

“Paul the Apostle”
Romans 1:1
(Preached at Trinity, October 1, 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. Last time we began looking at the opening salutation of Paul’s letter to the Church of Rome. Paul’s words were always chosen carefully. And, of course, as the Word of God every word is important. Not a single word is there by accident. We often pass over sections of Scripture in our hurry to get to what we consider the main part. Such is the case with genealogies. Such is also the case with the opening verses of the Epistles. When we pass over these verses we miss some of the meat of the passage.
2. In these opening verses Paul gives us a lengthy description of himself and his calling. His first description of himself is that of a servant
“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ” - The word for servant is **δοῦλος** – a slave or bond servant.
 - A. This was Paul’s badge of honor. Paul saw himself as one who had been purchased by Christ. He had been conquered and captivated by Christ.
 - B. In essence, Paul is describing himself as a Christian. Every Christian is a servant of Christ. Every Christian has been captivated by Christ. We throw ourselves at the feet of our Master. Paul saw this as his identity.
3. Paul’s next words describe his office and calling -
Romans 1:1 – “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
- I. Paul designates himself as one called to be an apostle
 - A. Paul wants his readers to be clear
 1. It was important for Paul to affirm his apostolic calling. There were many who refused to accept Paul’s call as an apostle
 2. Some saw him as a Johnny-come-lately. They said he couldn’t be an apostle because he had not accompanied Christ during his earthly ministry.
 3. Paul referred to himself as one born out of due time
1 Corinthians 15:8 – “And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”
 4. Paul was often the subject of attacks, accusations, and insinuations by his enemies.
 5. In most of his epistles Paul at some point affirms his apostolic calling. This was essential in order to validate his authority
Romans 1:1 – “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle”
Romans 1:5 – “By whom we have received grace and apostleship”
 - B. What exactly is an apostle?
 1. **ἀπόστολος** – “a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders
 - a. It is applied specifically to the twelve apostles of Christ

- b. In a broader sense applied to other eminent Christian teachers such as of Barnabas but we must not confuse this with the office of apostle. In a similar sense **πρεσβύτερος** means one who is advanced in age but it also refers to the office of elder. **διάκονος** refers to a servant but it also refers to the office of a deacon.
 - 2. The apostolic office was confined to a limited few - It was a particular office – a specific calling
 - Ephesians 4:11-12** – “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”
 - 3. Jesus specified specific and particular men to hold this office. They are given by name
 - Matthew 10:1-5** – “And when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. ² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. ⁵ These twelve Jesus sent forth . . .”
 - 4. There were particular requirements for Apostleship
 - a. We can see these in Acts 1:21-22
 - Acts 1:21-22** – “. . . men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.”
 - b. One who had accompanied Christ during His earthly ministry from the time of His baptism - He would have been trained by Jesus
 - c. An eyewitness to the resurrected Christ
 - d. One chosen by Christ Himself – chosen personally, by name.
- C. Jesus called and set apart a select group – twelve only
 - 1. After Judas betrayed Christ Peter stood and stated that it was necessary for a replacement to be selected
 - a. They were careful about the qualifications
 - b. They were careful that he was called of Christ
 - Only two men met the qualifications:
Joseph, also known as Justus and Matthias
 - c. Finally they resorted to the practice of casting lots to learn the will of Christ - the lot fell upon Matthias and he became the twelfth apostle.
 - 2. You can imagine then the problem of Apostle Paul –

Paul makes number 13

- a. Some hold that Paul is the twelfth apostle, not Matthias
They hold that Peter was rash in the appointment of Matthias
- b. The Bible, however, affirms Matthias as the twelfth apostle
After the appointment of Matthias and while Paul was still persecuting Christians the Apostles were once again referred to as “The Twelve”

Acts 6:2 – “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.”

Acts 2:14 – “But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:”

- c. The Bible declares “and He was numbered with the eleven.”
Acts 1:26 – “And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

3. So what about Paul?

- a. He was most definitely an apostle
He states this fact in almost all of his epistles.
Galatians 1:1 – “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)”
- b. Next to Peter, Paul is the most prominent of the apostles.
- c. Paul states he was the apostle to the Gentiles.
Romans 11:13 – “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:”
- d. The twelve apostles represent the twelve tribes of Israel.
Paul was another apostle that God provided for the ministry to the Gentiles – Apostle number 13. Paul concludes the apostolic calling. There would be no more.

II. The apostolic office was also particular in function.

A. The Apostles were used of our Lord in establishing His church

- 1. The Apostles were used of Christ to establish the doctrine of the church
Acts 2:42 – “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
- 2. Paul stated that the church was established upon foundation of the apostles
Ephesians 2:19-20 – “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²⁰ And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;”
- 3. In a building you first lay the foundation and then you build the building.
You don't continue adding to the foundation of the building

- B. The apostles were given gifts particular to their apostolic office
1. Paul states this in 2 Corinthians
2 Cor. 12:12 – “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”

Acts 2:42-43 – “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.”
 2. These signs, wonders, and mighty deeds were in the form of what we refer to as extraordinary gifts.
- C. Extraordinary gifts –
1. These gifts were given for the purpose of validating the gospel and confirming the Word of God prior to the completion of Scripture as well as validating God’s messengers.
Hebrews 2:3-4 – “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; ⁴ God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”
 - a. These extraordinary gifts made it possible to distinguish the true teacher from the false. There were many in the early church who claimed to be apostles.
Revelation 2:2 – “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:”
 - b. God validated the Apostles and prophets through miracles
 - c. These gifts were not to cause men to stand in awe of the Apostles but to stand in awe of God. God was affirming the mighty demonstration of Himself.
 2. The extraordinary sign gifts included healing and miracles and the revelatory gifts which included prophecy, tongues.
They were practiced primarily by the Apostles and their immediate followers which is affirmed by the testimony of Scripture.
2 Cor. 12:12 – “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”
Acts 5:12 – “And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people”
Acts 2:43 – “And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.”
- III. The office of apostle was an extraordinary office
- A. They had extraordinary abilities
 1. They were given extraordinary gifts

2. They were also given extraordinary authority
Paul claimed great authority over the churches
1 Corinthians 5:3-5 – “For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”
2 Corinthians 13:10 – “Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power (**ἐξουσία** – authority) which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.”
 3. God spoke authoritatively through them. The apostles had the authority to set forth doctrine.
Acts 2:42 – “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
 4. They had extraordinary discernment
 - a. Peter knew Ananias had lied concerning his offering
Acts 5:1-3 – “But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, ² And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?”
 - b. Peter knew Simon the sorcerer had a spurious faith
Acts 8:23 – “For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity.”
 5. The apparently had the ability to impart gifts to others
Romans 1:11 – “For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;”
- B. It was a temporary office
1. The apostles consisted of the twelve plus Paul and no more – The church is founded upon the foundation of these men together with the prophets.
 2. With the death of the apostles there were no more
We should note that with the death of James in **Acts 12** no replacement was chosen.
 3. There is no apostolic succession
The Catholic church sees an apostolic succession passed down through Peter and the popes. The Mormon church sees a succession of apostles.
 4. To a lesser degree, the Anglican and Episcopal church sees an unbroken chain of apostolic authority. While the authority of the pastorate bears some of the characteristics of apostolic authority and we certainly see the importance of doctrinal continuity, the office of apostle is forever gone.

- C. The extraordinary gifts passed with the Apostolic age
1. Today the Word of God is powerful
Hebrews 4:12 – “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
 2. For some, they are not satisfied with God’s Word. They demand more. They crave the sensational.
 God’s Word is sufficient – The Reformers called it Sola Scriptura
Isaiah 55:10-11 – “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: ¹¹ So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.”
 3. There is no need today to authenticate the Word of God through supernatural signs. God’s Word by His Spirit authenticates itself.
- C. How can we tell today if a message or a messenger is from God?
1. God has given us the perfect measurement of truth.
 Today we have the full and complete Word of God
 2. Once the New Testament Scriptures were complete you no longer needed Apostles. We have the authority!
 3. The Bible is the absolute measure of truth and is used of God to equip His saints
 4. The Holy Spirit powerfully and effectually applies His Word today. We are able to use the Word of God to try every doctrine.

Conclusion:

1. Before the canon was complete the office of apostle was a great treasure for the church. Paul is claiming this extraordinary office for himself. Christ had called him to it and equipped him for it.
2. Paul is stating at the beginning of this letter that he is not speaking as a mere man. He is speaking as the agent of Christ. This is of extreme importance to us. Paul sometimes says things that seem radical and hard for some to swallow. Some state, “Well that was just Paul’s opinion.” Paul’s words have divine authority.
3. Do you see how important these opening verses are?
 This is not a mere human book. We know at the very beginning that this is the Word of God. It is a message from God to our hearts. We have to understand this from the very beginning. This Book carries, “Thus saith the Lord” from start to finish.