

THE CREDENTIALS OF GOSPEL PREACHING

ROMANS 1:1-6 • TV-037B

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By

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Romans 1:1-6

“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: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.”

Last week I spoke to you on the subject: **“I’M NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.”**

This week I’m bringing you a message on the subject: **“THE CREDENTIALS OF GOSPEL PREACHING.”**

Now these two messages will be on a cassette tape. If you would like to have them there’s a small charge; you write to me. But I’d like for you to have them for your tape library or play for your family or friends. These are important messages.

Now here’s today’s title: **“THE CREDENTIALS OF GOSPEL PREACHING.”** And our text, if you’ll turn in your Bibles, will be taken from **Romans 1:1-6.**

Now most people have a totally wrong idea about Gospel preaching or about preaching in general. My friends, Gospel preaching is more than just a religious ceremony.

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We sing a few songs. Somebody prays. We take up an offering. And somebody sings a special and makes a bunch of announcements. And then some fellow with a loud voice or with a strong voice or with good public appeal is expected to get up and preach a sermon.

He's supposed to be able to holler louder than a baby can cry. He's supposed to be able to preach while people get up and go out and get a drink of water or go visit somewhere and come back.

He's supposed to be able to keep the attention of people who would whole lot rather sleep, who are there because they don't want to be there but because it's their duty and responsibility. This is the average conception of preaching but it's more than that.

And I'll tell you something else; preaching, Gospel preaching, is more than just dry, dead, doctrine of lectures which present facts taken from the Bible or from prophecy or from a denominational handbook or a catechism or a creed to be debated, argued, rejected or accepted.

Listen to me, true Gospel preaching is declaring the Word of God: "*Thus saith the Lord.*"

True Gospel preaching is declaring the message of God for this day. It's more than just saying some words. It's more than just a dry lecture. It's more than dead-letter theology. It's more than entertaining sinners on their road to hell.

True Gospel preaching; if a man is truly preaching the Gospel he is preaching God's message for this day, for this generation. True Gospel preaching is God speaking; that's right!

That's what Paul said; he says: "*We are ambassadors of Christ as though God (God Himself, Christ Himself) did beseech you, (as though He were preaching). We cry unto you, "Be ye reconciled unto God."*" That's what true preaching is.

Now man may stand up and say some words in a church and call it preaching but if he's really sent of God, if he's really preaching the Gospel, its God speaking. And that preaching carries with it a call. It carries with it a command from the living God to be heard. It's God speaking, to be received and to be obeyed.

I want you to listen to some Scripture; will you listen a moment? In **Matthew 3:1-2**; "*There was a man sent from God whose name was John.*" Now the key to that is this; there was a man named John who was sent of God.

That doesn't mean anything to you does it? But there was a man named John who was sent from God. And what did he do? Well it says: "*This John in those days came preaching.*" God sent him to do what, to preach?

When our Lord sent His disciples forth what did He say to them? He said; "*You go into all the world and preach the Gospel.*" That's what you're supposed to do; you are to preach the Gospel.

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Even our Master was a preacher. Our Master wasn't a screamer. He wasn't a hollerer. He wasn't a fellow that stood up and entertained people with His knowledge of the Bible; He was a preacher.

But He preached and began to say; *"Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* You can understand what He was saying. He made sense; *"He taught the people as one having authority."*

And then in **2 Corinthians 5:20** the apostle Paul says; *"We're ambassadors of Christ."* We are the ambassadors, the representatives of Christ.

And then in **Isaiah 55:11** our Lord said; *"My Word shall not return unto me void. It shall accomplish that which I please. It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."*

Gospel preaching is this, it is God speaking. It's the message of God for this day. It is God almighty sending a man with His Word, *"Thus saith the Lord."* And it carries with it a call. It carries with it a commandment to be believed and to be received and to be obeyed.

And the Bible; (listen to me) the Bible is full of warnings of the consequence of unbelief. Now I'm not saying that everybody who's standing in the pulpit represents God, far from it. I'm not saying that everybody who professes to be a preacher is speaking for God, far from it.

But you'll be able to recognize God's message. You try the message by the Word of God. You try the spirits. Not every spirit that comes in the name of the Lord is the Holy Spirit, *"But try the spirits whether they are sent of God."* Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you God's preacher, God's messenger, God's ambassador.

But the Bible is full of warnings of the consequence of unbelief. Now, when our Lord sent these disciples out He said this to them; (now this is vital, listen to it) in **Luke 10:16**, when He sent them out, there were 70 of them right?

And He sent them forth to preach and this is what He said before they left; He said: *"He that heareth you heareth me. And he that despiseth you despiseth me. And he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me, (God almighty)."*

Do you see how serious this is? I'll tell you what the apostle Paul declared. He said when he realized this; *"Who is sufficient for these things?"* Who wants to be a preacher? Who wants this burden? Who wants this responsibility?

Who wants to stand in the pulpit and look into the face of a group of people and say what I'm saying is not what I'm saying it is what God's saying. What I'm preaching is; *"Thus saith the Lord."*

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This is God's message. And if you hear me you hear God. And if you don't hear me you don't hear God. And if you despise me you despise Jesus Christ. And if you despise Jesus Christ you despise God the Father. That's some responsibility isn't it? But that's what the Lord said.

And in **Hebrews 4:2**; *"The Gospel was preached to them but the Word preached to them did not profit them."* Isn't that tragic?

The Gospel; God sent a message. The Gospel was preached to them, the good news, the glad tidings, the glorious message of redemption, of justification by grace, the forgiveness of sin by God's mercy through Jesus Christ was preached to them but didn't profit them.

It didn't help them a bit, why? Read on in **Hebrews 4:2**; *"Not being received by faith in them that heard it."* They heard it with these ears, but they didn't hear it with the heart. They heard the words. They comprehended the words. They weren't dummies.

They could hear what that man was saying but they didn't receive it by faith and therefore *"They could not enter in because of unbelief"* and they perished; the whole lot of them in the wilderness." Those are the people He's talking about.

So, you see, preaching is not just entertainment and it's not just to study in theology. And it's not just a fellow occupying a particular place in a religious ceremony. If preaching is true Gospel preaching under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit at that given time God is speaking.

Now, if I'm sent of God, if I am who I claim to be, if I am a messenger of God, if I've been ordained not of men, "Not the empty hands of empty men, laid on my empty head;" that's what Spurgeon called, "ordination."

But if I'm sent of God and if the message I am preaching is God's Word inspired by the Holy Spirit, you are under a heavy responsibility right now. You better turn the TV set off if you're not going to listen, if you're not going to listen.

He that increaseth wisdom increaseth sorrow and responsibility. *"To him that knoweth to do his Master's will and does it not; to him he shall be beaten with many stripes."* That's what the Scripture says.

And preaching is not just a warning; it's not just a threat. I hear many preachers preach and they sound like they're going to beat folks over the head. They threaten, they rebuke, they warn, they cry out.

They bring all of these terrible cautions and dangers. But it's more than that. Preaching is a divine revelation. It's a revelation of God, a revelation of His grace in Christ Jesus. It's a revelation of His mercy to the chief of sinners.

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Our Lord was hard on religious Pharisee's. He wasn't hard on sinners. He was a friend of sinners. They looked Him up. He ate with them and walked with them. Why; do you know what He said to that bunch of religious Pharisees?

He said; *"With the Publicans and the harlots they enter heaven before you."* They said; *"Well that man's gone to be a guest of a man that's a sinner."* Our Lord was the friend of sinners. Our message is just not a threat, a rebuke, a warning, a whip to drive men to a particular walk or standard or a law; it's the mercy of God to sinners.

Preaching is a revelation not only of God's grace but of man's need. When we get through preaching men ought to be able to see God in His glory, God in His holiness, God in His mercy, God in His grace, and God in His love.

And when we get through preaching they ought to see themselves in their sins, in their need, in their emptiness, in their inability, but in God's mercy and in God's grace and in Christ Jesus.

Paul's book of Romans is preaching at its best. I want you to turn now to the book of **Romans chapter 1** and listen to the apostle Paul. And he gives us the introduction to Gospel preaching or the credentials of Gospel preaching.

And I wish that I could preach to every preacher's student in the seminaries and colleges all over the United States right now. But this is the introduction to Gospel preaching. I've been doing it a long time, 30 years.

And I know the credentials of Gospel preaching. It's right here in front of us, **Romans 1:1**; listen. Paul describes the preacher. He describes the preacher's message. He describes the preacher's Lord and the preacher's congregation right here in the first six verses of **Romans 1**.

First of all: He describes the preacher.

How does he describe himself? Look at it; *"Paul, a servant, (a bond-slave)."* That's what that word servant is, a slave, a bond-slave. The true servants of God were never fond of titles; did you know that? About the only title they ever wore was, "brother."

They weren't fond of titles and they weren't fond of worldly honor. I don't know why people are today. Paul never called himself Dr. Paul. Nobody else called him that either. He never called himself Reverend Paul. He never called himself Bishop Paul. He never called himself Cardinal.

He never tagged any kind of title on himself except this one, "Paul a slave." Do you see the difference? Paul, a bond-slave of Jesus Christ; that's what I am, a servant. *"He that would be greatest among you; let him be your servant."*

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But today we are fond of titles, we're fond of credentials, we're fond of worldly honor. We're fond of being set apart. But these men called one another, "brother, brother," not a Reverend in the lot, not a right Reverend in the lot, not a Doctor in the lot. They were just bond-slaves.

Do you know where that came from, "bond-slave?" Over in the Old Testament a Hebrew servant would go into slavery and he would serve for six years. On the seventh year he was free. He was set free; he was permitted to leave.

But, the Scripture says; "If he did not want to leave, if he loved his master and loved his master's family and wanted to remain with him, he was to come to the master and say: Master; I love you and I love your family and I don't want to leave; make me a bond-slave." That's a willing slave, that's a loving slave. That's a slave who wants to be a slave.

So, they take him down to the door and the priest would bore his ear with an awl and from that moment on he was a willing, loving, bond-slave, because he wanted to be. Freedom was out there. The only freedom he wanted was the freedom to serve his master and that's what Paul was. Paul described himself a, "bond-slave."

You know, they came to John the Baptist and they said; "*Who are you?*" Well brother he could have said some things. Do you know what the Master said about him? The Master said; "*No man born of woman is greater than John the Baptist.*"

But John; what did he answer? "Who are you John?" "*I'm a voice in the wilderness crying, make straight the highway for our God.*"

Peter said in **Acts 10:26**; "*I myself am a man.*" They wanted to fall down in front of him and worship him and he said; "*Get up; I am a man, that's all I am.*" And Paul said in **Acts 14:15**; "*We are also men of like passions with you.*"

Richard Baxter once said this: "I preach as a dying man to dying men."

Listen to what Christ said in **Matthew 23:9**; "*Call no man your father on this earth; call no man your father on this earth. One is your Father which is in heaven.*"

Listen; "*Neither be ye called master. One is your master, even Christ. And he that is greatest among you let him be your servant.*"

So, here's the preacher. He identifies himself, no pretensions, no show, no titles, no worldly honor; he's a bond-slave. But he says, "*I am an apostle.*"

Though he considered himself a servant of Christ and considered himself; "*least, the least of the saints, less than the least,*" he said, "*chief of sinners,*" but he knew one thing; he knew God had called him. He knew God had sent him. He knew God almighty had ordained him and he said "*I am an apostle.*"

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Secondly: Look at the preacher's message, **Romans 1:1-2**; *"Separated unto the Gospel of God"*

Now, before this moment Paul had been separated to the law, to the ceremony, to everything else. But now this bond-slave of Jesus Christ was separated to the Gospel.

"God sent me not to baptize," he said. He wasn't minimizing baptism but he was showing what was important. God didn't send me to argue prophecy, to distribute the elements at the Sacrament of the Communion or to baptize; *"God sent me to preach the Gospel. I'm separated to the Gospel of Jesus Christ."*

He's not minimizing these things; he's putting them in their proper place. He said; *"I'm determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."*

"I preach the Gospel not with wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ be made of non-effect. I'm with you in weakness and fear and trembling. But I'm determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Paul played a one-string fiddle and that one string and one tune and one chord was Christ died for our sins. He found his hope in that. He found his strength in that. He found his confidence in that, the Gospel, *"Separated to the Gospel of God."*

And here he identifies that Gospel. First of all, he says, *"It's the Gospel of God"*, not the Gospel of the Baptist Church, the Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, or the Presbyterian Church, the Gospel of God, it is God's Gospel.

Why is it God's Gospel? Well, He planned it. It's the everlasting Gospel. *"It's the Gospel of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* It's the Gospel of Him who is, *"The surety of an eternal covenant."* It's the everlasting Gospel.

And then it's the Gospel of God not only because He planned it but because He executed it. *"God sent His Son into the world."* That's why Christ came because God sent Him. *"For God so loved the world He gave His Son. It pleased God to bruise Him."*

Peter, talking to those folks who crucified the Lord, he said; *"You with wicked hands have slain the Lord of glory but you did what the Father determined before to be done."* That's what the Scripture says. They carried out His will.

It's the Gospel of God not only because He planned it and He executed it; but He applied it. Saul of Tarsus wrote this; he said, *"God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace was pleased to reveal His Son in me."*

God revealed Christ to me. Salvation's not what I've done for God; it's what He's done for me. He's revealed His Son, not just to me. Christ isn't a doctrine, He's a person; *"He's revealed His Son in me."*

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And it's the Gospel of God not only because He planned it and He executed it and He applied it but He sustains it. *"I'm kept by the power of God."* I'm not kept by my faithfulness, my determination, my dogmatism and my resolution.

I'm as weak as you are and you're as weak as the next fellow. *"We're kept by the power of God."* That's how we're kept: *"Unto Him who is able to keep you from falling."* You don't keep yourself and your church doesn't keep you; God keeps you.

Paul called it the, *"Gospel of God."* He called it the, *"Gospel of God's glory."* And I'll tell you a good test of every song you sing and every message you preach, whether or not it's the true Gospel; ask yourself this when you get through with singing or preaching: *"Who gets the glory?"*

Do you get it? Do the people get the glory or does Christ get the glory? *"Of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. That according as it is written; he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."*

And this true Gospel; if a man's preaching the Gospel, when he gets through people are going to say, *"Praise the Lord, thank God."* Man's going to be brought down to the foot of the cross looking to Christ for His mercy.

One time a couple went from America over to England to hear Mr. Spurgeon. You know who Mr. Spurgeon was. Everybody knows who Mr. Spurgeon was, perhaps the greatest preacher of the 19th Century, perhaps the greatest preacher since Paul.

More of his sermons have been reprinted and read than any other one individual. But they went to hear Mr. Spurgeon and his church was packed out that Sunday morning, no way to get in. They secured a ticket to get in that night.

And that morning they went to hear another preacher. And when that preacher finished preaching the man and his wife walked up the aisle and out the door and down the steps and the man turned to his wife and he said; *"Honey what a sermon, what a sermon."*

Well that night they went to hear Mr. Spurgeon and Mr. Spurgeon preached. And after the service was over the same man and his wife left the Metropolitan Tabernacle and he looked at his wife and a tear glistened on his cheek and he said; *"Honey what a Saviour, what a Saviour!"*

Do you see the difference? Do you see the difference? *"What a great sermon, what a great prayer, what a great song."* *"Hallelujah what a Saviour!"*

And whatever I'm preaching or anybody else is preaching, what determines whether or not it's God's Gospel is He will get the glory. And if we go out praising the flesh and praising men then it's not of God because the Gospel humbles, and it strips, and it brings us down low in the dust and makes us look to the throne of grace.

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All right; now notice the next thing; he says, it's the Gospel of God and he says it's the ancient Gospel. There's no new Gospel. This Gospel which we preach; look at **verse 2** there, I believe it is, **verse 2**; "*Which He promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.*"

This Gospel we preach is no new Gospel. Jesus Christ did not begin to exist in Bethlehem's manger. "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*" He said; "*Before Abraham was I am.*" That's right!

They said; "Well you're not 50 years old. Weren't you born in Bethlehem? You're not 50 years old. How old are you, 31 or 32 years old?"

He said; "*Before Abraham was I am. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And all things were made by Him. Without Him was not anything made that was made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*"

When He came in Bethlehem's manger He just laid aside His royal robes of glory and came down here in human flesh. He just came to earth by way of the virgin's womb. That was the route by which He came. Christ came to this earth.

It's the ancient Gospel. The Old Testament is the Gospel in picture and promise. The New Testament is the Gospel in person.

Then He calls it the, "*Gospel of Christ. It's the Gospel concerning His Son,*" concerning His covenant mercies; all that we have in eternity is in Christ. Concerning His redeeming grace, "*We're not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ.*"

That's how we are redeemed. "*In Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace.*"

And then in Christ we have mercy and grace day by day, day by day. He says, brethren, "*We have boldness to come into the very presence of God himself.*"

How, through the veil, right into the Holy of Holies, through Christ, because of Christ, because of His blood? And then that which we shall enjoy in glory, why; "*In the ages to come He's going to gather together all things in Christ that we may be one.*"

He describes the preacher's Lord. He says, "*We preach not ourselves but Christ the Lord.*" His human nature, "*He was made the seed of David according to the flesh. He didn't take on himself the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham.*"

He was made of a woman. He came down here to this earth, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and took my place as my representative before the law.

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And then He was, “*declared to be the Son of God.*” That’s His divine nature. “*Whom do you say that I am? Thou art the Son of God.*” The Scripture reveals His deity. Our Lord said in **Hebrews 1:8**; “*Unto the Son He saith, thy throne O God is forever.*”

They took up stones to stone Him one day and He said; “*Many good works have I done among you. For which of these do you stone me?*” They said; “*We’re not stoning you for good works but because you are a man and you claim to be equal with God.*” And He is, and He is; “*I and my Father are one.*”

Jesus Christ is God almighty. He is made of the seed of David according to the flesh. He is revealed to be, declared to be, determined to be, the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.

And then Paul describes the preacher’s congregation. Now here’s something I want you to listen to a moment. Paul identifies believers. He identified himself; he said, “I’m a servant, I’m a slave, but I’m an apostle.”

He identified the Gospel; he said, “It’s God’s Gospel, it’s the Ancient Gospel, the Gospel of Christ,” His crucifixion, His death, His burial, His resurrection, and His mediatorial work.

And then He identifies His Lord; He is the Son of God. He is the Son of David and He is deity in the flesh.

Then He identifies the believer. How would you identify a Christian? Now be honest. You say, “Describe a Christian.” Do you know how most people describe Christians? Most people would identify a believer by what that man has done or by what that man is doing, or by what he’s given up.

But Paul doesn’t identify a Christian that way. He identifies a Christian by what he’s received. He says, “*We have received grace.*” Amazing grace:

**“Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.”**

I’ve received grace, grace to repent, grace to believe, grace to walk in holiness and righteousness, grace to forgive, grace to love, grace to show kindness, grace to show mercy; I’ve received grace.

I’ve received faith. And He says; “*We’ve been called of Christ Jesus,*” called out and called to be the sons of God, called by the Holy Spirit. That’s the believer. He’s received grace, faith; he’s been called out. He’s a special person, he’s a peculiar person, and he’s a holy nation!