

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

The Good News of Resurrection

Scripture: Romans 1:1-4

Code: 80-103

This is a day of good news, the best news, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and ever lives to make intercession for those who know him and love him. But frankly, we live in a world where most of the news is bad. A quick look at any newspaper, any news magazine, will reveal to us that the news in our world is not only bad, but seems to be getting worse. We find ourselves living in a culture that is negative, bitter, hostile, depressed, despairing. There is a hallof darkness that hangs over our enlightened heads. We seem to be on the backside, the down side of human history, progressively eliminating the most precious things that we hoped for a better world.

I suppose it would be safe to say that we've almost exhausted all of our options. We thought that when we were supremely educated, we'd be able to solve our problems. We thought that when we were sufficient industrialized, and had invented enough creature comforts, that we would be able to make life pleasant, and pleasing, and meaningful. We thought that when we became adept at the physical sciences: psychology, sociology, and even economics; that we'd be able to bring to bear upon our culture, all of the genius of the human mind and make a better world. When capitalism found itself deficient, we thought communism was the answer. Now we know neither is.

Men and women have therefore, come upon a certain kind of despair. The hope for a better world is gone. And we seem to be tumbling down the backside of whatever mountain of achievement we may have climbed. Men and women have become victims of constraining, unrelenting power within them rising up deep inside, pushing them toward self destruction. We are now face to face with the reality of sin. But no matter what we know in terms of enlightenment, no matter what we invent in terms of machines, features to increase our comfort, no matter how we understand the human mind and what makes seemingly for meaningful relationships; we cannot overcome the continually pressing, compelling reality of our own sin.

I suppose we could look at sin from a myriad of angles. But let me suggest to you, four major areas where sin produces bad news for the human race. First of all, the most basic element of sin is selfishness. Sin at its very root, says I'm God and I'll do what I want. Therefore, it is practically atheistic in that it wants to affirm man as God and not God as God. The basic element of sinfulness is selfishness or pride. The dominant word in sin, is I.

Man is utterly self-centered. He wants to please himself. He wants to make himself comfortable. He wants to satisfy his own desires. He wants to do his own thing as far as he is allowed and even

farther. He will press to the limits that society will tolerate and even go beyond. Man, in his selfishness, will consume everything in sight, whether it is people or things, in order to consume them on his own lust; whether it is a possession or a friend; whether it is a career or a life mate; a family member or an acquaintance. When anything ceases to be satisfactory, when anything ceases to feed him what his ego wants, it is discarded like a worn out shoe, past usefulness. And so people throw away things, and they throw away people.

We live in a world of those who demand their rights, who will fulfill their ego at all cost, who use and abuse each other to achieve their own personal satisfaction; whether in business, or marriage, or love. People pervert everything. Selfish lust will twist everything. And their hunger for gain, or sex, or fame, or popularity, or money, or adventure, or thrills will cause them to destroy everything around them.

So sin at its very root, pushes humans in the direction of self fulfillment. The result is that they become consumed with themselves, preoccupied with themselves, and that leads to their inability to sustain happy, meaningful relationships with anybody else. They're unable to genuinely love. They're unable to give sacrificially. They are unable to forgive completely. And thus, they are completely unable to build a meaningful, rewarding, joyful life. Greed dominates, and then it alienates. And the result is lonely despair. All of it works on the law of diminishing returns. The more you have, the less you have. That is bad news. We have a world of people who are reaping the harvest of sinful selfishness.

There's a second feature of sin that needs to be addressed. And this is guilt. You see, selfish sin inevitably produces guilt. Guilt, by definition, is a pain of the conscious. Guilt says this isn't right. Guilt says this is wrong. And guilt produces fear: fear of retaliation, fear of vengeance, fear of judgment. Guilt produces anxiety, a terrible tension, that everything is gonna go wrong. Guilt produces sleeplessness, illness, drunkenness, suicide.

People try to bury their guilt. They try to bury it in a frivolous façade of things, or experiences, or trips, or booze, or drugs. Or, they go to a psycho analyst who wants to bury it somehow in the responsibility of their parents or somebody who negatively impacted their life. And thus, guilt leads to further isolation and alienation. An anxious person, a fearful person becomes afraid of the people around him. A drunken person isolates himself into his own perverted thoughts. A person who is blaming others for the problems of his life eventually will alienate the people he most needs.

Selfishness then leads to a consumptive kind of lifestyle which eventually uses everybody, and therefore alienates them all. And that leads to guilt. And guilt leads to an inability to trust anybody, or to have any kind of meaningful relationship. And man is pressed deeper and deeper into the pit of his own despair.

That leads to a third component in sin. We could call it meaninglessness, meaninglessness. Life becomes simply a pursuit of unfulfilling selfishness, and then a cover-up of guilt. That's not very fulfilling. Life becomes what the writer of Ecclesiastes said, "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity." In Chapter 2 of Ecclesiastes, the writer said, "I looked into my wealth and it provided me nothing. I looked for experiences of joy. They provided me nothing. I looked for experiences of sorrow. They provided me nothing. I looked in relationships. I couldn't sustain them. They provided me nothing. I looked at everything that I had wrought in success in my career. And it offered me nothing." For after all, if I live selfishly, I alienate everyone. If I live selfishly, I live with guilt, and guilt depresses me and pushes me into despair and fear. And life becomes meaningless. It becomes nothing but an insignificant string of 24 hour periods that have no value. Nothing ever changes. Nothing goes right.

And then that leaves me with the fourth element, hopelessness. My great fear is that not only is life meaningless, but so is eternity. I look ahead in the future, and it seems bleak. And therefore you have a culture that would just as soon kill as to watch a television program. After all, life has no meaning, and the future has no hope. It becomes so totally bleak that you are left with wreaking havoc in anger against the world that you didn't ask to be born into. The news is bad. Death looks like the only escape if you believe it is an endless nothingness. And endless nothingness would be a better choice than this interminable meaninglessness and hopelessness.

You look at the world around you, you might assume that as clever as we are, as educated as we are, as enlightened as we are, as capable and powerful as we are in terms of what we can produce; as clever as we are in discerning people's problems, we would have been able to solve these painful realities. But the problem is, men in no way, by no means, has the capability to alter the human heart. And the Bible says, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. And the wretchedness of his own evil pushes its way out of his life." The news is bad.

And the longer human history goes, the Bible says, the worse men get. We are on the back side, the down side. We're rolling down the back side of human history accumulating as we go, more and more meaninglessness.

There's one more bad bit of news. As if it's not bad enough that we have come to the end of ourselves in terms of our human capabilities, and we are stuck with sin and selfishness, guilt, meaninglessness, and hopelessness. Let me give you the really bad news. Jesus said you will die in your sins. And you will spend an eternity in hell. That's the really bad news. It would be bad enough if all there was was this life. But there is a life to come that is everlasting that knows no end. And God says, he will send all unforgiven sinners into eternal hell to be tormented forever and ever.

I have to be fair, and I have to be honest and tell you the news is bad. We're going down the back side of human history at a rapid rate, heading to the end, and the end is worse. The manifestation of

this sin produced human life is bad news. We read about it in the paper every day. And the judgment of God, the worst news, is what we read about in the Bible. You say, well once in a while there's a little bit of good news. That's right. Even sinners have to sleep. And now and then there's a moment, or an incident, or an experience that brings us a fleeting joy.

But the question is, is there any long term good news? Is there anything to say to a world catapulting rapidly down the back side of human history into the pit of hell? Is there anything that can take away the selfishness? Is there anything that can give us meaningful relationships? Anything that can deliver us from guilt? Anything to give us meaning? Anything to give us hope? Anything that tells us how to escape judgment? Is there any really good news? The answer is yes there is.

Look with me at Roman Chapter 1. This letter to the church in Rome, titled Romans, was written by the Apostle Paul. Paul was a Jew with impeccable Jewish credentials. He calls himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a devout Jew, a religious Jew, a zealous Jew, a worshipping Jew, faithful to his religion; even bold, courageous, forceful in the exercise of his religion. He was Arioditein the Old Testament. He was knowledgeable in Old Testament law and ceremony. Further, he was educated in the Greek world. He was a highly educated and enlightened man. He had been exposed to all of Greek culture. He was multi-lingual. He was well-traveled. He was a brilliant spokesman with an unbelievably capable mind for logic and reason. He was powerfully persuasive as a preacher, a remarkable man. He could have infected the world and affected the world in a number of ways. Sheer genius in his mind, immense gifts of energy and compelling power of personality, great capability of speech, persuasive oratory; this man could have given the man any message probably effectively.

But in Romans, he tells us what his message was. "Paul, a bond servant of Christ Jesus called an apostle, set apart, for the gospel of God." Gospel means good news. "My task" he says, "is to preach good news. The good news of God." Good news from God to man, really good news. He calls it the "blessed good news" elsewhere. Sometimes he calls it the good news of salvation, or the good news about Jesus Christ, or the good news of His Son, or the good news of the grace of God. But over 60 times in his letters in the New Testament, he refers to the good news.

The good news is, you don't have to live in an ever increasing selfish isolation. You don't have to live with the diminishing returns of fulfilling your lusts and finding them unsatisfying. You don't have to live with guilt and its children: anxiety and fear. You don't have to live with meaninglessness. That is having no reson detra, no reason to live. You don't have to live with hopelessness, that is having no sense of reality and joy about the future. You don't have to live in the fear of judgment. Good news. It is good news which gives to men and women, forgiveness for all their sin and selfishness. Restoration to the favor of God, renovation of their nature, resurrection for the body, and eternal bliss in heaven; that is good news.

The good news, he says, is from God. And you have to ask the question, why would God bother to give good news to such bad people? There's a somewhat fanciful story told in France about a young man. The young man was much loved by his mother. In fact, he was doted on by his mother who was completely devoted to his care. He grieved her deeply when he pursued a career of wickedness. He took a course deeper, and deeper, and deeper into sin. Became eventually enamored with an evil woman. This evil woman dragged him down deeper and deeper into unrighteousness and iniquity. The mother, naturally, sought to draw him back. She wanted him back living on a higher plane. She wanted him to come back and live a pure life. And so she pled with him, her pleadings coming often.

The woman, the lover, the fornicating woman who had plunged this youth into the pit resented the mother bitterly. And one night, the story goes, the evil woman chided the man with an accusation that he didn't really love her. He said, but I do love you. She said, no you don't love me. If you really loved me, she appealed to him in his drunken mind, you'll remove your mother and her constant pleadings. If you really love me, you'll take her life and get her out of the way. According to the story, the young man rushed from the room to the nearby house where his mother lived, and dealt her death blows, killing her. To prove the depth of his affection to his evil paramour, he cut his mother's heart out of her body, put it in his hand. In his passionate rush out the door and down the steps across the street and back to his lover, he stumbled and fell in the street.

The climax of the tale goes like this. As he rushed on in his insane folly, stumbling and falling, from the bleeding heart there came a voice. My son, are you hurt? That is the way God loves you. And that is why God gives good news to bad people. Because the love of God could not even be silenced in the death of his own son. John 3:16 says "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life." God has good news for very bad people. He loves us far more than that mother ever could have loved her wicked son.

So Paul says, "I have come with a message. And my message is good news from God." In verse 2 he says, "He promised it through the prophets in the holy Scriptures." If you read the Old Testament, you will hear the prophets say there is coming a savior. There is coming a lamb who will be slain for the sins of the world. There is coming one who, being lifted up, will be the source of your forgiveness. There is coming one who will bear your sins, and your iniquities. The prophets said it's coming. And Paul says, "It came in Christ. And I'm here to preach it." Now the good news is all bound up in one person. Verse 3 concerning his son, "The good news is all about the Son of God, Jesus Christ."

Socrates once said, oh that someone would arise to show us God. Jesus did. He said if you've seen me, you've seen God. They questioned him about his age. And he said before Abraham was, I am. God came into the world. God, the second member of the trinity. You know there is God. We call God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The second member of the trinity came into the world to bring about the good news. Good news from God. He promised He would send His

Son. He promised the second member of the trinity would come into the world and bear our sins, and die, and rise again. He promised it. That's the good news. God has come into the world to die and to rise again.

Man longs to have the God-shaped vacuum in his heart filled. That's why there's a proliferation of religions around the world and through human history. There is an emptiness in man's heart that can only be filled by God. And he created the God of his own confusion to fill it until he comes to the knowledge of the true God. The true God has sent good news in his son. The Lord Jesus Christ is that individual.

And Paul says he is man, as proven by the fact that he was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh. He's a human, born into David's family. Furthermore, he is also God. And he was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the spirit of holiness, or the Holy Spirit. And then he names him, Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus Christ our Lord, God's Son, came into the world as man and God. The fact that he was man is proven because he was a descendant of David. He was born into the Davidic family. He was born a Jew. The fact that he is God was proven by the powerful resurrection from the dead.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "The name of Jesus is not so much written as plowed into the history of the world." There is no one who ever lived like him. Socrates taught for 40 years. Plato taught for 50 years. Aristotle taught for 40 years. And Jesus, for only three, yet the ministry of Jesus infinitely transcends the accumulative 130 years of the world's great philosophers. Jesus painted no pictures. And yet more pictures have been painted of him than any person who ever lived. Jesus wrote no poetry, yet more poems have been written of him than any person who ever lived. Jesus composed no music, yet more music has been composed of him than any person who ever lived. Raphael, Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Dante, Milton, Handel, Beethoven, Bach, Mendelssohn; they all focused on Christ. Every sphere of human art, and every sphere of human greatness has been enriched by the humble carpenter of Nazareth.

Paul said, "I came to preach the good news from God about the most important person who ever lived." He was man, yes, born as a descendant of David, a Jew. He was God, proved by the fact that he came out the other side of the grave with mighty power.

There in verse 3, he says "He was born of a descendant of David." That descendant was Mary. Mary, you know, was in the line of David. She was born in the succession of one of David's sons. Even Joseph, her husband, though not the father of Jesus physically, because Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and had no human father; but Joseph was also in the line of David. Through another of his sons came through Joseph, the right to reign. David was the king. Joseph was in the kingly line. And had there been a king in Israel, it could have been Joseph. He was of the royal line. And thus did he give Jesus, the royal right. Mary also, out of the loins of David, gave to Jesus the

royal blood. He is not just a man. He is a man who also had the right to be king. So God had a son. That son was fully man, born of a virgin, but nonetheless fully man. He, not just a man, was also a royal man. He became man with a right to reign.

Why? Because God promised that he would send a savior who would be a king. He would not just be the king over the hearts of men. He would be the king over a spiritual kingdom. And not just a spiritual kingdom, but an earthly kingdom. And not just an earthly kingdom, but an eternal kingdom. And he would sit on the seat of his father David, and he would reign. It was announced even at his virgin birth, in Luke Chapter 1, "He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign forever. And his kingdom will have no end." Paul says, "I preach good news. Good news about God's son, our Lord Jesus Christ." Good news that he was man. That he was not just man, but he was royal man, the right to reign.

The question then comes, why did he need to be man? And the answer is to die on the cross for men. If he was going to be the substitute for our sins, he had to be one of us. He became man that he might die for men, that he might take our place on the cross, that he might pay our penalty for sin, that he might bear our guilt, that he might feel our punishment. That's why you heard sung; he paid much too high a price for me. That's the plaintive cry of the sinner who says, I wasn't worthy of what you had to pay. It's true. But God is such a loving God that he has good news for very bad people.

So according to the flesh, Jesus Christ became a man, born as a descendant of David in order that he might bear the sins of men, that he might bear the guilt of men, that he might bear the punishment of men, that he might feel the wrath of God for men and be our substitute on the cross. That's good news! That is good news! That is the best news possible, that I don't have to die for my own sins. I don't have to pay the penalty for my own sins. I don't have to bear the wrath of God for my own guilt. I don't have to feel his judgment on my iniquity because God became man, fully man, and substituted for me.

But he's not only man, notice in verse 4, he was also declared not just the son of man, but the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the spirit of holiness. He is not just man, he is God. He is not only son of man, a title he uses frequently. He is not only son of man, he is Son of God. Son of man by birth, son of God by eternal character. Came down to us as a human through the loins of Mary. He came down to us as divine through the Holy Spirit. And that was confirmed in his resurrection. He was a son begotten by Mary, a son of man. He was a son begotten from the grave, son of God. His deity shows up no more clearly than in his resurrection. He is twice born then. He is a son by his first birth. He is a son by his second birth. He is a son because he came out, as it were, of the womb of Mary. And he is a son because he came out of the womb of rock, his tomb. He is God. He is man. He is the God man.

And in verse 4 he says, "He was declared." That's the word horidzofrom from which we get horizon in the Greek. It means a line of demarcation, a marking off. The horizon marks off the earth from the sky. And what marked Jesus off as God was that he conquered death through the power of his spirit. He came out of the grave, burst the bands of death to live again. When God raised Jesus from the dead, he irrefutably gave evidence that this is a divine son. And so, when we look at the life of Christ and the death of Christ, we see his humanity. We can't really argue that. He was human.

Tacetous, writing in A.D. 114 tells us that the founder of the Christian religion, a man named Jesus Christ was put to death by Pontius Pilate in the reign of Roman emperor Tiberius. That's historic fact. He lived. He died. Pline, the younger, another historian wrote another letter to the emperor Trageon on the subject of Christ and Christians. The great Jewish historian by the name of Josephus, who lived from 37 A.D., just after the death of Christ, to 95 A.D., writes about Jesus Christ and about the fact that he really lived. That's history.

Listen to what Josephus wrote. "Now there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man. He was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him for he appeared to them alive at the third day as the divine prophets had foretold these and 10,000 other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day." History says he was a man. There's no question.

There's a fascinating translation of a description of Christ sent by Publius Lentilus, to the Roman senate. Listen to what he wrote. "There appeared in these days, a man of great virtue named Jesus Christ who is yet among us. Of the Gentiles, accepted for a prophet of truth, but his disciples call him the son of God. He raises the dead and cures all manner of diseases. A man of stature, somewhat tall and comely, with a very reverend countenance such as the beholder must both love and fear. His hair; the color of a chestnut full ripe, plain to the ears whence downward it is more orient, curling and waving about his shoulders. In the midst of his forehead is a stream, or partition of his hair after the manner of the Nazarites, forehead plain and very delicate. His face; without spot or wrinkle, beautiful, with a lovely red. His nose and mouth so forked as nothing can be represented. His beard; thick in color like his hair, not over long. His look; innocent and mature. His eyes; gray, quick, and clear. In reproving; he is terrible. In admonishing; courteous and fair spoken. Pleasant in conversation, mixed with gravity. It cannot be remembered that any have seen him laugh. But many have seen him weep. In proportion of body; most excellent. His hands and arms delectable to behold. In speaking; very temperate, modest and wide; a man of singular beauty surpassing the children of men."

There's no question about the man. We see him in his human life; eating, sleeping. We see him walking, running, speaking, shouting. We see him dying. But he had to be more than a man. If he was going to bear our sins, if he was going to conquer death; for if he was only a man, he would have

had to have died for his own sins. And so, the resurrection becomes the signal mark, the horizon that marks off his deity. This is good news.

The God man has come as man. He died for men. As God, he conquered death. And he says, because I live, you shall live also. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." The apostle Paul elsewhere said if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved; saved from sin, selfishness, guilt, meaninglessness, hopelessness, and judgment. Poet wrote, "I know a soul that is steeped in sin that no man's art can cure. But I know a name, a name, a name that can make that soul all pure. I know a life that is lost to God, bound down by the things of earth. But I know a name, a name, a name that can bring that soul new birth. It is the name of Jesus Christ." You can believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, that he paid the price for your sin, that he is the God man, and then confess him as your Lord and savior, and be saved. And therein is selfishness conquered, and sin, and guilt, and meaninglessness, and hopelessness, and judgment. All of those things come as blessings to the one who believes.

There was a very wealthy man, extremely wealthy, who possessed great treasures of art. It had been a lifelong enterprise in his family, to collect great works of art. The man had one son. The son was a very ordinary boy. Some time in his mid teen years, he died. His father was so grief stricken over the death of his only son that within a matter of about two months he died also. The father's will provided that everything would be sold by auction to the highest bidder. But the father stipulated that the first item to go on the block of all the treasures that he possessed was a picture, an oil painting, of his son. In keeping with the will of the father expressed the first paragraph. The auctioneer held up the portrait of his diseased son. No one really cared about the boy or the picture. And there were several moments of silence as no one bid. Finally, an old servant who had served in the estate for a number of years bid a miniscule amount, 75 cents. There were no other bids. The auctioneer said sold for 75 cents. And then the dramatic moment came. The sale was stopped because the will had further provided that whoever bought that picture would receive all the rest of the estate.

God is not unlike that wealthy business man. He says if you love my son, I'll give you all my treasures. Father we thank you this morning that we can know you through Christ. We thank you that we can know our sins are forgiven, that we can know our selfishness is gone. And we can live for the love of others. That we can know in Christ, that guilt is removed for he bore it all. And life had meaning and hope. We thank you that we can know in Christ that there is no judgment. You will never condemn us. You will never punish us for you already punished him for our sins, all of them.

You haven't told us to do anything to earn this salvation. There aren't any formulas. There aren't any ceremonies. There aren't any rituals. You just said, confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord. Believe in your heart that you raised him from the dead. And you'll be saved. We know that confession involved repentance and a willingness to follow Christ.

Lord we ask that you might bring many souls this day to that place where they hear the good news, good news for very bad people, good news of forgiveness, good news of heaven for all who turn from their sin and put their complete trust in what Christ did on the cross. We thank you for that good news. In the Savior's name, Amen. In the Savior's name, Amen. In the Savior's name, Amen. In the Savior's name, Amen. In the Savior's name, Amen. In the Savior's name, Amen. In the Savior's name, Amen. In the Savior's name, Amen. In the Savior's name, Amen.

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