

The Book Of Romans

The Good News Of God Part 1a

Session 2

Romans 1:1 (NASB)

¹ Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

A quick look at any newspaper or passing glance at a weekly news magazine reminds us that in our world most news is bad and seems to be getting worse.

What is happening on a national and worldwide scale is simply the magnifications of what is happening on an individual level.

As personal problems, animosities, and fears increase, so do their counter parts in society at large.

Human beings are in the hold of a terrifying power that grips them at the very core of their being. Left unchecked, it pushes them to self-destruction in one form or another.

That power is sin, which is always bad news.

Sin is bad news in every dimension. Among its consequences are four inevitable byproducts that guarantee misery and sorrow for a world taken captive.

1. Sin has selfishness at its heart. The basic element of fallen human nature is exaltation of self, the ego. When Satan fell, he was asserting his own will above God's, five times declaring, I will;

Isaiah 14:13-14 (NASB)

¹³ "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north.

¹⁴ 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

Man fell by the same self-will, when Adam and Eve asserted their own understanding about right and wrong above God's clear instruction.

Genesis 2:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Genesis 3:1-7 (NASB)

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

² The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴ The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

⁵ "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

By nature man is self-centered and inclined to have his own way.
He will push his selfishness as far as circumstances and the tolerance of society will allow.

When self-will is unbridled, a man consumes everything and everyone around him in an insatiable quest to please himself.

When friends, fellow workers, or a spouse cease to provide what is wanted, they are discarded like an old pair of shoes.

Much of modern western society has been so imbued with the propriety of self-esteem and self-will that virtually every desire has come to be considered a right.

The ultimate goal in many lives today is little more than perpetual self-satisfaction.

Every object, every idea, every circumstance, and every person is viewed in light of what it can contribute to one's own purposes and welfare.

Lust for wealth, possessions, fame, dominance, popularity and physical fulfillment drives people to pervert everything they possess and everyone they know.

Employment has become nothing more than a necessary evil to finance one's indulgences.

As is often noted, there is constant danger of loving things and using people rather than loving people and using things.

When that temptation is succumbed to, stable and faithful personal relationships become impossible.

A person engulfed in self-will and self-fulfillment becomes less and less capable of loving, because as his desire to possess grows, his desire to give withers.

And when he forfeits selflessness for selfishness, he forfeits the source of true joy.

Selfish greed progressively alienates a person from everyone else, including those who are closest and dearest. The end result is loneliness, and despair.

Everything that it craves soon yields to the law of diminishing returns, and the more one has of it the less it satisfies.

2. Sin produces guilt, another form of bad news.

No matter how convincingly one tries to justify selfishness, its inevitable abuse of things and other people cannot escape generating guilt.

Like physical pain, guilt is a God-given warning that something is wrong and needs correcting.

When guilt is ignored or suppressed, it continues to grow in intensity and with it comes anxiety. Fear, sleeplessness and countless other spiritual and physical afflictions.

Many people try to overcome those afflictions by masking them with possessions, money, alcohol, drugs, sex, travel, and psychoanalysis.

They try to assuage their guilt by blaming society, parents, a deprived childhood, environment, restrictive moral codes, and even God Himself.

But the irresponsible notion of blaming other persons and things only aggravates the guilt and escalates the accompanying afflictions.

3. Sin produces meaninglessness, still another form of bad news and one that is endemic to modern times.

Trapped in his own selfishness, the self-indulgent person has no sense of purpose or meaning.

Life becomes an endless cycle of trying to fill a void that cannot be filled.

The result is futility and despair.

To questions such as why am I here?, what is the meaning of life?, what is truth?, they find no answers in the world but the lies of Satan, who is the author of lies and the prince of the present world system

John 8:44 (NASB)

44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NASB)

4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

In the words of Edna St. Vincent Millay in her poem "Lament" they can only say, "Life must go on; I forget just why"

Or like the central character in one of Jean Paul Sartre's novels, he may say nihilistically, "I decided to kill myself no remove at least one superfluous life,"

4. Sin also brings hopelessness, which is the companion of meaninglessness. The consumptively selfish person forfeits hope, both for this life and or the next. Although he may deny it, he senses that even death is not the end, and for the hopeless sinner death becomes therefor the ultimate bad news.

Millions of babies are born every day into a world filled with bad news.

And because of the boundless selfishness that permeates modern society, millions of other babies are not allowed to enter the world at all.

That tragedy alone has made the bad news of the modern world immeasurably worse.

The tidbits of seemingly good news are often merely a brief respite from the bad, and sometimes even what appears to be good news merely masks an evil.

Someone once commented cynically that peace treaties merely provide time for everyone to reload!

But the essence of Paul's letter to the Romans is that there is good news that is truly good.

The Apostle was, in fact, a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest of the gospel of God;

Romans 15:15-16 (NASB)

15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,

16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

He brought the good news that in Christ sin can be forgiven,
selfishness can be overcome,
guilt can be removed,
anxiety can be alleviated,
and life can indeed have hope and eternal glory.

In his Romans letter Paul speaks of the good news in many ways, each way emphasizing a uniquely beautiful facet of one spiritual gem.

He calls it the blessed good news, the good news of salvation, the good news of Jesus Christ, the good news of God's Son, and the good news of the grace of God.
It begins and ends with good news.

The entire thrust of the sixteen chapters of Romans is distilled into the first seven verses.

The Apostle apparently was so overjoyed by his message of good news that he could not wait to introduce his readers to the gist of what he had to say.
He burst into it immediately.

In Romans 1:1-7 Paul unfolds seven aspects of the good news of Jesus Christ.

He first identifies himself as the preacher of the good news v 1

The then tells of the promise v2

The Person v3-4

The provision v 5a

The proclamation v5b

The purpose v5c

And the privileges of the good news v6-7

THE PREACHER OF THE GOOD NEWS

Romans 1:1 (NASB)

¹ Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

God called a unique man to be the major spokesman for His glorious good news.

Paul was God' keynote speaker, as it were, for heralding the gospel.

A singularly gifted man, he was given divine insight into the mystery of Christ;

Ephesians 3:1-4 (NASB)

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

² if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you;

³ that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

⁴ By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

Colossians 1:26 (NASB)

²⁶ that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,

That remarkable Jew with Greek education and Roman citizenship, with incredible leadership ability, high motivation, and articulate expression, was specially and directly called, converted, and gifted by God.

Paul crisscrossed much of the Roman Empire as God's ambassador of the good news of Christ.

He performed many healing miracles, yet was not relieved of his own thorn in the flesh.

He raised Eutychus from the dead but was at least left once for dead himself.

He preached freedom in Christ but was imprisoned by men during many years of his ministry.

In the first verse Paul discloses three important things about himself in regard to his ministry:

His position as a servant of Christ,

His authority as an apostle of Christ,

And his power in being set apart for the gospel of Christ.

PAUL'S POSITION AS A SERVANT OF CHRIST

Romans 1:1a (NASB)

¹ *Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus,*

The word here is "*Doulos*" (bond-servant). This word carries the basic idea of subservience and has a wide range of connotations.

It was sometimes used of a person who voluntarily served others, but most commonly it referred to those who were in unwilling and permanent bondage, from which often there was no release but death.

The Hebrew equivalent "*ebed*" is used hundreds of times in the Old Testament and carries the same wide range of connotations.

The Mosaic law provided for an indentured servant to voluntarily become a permanent bond-slave of a master he loved and respected.

Exodus 21:5-6 (NASB)

⁵ *"But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,'*

⁶ *then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.*

That practice reflects the essence of Paul's use of the term *doulos* in Romans 1:1.

The apostle had given himself wholeheartedly in love to the divine Master who saved him from sin and death.

There is of course, an honor and dignity attached to all of God's true servants, even the most seemingly insignificant, and Paul was very much aware of the undeserved but real dignity God bestows on those who belong to Him.

Yet he was constantly aware also that the dignity and honor God gives His children are purely from grace and that in themselves Christians are still sinful, depraved, and undeserving.

He wrote to the Corinthian Church;

1 Corinthians 3:5 (NASB)

⁵ *What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.*

Here Paul uses the term *diakonos* to describe his position as a servant, a term commonly used of table waiters.

But his use here of *doulos* the emphasis is on subservience and insignificance, not honor.

Late in the same letter Paul asks his readers to regard him as a galley slave, using the word *huperetes*, which literally means under-rowers, referring to the lowest level of rowers in the large galley of a Roman ship.

Because he was called and appointed by Christ Himself, Paul would never belittle his position as an apostle or even a child of God.

He plainly taught that godly leaders in the church especially those who are diligent in preaching and teaching, are worth of double honor by fellow believers.

1 Timothy 5:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ *The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.*

But he continually emphasized that such positions of honor are provisions of God's grace.