, man is oppressed with guilt. And the bad news is that man lives in anxiety, he lives in fear, he lives in sleeplessness, he lives with psychological problems, ulcers, myriad illnesses caused by his guilt which he may try to alleviate with drunkenness or suicide or something else. We live in a frightful world where people are panicked over their guilt. They try to cover it with a frivolous facade. Some try to turn their heads away from real guilt by money, possessions, alcohol, drugs), sex, travel, psychoanalysis, blaming their guilt on society, blaming their guilt on some antiquated biblical tradition that's imposed it upon them, blaming their guilt on God, on Christians, on the church, on their parents, on some prenatal trauma. I even heard one guy who blamed his guilt on a banana his mother gave him when he was little.

Selfishness leads to a consumptive sin and it inevitably brings with it guilt. And when you try to blame someone for it,, that only compounds the guilt because now you know you're guilty not only of the sin but of trying to push it off on somebody who doesn't deserve it.

And that gives us some more bad news. For selfishness leads to guilt and guilt leads to meaninglessness. Man is caught in a trap of his own selfishness. It takes him nowhere but to an over-burdening guilt. And sooner orlater he says to himself, "Is this what life is all about? Better that I

should not have been born." Life becomes an endless cycle of trying to be fulfilled when it is impossible and bearing only guilt. And in that kind of life there's no fulfillment. And where there's no fulfillment, all the basic questions are asked. "Is this all there is? ... Where are the real answers? ... What are the real quest ions?...why am I alive? ... What is the meaning of my life? ... What is truth? ... How do I find out what is truth?" And man is fed a steady diet of lies by the consummate liar Satan who runs the world's system. And the lies never really answer the question of meaning. So he never gets an answer.

The news is always bad. That's what Edna St. Vincent Malay meant when she said, "Life must go on, I just forget why." We live a series of 24-hour periods without significance, nothing changes all is emptiness. And as the main character in one of Sarte's novels said, "I decided to kill myself to remove at least one superfluous life."

Now we find a fourth element in this chain of bad news that is brought about by sin, and that I like to call hopelessness. You startout with a consumptive selfishness and finally you wake up to the fact that it has the law of diminishing returns and when it's all over and done, all you have left is guilt for all that you've done to get where you are. And born out of this trauma and anxiety from guilt is the meaninglessness of life and born out of the meaninglessness of it all is the bad news that you've got nothing now and nothing later either. And so there is an utter hopelessness. There is no possible fulfillment in a selfish self-centered guilt-ridden meaningless life, only the starkness of death. And then what? No hope. And so people mask death which I believe is the ultimate obscenity to most people, but they mask it by laughing at it or mocking it or covering it somehow to alleviate the fear that it brings. But it is ultimately the worse news of all. There's nothing here and there's nothing there either. Bad news ... bad news.

Thousands of babies are born every day into a world filled with bad news ... bad news. And all along, men find themselves going deeper and deeper into the dilemma because they are pushed there by the liar Satan who keeps pumping the lies through the system in which they live. And the manifestation of all this sin produced bad news is what you read about when you pick up the Los Angeles Times, bad news. And even the little bits of good news, so called, are like moments of rest in an unending saga of bad news. It's like somebody said about peace treaties. Peace treaties and times of peace are only those moments when everyone stops to reload. Even sinners have to sleep. And a brief respite and maybe some so-called good news is short lived.

Is there any good news? Really good news? Good news about sin that it can be dealt with? Good news about selfishness that you don't have to live that way? Good news about guilt and anxiety that it can be alleviated? Is there any good news about the meaning of life? Is there any good news about the future life after death? Is there any good news?

I submit to you that Paul says in verse 1, there's good news and that's the gospel ... the good news of God. And that is what Romans is about. Paul begins in verse 1 with the good news of God. And in chapter 15, as he draws to an end, in verse 16 he says, RI the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the good news of God." So bracketing this epistle is the great reality that Paul is bringing good news...good news.

Paul also called it the blessed good news. He called it the good news of salvation. He called it the good news of Jesus Christ. He called it the good news of His Son. He called it the good news of the grace of God. Whatever he called it, it was good news. Good news that sin could be forgiven. Good news that guilt could be removed. Good news that life could have meaning. Good news that the future had a reality that was eternally glorious. Good news ... you'd think that we were preaching the bad news the way the world reacts. But that's how twisted they are because they are under the influence of the liar. We have the good news.

Now as we go through the book of Romans, we will see the incomprehensible riches of the good news unfold before us. But may I suggest to you, and I'll take a second to do this, I didn't plan to, may I suggest that the entire thrust of the 16 chapters of Romans is distilled into the first seven verses? I can understand Paul. He is so utterly thrilled by what he's going to say that he can't wait to say it all until he gets to the end of 16. So he summarizes the whole thing in the first seven verses. It distills the entire thrust of this entire epistle. It capsulizes, it summarizes it and then it unfolds. It's as if the seed is in the first seven verses and the full bloom comes as you go through the 16 chapters.

Now look at verse 1 for a moment at the phrase "the gospel of God," "the good news of God," euangelion...euangelion. That term is used by Paul 60 times in his epistles; 60 times he talks about good news. It's a very favorite term. No wonder, that man lived all his life hearing bad news and once he heard the good news he couldn't help but tell everybody in sight about it. Tindle wrote, "The word euangelion signifieth good, merry, glad and joyful tidings that makes a man's heart rejoice and makes him sing and dance and leap for joy." And I think in that he really captured the meaning. It's good news, a good, merry, glad, joyful news. Good news that God will deliver us from our selfish sin. Good news that God will forgive and free us from guilt. Good news that God will give meaning to life and make it abundant. And good news that there's hope for life to come.

And would you notice, also, in verse 1 that it is good news from God? And that's the thrust of the Greek. It is "from God." And it's important that Paul say that because the word euangelion was a common Greek word. And you know how it was used? It was used in the cult of worshiping the emperor. It was connected to the emperor cult. Now you remember in the Roman Empire, the people were required to worship the emperor as if he were a god. And whenever someone from the emperor's official party was to make amonumental announcement about some great event relative to the emperor, it was called euangelion, good news. For example, "Good news, the emperor has given birth to an heir." That would be one way it was used. Or, "Good news, the heir has come to age." Or,

"Good news, we have a new emperor as he accedes to the throne." This was the euangelion.

But Paul says this, listen: "I'm writing to you at Rome who are used to hearing the euangelion of the Roman Empire and I'm telling you I've got good news but it's not from Caesar, it's from ... whom? ... God." That's really good news because frankly most of the Caesars were bad news to begin with. It's good news from God.

Now you can't help but stop and think, why should God give me good news? I don't deserve it. You're right. But that's the way He is. He brings good news to those who are undeserving.

Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse, I think, captures the thought in a most fascinating paragraph in which he recounts a story. Listen to it. He says it was told about a young man in France, much loved of his mother who pursued a wicked course that took him deeper and deeper into sin. He became enamored of an evil woman who dragged him further and further into unrighteousness. The mother, naturally, sought to draw him back to a higher plane and the other woman resented it bitterly. One night, the story goes; the evil woman chided the man with an accusation that he did not really love her because he allowed his mother to interfere. He vowed that he loved her. She appealed to his drunken mind saying, "If you really love me, you will rid us of your mother and her constant pleadings." Well, according to the legend, the young man rushed from the room to a nearby house in which his mother lived and dealt her death blows, tearing the heart from her body to carry it back to his lover as proof that he had taken her life. Then, says Barnhouse, came the climax of the tale. As he rushed on in his insane folly, he stumbled and fell and from the bleeding heart there came a voice, "My son, are you hurt?" Barnhouse said, "That's the way God loves." Utter and absolutely forgiving, so does God love.

Charles Wesley put it in a hymn. "Depth of mercy, can there be mercy still reserved for me? Can my God His wrath forbear me the chief of sinners spare? I have long withstood His grace, long provoked Him to His face, would not hearken to His calls, grieved Him by a thousand falls." And so did Wesley wonder at the good news from God to undeserving men.

Beloved, this is good news. Aren't you glad for the good news?

Now we're going to see these seven verses and we're going to watch in the weeks to come the unfolding of the good news. And there are basically seven aspects to it. Let's begin with the first one ... the preacher of the good news ... the preacher of the good news.

Maybe it's because I'm a preacher and a minister that I find myself drawn to spend some time on this because it speaks to me so much. And if you'll indulge me, for a moment, I'll preach to myself.

Now God called a unique man to be the major spokesman for the good news. Verse 1, Paul, you remember him? Paul, he was that man, the preacher of the good news, uniquely, was committed to

him the mysteries, that which was hidden from the past generations and peoples and now revealed, as he says in Ephesians 3 and Colossians chapter 1. He was God's keynote speaker for the heralding of the good news. That remarkable Jew with Greek education and Roman citizenship, that man with incredible abilities as a leader, a fighter, highly motivated, determined, articulate, brilliant, specially called and converted by God Himself, that man who completed three missionary journeys proclaiming the good news from Jerusalemto Macedonia and crisscrossing that territory, Paul that very unique servant who could do miracles and yet could not rid himself of his own thorn in the flesh, Paul who could raise Eutychyus from the dead, yet himself be stoned to death and again later and finally in his life have his own head chopped off, Paul who could break prisons to bits as he did in Philippi and yet himself was a prisoner, Paul is the preacher. And may I remind you that every preacher who's ever preached since has depended on Paul's sermons for his material. Thirteen books of the New Testament, the legacy of this man through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Now he tells us three things about himself in verse 1. First, Paul a servant of Jesus Christ. The word is slave, really. Look with me for a minute at Exodus 21. Let me see if I can give you a Jewish context for Paul's thinking. In Exodus chapter 21, we find out about the servant master relationship among God's people as God gives some laws to them. And in verses 5 and 6 we read this, "If the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife and my children I will not go out free." In other words, if the servant says I don't serve because I have to, I don't serve because I'm forced to, I don't serve because I'm paid to, I don't serve because I'm afraid not to, I serve because I love my master,, therefore I'll never go free. He became known as a bondslave.

That is really the essence of the word doulos used in Romans 1, bondslave. And look what happened in verse 6. His master would bring him to the judges and they would affirm this. He would also bring him to the door or to the doorpost where there would be wood. And his master would bore his ear through with an awl and he shall serve him forever. If you said I want to serve out of love, and I'll never leave because I love you, then you weretaken to the door and right here where ladies get their ear pierced which is insignificant, a very significant thing happened, that ear lobe was pressed against the wood and it was drilled and permanently the mark was there, I am a slave of love.

Now that is the essence of what is behind Romans 1:1, go back now to that portion. And Paul is saying that I am a bondslave. This is something that I have chosen out of love, not fear.

There were millions of slaves in the Roman Empire. Perhaps they all didn't understand this Jewish concept, perhaps some of them did. I'm sure some of them served out of love. But most of the slaves in the Roman world in the Greek culture were looked down on. They were treated not as persons but as objects, tools. If you wanted to, you could kill your slaves. It was inconsequential. Therefore some Bible commentators are saying in this passage that Paul is using doulos only in its Jewish sense, that he is speaking only about the affirmation of his love and he is speaking about the dignity of such service. And, by the way, in the Hebrew use of the concept of servant, someone in the highest ranks

could be called a servant. Kings had servants, ministers who ministered to their royal needs. And so in a Hebrew sense, a servant could be a lofty term of great honor and great dignity.

For example, in Genesis 26:24 it says Abraham was a servant. In Numbers 12:7 it says Moses was a servant. In Joshua 24 it says Joshua was a servant. In 2 Samuel 7:5 it says David was a servant. In Isaiah 20 verse 3 it says Isaiah was a servant. And in Isaiah 53 it says when the Messiah comes, He will be a servant. And so many commentators feel that what Paul is saying is, "I am a servant of Jesus Christ," as an emphasis of the dignity of his office in a Hebrew sense rather than the demeaning Greek sense.

But I really think that misses the point. Yes, there is a certain exaltation, there is a certain honor, there is a certain marvelous incomprehensible dignity at being called a servant of Jesus Christ. There is a sense in which you wait on the majesty and the royalty of the King of kings and Lord of lords. And so that is true. But it's not true to separate that from what the Gentiles would have understood about that same term. And for the Greek word itself, doulos, it meant abject slavery, as a bondslave. No dignity but humility. And I believe Paul wants us to see it in that sense as well.

He chooses two other words to speak of his servitude. First Corinthians 3 gives us one of them, verse 5. And here obviously his emphasis is on humility. "Who then is Paul? And who is Apollos? But diakonos." we get the word "deacon" from it, it means "table waiter." If you looked in that culture, it really meant busboy. But who are we but table waiters by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man, I planted, Apollos watered, God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters, but God that gives the increase. We're nothing, he says, but table waiters.

And later in I Corinthians 4:1 he says this, "We are servants of Christ," and he uses a different word. He uses the word huperetes, it's the word translated in the authorized, ministers. It's huperetes, huper means under, etes comes from a word that means to row. It's an under rower. They had a trireme ship with three decks. And on those lower three decks were three levels of galley slaves who rowed those hulking ships. And Paul says will you remember me as a third level galley slave. That's humility. You can't get any lower than that.

So, yes I believe there is a Hebrew thought here of dignity, of honor, of respect, but it is marvelously mingled with the humility of the meaning of the Greek term so that Paul paradoxically finds himself both exalted as the servant of Christ and debased as well. An expression of humility and dignity. And this is an ambivalence that every representative of Jesus Christ carries.

Sometimes when I think of the dignity of what I do, it overwhelms me, Sometimes when I realize that I stand up and proclaim the gospel of God? When I stand up and proclaim what I have gleaned out of the Word of God and the ministry of Paul and the teaching of the Scripture under the power of the

Spirit of God, I realize that there's no higher calling in the world than that. And there is a marvelous dignity and the Bible says never speaka word against one whorepresents Christ, don't accuse an elder unless you have good grounds and do it before two or three witnesses. And the Bible says give honor to whom honor is due. And the Bible says pay them double what you should pay them if they work hard in the Word and doctrine. And the Bible says respect them. And the Bible says obey them and submit to them and set your life to follow their example. It is a lofty thing. And yet there is that marvelous spiritual ambivalence that says it is the humblest kind of service because you know that whatever it is that you do, you have absolutely no right to do it because of who you are. And who you are is what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3, you're nobody, you're nothing**.**

And so, Paul was a servant with all that that encompassed. He was a servant of Christ. That meant he had to absolutely obey Jesus Christ. And yet there was a dignity there that was marvelous.

Secondly, the preacher of the gospel says not only am I a servant of Jesus Christ but called an Apostle. The best rendering of the Greek is a called Apostle ... a called Apostle. The idea is that he was an Apostle not because he decided on his own, but because God decided and effectually called him. There is no human appointment here. By the way, the term "apostle" was first used by the Lord in Luke 6:13. He called His Disciples Apostles. Now Paul was called an Apostle by God.

Quickly look with me, just a moment, at Acts chapter 9. And you remember from last week that Paul was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians. The Lord stopped him in his tracks. Slammed him in the ground, blinded him. And then there came a man by the name of Ananias who cared for him. And verse 15 of Acts 9, "The Lord said through Ananias to Paul, Go thy way for he is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name." He is a ... what? ... Chosen vessel. It wasn't his choice. It was God's choice.

The twenty-second chapter of Acts,, Paul looks back. And he remembers what Ananias told him. Ananias came to him just as the Spirit instructed him in chapter 9. He said to him, verse 13, "Brother Saul, receive your sight. In the same hour I looked up upon him and he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldest know His will and see that Just One and should hear the voice of His mouth," that being Christ, "for thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard."

Look at chapter 26, verse 16. "The Lord says, Rise and stand on thy feet for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose." Paul is recalling his testimony.'I have appearedfor the purpose of making thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in which I will appear unto thee," and He appeared to him two more times, "delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God that they may receive forgiveness of sin and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me." And then he says, "Where upon, 0 King

Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." I obeyed. He was called an Apostle.

In fact, in 1 Corinthians 9 he says, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." He says don't give me a reward, don't give me an honor, don't name a school after me or put a plaque on the wall or build a statue, pray for me. God has given me a task to do I didn't ask for and if I mess up I'm in a lot of trouble. In Galatians 1 he said, "I am a servant called an Apostle," and he said, "God has placed me into this ministry." He says in verse 10 of Galatians 1, "Do I seek the favor of men or of God? Do I seek to please men, for if I yet please men I should not be the servant of Christ." And he says, "I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not after man for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." He says my call was from Christ Himself.

Now I think that's a very important word. That if you're going to represent the Lord Jesus Christ, you better know that He called you. I wouldn't take one step forward if I wasn't sure that God had placed me in the ministry, it's far beyond me now. The term apostolos which is translated back in Romans 1 as apostle means "a sent one, a commissioned one, a dispatched one, a messenger, an ambassador, or an envoy." And by the way, in those days they called certain boats apostolic boats. And apostolic boats werenot boats that carried apostles, it had a secular use. An apostolic boat was a cargo ship. It was dispatched with a cargo for another city. And so it meant anything dispatched or sent. And Paul is saying I'm sent, but my being sent is not a self-made decision.

Do you know that the term "apostle" appears 78 times in the New Testament and far and away the majority of those times refer to the Twelve and Paul who were specially sent ... specially sent.

This week I read the story of a dear old black preacher. He preached out in a little country church. He preached his heart out and was a humble and godly man. And a young man came to preach one Sunday night who was cocky, self-assured, thought he was more than those folks really deserved. And he preached and it was apparent his attitude. And when he was done, the dear old black preacher went up to him and said this, "Young man, was you sent or did you just went?"

I think maybe there's a lot of people who wasn't sent they just went. But Paul was sent. And he knew it because God had affirmed it to him.

I've been reading the last two weeks, a book entitled The Reformed Pastor," by Richard Baxter written in 1650. And the first hundred pages he calls the clergy to task in Britain in 1650 and says to them, "Before you keep preaching, you better go back and find out if you're redeemed." And he goes for a hundred pages of that. You better be sure God has sent you.

There is also an official sense in which we have to understand the word "apostle." An apostle was a very official office. It had a broad sense and everybody who bears the message of Christ is sent. Go

into all the world and preach the gospel. We're all sent. We all are apostles with a small "a". And the New Testament lists various people who are apostles who are outside the Twelve and Paul. But they're the ones with a capital "A", an official office. And if you were to study the New Testament you'd find that they had to be directly called by Jesus Christ, that is directly and verbally and personally by Him. They had to have been eye witnesses of Christ and His resurrection. And Paul was because he saw Him on the Damascus road. They were endowed with a special ability from the Holy Spirit in which they could write correctly the New Testament because Jesus made the promise to them that the Spirit would come and live in them and lead them into all ... what? ... truth and bring to remembrance everything He had said.

They also were given the ability to do signs and wonders and mighty deeds and miracles which are called by the Apostle Paul the signs of an Apostle. And their office was not restricted to a local church, nor to any short period of time. But they became the foundation on which all the history of the church is built. So these unique Twelve plus one, Matthias replacing Judas, were the foundation. They had to be called by Jesus Himself. They had to be eye witnesses of His resurrection. They received the Holy Spirit by which they could write the revelation and they could do signs and wonders and mighty deeds. And their office extended far beyond any local congregation. And Paul was one of those very special, special people. And he knew that God had called him.

You know, in Jeremiah 23 it says there were some prophets who went but they never were sent. And the people should never listen to them. Oh, beloved, I tell you, there are so many prophets like that today who are out there talking but should not be listened to. They are damned prophets, false prophets. And then there are those who never were sent, they just went. They have not the anointing of God on them. And we are not to listen to them. They have corrupted the church through all the centuries of its existence and continue to do so even now.

And so says Paul, I am a servant of Jesus Christ, a called Apostle. And by the way, he calls himself that at the beginning of several other letters as well. And thirdly, and we'll stop with this point, separated unto the gospel of God.

You want to know something basic? You can't serve God unless you're separated. It can't be done. It's a rich, rich idea. The word separated is the idea of setting apart. You can go back into the understanding of the Old Testament into the thirteenth chapter, for example, of Exodus and you'll see that God wanted set apart unto Him the first born of man, the first born of the beasts. You can go to Numbers 15 and you'll see that God wanted the first fruits of the crop. You can go to Numbers 8 and seethat God set apart the best of men, consecrated the Levites to His service. You can go to Leviticus 20 and see that God took the whole nation of Israel and according to Leviticus 20:26, He separated them from the other nations and said,, "This people is holy unto the Lord."

Every one of those Scriptures I just gave you, the separating of the man and the beast, the separating of the first fruit, the separating of the Levites and the separating of Israel, in the Septuagint version, the Greek version, uses the word aphorizane and that is exactly the word used here. It means separation in the fullest sense. Those animals and those first-born sons were utterly separated to the Lord. The first fruits, the same. The Levites, the same. The nation, the same. There was to be no intermingling. And Paul knew that once he was called an Apostle, he was disconnected from the past. By the way, aphorizane has in the middle of it a little phrase, phoriz that may be the root of the word Pharisee. Pharisee meant a separated one. And all his life, to this point, his adult life, Paul had been a Pharisee, separated unto the tradition of the Jews. Now he says, I am--if you will--a Pharisee separated unto the gospel of God. Good news, no more of man's bad news.

In Galatians 1:15 he said, when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called my by His grace. Paul was separated from his mother's womb. On the road to Damascus he was separated unto the gospel of God. And then he became a pastor of the church at Antioch. And in Acts

13:2 the Bible says the Holy Spirit said unto them, "Separate me--Paul and

Barnabas--and send them to the work I have for them." He was a separated man. The secret of his service is that he was a bondslave. He utterly surrendered to the Lord. He was an Apostle sent to carry the message.

And, beloved, he cut the cord.

I tell you there are more people in gospel ministry who see little fruit and no power, even though they may understand that they're to be servants and they may have been called, but somewhere along the line they are unwilling to be separated. Would you look with me at one Scripture?

The last one we'll look at for this time.

Second Timothy, chapter 2. Do you remember the situation in 2 Timothy

chapter 2? Timothy was a servant of the Lord, servant of Christ. Timothy was an apostle, small "a", not one of the Twelve, plus Paul, but nonetheless a messenger sent. But Timothy had come to the point in his life where everything was coming apart. He lost it. You know what was happening to him? Well, just looking in this letter alone you can find a lot of things.

Verse 6, chapter 1, "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." What do you mean "stir up the gift of God"? What was the gift of God? Well, the "gift of God" was the particular ability that he had for ministry, the preaching and the teaching. And that was a gift of God given to him and it was confirmed to him by those who were

knowledgeable and confirmed by the laying on of hands.

In other words, he was getting lazy in the ministry. He just wasn't functioning. And then he says, not only are you not functioning, verse 7, but God has not given us the spirit of timidity. He had become timid instead of bold. Verse 8, 'Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Now get this, this is Timothy personally discipled by Paul, gifted enough to have followed Paul as the pastor of the Ephesian church, this is Timothy of whom Paul said to the Corinthians, "I will send him to you to straighten you out because he'll bring you unto remembrance of all my ways." This was reproduction. This was number one son. And he is not functioning. And he is timid. And he is ashamed of the gospel and even of his association with Paul, chapter 2 verse 15, "Be diligent to show yourself unto God a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Apparently he wasn't even really doing his job with the Word of God. But verse 16 says he was involved in profane and vain babblings, hassling with philosophers. Verse 22 indicates that he probably was getting embroiled in some youthful lusts. Verse 23, that he was striving in foolish and unlearned questions. He lacked gentleness.

In other words, the whole thing was coming apart. He had been sucked into the system. And the word comes to him in chapter 2 verse 4, Paul says this: Timothy, have you forgotten that you're a soldier, verse 3, have you forgotten that you're supposed to endure suffering as a good soldier? And do you remember this; no man that fights the battle can entangle himself with the affairs of this life?

Do you hear that, what he's saying? Timothy, you cannot be caught in the lusts of this world. Timothy, you cannot be caught in the philosophy of this world. You cannot be caught in being ashamed of the gospel by the intimidation of this world. You cannot be caught into the easy come-easy go society. You must be diligent to stir up the gift of God. Timothy, have you forgotten that you cannot entangle yourself with the affairs of this life? When you go into the ministry of Jesus Christ, you cut the cord, you sever.

That's the kind of man Paul was. A servant of Christ but not just that, called an Apostle but not just that, separated. And he never got himself entangled with the affairs of this life. I've known men who have gone out of the ministry because they loved money or possessions. They couldn't cut the cord. They fell into moral sin. The world lured them. Or they were more concerned about their reputation, so when they got an opportunity to speak, they made sure they never offended anybody, and in so doing, they offended God for they were not separated. What an example he is to U.S.

His position--he was a servant. His authority--he was sent by God. His power--he was separated. His message--good news and good newsthat has come from God Himself. Now you know the preacher. Next week--or two weeks, or three weeks--I think until I get back to this subject, next time the promise of the good news, verse 2. And we might even get to verse 3. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for speaking to my heart tonight, for refreshing again in my own soul what it is that I am to be because I know this man is the example for he said, "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ." May 1, too, be a faithful servant, understanding both the dignity and the humility of such service rendered. May I have that affirmation of being called, though not an Apostle as the Twelve and Paul, yet as one sent, building upon their foundation. And may I, Father, toot be separated. May I be disentangled from the affairs of this life. May I not be lured by the weakness of the flesh to forego the diligence of study to rightly divide the Word. May I not be lured by the world, to be timid. May I not be lured by the world to be ashamed of the Lord or of those who represent Him, though they be prisoners. May I not slip to make my ministry a philosophical debate. May I not be lured by the lusts of unrighteousness.

May I not find myself argumentative, breeding strife, lacking gentleness.

In sum, as the Spirit of God said to Timothy, may I be a good soldier who knows that he cannot be entangled with the affairs of this life.

And I would pray that for all this, Your people. All of us fight the warfare, all of us are Your servants, all of us have been called and sent to this world to be witnesses and all of us must be separated. Teach us what that means in application in our own lives that we may carry the good news to a world literally dying from all the bad news. And may there be many who hear that good news because we, too, have been faithful. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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