

The Exalted Gospel – Part 3

Romans 1:1-7

Before we examine the text this morning I would like to share my heart with you for a few minutes. I confess that I always have a sense of desperation when I come and stand before you. I am aware of my own weaknesses, my own sin and I look down at my pitiful manuscript and I realize that unless the Holy Spirit intervenes nothing is going to be accomplished by what I have to say. In fact, inevitably when I walk these 10 or 12 feet from my seat to this sacred desk I am praying for a supernatural filling of the Spirit of God.

Whenever I stand behind this pulpit it is my passion that through what I have to say you will see Jesus. In fact, there is a plaque right up here. If you would like at the end of the service you can come look at it. And it says, “We would see Jesus.”¹

I want you to be able to clearly see, through what the Spirit of God has laid on my heart, the light of the knowledge of the glory of Christ or the glory of God in the face of Christ. I want the exposition of the text to cause you to somehow once again get lost in the mystery and majesty of our great God.

I suppose I feel a bit like Moses who said to the Lord on the mount, “Show me your glory.”² That is what I want for me. That is what I want for you.

Frankly, I care very little about being relevant when I preach the Word, the idea of looking for something in the text that will scratch you where you itch. That kind of preaching, I believe, is really the opiate of the self absorbed. I do not labor in the text during the week so that I can mine some golden nugget of practical truth that is going to make your life better. Dear friends, I am not Dr. Phil. This is not group therapy. I am, by God’s grace, a preacher of divine truth. I am standing at the foot of the cross along with you a sinner saved by grace with a bunch of living sacrifices looking up and wanting us all to see the glory of God in the face of Christ and to somehow be consumed by that glory and be humbled by it.

And when that occurs isn’t it fascinating how the Word of God becomes extremely practical to each of our lives. Somehow the Word pierces our hearts in ways that I could have never imagined. And many times it pierces each of you in different ways. Certainly the Word of God is living. It is active. It is sharper than any two edged sword. It is able to judge the thoughts and the intentions of our heart.

During the week I wrestle with the text for many hours until I have a clear understanding, as much as humanly possible, of what the text has to say. And when I do understand it, you must know that it changes me. In fact, if I am not changed, I am in no condition to come and stand before you and say, “Thus saith the Lord.”

Sometimes I am convicted of my own personal sin. Sometimes I am overwhelmed by the glory of God. I have maybe a new sense of joy or maybe I am struck with a new sense of

¹ John 12:21.

² Exodus 33:18.

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pain for those that do not know Christ or whatever the intention of the text may be. But whatever the text, I am always moved. I am always changed. And the great and difficult goal of the expositor is to stand before God's people and present the Word in such a way that you, too, will be moved, that you, too, will somehow be changed by what you hear. And at some level I suppose when I am in the vault of study and I am communing with the Lord in an effort to understand the text it is not so much that on Sunday mornings I leave that vault of study and communion to be with you, but rather, I suppose in some mysterious way, I am now inviting you in there with me. And I trust this is your attitude and your prayer.

I spend hours in that vault bringing my life before the Lord, pleading for clarity, for simplicity. I am always amazed by what the Word has to say. And so now I stand before you once again, a man that has been crushed and comforted by the text before us, one whose life has been changed just a little bit more by what I have learned and now by the power of the Holy Spirit I pray that that same experience will be yours. I am merely the clay pot that contains this treasure of the gospel that, as Paul said, the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God, not from me.

So if you long for a glimpse of the glory of God I want you to join me as we, once again, look at the exalted gospel that is presented here in summary fashion in Paul's profound introduction to his letter to the Romans. Let me read these first seven verses once again.

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.³

In verse one we read about the preacher of the gospel, that he is a bond servant of Christ. We learn that he was called as an apostle set apart for the gospel of God. In verse two we learned about the promise of the gospel, that it is the good news of saving grace promised beforehand, a gospel that was decreed in eternity past, revealed to his holy prophets then recorded in the holy Scriptures, there specifically referring to the Old Testament. And in verses three through four we began to look at the person of the gospel.

Verse three we read, "...concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh."⁴

³ Romans 1:1-7.

⁴ Romans 1:3.

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We learned that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. He was the Son of God as well as the Son of David, the Son of Man. We are reminded in this text that there has been a Father Son relationship that has always existed even in eternity past in the triune Godhead. We learned that he was the eternal Son of God before he was conceived and before he was born. He did not become the Son of God at the incarnation or at his resurrection as some cults teach. In fact, I was raked over the coals for this teaching just a couple of weeks ago by a Jehovah's Witness. But Jesus was not created. He was the Creator.

John one tells us in verse two that:

He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.⁵

Dear friends, Jesus Christ did not achieve divinity. He was divine. He has always been divine. He is the eternal Son who has existed from all eternity.

In John 17 and verse one Jesus prayed to the Father, "Glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee."⁶

And then he went on to add something very important in verse five. He said, "Glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."⁷

The apostle Paul likewise states in Galatians chapter four verse four, "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman."⁸

So in his incarnation the second person of the trinity laid aside his right to the full prerogatives as well as being coexisting with God in glory, laid all of that aside. He took on human flesh, a human existence to come to do the Father's will and yet we know according to Philippians two that he really never divested himself of his divine attributes. He just laid them aside.

We saw a glimpse of that on the mount of transfiguration. You will recall when Jesus peeled back his flesh and he allowed the effulgence of his glory to blaze forth in blinding light. In fact, nowhere is his humanity as well as his deity pictured more graphically than when he hung upon the cross. You will remember that physically his visage was so marred that he was not even recognizable. Blood dripped from his tortured body.

And yet in his divinity he promised eternal life to the thief next to him that confessed his guilt and believed in the Son of God.

⁵ John 1:2-3.

⁶ John 17:1.

⁷ John 17:5.

⁸ Galatians 4:4.

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Now let's continue what Paul has for us to understand with respect to the person of the gospel as we look at verse four. This is an amazing text. Notice he says he "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."⁹

This is fascinating. God's Son who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, referring to his virgin birth, was also as we see here declared the Son of God.

"Declared" comes from a Greek word *orizw* (hor-id'-zo). It means to determine or to mark out a boundary or a limit of some place or thing. In fact, we get our English word "horizon" from that word. It is the idea of marking off the place where the sky meets the earth. A horizon, therefore, shall we say, determines or declares that demarcation.

And in this context the eternal sonship of Jesus Christ, his absolute deity is marked off or it is determined. It is declared with power by the resurrection from the dead. In other words, his glorious resurrection proved his deity. It was marked off. It was declared in unmistakable terms.

And, frankly, only a fool could possibly miss this. The Son of man is also the Son of God. The resurrection was the declaration of his eternal sonship.

Now notice. He was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. And what staggering power this was and remains to this very day. The power to conquer sin and Satan and death. Inconceivable power. And what was the source of his power? It says, "According to the Spirit of holiness."¹⁰ In other words, according to the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Now you will recall, as we look at the gospels, that the Lord Jesus was conceived in the Spirit, Luke one. You will also recall that the Holy Spirit descended upon him in his baptism in Luke three. And, if we look at Luke four we learn that he was literally full of the Holy Spirit. In fact, in Matthew 12:31 we learn that to deliberately reject him Jesus said was blasphemy against the Spirit and shall not be forgiven.

So the fullness of his power and his glory needed to be ultimately declared and it was veiled in his humanity, but declared in his resurrection.

Think about it. There was no power. There was no glory when Jesus came as a babe in the manger. All of that had been laid aside. His glory and his power were concealed by human flesh, not manifested in any way outwardly. But at death—now catch this—at death the Lord Jesus laid aside his weakness and on the cross the bonds of sin and Satan and death were all severed once and for all forever. And suddenly he was raised from the dead no longer to live in weakness and humiliation, but by the power of the Holy Spirit he arose victorious, the exalted Savior and sovereign King.

⁹ Romans 1:4.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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Beloved, this is the glory and the power of the cross, the power of the resurrection. No wonder Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”¹¹

You see, the time of his humiliation had come to an end. And now, according to Philippians two, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name and that is that Jesus is Lord. Jesus alone is the sovereign ruler.

He goes on to say, “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”¹²

Paul even said in 2 Corinthians 13:4, “or indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we shall live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.”¹³

Beloved, let this sink deep within your soul. This is so incredibly exciting. The same power that raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead works in you. It works in me.

In Ephesians 2:20 Paul says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us...”¹⁴

That is the same power that conquered sin and Satan and death that will one day defeat the antichrist and destroy all of the nations that are opposed to him.

You see, that same power is yours and mine today. So therefore that same power is with us when we go out from this place today and we go back into the world and we face all of the stuff that we have to face in this fallen world. What an incredible thought.

You see, as believers were armed with the irresistible power of the glorified Christ. And it is for this reason that Paul would tell us in Philippians three that he was willing to suffer the loss of all things, of everything that meant anything to him in his life in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him. And he went on to say, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.”¹⁵

William Hendrickson described it this way, quote, “It was because of this great power that the exalted, divine and human Savior from his heavenly throne poured out the Spirit upon his Church imparting strength, conviction, courage and illumination to those who previously had been very weak. Also it was this energy that enabled him to bring about conversions by the thousands so that even according to the testimony of his enemies,

¹¹ Matthew 28:18.

¹² Philippians 2:10-11.

¹³ 2 Corinthians 13:4.

¹⁴ Ephesians 2:20.

¹⁵ Philippians 3:10.

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quote, ‘the world was being turned upside down,’ Acts 17:6. Moreover,” Hendrickson goes on to say, “it was as a result of the exertion of this mighty influence that the barrier between Jew and Gentile, a wall so formidable that its removal must have seemed impossible was actually broken down. And it was on account of this force that the glorious gospel of the risen exalted Savior began to penetrate every sphere of life and is still doing this today,” end quote.

What an incredible truth. What a blessed truth. Again, verse four.

“... who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹⁶

My friends, this is my Savior. This is my Lord. Can that be said of you? Is he your Savior? Is he your Lord?

In Psalm two we read an amazing prophecy concerning the Father and the eternal Son, one given 1000 years before Christ. In verse seven of Psalm two we read, “He said to Me, ‘Thou art My Son.’”¹⁷

Now that refers back to the Davidic covenant that we read about in 2 Samuel seven verses eight through 16 which, by the way, is the only reference in the Old Testament describing the Father Son relationship within the triune godhead. And then he goes on to say, “Today, I have begotten Thee,”¹⁸ a reference to the Son as Messiah.

And it is interesting to note that this text is quoted in the New Testament in Hebrews chapter one verses five and six with respect to Jesus’ birth. There we read, “HOU ART MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”¹⁹ And the writer goes on to say, “And again, ‘I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME.’”²⁰

And there he quotes from 2 Samuel seven referring to David’s greater Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we also learn more of this in Acts chapter 13 verses 33 through 34. Remember there Peter is trying to explain who Jesus is to the Jews because they are confused about it all and he quotes Psalm two that they would have been aware of and he says, “You are my Son. Today I have begotten you.”

Peter goes on to say. “And as for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way...”²¹

¹⁶ Romans 1:4.

¹⁷ Psalm 2:7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Hebrews 1:5.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Acts 13:34.

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And then he quotes Isaiah 55:3. ““I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.””²²

You see, this text points to the fact, once again, that Jesus’ resurrection was the declaration of his eternal sonship and that his atoning work was perfectly or I should say perfectly satisfied the will of the Father.

So from the start Paul makes it clear that as a descendant of David Jesus was fully man and that later because of his resurrection he was therefore declared to be the Son of God.

Let’s pause for a moment. I find myself absolutely amazed as I marvel at the glorious panorama of redemption that we see here in these first four verses to think as Paul is telling us that in the unknown reaches of the third heaven our sovereign God in eternity past put together this magnificent scheme to glorify himself. He came up with the plan of the gospel and at that time he even sets apart those whom he will save and those whom he will send to be messengers of this good news of grace. And then he sends his Son to the earth in human flesh. And the Lord Jesus comes and perfectly fulfills the law and then willingly suffers and dies on a cross, that he descends down into the grave and then suddenly he bursts forth from it and his resurrection then proves to the world that, indeed, this was and this is the eternal Son of God. And then he ascends back to his Father in glory, sits at his right hand awaiting the day when he, as the Messiah king will once again return as the greater Son of David and establish that glorious kingdom that will exist throughout eternity.

Now I tell you. What human being could have possibly invented such a scheme? Moreover, what human could have possibly recorded that over some 1500 years? What human being could possibly weave all of these concepts together through the various authors of Scripture over all of those years and then present it in such a way that is absolutely infallible, that is compelling and as we see prophetic, prophecy that has already, much of it, been fulfilled?

Obviously this is a testimony to the authority and inspiration of Scripture. What an amazing design, isn’t it? Amazing design. And Paul later summarized this sweeping vista of God’s grace that I am trying to describe. In fact, it is thought to have been maybe the lyrics of a hymn that the early saints used to sing. It is found in 1 Timothy 3:16. Here is what we read there.

“And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.”²³

Let me read that with a comment or two. He says, “And by common confession...”²⁴ In other words this is our message to the world. “Great is the mystery of godliness.”²⁵ There

²² Ibid.

²³ 1 Timothy 3:16.

²⁴ Ibid.

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he is referring to salvation through the imputed righteousness of Christ. And then he says, “He who was revealed in the flesh,”²⁶ that is the incarnation. “Was vindicated in the Spirit.”²⁷ There is the resurrection. “Beheld by angels.”²⁸ And you will recall that would have included both fallen angels as well as the elect angels. And so there you have exaltation. “Proclaimed among the nations.”²⁹ There we have proclamation. “Believed on in the world.”³⁰ There you have regeneration. And then “Taken up in glory.”³¹ Referring to the ascension and there you have the glorification.

What a great summary of the exalted gospel. And, beloved, what is even more staggering to me is that he would somehow include a wretch like me in this plan and like you, that the Creator, King of glory would choose me in eternity past and then come to earth to die in my stead and to snatch me from the kingdom of darkness and put me in the kingdom of his dear Son, adopt me as a son and give me an eternal inheritance that remains in heaven to this day that is reserved and protected by the very power of God. I am left speechless when I think of these things.

So my heart, again, as I said earlier, is crushed by such infinite love all because of the person of the gospel.

As we were singing earlier and I was hearing the roof just being raised by you dear saints, I was saying, “Oh, Lord, thank you for music, because how else would we be able to express the doxologies within our soul?”

So often words fail us and somehow a song and a melody will give expression to that which we cannot speak. It is an amazing gift.

But notice Paul moves from the person of the gospel to the purpose of the gospel in verse five.

“Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name’s sake.”³²

The purpose of the gospel is very simple. It is to save and to send. We see that here in this text. Jesus saves sinners by his grace and then he sends them into the world to make disciples of people of all the nations to the glory of God.

Now first notice. Paul simply states that through Christ, not through human effort, we have received grace. That is referring to salvation. The Old Testament Hebrew term for

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Romans 1:5.

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grace was one that was rooted in the idea of to bend or to stoop, to condescend. In fact, we read it in Genesis 6:8 where Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. And the prevailing idea of that term is that of a superior that does good to an inferior and, thus, delivers help to that person. Although the inferior individual has no claim for such goodness. So it is the idea of unmerited favor. And, in the New Testament Greek we have the word *cario* (khar'-ece) and it reflects the same basic meaning and the controlling resident idea of the Old Testament term and that is of condescending, unmerited favor.

In fact, a workable definition that I like to use of grace is simply this. Grace is God's favor to sinners who do not merit his goodness, who cannot earn his goodness, cannot repay his goodness and who, of themselves, do not even want God's goodness.

Beloved, you will never be able to understand salvation unless you understand grace. And even at that there is things that are inscrutable to us that only God can understand.

Some will ask, "Well, why doesn't God save everyone?"

Well, I would submit to you that such a question is deficient in its understanding of the reality of the fall, in other words, the depth of man's sin as well as understanding the character of our God. You see, the proper question has got to be: Why has God condescended to save anyone? And for that reason there is but one basic and blessed answer. And that is because our God is a gracious God.

And Paul says that we receive this grace through Christ in verse five.

You see, it is not through anything that we can contribute. In fact, Paul is going to later on tell us in Romans chapter three verse 24 that we are "justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."³³

And then in verse 27 he asks the question.

"Where then is boasting?"³⁴

He says, "It is excluded."³⁵

You see, dear friends, God gets all the glory. We get none.

MacArthur summarized this so well. He put it this way. "Salvation does not come by baptism, by confirmation, by communion, by church membership, by church attendance, by keeping the 10 Commandments, by trying to live up to the Sermon on the Mount, by serving other people or even by serving God. It does not come by being morally upright, respectable and self giving, nor does it come by simply believing that there is a God or

³³ Romans 3:24.

³⁴ Romans 3:27.

³⁵ Ibid.

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that Jesus Christ is his Son. Even the demons recognize such truths. See Mark 5:7 and James 2:19.”

He goes on to say, “It...” referring to salvation, “comes only when a person repenting of sin receives by faith the gracious provision of forgiveness suffered by God through the atoning work of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ,” end quote.

So the purpose of the gospel includes this dispensing of saving grace through Jesus Christ. But notice also he not only saves, but he sends in verse five.

He says, “Through whom we have received grace and apostleship.”³⁶

Apostleship is rooted in a term that means to send away or one who is sent. And *apostolos* (ap-os'-tol-os) in the original language is a messenger or a delegate, one sent forth with orders from another.

Now certainly this would include the specific office of apostleship that we know was given to 13 men that God sovereignly chose and then supernaturally empowered to preach the gospel, to help establish the early Church. But you must understand that the term also is used in a general sense to describe every believer because we are all sent by God to make disciples. We see this, for example, with names like Barnabas in Acts 14, with Epaphroditus in Philippians two. We see it with respect to Timothy and Sylvanus in Andronicus and Junius and you have other unnamed servants. They are all apostles in this sense that they were sent. They were called and sent as ambassadors of Christ.

Now what are we all to do when we are sent? Well, the end of verse five Paul says that we have received this apostleship, “To bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name’s sake.”³⁷

Faith here refers to the teaching that is found in the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament. In fact, you will recall that Jude describes the Scriptures as the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints in Jude three. And the obedience of faith is really a synonym for salvation in the sense that any man or woman who claims Jesus as Savior proves it by being obedient to him as Lord. There is a slave master relationship here. And we as his slaves obey his Word. We obey the Scriptures.

Peter made this abundantly clear in his sermon at Pentecost in Acts two verse 36 when he said, “

Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”³⁸

³⁶ Romans 1:5.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Acts 2:36.

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So true believers manifest obedience of faith. They are obedient to the Scriptures. Now please understand. Believing the gospel is far more than some intellectual acceptance of what the Bible teaches. It is way beyond that. It includes the idea of humble submission.

Chapter six and verse 17 we read:

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.³⁹

In James chapter two verse 17 we read that faith that has no works is dead.

You see, we are not saved by works, but we are saved unto good works. So genuine saving faith will always be validated by a person's obedience to the Word of God.

Now I know, especially in this culture, this is a horribly offensive concept. But, dear friends, you show me a man who claims to be a Christian but shows no fruit of repentance in his life, manifests no transformation, has no desire to be separate from the world, has no appetite for Scripture, has no real love of God, has no devotion to his glory, you show me a man that has no real humility, no selfless love, no private devotion to God, no passion to be like Christ. You show me a man that has no prayer life. You show me a man that has no measurable spiritual growth, he has no desire to be salt and light, he has absolutely no inkling of a desire to go out and obey the Lord and make disciples and I will show you a man who has deceived himself.

Remember Jesus warned in Matthew seven and 21, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."⁴⁰

I don't care how many times a man has walked an aisle, has repeated some sinner's prayer. I don't care how often he goes to church, how actively involved he is in ministry or even how convicted he is over his own sin, how moral he is or how many Sunday school classes or sermons he has preached, if he doesn't manifest, as Paul says, the obedience of the faith, he is lost and he will perish in his sins.

Paul tells us in Romans chapter 10 verse nine, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness."⁴¹

There is the proof in the pudding. It results in righteousness.

"And with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation."⁴²

³⁹ Romans 6:17-18.

⁴⁰ Mathew 7:21.

⁴¹ Romans 10:9-10.

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Certainly a true believer will manifest the righteousness of Christ more and more as that process of sanctification conforms him more and more to the image of our dear Lord.

Let me summarize what Paul is saying a bit differently with respect to our apostleship, this idea of bringing about the obedience of the faith among all the Gentiles, all of the nations of the world.

Think about it, dear friends. The one who saved you by his grace has also commissioned you to be his messenger. I alluded to this a minute ago. In Matthew 28 you will recall that Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations.”⁴³

The operative verb in that particular text is “make disciples.” You have these participles hanging off of that. That is the idea of as you are going, as you are teaching, as you are baptizing, you are to be making disciples. That is what we have been commissioned to do.

He says, “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”⁴⁴

So that is what the Lord has told us to do.

Now I remember as a young man many times my father telling me to do something and I am sure there were times where I was disobedient, but believe me. There were always severe consequences to that disobedience. And I would never, at least very seldom, come back to my father and tell him that I really had no desire to do what he asked me to do. I can hear my dad now.

“Son, didn’t I tell you to do such and such?”

Of course the answer was, “Yes.”

And the obvious next statement would be, “Why didn’t you do that?”

You see, I didn’t want to hear that from my father, my earthly father. I don’t want to hear that from my heavenly Father either.

You see, every believer, every one of you in here that know Christ you have been called to an apostleship. You have been commissioned to make disciples. Now that is going to look like different things at different times. But it is also going to include fundamentally life on life, face to face Bibles open, hands folded in prayer type of meeting with people.

Now I ask you. Is that a priority in your life?

⁴² Roman 10:10.

⁴³ Matthew 28:19.

⁴⁴ Matthew 28:20.

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I ask you to really examine your heart as we think about this because, beloved, please hear it this way. There is no such thing as conversion without commission. When we come to Christ and we are lavish with all of these spiritual blessings what comes with that is a commission to serve him, ultimately to make disciples. And I would humbly yet forthrightly tell you that if you disregard this commission to make disciples through whatever cockamamie excuse you come up with, if you choose to do that you are going to forfeit blessing in this life and you are going to lose eternal reward in the next. It is as simple as that.

Imagine what this church would look like if even half of you would get serious about making disciples, praying for some specific person passionately, inviting them into your heart, I mean into your home so that you can begin to tap into their heart and their life and you begin to deal with them face to face or to take someone who maybe is a believer and they are struggling and come alongside them and help them grow in Christ. Imagine what would happen if we got serious about this.

And I would submit to you that there can be no greater demonstration of our love for Christ than to be faithful to what he has commissioned us to do for his glory. So remember. The purpose of the gospel is not just to save, but to send.

The end of verse five. “...to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.”⁴⁵

All of the lost in all of the nations. And then notice the motivation. He says, “For his name’s sake.”⁴⁶

In other words, we do this for the glory of his name.

Now, dear Christian, please hear this and be humbled by it. The grand goal of the gospel is not the salvation of men, but it is the glory of God. You must realize that we are only incidental to his eternal purposes to somehow glorify himself. We are not the center of gravity around which God orbits. He is the center of gravity around which we orbit. He does not exist for us. We exist for him. That is the idea.

And yet by God’s grace in ways that we can’t even begin to explain or understand he has chosen a few to receive the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore put his glory on display because of his infinite holiness and mercy and grace and love. And even display this glory through his wrath upon those who reject him.

Then notice Paul goes on to encourage the saints at Rome, these trophies of his grace who had been brought to the obedience of faith.

Verse six.

⁴⁵ Romans 1:5.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

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“...among who you also are the called of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁷

Here again we see the grand purpose of the gospel, don't we? To call those who belong to Christ. Call really refers to the work of God by which he actually brings a sinner to salvation, by which he causes the person to respond in faith and obedience accepting God's offer of salvation that he gives to all men.

Now, understated this. There is a general calling that we read about in Scripture, one that we understand plays out in God inviting all men to Christ. And that call is universal and as to time and extent. But it is a call that can be resisted and rejected. And yet we see biblically that men are responsible for rejecting that universal call, but that is not the calling that we have here.

Paul is addressing the called of Jesus Christ. You see, God invites all men to salvation, but only those that he has elected in eternity past will he actually save. And what we learn in Scripture and, again, this is an inscrutable mystery that we cannot fully comprehend, this calling is never at the cost of the will of man. It is never the coercion of the will. But it is a supernatural working with the will, the human will of the elect so that it freely and voluntarily chooses to be saved, chooses to believe in Christ as Savior and Lord.

In fact, Paul summarizes this and we will study it in great detail as we continue on in Romans. But in Romans eight verse 30 he speaks of those “whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”⁴⁸

Now all through the New Testament epistles we see that those who are called to salvation are always those who are the recipients of this supernatural drawing of the Father, the recipients of this supernatural regenerating process of the Holy Spirit of God and so forth. And this calling is, therefore, the effecting of God's elective purposes. The instrument of this call is always the Word of God and the agent is always the Spirit of God.

And you might also need to put in you mind that this effectual call, in other words this call that will have its appropriate effect, this effectual call of grace is an irresistible call upon the elect.

Let me give you an illustration. You see something like this in the story of Lazarus. You will recall that Lazarus had been dead for four days. We learn from the text that his body stunk. His putrid corpse had been sealed in a tomb. And yet Jesus said, “Lazarus come forth,” and he did.

⁴⁷ Romans 1:5.

⁴⁸ Romans 8:30.

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Now I ask you. Did Lazarus contribute anything to that coming forth? Obviously he could not. And, likewise, we see in the Word of God that every sinner is dead in his trespasses and sin, Ephesians 2:1.

We, before we come to Christ were spiritual cadavers, unable to save ourselves. In fact, the stench of our corruption was so exceedingly foul that it offended the nostrils of our holy God.

You see God utterly abhors sin. And yet in his sovereign mercy what does he do? He calls us to come forth. He gives us spiritual life.

We were buried with Christ yet raised to walk in newness of life, Romans 6:4.

Now some will ask, “Well, how do I know if I am part of the elect, if I am one of the called?”

It is real simple. If you believe you are, if you don’t, you aren’t. You see, the effectual call of God can only be known by its results. Does a person believe resulting in righteousness?

Dear friend, understand that God has not published the actual names of the elect and of the book of life. He hasn’t published that. But he has published the page of his decree whereon the character and the conduct of the redeemed are recorded. We see it all through Scripture. They are the ones who have been broken over their sin, who beat upon their chest and say, “God, have mercy upon me a sinner.” These are the ones that cry out for mercy and believe in the crucified and risen Christ. These are the ones who therefore are transformed and made new creatures in Christ. The old things pass away. The new things come. They begin to hate what God hates and love what he loves. And you begin to see them walking in a different direction. This is the character and the conduct of the redeemed. And I would submit to you that if this is you then you are part of the elect.

What is important to understand is that God brings man to Christ for salvation. The initiative, the power and all the glory belong to him. And for this reason we see those who are the called of Jesus Christ in verse six are given two very precious labels. Won’t you notice them in verse seven?

They are called the beloved of God and saints.

Verse seven says, “To all who are beloved of God.”⁴⁹

In other words, to all of you who are the undeserved recipients of his eternal love. There are so many texts that speak to this.

⁴⁹ Romans 1:7.

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In Jeremiah 31 verse three the Lord spoke through his prophet and said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.”⁵⁰

They are also called saints.

“...called as saints.”⁵¹

It is from the Greek word *agion* (hag'-ee-os). It means to be set apart. In other words, these are the holy ones. You who are called, you are the holy ones. You are the ones that have been set apart.

You will recall in the Old Testament many things were considered set apart unto God, set apart by God from the world unto himself. But when he has called us by his grace to have peace with him we become his special possession throughout eternity.

Again, this is the glory of the exalted gospel.

Well, with this in mind he closes and he says, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵²

I have stooped. I have condescended. I have loved you. And now the long war of your rebellion with me is over. I no longer see you as my enemy. But I see the righteousness of Christ imputed to you and therefore I see you as my adopted son.

Herein is the exalted gospel. What more can I say? If you have never really believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, may I encourage you to do so today while there is still time? But those of us who have been saved by his grace, whenever we hear the Word of God taught, whenever it is preached the Spirit of God will inevitably bring something to bear upon our soul. Whatever that is, whatever you have heard today that is gnawing at you, deal with it, lest you grieve the Spirit, lest you forfeit blessing in your life and eternal reward. Reexamine your heart. And whatever you do, do to the praise of his glory.

Let's pray together.

Father, we are humbled by what you have spoken to us in your Word. I pray that somehow these great truths will change us, will move us in a direction that will not only bring you great glory, but bring us great joy. I lift up those who do not know you as Savior. Oh, God, would that you convict them this day. I pray that today would be the day that they experience the miracle of the new birth. For it is in Christ's name that I pray. Amen.

⁵⁰ Jeremiah 31:3.

⁵¹ Romans 1:7.

⁵² Ibid.

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