

SET APART TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

ROMANS 1:1-4 • TV151A

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Romans 1:1-4

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

Our text for the message today will be found in the **first chapter of Romans**. I will be reading one verse of Scripture but I would like for you just to keep your Bible open and we will deal with the first **three or four verses of Romans chapter 1**.

Now, in this first chapter of **Romans, verse 1**, the apostle Paul makes this statement: *“Paul, a servant (or bond-slave) of Jesus Christ called to be an apostle, separated (or set apart), unto the Gospel of God.”*

That’s my subject today: **“SET APART UNTO THE GOSPEL OF GOD.”**

Many years ago I was given the notes of an old preacher who had passed away. In his notes I found these words; (this man died in 1969 but he ministered in the first part of this century, thirty five or forty years). These were words that he had written in his notebook.

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I want you to listen to them; he says, “The most humbling and challenging thing that I face; the great concern of my heart is that my generation experiences a recovery of the Gospel. We have just about lost the Gospel!”

“My heart’s desire is that my generation experiences a return to the Gospel of God’s free grace. My generation is plagued with a gospel of works. My generation does not know what the Gospel of redemption is.

“I want to return to that message, that great old message of God’s Word which was used of God in other days, to awaken men to the guilt of sin and to reveal to them the glory and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

He continued: “The two-fold message of God’s grace is this: *‘all flesh is grass and the glory of man as the flower of the field. The grass withereth and the flower fadeth because the spirit of God bloweth upon it.’* That’s the message; that’s the message that God has used in days gone by: *‘all men are sinners and sinners are called upon to behold their God.’*”

He said, secondly: “the two-fold message of God’s Word is, *‘behold your God.’*”

“That message takes the glory away from men. That message proclaims the redemptive glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. That message, the results of it, will be a sense of the awesome, fearful presence of the living God, breaking the hearts of sinners and bringing them to the feet of Jesus Christ in true repentance and in true saving faith.”

He wrote, “If we return, to the preaching of that message, the message of God’s redemptive glory, the message of man’s sinful condition, gone will be the voice of the proud sinner who inwardly debates whether or not he will accept Jesus.

“Gone, will be the proud heart and the proud voice of the sinner who debates whether or not he will let God save him. No longer will they say, ‘Christ is at my heart’s door knocking, begging to be admitted. Shall I bid him enter or shall I turn him away?’”

“Instead of such small thoughts of God, we will again hear sinners cry:

**‘Depths of mercy can there be,
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God his wrath forbear
And me the chief of sinners spare?’**

“If we would serve our generation, if we would honor our Lord, if we would be true to the souls of our hearers, we must, I repeat, we must return to the preaching of God’s free grace.”

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That's what Paul is talking about here. He calls himself "*Paul*." None of the true servants of God were ever fond of titles. They never courted titles of honor and titles of respect; they just called themselves "*Paul, Peter, James, and John*."

Paul said, "*I am a servant (a bond-servant, a willing, loving slave), of the Lord Jesus Christ. I've been called of God to be an apostle and I am separated, (I am set apart) to preach the Gospel of God*" (Almighty God)."

There was a time when Paul was separated to tradition. There was a time when he was separated to ceremonialism. There was a time when he was separated to the law. He said, "*I am a Hebrew of Hebrews*:"

"My mother was a Hebrew; my father was a Hebrew." He said: "*I was born of the tribe of Benjamin. I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I had exceeded and passed by many of my equals; concerning the law I was blameless.*"

But, he said: "*When I met Christ, I counted all of these things but rubbish, but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him.*"

Now Paul, who was separated to the law, is set apart to the Gospel. Now, he who was separated or set apart to tradition and ceremonialism cries out "*I am determined; I am determined.*"

Even in the great city of Corinth, among his philosophers and learned and educated men, "*I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.*"

He said again to that church: "*God didn't send me to baptize; God sent me to preach the gospel.*" Again, he said to the church at Galatia: "*God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

And again, he said; "*I do not frustrate; (I do not confuse; I do not distort) the gospel; if righteousness before God comes by the law (by the works of men), then Jesus Christ died in vain.*"

He wrote to that church in Galatia and I think the same thing can be written to the majority of churches of this day; he wrote: "*I marvel; (I am amazed) that you are so soon removed from him that called you unto the gospel of Christ unto another gospel.*"

My friends; what I am saying, in 1981, like the church of Galatia; you and I are victims of "*another gospel.*" It's not another; it's a perversion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I will give you some examples if you will listen for a few moments. You know these things to be true!

I'm not bringing charges with which I am not acquainted. I'm not talking about things of which I am not familiar. I am talking about things that you yourself know is true; we have been victimized from the pulpit.

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The fault is not in the pew today; it is in the pulpit. It's not that people won't go to church, it is that people go and don't hear anything and therefore, they quit going.

I want you to listen to seven or eight things that I am going to present to you:

First of all: Today's gospel calls on proud men to stand up and be counted for Jesus (it is like that "*other gospel*" Paul talked about in **Galatians 1**).

You might say: "What's wrong with that?" The Gospel of the Bible calls on men to bow down and worship. The Gospel of the Bible says: "*The sacrifices of God are a broken heart and a contrite spirit. God saveth such as be of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.*"

The proud, God rejects; that which God hates the most is a proud look. He will exalt the humble and He will abase the proud.

Secondly: Today's gospel gives men and women a title to heaven that has no sincere love for Christ!

You know it's true and I know it's true. You know that people belong to churches all over this nation, hundreds of thousands of them, who have no love for the Gospel, who have no love for Christ, who have no love for the fellowship of the saints, who have no concern that their lives be counted for the Lord Jesus Christ and yet they have a sure title to heaven.

Thirdly: Today's gospel emphasizes what men should do for God rather than what God, through Christ, must do for the sinner!

Today's gospel makes salvation an offer; "will you take Jesus; will you have Jesus?"

Salvation in the Scriptures is a gift. The Scripture says; "*The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord; For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.*" Almighty God gives salvation.

Salvation is not an offer; salvation is a gift. The Gospel is a command; God commands men to repent. He commands men to believe. When a man repents and believes on Christ he is doing what he ought to do. He is doing what God commanded him to do.

He's not to be congratulated for calling God, "a truthful God" rather, he is to be blamed if he gives not God all the glory.

Fourthly: Today's gospel presents a salvation that rests on the will of men, rather than on the will of God!

Is salvation an act of the human will or is it an act of the divine will? In **John chapter 1** our Lord said: "*As many as received him, to them gave he the privilege to become the sons of God,*

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even to them that believe on his name: Which were born not of blood, (that is, not of fleshly inheritance), not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but born of God."

Paul said in **Romans 9**, *"It's not of him that willeth, but of God that showeth mercy."* So, salvation is an act of the divine will; it rests on the divine will.

The leper fell at the feet of Christ and he said: *"Lord; if you will, you can make me clean, if you will."* But, we have turned to the sinner and we say, "God's willing and God wants to do this; will you let him?"

Is it a matter of letting God save us or submitting to the saving power of God? Think about it! Today's gospel substitutes human reason for Holy Spirit conviction. Today's gospel identifies a Christian by what he does not do, rather than by what he is.

What is a Christian? Somebody said, "Well; a Christian is a fellow that doesn't do this and doesn't do that and doesn't do something else." I thought a Christian was a person who was in a living, vital union, with the Son of God.

I thought a Christian was a person who the Spirit of God dwelt, that a Christian was judged and identified and characterized not by what he didn't do but by what he is.

Last of all: Today's gospel tries to change men's ways without changing men's hearts!

I think that if Paul were living today and writing to the average church in 1981 that this is what he would write: *"I marvel, that you are removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another:*

"But, there be some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But, I say unto you: Though we or an angel from heaven preach unto you any other Gospel than that which we have declared; let him be accursed:

I say it again; Paul said; I repeat it; *"if we or an angel preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached; let him, be accursed."*

What is this Gospel of God's grace to which Paul was set apart? What is this Gospel of God's grace which Paul determined? He said: *"I am determined to preach this gospel."*

This Gospel of God's grace for which Paul gave his life; what is this Gospel? Take the Scripture there; do you see **verse 1**? It says: *"Paul, a servant (a bond-slave) of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God."*

That's our first clue; what is this Gospel? Do you see the first clue? It's God's Gospel. It's not the Catholic Gospel, it's not the Presbyterian Gospel, and it's not the Baptist's Gospel. It's not the denominational Gospel and it's not the Church of Christ's Gospel, it is God's Gospel.

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That's what he says: "*I am separated unto the gospel of God.*" What does that mean? "What do you mean preacher, the Gospel of God?" Let me give you three things that will help you:

First of all: It is the Gospel of God in that He is the author of it; He is the sole author of it!

When Mr. Henry Ford built his first car way back yonder, 75 or 85 years ago, he was the author of that automobile from bumper to bumper, from top to bottom. Mr. Ford made that car; he was the author of it and they even called it by his name, "a Ford automobile."

It was conceived in his mind; it was planned by his own ingenuity; it was accomplished and built by his own hands; it was his car! It was made by him and it was put on the market by him. It was his car; it was Mr. Ford's automobile.

This Gospel to which Paul was separated is God's Gospel; He is the author of it. That is what the Scripture says: "*Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of our faith.*" What do we mean by that?

Well, we mean this: God planned it. The Scripture says: "*Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.*" When was the Gospel planned; when was it first mentioned?

When was the Gospel first purposed, in Bethlehem? No sir! Was it at Sinai? No sir! Was it in the Garden of Eden? No sir; it was "*before the foundation of the world. Jesus Christ is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.*"

How old is your Gospel? The Gospel of God is the Gospel that was conceived, planned, and purposed in the mind and heart of God before this world was ever made, before its foundations were ever laid, before Adam ever fell, God Almighty purposed to have a people like His Son, Jesus Christ.

That's what the Scripture says: "*Christ is the surety of the everlasting covenant. His blood is the blood of the everlasting covenant. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning. God declareth the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my council shall stand; I will do all my pleasure.*"

Paul, talking about the redeemed people, said: "*You were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.*" God is the author of it.

Secondly: Not only is God the author of it, but He also executed it!

I said that Mr. Ford thought of this car and he built it and God thought of salvation and purposed it and planned it and he built it. "*It pleased God that in Christ should all fullness dwell. In the fullness of time he sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them born under the law.*"

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Isaiah 53 says: *“It pleased God to bruise him.”* When Peter stood at Pentecost and accused those people of crucifying Christ; read **Acts 2, 3, and 4**; he said: *“You with wicked hands have crucified the Lord of glory: But, you did what God determined before to be done.”*

He said: *“Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Jews and the Gentiles, all got together against the Lord’s Christ, to do (to do what they wanted to do and to do what they planned to do), but to do what thy hand and thy council (purpose) determined before to be done (before the world began).”*

Thirdly: It’s God’s Gospel. He planned it, He executed it and He even applies it!

There is no sinner that is ever brought to repentance except by the goodness of God. There’s no sinner ever brought to a conviction of sin except by the Holy Spirit. Christ said: *“When he’s come, (the Holy Spirit) he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.”*

There’s no sinner brought to faith except by the grace of God. It’s the goodness of God that leads you to repentance and it is the mercy of God that brings you to faith. God applies it, listen to Paul; *“God who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his son in me.”* If any man is saved he will give God the eternal glory for it.

Fourthly: God sustains it!

How do you suppose that we are kept in the faith? How do you suppose we are kept in the body of Christ? How do you suppose that we are kept with all of the enemies that we have, *“the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness,”* and all of these things?

How do you suppose that any frail, fickle, foolish, son of Adam, ever stands, ever dies, in the faith, ever continues in the faith? How do you suppose, by his own strength and merit, by his own power, by his own deeds?

Listen to **1 Peter 1:5**, *“We are kept by the power of God through faith.”* Listen to **Jude 24**, *“Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling.”* It’s God’s Gospel from bumper to bumper, from *“Alpha to Omega, from beginning to end.”*

He planned it; He executed it; He applies it, and He sustains it. Who is going to bring you out of the grave? Who is going to make you like Christ? Who is going to bring your soul and body together in that great day? Who is going to do that?

God will because this whole thing is the operation of his grace. *“He is able to raise you and make you like unto his glorious body.”* That’s what we mean by the Gospel of God; it is God’s Gospel. Any other Gospel is another Gospel; that is what Paul is saying.

Fifthly: Not only that, but it is the Gospel of His glory!

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Everything God does, He does for His own glory. He is a jealous God and will not share His glory. Listen to **1 Corinthians 1: 26 through 30**; now listen while I read this: *“You see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called?”*

“But; God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty: And the base things of the world and the things which are despised hath God chosen:

“Yea, and things which are naught to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence: But of him, but of God, are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: That according as it is written (throughout the whole Bible); He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.”

That’s God’s Gospel; it is God’s Gospel. He’s the author of it; it’s for His glory. It is the Gospel of His grace! Paul summed it up: *“I am what I am, (whatever I am, whatever I know, whatever I’ll be) by the grace of God: For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it’s the gift of God, not of works less any man should boast.”* Paul said, *“I am separated to God’s gospel, (I am a preacher of God’s gospel).”*

Secondly: I will tell you this: Look at **verse 2:** *“And this gospel of God (is the ancient Gospel), which he promised; by his prophets in the holy Scriptures.”*

What do we mean by that? Well; I have been accused of preaching 1st Century theology. I have had folks say that. They write in and say, “Well; you are preaching an old, first century, free Gospel, an old first century theology.”

Hold on now! It goes further back than that; it goes further back than that, a whole lot further back than that. It goes clear back *“before the foundation of the world.”* That’s how far back my Gospel goes.

That’s how far back Paul’s Gospel goes. He said: *“It’s the ancient Gospel; it’s the Gospel promised.”* Before it was ever typified, it was promised. Before it was ever pictured, it was promised.

It goes back to the Garden of Eden. When God came to that fallen pair and said to them: *“The seed of woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,”* the seed of woman shall defeat the power of evil and Satan, *“the seed of woman;”* that is Christ; that’s the virgin-born Son; that’s *“the seed of woman.”*

It goes back to Abel’s lamb. When Abel came before God with his brother Cain, Cain brought the works of his flesh, the fruit of the field. Abel brought the firstling of the flock without blemish or spot and shed the blood of that sacrificial lamb on that altar before God by faith.

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That lamb was Christ. It goes back to Abel outside the Garden of Eden. It goes back to Abraham who stood on Mount Mariah and slew that ram in the stead of his son and put that ram on the altar and burned its body in the place and stead of his son.

Our Lord spake of that day when he said: *“Abraham rejoiced to see my day”* (he saw it; he saw it) *he saw it and was glad.*”

It goes back to Moses. Our Gospel goes back to Moses; it goes back beyond the first century. It’s a lot older than that. Our Gospel is as old as the foundation of this world and older; it goes back to Moses for Christ said:

“Moses wrote of me; to him give all the prophets witness.” It goes back to Job, old Job said: *“I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep.”* Job said: *“I know that my redeemer liveth: And though worms destroy this body, with my eyes (myself), I will see the Lord.”*

Job saw him. It goes back to Isaiah who said: *“Behold; a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Immanuel (God with us).”* Yes; it is the ancient Gospel!

Here, in **1 Corinthians 15: 1-3**, the apostle Paul describes it this way: *“I preach unto the gospel and that Gospel wherein you stand, in which you believe, by which you are saved, is that Christ died for our sin; (now watch this next phrase) according to the Scriptures.”*

What Scriptures, the Old Testament? Every type and shadow in the Old Testament is a picture of Jesus Christ. That Rock was Christ; that Passover Lamb was Christ; that Ark floating on the waters of judgment is Jesus Christ.

That high priest who was going into the Holy of Holies is Christ. Every atoning sacrifice is Christ alone.

This is where I have been coming all along; here is where I have been coming all this time; Paul said: *“I’m set apart to the Gospel,”* the Gospel, the one Gospel, the Gospel of God, the ancient Gospel; now watch this:

Thirdly: This Gospel of God, this ancient Gospel; do you see **verse 3**, is *“concerning his Son, concerning his Son, Jesus Christ.”*

Will you bear with me a moment? I know that many people refer to the Gospel as the plan of salvation and I suppose, in a way, that it is a plan. I think that is misleading. It’s not a plan of action on the part of a sinner but it is a plan in this regard!

God did plan it; God did purpose it. It was a plan to honor His law and satisfy His justice. In that respect, it was a plan. In that respect, God fulfilled every requirement that was purposed; it was a plan.

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But, for me, the Gospel is not a plan, for me it is not a proposition; the Gospel is a person, Jesus Christ our Lord. It concerns His Son. This is good news; this is glad tidings (this Gospel of redemption).

This Gospel of God concerns a person; well, what about him? Seven quick facts:

First: It concerns His deity; *“he’s declared to be the Son of God.”*

He wasn’t made the Son of God, *“he was declared to be the Son of God: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. I and my Father are one.”* Jesus of Nazareth is none other than God Almighty.

“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, and the Everlasting Father.”

Second: It concerns his incarnation! Look at **verse 3**: *“He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”*

It concerns His Son’s death. Who died? Christ! How did He die? He died a shameful, ignominious, suffering death. Why did He die? He died that *“God may be just and justify the ungodly.”* For whom did He die? He died for the *“ungodly.”* When did He die? He died *“in the fullness of time.”*

Third: Then it concerns His Son’s resurrection! He didn’t remain the tomb. The angel said: *“Don’t look for the living among the dead.”*

Fourth: It concerns His Son’s exaltation! *“He’s the one mediator between God and men.”*

Fifth: It concerns His Son’s return! *“He will come again.”*

Sixth: It concerns our hope in Him! *“He is our only hope,”* Jesus Christ.

Seventh: This Gospel is concerning His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ!