

“Paul, a Servant of Jesus Christ”
Romans 1:1
(Preached at Trinity, September 24, 2006)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I begin the Book of Romans I do so with great fear and trembling. I have considered preaching through this book since I’ve been your pastor but each time set it aside. Preaching through Romans is intimidating. Romans is one of the most theological books of the Bible. There are sections that are very difficult. I’ve been praying that God will grant us the illuminating grace of His Spirit as we travel through the chapters.
2. Because of the depth and richness of this Epistle we will need to approach it slowly and carefully. I have no timetable for its completion. It’s my desire that we examine it adequately knowing that I will continually be challenged by my own inadequacy to teach this book. I’m most concerned that Christ be exalted in this series of sermons.
3. Although Romans is a very theological book, it was not written as a theological treatise for the benefit of theologians. It was written as a letter to a local church. It was written for people like you and me.
 - A. Paul was concerned about building up this local church and establishing them in the faith.
 - B. Paul continually taught the Word of God. It was his chief calling. A marginal note in one of the ancient manuscripts suggests that Paul taught up to five hours each day. He had a brilliant mind. Nowhere is this seen clearer than in the Book of Romans.
4. The Book of Romans has been called one of the greatest Christian writings ever written. It has had a profound effect upon countless believers throughout history.
 - Augustine was converted through reading a passage from this letter. His life of immorality and vice had gripped him until one day he heard a child singing the words, “tole lege, tole lege” “take and read.” He had never heard such words coming from a child and knew they were from God. He rushed to where a copy of the Bible was laying and opened it randomly and read:
Romans 13:13 – “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.”
 - Martin Luther’s own spiritual experience came through reading this book.
Romans 1:17 – “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
Indeed the Reformation may be said to have found its roots in a renewed understanding of this book.
 - John Wesley’s conversion came as the result of hearing Luther’s Preface to Romans read.Over and over the lives of Christians have been stirred and directed from reading this book. It will yield rich dividends for you also if you take the time to read and study this book.

5. Paul wrote this letter from the city of Corinth. It was addressed to the Church of Rome to a people he had never met. This may explain the absence of any particular issues like we find in many of Paul's letters. Paul's teachings here are universal in scope.
6. Paul begins this letter with a salutation similar to other ancient letters.
 - A. We have our own style today. We open with, "Dear so and so" and close with, "sincerely yours" even when we are addressing total strangers.
 - B. In ancient letters the author would begin by identifying himself as the sender followed by a greeting often in the form of "grace and peace." This was followed identifying the addressee.
 - C. Paul's letters, however, were never merely formalities. His words were always chosen carefully – and of course, we know that this is the Word of God. Every word is important. Not a single word is there by accident. It will be important for us to remember this as we study it.
7. In these opening verses Paul does more than just give a traditional salutation. Rather he gives us a lengthy description of himself and his calling.
 - I. Paul's first description of himself is that of a servant
"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ"
 - A. The word for servant is **δοῦλος** – a slave or bond servant
 1. Paul might have used many words to describe himself
 - Paul, the successful and effective missionary
 - Paul, the planter of dozens of churches
 - Paul, whose ministry has been validated by great signs and wonders
 - Paul, distinguished scholar
 2. All of these titles would be true, but these things were not what Paul saw as his chief characteristic. What Paul was most was a servant of Christ.
 3. Paul saw himself as one who had been purchased by Christ. He had been conquered and captivated by Christ.
 - B. What is your chief characteristic?
 1. You may be outspoken and popular among men
 2. You may be a high achiever with many accomplishments
 3. You may have advanced in your career to a high degree
 4. You may be an excellent parent and maintain a well ordered home
 5. As a Christian you may have much of which to boast
 - a. You may be well read and have a good understanding of theology. You may have a library full of religious books.
 - b. You may be a pillar in the church, well respected and admired
 6. But what is your relationship with Christ?
 - a. Have you been captivated by Christ. Is your heart inflamed with love for Jesus?
 - b. Is He your Master and Lord? This is Christianity!
 - C. In essence, Paul is describing himself first as a Christian.
 1. One of the great terms of Christianity which Paul will state clearly in Chapter 3 is redemption.
Romans 3:23-24 – "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"

2. In Paul's day it meant to buy in the marketplace – particularly the purchase of a slave.
3. In Christianity we have been bought, we have become slaves which is actually freedom.
 - a. We are freed from the sin that held us bound
 - b. We are freed from Satan who held us in blindness
 - c. We are now free to serve Christ

This is what Paul meant as he wrote to the Corinthians
1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”
4. Every Christian is a servant under grace.
 What do I mean by a servant under grace?
 - a. The lost man, if he obeys God at all, obeys Him by fear. The law condemns him and the judgment of God is terrifying to consider. His is a servile obedience motivated by a fear of God's wrath.
 - b. Christians have been freed from the condemnation of the Law. We have been freed from the rigor of the law that demands absolute obedience but gives now power to meet its demands. In Christ we have found mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation. All of our former terror is gone. We serve Christ out of a passion for Him, out of pure delight, out of a heart of gratitude and a desire to please Him. Grace has given us a freedom to serve.

II. The chief function of a disciple of Christ is service

- A. Are you a servant of Christ?
 1. This isn't a theoretical question that calls for an abstract answer. It is a question of which the answer can be observed objectively.
 2. Most people immediately answer with an absolute Yes. But does your life validate your answer?
 3. How do you know that you are serving Christ?
 4. The answer is not difficult to discern.
 5. Our service to Christ can be measured in two ways
- B. We serve Christ by obeying Him
 1. Remember, we have been freed from the burden of the law We serve Christ out of a passion for Him, out of pure delight, out of a heart of gratitude and a desire to please Him. Grace has given us a freedom to serve.
 2. The servant of Christ obeys Him out of a sincere desire to be useful to Him. We love Him. We want to honor Him.
 3. Let me direct your attention to **2 Timothy 2:20-21**
 - a. The context of these verses finds Paul warning Timothy of the great danger of allowing false doctrine to infiltrate the church. In **Verse 18** he warned that these false teachings were overthrowing the faith of some

- b. In **Verse 20** Paul describe the house of a wealthy man where there were costly pots and common pots – pots of gold and silver and pots of wood or clay.
 - c. The gold pots were precious and reserved for the best use and the common pots were plain and easily replaced.
 - d. In keeping with the metaphor of the church as the great house. There are costly vessels, true believers who are serving Christ. There are also false believers – those who are never holy, never spiritually minded – they only have a form of godliness
2 Timothy 3:5 – “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”
 - (1) They are under constant danger of falling away, of having their faith overthrown, of being made shipwreck
 - (2) They are a source of great grief for pastors who weep at their lack of love for Christ and His kingdom.
 - e. The Christian’s greatest desire is to be used of our Lord – to be His servant. Notice in **Verse 24** Paul maintains this emphasis – “The servant of the LORD . . .” - δοῦλος
4. Is this your great desire? Does serving Christ bring you the greatest joy? In this passage Paul describes how we are fit for the Master’s use.
- a. **Verse 21** – “If a man purge himself from these” – To what is Paul referring?
 - (1) Paul is referring to the false teachings of these vessels of dishonor - False doctrine will eat away at you like a cancer – **Verse 17**
 - (2) If you want to be fit for the Master’s use you must be grounded in His Word
 - b. **Verse 22** – You will also need to flee hard from some things while following hard after others. It means we have to obey Him.
 - (1) “Flee Youthful lusts”
 Flee - φεύγω - Our word “fugitive” comes from this word describing a person who is running to avoid capture. The Christian must be continually on the run from sinful passions.
 - (2) Instead of following after fleshly lusts we are to follow hard after things that will enhance our service to our Master.
 “righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”
 - c. Your doctrine must control your actions.
- C. We serve Christ by serving others.
- 1. Are you serving others? Do you love one another? Do you truly care for one another? (example of the man at Lakeshore – Thank you!)
 - 2. Do you truly care for one another? Are you sensitive to the feelings of others? Are you concerned for their wellbeing? Or are you simply so wrapped up with yourself you don’t have room for anyone else.
 - 3. Christianity is being able to put the wellbeing of others before yourself. This is service. Are you a servant?

4. This was our Lord's constant teaching
Matthew 23:11-12 – “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”
Matthew 25:34-36 – “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶ Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”
Verse 40 – “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.”
5. Jesus demonstrated this by His own life
Matthew 20:28 – “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”
 He washed the feet of His disciples – a task normally done by servants.

Conclusion:

1. The question before you this morning is, “Are you a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ?”
 - a. Have you been removed from your throne? Are you dying to self?
 - b. Are you striving to obey His commands?
John 15:13-14 – “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”
 - c. Do you see the importance of your brothers and sisters? Do you love them?
2. Our greatest desire should be to serve our Master with excellence
 As Paul says, “meet for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work.”
 - a. Are you prepared and ready for every good work?
 - b. Are you available for the Master's use?
 - c. It may mean doing menial work, but it is all glorious for it is the Master's work
3. If you are a servant; if this is your identity you are in excellent company
Romans 1:1 – “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ”
James 1:1 – “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”
2 Peter 1:1 – “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ”
Jude 1:1 – “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ”
4. This is genuine Christianity.
 It is serving others as we seek to become more and more holy.
James 1:27 – “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.