

Paul - The Evangelist

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[0 : 00] Today, I'm reading from Romans chapter 15, and I want to read just a few verses from verse 18.

Romans 15, and there are 18th verse. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that from Jerusalem and as far round as Elyarukum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ, thus making it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on another man's foundation. Amen. May the Lord bless to us that reading may be to his praise and to his glory. Okay. Last week, we thought about Paul the convert, and this week, we take it a stage further, and we look at Paul the evangelist.

Now, Paul never claims to be an evangelist. What he claims is that he's an apostle, a preacher, and a teacher.

But in writing to Timothy, just before he died, he told him, do the work of an evangelist.

[1 : 49] So we must assume that in giving that instruction, that's what he sees himself to have done. He has done the work of an evangelist.

The word evangelist only occurs three times in the New Testament. And the only person it's attached to is one of the deacons in chapters Acts 6, who was called Philip.

And in Acts 8, we read that Philip went down to a city of Samaria and preached Christ to them, and the result of which was that there was a massive turning to God.

Coming back to Romans 15 for a minute, in this final division of the letter from 12 to 16, he's finished talking about what the gospel is and what the place of Israel is in it.

He's now talking about how the Christian should live his or her life. And in verses 1 to 5 of the chapter, he talks about the responsibility of the Christian to help the weak.

[3 : 08] It's a practical thing, this Christianity. And he gives the life of Christ as a supreme example of one who did this, saying he did not please himself.

And then in verses 7 to 13, he talks about the necessity of welcoming one another, irrespective of whether we are Jews or Gentiles, English, Scotch, Welsh, Irish, or any other particular nation.

And for this, he quotes from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and several Psalms. And then in these verses that we read from, he's contemplating this pending visit to the church at Rome, and he concentrates on saying what the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished through his ministry.

So think with me, if you will, about Paul's opportunities. Now we take it as read, or as an example, when someone becomes a new convert, the first people they will witness to will be those of his own family.

But in the case of Paul, that wasn't the case. The first time he witnessed to anybody was in Acts 9. We read that for several days he was with the disciples at Damascus, and in the synagogues immediately he proclaimed Christ.

[4 : 52] And the reaction of those in the synagogue was that they concocted a plot to kill him. And so he went to Jerusalem, and there he proclaimed boldly in the name of the Lord.

And lo and behold, this was produced another plot to kill him. So what happened was that the brethren decided to bring him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus, the place of his birth where his family still resided.

What do we know about Paul's family? We know he had a sister. Paul's family. Because in Acts 23, her son overheard yet another plot by the Jews to kill Paul.

We know that both of his parents were Jews, and they were both Roman citizens. Paul claims that.

He says, I was born a citizen. His father was a Pharisee. And he says, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees, in Acts 23.

[6 : 12] And what he wants to tell us is that he came from a long line of people who were Pharisees, who were all probably ordained rabbis.

So what was the reaction of his family to this witness that he was going to give them? Now, there's no definite information, but there is perhaps a memory which is written down in Romans 9.

Is he talking about his relatives here?

The word kinsman in Greek is *soon genes*, which means a close relative. So what I'm saying is that I think that in this opening verses of Romans 9, there is a genuine memory being recorded of how his family reacted to the ministry of the gospel.

The word that's used, which I say means a close relative, is the same word that the angel used to the Virgin Mary when he said that the mother of John the Baptist was also giving birth.

[7 : 50] And in that sense, it probably means that they were cousins. So what has happened here is that if we take Romans 9 and 3 to be referring to his family, it becomes clear to us that they did not accept his testimony about Jesus Christ.

And indeed, there are records of people who are Jews who have been converted, who have been ostracized by their family. the father has expelled them from the house.

And when the father is asked at a later stage by someone different, how is your son? The reply is, I have no son. That's the cost of a Jew at this stage becoming a Christian.

So what is the witness that he gave? Now, he gives his testimony several times in the Acts of the Apostles.

And so he says his upbringing and his training in the rabbinical law was under this other rabbi, Gamaliel. I am a Jew born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers.

[9 : 24] And if this is what he said to his family, which I've no doubt it was, he then went on and would have gone on to state his conversion. Acts 22.

As I made my journey and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. And I heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?

And then he would have told of his response. What shall I do? And the Lord said, rise and go into Damascus and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.

And so up to this point, the Jews that he was speaking to listened with intent. But after that, they made it clear they're having nothing more to do with him.

And that would be true of his family also. So when we consider all that the apostle says about his own experience in coming to terms with his newfound faith, this is what he says it meant.

[10 : 41] Philippians 3, verse 8. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as garbage that I may win Christ.

So for Paul, the Pharisee, all these family ties are as nothing. What he's interested in is getting hold of Christ into his life.

It cost him everything. Jesus himself said, if any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

for whosoever would save his life will lose it and whosoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

So Paul, the new convert, the former Pharisee, the rabbi, is so saying for him to have got Christ into his life, it cost him everything.

[11 : 57] and the fact is it may not cost us our family ties but there will be a cost. Following Jesus is not an easy option.

Let no one be mistaken about that. So having spoken about his opportunities as far as his family is concerned, I now go on to consider his message and his method.

In Acts 9 and 22 we're informed that Paul or Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews living in Damascus that Jesus was the Christ.

He did this by proving it. So we're beginning to see a method emerging and that method is actually contained in two different words.

Method of explaining the gospel and the method of proving it. Listen to what happens at Thessalonica.

[13 : 10] it. And Paul went in as was his custom and for three weeks he debated with them from the scriptures explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from

the dead saying this Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ.

So that's what was happening in Thessalonica. he was explaining and he was proving and what he was proving it on was not any family traditions he might have inherited but the scriptures themselves.

So what were the scriptures that he relied on? Here are the facts. In the letters of Paul there are one hundred and seven explicit quotations from the Old Testament and you will rejoice that I'm not proposing to go through each and every one of them.

What I will tell you is the book he quoted from the most was Isaiah followed by Psalms, Genesis and Deuteronomy. So what we need to do now is to examine one of his sermons at length and see this method being used a good effect.

This is why I asked you to look at the sermon which was contained in the idea was in the bulletin thanks to Gerald about reading Acts 13.

[14:52] Now what he does here he starts to explain. Now what you have to bear in mind is that this audience that he was doing this to were not solely Jewish.

It says there were devout Greeks there. Now these devout Greeks worshipped in the synagogue and they worshipped the one God that the synagogue worshipped but they didn't believe in all the manishuai of the law that was attached to that belief.

So he begins by considering and his explanation begins with the history of Israel and their stay in the land of Egypt at which time God chose them as the people of Israel and led them out.

And so he's talking now about Exodus 5. Then he refers to the 40 years in which God bore with him in the wilderness and follows Deuteronomy 1 to show you that.

He then notes how God destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan and gave their land as an inheritance to the people of Israel. Again Deuteronomy 7 Joshua 14.

[16:17] This history is continued without an explanation and brought down to the ministry of John the Baptist and he looks at Isaiah 44.

24. So in verses 26 to 31 these are the facts of the gospel as they relate to Jesus.

Now what does he say about him? He refers to the coming of Jesus and to the fact that the rulers in Jerusalem did not recognize him and they didn't realize that by not recognizing him they were actually fulfilling the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath in the synagogue. Following this action they asked or they persuaded Pilate to have him crucified and so when they had fulfilled all that was written about him he took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb.

Yet the glorious fact is says Paul that God has raised him from the dead and he has appeared to many days to those who had followed him from Galilee.

[17:38] So what I'm saying now is in all of this this is explanation giving you the relevant facts of the Old Testament history and as it's seen in the person of Jesus and from this point on he now starts to prove and he does that by concentrating on the resurrection of Christ from the dead and he says to the audience we bring to you the good news that what God has promised to the fathers this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus and he immediately he refers them to Psalm 2 verse 7 you you are my son today I have given birth to you and he goes on and proves that Christ did not enter the tomb to decay and quotes

I will give you the holy and the sure blessings of David and then in Psalm 16 he says you will not let your holy one see decay Isaiah 55 and Psalm 16 so what he's been doing in this sermon he's got this method of explaining the background the history the foundation and then he starts to prove the majestic points of the Christian gospel by referring to the scripture let it be known to you therefore brothers that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you and the question is of course can we use this method today yes we can because we've entered a period in the history of the world where the majority of people are illiterate as far as biblical knowledge is concerned so therefore if we go about our task in evangelism by following what Paul has done i.e.

explaining the background the history and then proving the same thing from scripture not only is it the right thing to do but it gives to the witness an authority and that authority is not man-made it's heaven-made the results i will not venture to speak of anything except what christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the gentiles by word and deed by power of signs and wonders by the power of the holy spirit so that from jerusalem and as far round as illericum i fully preached the gospel of christ so at the end of the sermon he gives an appeal let it be known to you this is acts 13

38 to 39 let it be known to you therefore brothers that through this man forgiveness of sins is to claim to you and by him everyone that believes is freed from everything which you could not be freed by the law of Moses so there's the appeal forgiveness of sins and the freedom from the bondage of the law then he gives a warning beware therefore lest there come upon you what is said in the prophets and again he's proving this because now he quotes from one of the minor prophets Habakkuk behold you scoffers and wonder and perish for I do a deed in your days a deed that you will never believe if one declares it to you and so we find that this sermon and the meeting came to an end and so we read in verses 42 to 43 as they went out the people begged that these things might be told them the next sabbath and when the meeting of the synagogue broke up many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God so what has happened here we've had the gospel explained we've had it proved and we've had it applied but when we consider what happened in the next sabbath the response was perhaps not exactly what Paul and Barnabas thought it would be and so we read Acts 13:44 to 45 the next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God but when the Jews saw the multitude they were filled with jealousy and contradicted what was said by

Paul and reviled him and look at verse 50 the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district so there was a minority who were not prepared to listen to this message and they incited the rest to react in a hostile manner to the gospel message as preached by Paul and Barnabas and they now respond to this rejection in this way it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you since you thrust it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life behold we turn to the

[24:50] Gentiles and once again Paul proves that his action is in line with the plan of God he does this by quoting Isaiah 49:6 I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth this is a number of one of a number of prophecies in the book of Isaiah which are called the servant songs because they all speak of the divine servant who's to come and one of those of course is Isaiah 53 so Christ is the supreme servant of the Lord but now what Paul and Barnabas are saying is that this ministry as they undertake the ministry of preaching the gospel is in line absolutely in line with the plan of

God and because of that it has an authority you remember that when Jesus spoke about the coming of the spirit in John 16:8 when he the Holy Spirit is come he will convict the world of sin and that's what's happening here these people are reacting because God in this ministry has touched their heart and so we find that their stance brings tremendous results verse 48 when the Gentiles heard this they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord and as many as were deigned to eternal life believed it would seem odd that Luke has added that comment about the possibility of the results coming about because they were in the elect and predestinated plan of

God the way to understand it is simply this if they are saying on the one hand that's what they said first that their mission is in the plan of God is in the predestinated plan of God then the results also follow in the same way so what does this mean to us it means that God has a plan for us here in Westerhills and in our neighborhood and we should rejoice that we are part of that plan and so verse 49 concludes the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region so here we have it Paul the evangelist who encourages us as he did with

Timothy to do the work of an evangelist and he encourages us to do it in the same way that he himself did it which is to back it up with the authority of God's word because if it's followed up with the authority of God's word it will produce a tremendous harvest of souls so we've thought about Paul the convert and now we've thought about Paul the evangelist and next week God willing we'll think about Paul the teacher amen may the Lord bless these remarks may it be to his praise and to his glory let us stand and sing for the blessing we thank you for your presence in this service of worship and praise we would bow before your word and say

Lord let it be so for your name's sake and for your glory we pray that you might take that presence with us wherever we go and to you we'll give the praise and the glory in Jesus name amen