

## Romans, Part 2 4-3-22

### *Gospel Creeds & Credential*

Romans 1:1-7 *Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup>which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup>concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup>who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>5</sup>through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, <sup>6</sup>among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; <sup>7</sup>to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West were two 19<sup>th</sup> century English lawyers, and cousins. They were religious skeptics and discussed together how they could disprove the Christian faith. They decided that the two pillars on which the church was built were the resurrection of Christ and the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the man we know as Paul. West tackled the resurrection, while Lyttleton's goal was to disprove the story of Paul's conversion. Since both were mostly ignorant of the relevant facts they decided that considerable investigation was in order, if their writings on the subject were to demonstrate integrity. While they were preparing their books, they had a number of dialogues and, in one of them, West told Lyttleton, somewhat sheepishly that he was growing convinced that there was actually something to the claim of resurrection. Lyttleton was glad his cousin had admitted this because he also was finding the remarkable story of Paul's conversion quite difficult to challenge. In fact, he told West that he believed the conversion of Paul as the New Testament recorded it, and furthermore, he now believed Christianity to be true. West was both astonished and pleased because he too had taken a step of faith into the light of the gospel himself. Their books were published, defending the validity of Christ's resurrection and the dramatic, inexplicable conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the Christian hater, into Paul the apostle, the preacher, and the author of Romans.

That story of Lyttleton and West is quite appropriate for our meditation today from Romans 1:1-7 where we read a brief defense of both Jesus as the Christ and Paul as an apostle. Since Jesus is the more important we will spend most of our time on him, but let's take a minute to wrap up our look at the author of Romans. We saw last time that Paul described his office or calling as *apostle*, his

mission and message as being the gospel, and his attitude or disposition being that of a bond-servant. A few months back a pastor friend sent me this from Twitter. *After listening to his owner drone on for hours, Ralph suddenly realized he was not cut out to be an emotional support dog after all.* My friend's comment was that this is how he was feeling about being a pastor. Well, I get it. Some weeks are tough. Sometimes most all of us think we may be in the wrong line of work. I remember writing back to my friend that it was Thursday but Sunday is coming. By that, I meant to say that no matter what hard things come our way during the week, on Sunday we get to exalt Jesus and tell people about him. And, if you love Christ – wow! What a privilege it is to do that. I think you know that Paul suffered a great deal in his ministry. Oh, he had the same stresses that most pastors and missionaries have, plus all the intense persecution that was uniquely his. But how did he view it? Verse five he says that through Christ he, Paul, had received grace and apostleship. Grace and apostleship. One is general the other specific. One applies to all of us, the other just to a few. In Ephesians Paul gives us more insight on how he viewed his role. Ephesians 3:7-8 (ESV) *Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup>To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.* I love that verse more than I can say – especially that part about the unsearchable or unfathomable riches of Christ.

So, let's spend the rest of our time discovering what our text tells us about Christ – and oh, it is rich!

First, we see that Jesus is the promised Messiah of old. Paul is not unveiling a new religion, a new philosophy that just emerged out of nowhere. From the very start of his exposition he connects us back to the Old Testament. Indeed, Romans is constantly referring us back to the ancient book of God – starting with the second verse which tells us that this gospel was promised in the prophetic words of Scripture. One of the reasons I have confidence that the Bible is truly a divine revelation is right here. Many books, written by many authors, written in different eras in different centuries, and yet all of these parts come together to form a remarkable unified whole which finds its center and end in the person of Jesus. Our author, the apostle Paul, is skilled in presenting this. He speaks much of Abraham and of Adam. He understands law and grace. He quotes Moses, he quotes Hosea, he quotes Isaiah, he quotes David, he quotes Malachi. He quotes Jeremiah. He alludes to Daniel. He quotes from Joel and Nahum. Fifty-seven times he refers to the Old Testament. Just to give one example – in Romans 9:33 (ESV) *As it is*

written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” That verse combines two quotes from Isaiah, from chapter 28 and chapter 8. Paul pulls them together to clarify something important about? About? About Jesus. Isaiah was about Jesus. Romans certainly is.

So, the apostle is telling us good news, which implies something is new, but it is in line with something very old. And the new things had been foretold in many times and many ways in the holy Scriptures. The what? The holy Scriptures – the **γραφαῖς ἁγίαις**. The sacred writings. The holy Scriptures. I remember in a college Bible study asking a young man what kind of Bible he had. I was wondering if it was King James or Revised Standard Version or what. He looked at the cover and said to me, “It’s a holy Bible.” Thirty years ago, most of us had a Bible that said on the cover, “Holy Bible.” Paul is fine with that. That is the Bible’s view of the Bible. It is the historic view of the church as well. It is holy. Sacred. Divine. It is more than a human work which is how it can promise beforehand what came to be in the person and work of Jesus. In the final chapter, Paul would put it this way, Romans 15:4 *Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

Very good – After connecting his message of Christ to the Old Testament Paul then goes on to reveal for us his mysterious character – his mysterious character. When you look at verses 3 and 4 you see Jesus described as being two things that don’t seem to blend so well - Son of God and descendant, son of David. Seems like we have to land on one or the other – But no! It is somehow both of these realities. Verse three says God made promises concerning his son. Verse four says Jesus was declared to be the son of God. So, that much is obvious enough. Paul is serving a master who is the very son of God, a divine person, one with the father. And yet, verse three makes this point about him being in the lineage of David according to the flesh. Well, that is some interesting language. *According to the flesh*. Normally, the Scriptures would just say, *of the seed of David*, or *a descendant of David*. Period. But he adds that little phrase *according to the flesh*. That phrase suggests a certain element of complexity with regard to who Jesus is. I remember when Beth and I watched the series of shows on the life of Christ called, *The Chosen*. At one point, the disciples were remarking about the stamina of Jesus when Mary commented, *He is a hard-worker. He gets that from his father --- both of them*. Funny, but also amazingly true.

When we read the Old Testament we see this mystery being presented before us. In so many places, the prophets make clear that the Messiah King, the future Savior of Israel will be from the line of David. But, then we read in Isaiah that the coming Redeemer will be God himself. *I the Lord am your Redeemer, and there is no other.* Scholars would puzzle over how both of these lines of prophecy could be true. Then along comes Jesus. His mother, Mary, who is in the line of David, is told by an angel that she will bear a son who will sit forever on the throne of His father, David. When Mary explains to the angel that he must be mistaken because she is a virgin. Here is what we read in Luke 1:35 *The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."* Nine months later, Mary give birth to a child whom everyone believes to be fathered by Joseph. Because He was Mary's child He was of the line of David. But because His conception was supernatural, by the Holy Spirit, He was and is the only begotten son of God.

So, this is the incredible mystery surrounding the person of Jesus. Mind-blowing and wonderful. But why do we believe something so fantastic? I am so glad you asked. And I am glad Paul gives us the answer in these early verses of Romans where we find in verse 4 that Jesus was declared, announced, heralded, proclaimed to be the son of God. And how was that proclamation made? Paul says it was made with power. Not with words. Oh, Jesus had been declared to be the son of God with words. When he was baptized a voice came from the clouds and said, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well-pleased." That proclaimed him the son of God. But just words. Powerful words. Divine words. But here it says the proclamation of his sonship came in power by the resurrection. Someone said God communicated this through body language, specifically through the risen, glorified body of Jesus.

Now remember, there are only three options about Christ. Either He is a liar and the greatest deceiver the world has seen. Or else, He is a lunatic who thought He was God, or He is who He said He is, the Son of God, God incarnate. I mean anybody who claims to be God and who claims He will rise from the dead and come again with angels to judge the world is either a liar, a lunatic, or He is Lord. Where do you stand? Jesus gave some direction as to how to answer this trilemma. He said, "You want proof? I'll give you proof. I'll die and rise again on the third day. If I do that, believe me." He said this to His enemies and I think anyone will admit that is a fair challenge. And His enemies took Him so seriously they placed an armed guard at His tomb. But it didn't stop Him, not death, not the

Roman guard. He arose and God cast His vote saying that Jesus is Lord. At the resurrection God said with thunderous voice, “This is my Beloved Son, listen to Him!” In the preaching of the apostles in the book of Acts you see this simple argument over and over again. He is risen, therefore He is Lord 2:32 *This Jesus, God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.*” In Acts 5 Peter again says in verse 5:30-31 *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. <sup>31</sup>He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* In Athens, Paul said this, referring to the one living God Acts 17:31 *He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.* This Jesus we know to be the risen Son of God because He defeated death just as He had promised.

Later in his epistle, Paul would say this Romans 10:9 *if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.* Strangely the most important thing about you is your beliefs about and your relationship with Jesus. More important than your body, your income, your politics, your family. He is not just a figure in history. He is God’s Son, the Lord of life. Your eternity hinges on this right here. Will you confess what the apostle writes about and simply affirm before the angels and these witnesses that you believe the testimony and you have given your heart to the risen King? Sing I Believe.