

Good News To Tell
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Romans 1:1-17

- "I would move Heaven and earth" A figure of speech, an expression, an idiom.
- What does it mean? (To do everything possible to achieve a result.)
- Question: What would cause you to "Move Heaven and earth?" (Discussion)
- The other night Susan and I saw one of the most gifted cancer doctors in Atlanta
- As we said goodbye he said: "We're still working to cure cancer."
- If you had the cure to that dreaded disease, I bet you'd "move Heaven and earth" to get it in the hands of everyone around the world.
- The Apostle Paul had the cure to a disease more devastating than even cancer...

As Chuck Swindoll put it:

"The cure for the terminal disease of sin is the gospel, which allows any who will receive it to enjoy a restored relationship with the Creator."

The Apostle Paul was as motivated to share the GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL as we would be to share a cure for cancer!

The first seven verses of Romans tell us who the writer is; what he's writing about; and to whom this letter was written. They also tell us a lot about WHY WE TELL this GOOD NEWS of the Gospel.

Romans 1:1-7

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life[a] was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power[b] by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. 5 Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from[c] faith for his name's sake. 6 And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Verse 1 is a one sentence biography of Paul...the church at Rome had never met Paul so he's giving them his bio, his credentials
- In fact, the first six words say a lot: "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus,"
- In most English translations the word is "servant"...but the Greek word is "doulos"
- Anyone know what that word "doulos" really means?

- John MacArthur has been studying Scripture for more than 50 years. Yet in his book, Slave: The Hidden Truth About Your Identity in Christ, he reveals that only recently he discovered a centuries-long “cover-up” by New Testament translators.
- Because slavery was such an "incendiary" issue, translators used the word "servant".
- If the text was referring to a person who was a slave they used "slave".
- But when referring to our relationship to Christ, it was servant.
- In the NLT at least they say "bond servant".
- But any Greek dictionary will tell you the word is SLAVE
- Question: How does that change our outlook on our relationship to Christ?

MacArthur says:

...the word “Lord” is used 747 times in the New Testament we all understand that all Christians say Jesus is Lord. That’s our common confession. But I don’t think people get it. If he’s Lord, I’m his slave. And all of a sudden, all the sayings of Jesus – “deny yourself,” “take up your cross,” “follow me,” “why do you call me Lord and not do what I say” – all these things took on new meaning because that sets the paradigm so clearly.

Until you understand what it means that he is Lord and I’m his slave, you’re going to get all kinds of things wrong.

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/interview-john-macarthur-on-being-a-slave-for-christ-middle-east-unrest-49087/>

- Paul HAD to share the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel because he was a SLAVE to Christ
- Verse 1 also says he was called to be an Apostle. The word apostolos in Greek means simply “one who is sent.”
- But to be an Apostle of Christ meant more than that

R.C. Sproul writes:

In the early chapters of Acts, the church gathered to elect a new apostle, and it set forth the criteria for apostleship. The first criterion was having been a disciple of Jesus during his earthly ministry; the second was having been an eyewitness of the resurrection; and the third and most important criterion was having been directly and immediately called by Jesus (Acts 1:20–26). In the three criteria for apostleship, Paul fails the first two tests: he had not been a disciple of Jesus during Jesus’ tenure on earth, nor had he been an eyewitness of the resurrection of Christ. thereof why there were some in the early church who seriously challenged the apostolic authority of Paul. The supreme qualification for apostolic authority was a direct and immediate call by Jesus. I believe that is why, in the book of Acts, the account of Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus, where Christ called him to be his apostle, is repeated three times. It is to remind the people that Paul is an authentic agent of revelation. He speaks with the authority of Jesus.

- Paul says he was "separated unto the gospel of God" -- Set apart to share this GOOD NEWS

- Verse two: How long had this gospel been promised? "Holy scriptures" = Old Testament
- Verses 3 and 4 authenticates Jesus as Messiah and Son of God...from David's line
- Verse 4: How was the deity of Jesus confirmed? Resurrection
- Remember: every other religion's leader is dead...ours came BACK from the dead!
- Verse 5 is Paul's mission statement...Why does it say he had been called?
- The NIV says: Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from [c] faith for his name's sake.
- Verse 7 tells us TO WHOM the letter was written: the believers in Rome.

Paul was motivated to "move heaven and earth" to share the GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL because he was called by Christ, but more powerfully, he was a SLAVE to Christ.

Who were these Roman Christians? Verses 8-15 tell us...Paul writes:

Romans 1:8-15

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.

9 God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you 10 in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

11 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— 12 that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, [a] that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

14 I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. 15 That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

- Their faith was famous in the known world then and in all the world today!
- Paul prayed for them daily
- Paul wanted desperately to visit them
- He wanted to encourage them...and be encouraged BY them
- He felt OBLIGATED to share the Gospel not only with the Christians in Rome but with the Gentiles who had not believed.

Now we come down to WHAT this Gospel is all about

Romans 1:16-17 Paul writes...

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

- Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel...are we?
- Jesus warned us that if we are ashamed of him before men, he will be ashamed of us before his Father (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26).
- Verse 16: Why does it say Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel? It is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. He knew IT WORKS!
- This isn't just religion...it's POWER
- Back to the cure for cancer...if we had that cure, we'd want everyone to know about it
- We wouldn't HIDE something that powerful!
- Paul not only had a message for those who had not believed, he had a message for Christians too.
- The Gospel isn't just the power to save...it's the source of RIGHTEOUSNESS for all who believe...look at verse 17

17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,[a] just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”[b]

What does that mean?

NLT: This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." (NLT - Tyndale House)

Two of the great barriers to people coming to faith in Christ are either they believe "I'm not so bad" or "I could never be good enough." The great reformer Martin Luther struggled with the second one, "I could never be good enough to stand in front of a Holy God." Though he had had a salvation experience in the midst of a thunderstorm, Luther still struggled with his own personal sins, and the more he studied about the holiness of God the more that struggle intensified.

In his book "The Holiness of God" R.C. Sproul has a chapter called "The Insanity of Luther." You see Luther's struggle with his own personal sin had gotten so bad that those of the monastery who he reported to had begun to think he was either crazy or lazy. He either had come unhinged because he spent six hours a day confessing yesterday's sins, or he was just trying to get out of work.

But then as Martin Luther was studying this very verse Roman's 1:17 it all became clear. When he read and understood "the just shall live by faith" finally he got it! He understood that none of us is good enough to stand before a holy God, however through faith in Christ, God has made us righteous.

As Luther wrote: "...through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning and whereas before the "justice of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me expressively sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate of heaven."

Ray Pritchard writes:

As someone has said, "A clear conscience is the result of a poor memory."

The only people who think they are good enough to go to heaven are the people who don't know how bad they really are! Righteousness is what we need but do not have. Therefore God, knowing that we could never be righteous on our own, has provided a righteousness which comes down to us from heaven above. It's not earned or deserved, but is given to us by God as a free gift."

The only way we can be righteous is to live BY FAITH...faith that comes from the POWER of the Gospel.

So, What's the TAKEAWAY?

- If you and I are truly slaves to Christ it will not only change how we live, but how we SHARE the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel
- We won't see the Gospel as an embarrassment, but THE CURE and we will "move Heaven and earth" to share it...because it is the POWER of God
- Finally, we'll realize that through Faith God has made us righteous...a free gift of grace not anything we've done.