

Today, as we begin a new series, I like us to go to a New Testament book, a book that would be familiar to you if you are a Christian for some time and that is the Book of Romans.

This is the epistle by Paul, written to the people, to the church at Rome- so, the Book of Romans. I believe this is an exciting journey because this is the Book that God has used in times past to effect transformation of lives. As people study the Book of Romans, the Spirit of God worked in their hearts, that many came to salvation, many became revived and reformation really is born out of the teachings of this book. And so this morning and for the months to follow, we will be looking at the Book of Romans. I am confident it can change your lives because it has changed the lives of many people in times past.

For example, now this man may be unfamiliar to some of us, but let me just go a little bit to church history and to great people of the faith so that you may be encouraged thereby.

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There is this man called Augustine, his teachings are still being read today. He is considered to be a theological father of the Reformation because of his teachings on divine grace and salvation. Nevertheless, Augustine was a man who struggled in his own life. He struggled because he felt that he was still living in sin until he came to a passage, to a verse in the Book of Romans where it says, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision to the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." And with that one verse, Augustine was blessed in his heart and this is what he said "Instantly at the end of this sentence, a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away." God used that one verse to change Augustine's life.

Another man you may be more familiar with is the man Martin Luther, the father in a sense, of the Reformation. And Martin Luther likewise had his life turned around because of the Book of Romans. The Spirit of the living God took that Word and send it straight to bless his heart. This is what Luther said as he went through the Book of Romans. He says "There upon, I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning. The passage of Paul in Romans became to me the gateway to heaven." The Book of

Romans is 'the chief part of the New Testament and the perfect gospel' according to Luther.

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Go on a little bit more- in the 18th century, another famous Christian figure would be the man John Wesley. And John Wesley likewise was converted and saved as a result of the teachings in the Book of Romans. He said "I myself felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ and Christ alone for my salvation and an assurance was given me that He had taken my sins away, even mine and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Hey, great men have been touched because of Paul's writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the epistle to the church at Rome. And again, John Calvin, another teacher, theologian, he said "If a man understands it (that is, the Book of Romans), he has a sure road open to him to the understanding of the whole of Scripture."

So one by one, they are testimonies of blessings. Maybe let's bring it to someone living closer to our times. I know you guys say, "Wow Pastor, you are a bit out of times, these are ancient people!" Is there any one today that testifies to the Book of Romans? Yes, preachers today do. One man that is still alive and still very well respected and loved today is John MacArthur. And when he preached the series through the Book of Romans, this is what he began with. He said, "We embark, I believe, tonight on a life-changing adventure. I'm convinced that people will be utterly transformed in mind and heart as we move through this very special journey in the Book of Romans."

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Another man- last one alright- John Piper, and some of us have read his writings and this is what Piper said about the Book of Romans. He says "The best way (for the church, for the people of God) to be lastingly relevant is to be standing on rock-solid, durable old truths rather than jumping from one pragmatic bandwagon to another." It's true, people today like to hop onto different schools of teachings and neglect that lasting truth that is provided in God's Word and Piper says, "Romans is as solid and durable and reliable and unshakable and thorough as the truth can get."

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I hope, with these men of faith, you would be encouraged to look into the Book of Romans. You know, the Bible tells us, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is ... what? Profitable." I believe the whole Bible is profitable. It is a blessing, it is a joy, it will help you, it would encourage you, it would build you up as you read the Bible. But all Scripture is profitable, and at the same time I believe, some Scripture is especially so, some passages of the Bible are particularly so. And I think the Book of Romans will prove to be a golden book that would bring great blessings to your heart.

The best testimony that this is a book that you ought to study is when your own life is changed as a result of it. Now, with all these introductory remarks, let us come to the Book of Romans and start with Romans 1:1. You can't go wrong, starting with verse one and verse one tells us:

Rom 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.

Now, believe it or not, today we are just going to deal with Romans 1: 1. Now you may say, "Pastor, then will I live to see the end of Romans preached?" (Laughter in the congregation). I am not sure really, I'm not sure if I'm going to take it a verse a day or a verse a week, but be assured we will be covering the Book of Romans the best way the Lord leads us to.

But, here it is: The Book of Romans begins with these introductory remarks, with Paul introducing himself. I think if we want to appreciate the Book of Romans well, then we need to maybe know a little bit more about the author, isn't it? - So that we may sense his heartbeat and his perspective and his view of things?

Now, who is Paul? This morning let's do a little Q & A, alright? Let's do a little Q & A. Let me ask you some questions and according to what you have read in the Bible, tell me the answers. What is the race of Paul? Jew - very good, well done, give yourself a round of applause. (Laughter in the congregation). It would get harder alright. So, he's a Jew, he is not a Chinese, he's not a Caucasian, he is a Jew. What is the citizenship of Paul? Roman- Wow, let's give yourself another round of applause, well done, alright. You seem not to be very interested to clap for yourselves. (Laughter in the congregation).

All right, it is too easy. What was his birthplace? Tarsus. Wow, that is very fast, who gave the answer? Okay, no one dares to stand up, never mind. Tarsus is the right answer. Now, Tarsus is an important city in those days. You have great centers of learning in Athens and Alexandria and then you have Tarsus. They are the three top

cities if you want to go to study and you go to university. They are like the Princeton, Harvard and Yale of our day. So, he was born and raised really in a great cultural city of Tarsus.

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What was his father's occupation? Tent maker, alright, so the answers are getting a little bit softer now. (Laughter in the congregation) Yes, his father was a tent maker and Paul knew the art and skill of tent making. Who was Paul's religious teacher? Gamaliel, alright, Gamaliel was his teacher, you guys are doing very well. And apparently, Gamaliel is the grandson of Hillel. Hillel is one of the, if not the most famous Jewish Rabbi. Gamaliel was the "Sifu", the guru, the master teacher of that day and Saul, or Paul had the privilege to learn from this great teacher, great master. And he, by Jewish culture, will be studying and memorizing Scripture ever since young. He would memorize verses in the Bible and he would sit at Gamaliel's feet and learn from Gamaliel and ask questions of Gamaliel and be asked questions by Gamaliel and so, at an early age, his mind is sharpened as he learns from this master.

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When was Paul converted or saved or entered into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ? On the way to Damascus. What was he doing on the way to Damascus, by the way? All right, Paul before he came to know Jesus, was actively persecuting the church of Jesus Christ. He was catching and hauling people into prison because they believed in Jesus. He hated Christians and he was on the way to Damascus to receive a letter to say, "Can I get more people into jail?" When upon his way, Jesus appeared personally to Paul, in a bright light and that was the time that Paul came to Jesus for salvation and life.

One last question for you: What is the hairstyle of Paul? (Laughter in the congregation) Eh, I am not kidding, you know. There's.. the Bible tells you his hairstyle. What's the hairstyle of Paul? Armani, undercut, slope, curly, permed? Jesus Christ? Hairstyle, hairstyle? Modeled after Christ? Well, the Bible tells us the answer- if you search it- I won't tell you the answer,(laughter in the congregation) you go search it, alright. The answer is a simple word, some of us have that hairstyle now. Ha, ha, ha, yes, he was bald, he shaved himself once, in the Book of Acts. So that's his hairstyle, at least he used to have that hairstyle. But there is so much to learn about Paul. There's so much about this man, because to many people, he's one

of the, if not the greatest Christian to ever walk on the face of this earth, apart from of course our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Because of Paul, today in the Bible, you have so much wealth of scriptural knowledge. Most of the epistles, a large portion of the epistles, are written by this man of God. It is said that at the close of the apostolic age or that era, there were about 500,000 followers of Jesus Christ and I think no small part is due to this man that God has used. So this is the author, Paul, who wrote the Book of Romans for us.

But the question is this: Why is Paul such a greatly used man? What is the secret of his success? I think if you are a child of God today, if you believe in Jesus as your Savior, if you want to follow Jesus, I think deep in our hearts, we want to live a successful life for God. But what is the secret to Paul's success? Some people say, "Oh I know, because Paul is a man who is tall, dark and handsome like Pastor Jason". Ugh, no, no, no. (Laughter in the congregation). Certainly, doesn't fit any of these criteria. But what is the secret of Paul's success? Is it his physical appearance, stature? Well, the answer probably is not. There is a little second-century description of Paul. I am not sure if it is entirely true, but this is what some people say about Paul. This is what he looks like: small of stature and there is an unconfirmed report that he was three cubits which would be 4'6". What is 4'6"? 1 foot is 30 cm, am I right? 6 inches is about 15 cm. So this man is about...? Guys, do your maths. You answered the Bible questions better than your mathematics. Singapore would be very upset. He is about 1.35 m, not very tall. He is a short man, not very impressive and it goes on to say that he is bald with crooked legs, a hooked nose and scars all over his face, from the stoning and beatings. He suffered a lot for the cause of Jesus Christ. Now, I'm not sure that is absolutely true, but there is one thing the Bible says about his appearance. In 2 Corinthians 10:10, the Bible says the people are always saying that, Paul's speech is 'contemptible' and his bodily presence, 'weak'.

I am not sure exactly what that means, but surely he's not much of a specimen of a man, physically speaking.

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His previous name is Saul, named after King Saul. King Saul was a tall, dark, handsome man. But Paul isn't. So, his secret is certainly nothing to do with his physical appearance or stature. But this morning, I hope that as we come to Romans 1:1, we would learn from Paul, as he shares with you, 'The Secrets of My Success'.

I say secrets because it can be so obvious, but it can so easily slip by us and we fail to notice it. His secrets are all contained in Romans 1:1. This morning, let's look at what it takes to be a successful Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ. What does it take for me to live a life fulfilled and purposeful according to God?

“The secrets of my success”, Paul says in Romans 1:1, “My first secret is that:”

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### **1. I know my Master.**

The first secret to my successful Christian living is that I know my Master. He says here, “Paul” and the very first thing he says after his name is: “a servant of Jesus Christ”. Interesting, isn't it? Interesting - maybe we would have thought, to prove his credentials, he could have written ‘Paul, the missionary par excellence’ or he could have said, ‘Paul, the supreme Christian’. He could have said those things, he could have said, ‘Paul, the man who led thousands to Jesus Christ’. He could have written these things, but the first thing he said is “I am Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.” Now, that's not the kind of stuff you will want to put in your resume: ‘I am a servant’. The IBM CEO may look at it and say, “What is this kind of resume? Throw it aside!” But not Paul, he said, “If you listen, and if you think hard about it, this is the secret of my success: I know my Master, I am a servant of Jesus Christ”

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By the way, before we go on, I like to say actually all of us serve someone. Believe it or not, realize it or not, all of us serve someone. Before you came to know Jesus, you were a servant of sin. I was a servant of sin. Before I came to Jesus Christ, all I knew was to sin, all I knew was to live a self-centered sinful life. All I knew was to follow the way of the world, what this world teaches me. And by the way, the world represents a philosophy that is apart from God. And so, I was a servant to sin and to the philosophies of the world and that is what Jesus said, isn't it? Jesus tells us “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (the slave) of sin.”

And that is where man is. Before we come to Jesus, we are all servants of sin, we serve sin, we can't refuse sin. Romans 6 tells us that Jesus frees us from the slavery and the bondage of sin. But Paul also tells us in Ephesians 2, that before you came to know Jesus, you served sin. You served, if I may use this word, the devil. He says, in

Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air...

And this refers to the devil himself. That is the description of our lives in the past. We were not masters of our lives. We were not truly free because we were all under the bondage and slavery of sin, we walked according to Satan's manipulations. That's who we were, that's who we served and nobody truly is free. Just a little illustration of that: This week, I read an article about this lady. You can't not know her, right? You can't not know her, she's always creating headlines. Now, I do not know her songs, I don't watch MTV's or anything but surely, every now and then, Lady Gaga appears in the news. This week, on 21 February, I read about Lady Gaga on 'drunk diet'. Now, what this article tells me is that she is a lady who has to get fit and slim because she is in the entertainment, showbiz line. But on the other hand, she loves to drink whiskey and we all know that if you drink a lot of alcohol, you tend to have a pot belly, you tend to put on weight easily, the calories are excessive. So, what she does is she goes on what you call a 'drunk diet'. She drinks, doesn't eat a lot and the very next day she hits it out at the gym, even if she is having a hangover, she would still exercise on the gym.

This is what she said "I am on a 'drunk diet'. I live my life as I want to creatively. I like to drink whiskey and stuff while I am working, but the deal is that I have got to work out every day, and I work out hung over if I am hung over." Her state of drinking desire is so bad that it goes on to say she couldn't remember celebrating her Grammy win because she was so drunk. She's really Lady Gaga! (Laughter in the congregation) And she has previously caused controversy with her extreme dieting methods.

Her publicist or her tour manager said "Last year, she would binge on junk food such as cakes and sweets and then not eat for weeks to fit into her costumes - once losing 20lbs between fittings for one of her outfits.

Describing her condition, David (her publicist) said: 'When I say she was sick, she was really sick, both physically and mentally.

'Talent scout Wendy Starland added: 'The pressure on her to lose weight was very high.'

Lady Gaga is not a person that is living the way she would like it to be, really. She's facing pressure, she's facing what the world tells her: "Be slim, be slim, be slim!" and I find it a contradictory remark when she said "I live my life as I want to."

Hey, the reality today is that we walk according to the course of this world. What the world tells us, we follow. Worse still, what the devil tells us, we follow. We all are slaves to someone.

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But Paul was a man who chose his Master well. Paul says "I am now no more a servant of sin, I now am a servant of Jesus Christ, I serve Jesus." By the way, this is a beautiful word. It's a word that is so rich in meaning that you must grasp it. The word 'servant' here is not a part-time help that comes to your house to clean from 9 am to 1 pm. That's not the kind of servant that is spoken of here. The word 'servant' here is the word 'doulos' in the Greek and this is a word that means 'a bonds slave', BONDslave.

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Someone who totally and completely belongs to his master, he is really a slave. This slave's life, this slave's possessions, this slave's everything belongs to the master. And Paul is saying, "I am a slave of Jesus Christ. All that I am belongs to Him." It is a very moving word.

Paul says in Galatians 1:10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant (*doulos*) of Christ."

You see, Paul is saying, "I belong to Jesus and I live not to please anyone else. I live not to please men, I live to please Jesus." I think this is the secret to Paul's success. He knows who to listen and to obey. He knows that this life is not to be spent for himself or for others but for Jesus alone. Paul says, "I am a slave." Friends, do you recognize that we are called to be slaves of Jesus Christ? Because if you choose not Christ as your master, you serve someone else today and you know who he is.

Some other thoughts I want to add to this word '*doulos*'. It's a great word, it's a neat word because for a Jew, the word *doulos* means so much. For the Jewish people, they have a kind of agreement about slavery or servanthood. If there is a servant that a master has paid for, this servant would serve the master for six years. And on the seventh year, the contract is up and the master will set the servant free. But the servant now has a choice to make: do I want to go absolutely free or do I want to serve my master still? And if the servant says, "Even though my contractual agreement is up, I still want to serve my master", what he will do now is to go back to the master and say "Master, I want to serve you because I love you." And the master



will do something very, very cruel in our eyes. The master will bring this man to the judges, put his ear against the door post, take a very sharp object and hammer it through the ear. “Ee!” you say, “Are you sure, Pastor? Are you kidding me?” No, I am not kidding you. It is absolutely what the Bible says. In

Exodus 21:2 If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.

His contractual obligations are fulfilled.

Exodus 21:5,6 And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

“What is in ‘awl’?” you say. It looks something like this. You want to try? Anyone wants to try, we can experiment? Ah no, you won't because it is painful. But, you see, what happens is that this servant now has a permanent, visible mark on him: I belong to my master because I love my master.

And Paul says "I am a bonds slave of Jesus Christ." I belong to Jesus and I am willingly submitting myself to Jesus. I do this because I want to. I love my Master and I bear in my body the marks of slavery, of servanthood to Jesus Christ.” He is saying, “I am no Christian superstar, I am no supreme master, I am simply a humble *doulos* of Jesus.” In fact, he uses other words to describe that humility.

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You know, in 1Cor 3:5, he says, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?”

Why do you make heroes and idols of such men? Aren't we just ministers? And the word there is the word '*diakonos*', that we today use for the 'office of deacons'.

Deacons are simply *diakonos* and the word *diakonos* means 'people who wait on tables'. You know how it is when you go to a fancy restaurant, a waiter waits at your table to serve you, and Paul is saying “I am merely a table waiter, I serve, I am no superstar!”

He goes on to tell us 1Cor 4:1 that another word translated into English as 'ministers', but in the Greek is a separate word called '*hyperetes*', and this is the word that means 'an under-rower'. What is 'an under – rower', you say. In the old days, when you go

on ships, you don't have engines, you don't have petrol and so on, so you move by manual power, people would be rowing the boats and for it to go fast, you have different levels in the boats for many people to sit on and to row. The worst place to be is in the bottom row because it is the tight, squeezey hot part, and those who are the lowliest of slaves would go to the bottom rung and this is the word that is used to describe these people, 'the under rowers'.

1 Corinthians 4:1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers (*hyperetes*) of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Paul is saying, "I am just a humble under rower." My friends, can't you see this is the secret to Paul's success? He is not lifted up in pride, but he says, "I am simply a *doulos* of Jesus Christ."

0:28:54.9.

My friends, this is also to be the secret of your success. You see I think Christian living fails, when we fail to understand that we are called to be slaves of Jesus. We live in a day and age when we choose the kind of Christianity we want. Oh, we want a Christianity that is convenient. "Eh Pastor, why do you choose SIM, I stay in Pasir Ris. I want the church to be near me." "Pastor, can you don't ask me to serve in this ministry because I got to watch my TV program." "Aiyoh, why are Bible studies all at night, can't it be my schedule?" "Can't Christianity be simpler and easier? Can't it for less things?" My friends, you can't, because it's not on your terms. It's on the terms that Jesus gives us.

Christian living begins when we understand we are slaves to Jesus Christ. It means that all that I am and all that I have, belongs...Eh, by the way, those who are staying in Pasir Ris, please don't be offended. (Laughter in the congregation)... Ha ha, I am just saying it as a joke alright. But it does mean that all that I have and all that I am belongs to Christ. I think it should affect the way you deal or you view your finances. Let me tell you a big lie in churches today, alright. The big lie in churches today is: give 10% to the church and the rest of the 90% is yours. I think that's a lie. That's a terrible lie because nowhere in the Scriptures does it tell me that, that money, that 90% is mine when I am a slave of Jesus Christ. You have no right to say that. Now, I'm not saying that you take your weekly or monthly salary and pour it all into the offering bag. That's not the point. The point is: your money is really God's money. And instead of saying "This is how I want to spend it", you should ask your Master, isn't it? "Lord, what is it you want me to do with the money?" It means the

time that you have is not your time, it's the Lord's time. How sad, when we think of our Christianity as 'Every Sunday, two hours- that's what I give to God.'

0:31:34.9.

You know why we have such thinking? Because we do not realize we are slaves of Jesus Christ. Do you know why today you listen more to your boss at IBM and Hewlett-Packard and all these companies and not listen to Jesus and not listen to the Word of God and obey His Word, it's because we fail to realize we are slaves to Jesus Christ. Who do you live to please? Yesterday in our discipleship clinic- there is a group of people, we are hoping to help one another grow in the Lord Jesus Christ- the discipleship group, and I was reminded of this verse in Luke 14 when Jesus says, "If any man come to me and *hate not...*" strong words, "*hate not* his father and his mother, his wife and his children, his brethren and his sisters, yea, even his own life," Jesus says, "he cannot be my disciple."

My friends, the cost of Christianity is high and the price would never come down. It demands us recognizing that we are slaves to Jesus Christ. That's where real Christian living begins. Who do you seek to please? I read about this man, his name is Kenneth Galbraith. You would recognize instantly, he is not the man on the right, (Laughter in the congregation), that's Clinton. Kenneth Galbraith is the man on the left. He's a well-known economist, iconoclastic kind of economist, well-known man in his time of the United States. He wrote in his autobiography about an incident with his housekeeper, Emily Wilson, his housekeeper who served him. He was very tired one day and he decided to sleep and so he said to his housekeeper, "Emily, please hold all the phone calls for me, I need to take a nap." And so he went to sleep. Soon after, a call came in and this call came from this man called Lyndon Johnson. Those familiar with American history would know that Lyndon Johnson is one of the presidents of the United States of America, 1963 to 1969. And so Emily picked up the call. He said, "Get me Kenneth." Emily Wilson, the housekeeper said "Sorry Sir, he said he is taking a nap, would you like to call back later?" Lyndon Johnson said, "I am Lyndon Johnson, the President of the United States of America. Get me Kenneth!" And Emily says, "Sorry sir, I work for him, not for you. Goodbye!" (Loud laughter in the congregation).

Fantastic answer! And when Kenneth woke up and knew about it, he immediately called the President of the United States. And the President Lyndon Johnson said "Who is that lady working for you? Get her to the White House, I want her to work for me!" (Loud laughter in the congregation). Who wouldn't want a servant like

this?! And you know, that is the kind of servant Jesus is looking for, Jesus is calling for. Oh friends, this is a church, this is a day and age when we listen to the philosophies of the world, when we listen to sin and we listen to the devil really, in the course of this world, and we fail to realize we are slaves to Jesus Christ.

o:35:13.6.

We have people today struggling because they say it's so hard to serve Jesus. My friends, when you realize you are slaves to Jesus, you would be willing to give your lives. There's so much difficulty amongst people today, so much difficulty to study the Scriptures, to go for discipleship, to grow and to serve because it's on our terms: 'I am not a slave, I am really a church-goer'. But no, friends, it begins here: I know my Master and I want to be His slave. Not because I am forced to, not because someone is going to scold me, but because, like the bond slave of the Hebrews, I love my Master. He set me free from sin, He set me free from a miserable, purposeless life and now I want to give my life to Him. I love Him and I will serve Him.

One more word of caution from this one term, '*servant*'- reminds us of how much we need humility, isn't it? We live in a day and age where we can so easily have superstars in church. Pastors are superstars. Now I think there is a balance that needs to be struck in Scripture. The Bible does command the church to honor the church leaders. The Bible does command the church to give honor where honor is due, to rebuke not an elder unless you have good grounds and that you do before two or three witnesses. The Bible tells you to honor those who lead, especially those who do so in the Word and doctrines- they are worthy of double honor. So there is to be that submission, that honor to church leaders that is commanded in Scriptures. But the danger for any church leader, pastor, preacher, is that he can swallow it all up and be drunk with such honor and forget that he is really simply, at the end of the day, a *doulos* of Jesus Christ.

Maybe today God has blessed you with great possessions and wealth. And maybe because you are successful in the material world, successful in the business world, you begin to strut around. "Yaya, papaya", you say. (Laughter in the congregation) You strut around and you think that you're quite somebody. Or maybe you have been serving in church for a long time and you are so revered, so honored and you think that you're quite somebody. You know, the time when we begin to think we are quite somebody is the time we begin to crash and burn. We have heard, we have seen even in our own church, people who are going on a high. They are at the pinnacle of

their ministry and they can crash so easily the very next day. They go beyond that tipping point because they are lifted up in pride.

I don't see that in Paul's life. In fact, God watches out for that for Paul. Paul is given a thorn in the flesh that he may be humble. And Paul therefore, when he writes to the Christians at Rome, he says, "I know my Master, I am no supreme Christian. I'm a servant, I am a slave." Friends, I could end my sermon here and I think it would be enough, isn't it? Just to sit and to soak in what God has to say about *doulos*. But let's move on.

## **2. I am called to be an apostle**

Secondly, Paul says "I am called to be an apostle" and I am sure you realize that the word '*apostle*' is the word 'messenger' or 'someone sent forth on a mission, with orders'. In a sense, I've said this, in a sense we are all apostles, but with a small 'a', alright? We are all men and women sent on a mission by God-on a mission for what? Great commission- Matthew 28: "To make disciples of all nations." We are all people with a great commission. But in the passage here, Paul is saying "I am called to be an apostle." In the Greek, it would be better translated, "I am a called apostle", a man that is 'selected divinely to be in the office of apostleship'. It's a very select group of people, very small group.

Let me say, first of all, the second point is: Paul says "I know my mission, I know my mission. I know my Master and I know my mission from my Master. I am to be an apostle." Now, by the way, I don't think there should be apostles in our day and age today because the criterion for apostleship is clear. It says here in the Acts 1:22, "that we must be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Now, Paul was not one of the twelve who followed Jesus initially, but Paul did see the Lord Jesus Christ after His resurrection. In a sense, he is qualified to be an ordained, appointed apostle by God.

(Acts 1:22 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.)

He says in 1Cor 9:1 "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

He says again in Romans 1: "I am called to be an apostle".

So Paul is a man who knew his ministry. An apostle, in essence, is called to be the leader of the church of Jesus Christ. He is to give himself over to prayer and the Word, he is to feed the flock, he is to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, he is to protect the people, he is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry- in essence, he leads the church. And Paul recognizes he has a mission from God to lead the church, and not just any other church- he has a very unique ministry and his ministry is to the Gentiles. Paul's ministry is to a people who are called Gentiles. By the way we are all Gentiles except for one man here- I know he is a Jew. But everyone else here today, we are all Gentiles. We are gentle, you see. Ah no, bad joke. We are all Gentiles and Paul is called to reach out to the non-Jews, the Gentiles, as he said "I am an apostle of the Gentiles."

0:41:58.6.

This is quite amazing, if you think about it, because Paul is what...? ...racially a Jew! And a Jewish man, since young, is raised up to pray this, 'God, I thank you that I am not, number 1, a woman'- it is true, that's what they pray- 'number 2, I am not a slave and number 3, I am not a Gentile'. To them, these things are despised roles: woman, slave, Gentile. But isn't it quite amazing that God turned this man into a slave of Jesus Christ? And number two, he would have to reach the Gentiles?

0:42:47.6.

But God has always prepared Paul and Paul realized it. Paul says on hindsight in Galatians 1:15, "you know I realized this," "God separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace."

(Gal 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace)

Paul is saying, "My entire life is prepared by God that I may be the apostle to the Gentiles."

0:43:06.7.

I think one thing Paul said on the road to Damascus, is something we should say in our lives, "Lord, what would you have me do?" If Jesus is really your Master, shouldn't we in our lives say "Lord, what is it that you really want me to do, what is my mission?"

Ah, I say friends, we should know our mission, we should know what we are to do. It doesn't quite describe who we are- we are bond slaves to Jesus- but what are we to do? We are all to be apostles with a small "a". We are all to be making disciples of all nations. We are all to be witnesses for Jesus Christ, we are all to be the salt and the light, we are all called as the GLCC mission goes: 'be leading generations into a life-changing relationship with Jesus'- this is what we are to do. But you say, "Where? How? In what specific capacity?" Well, that is where you have to come to Jesus and say "Lord, what will you have me do? I am staying in Yio Chu Kang, I work in IBM, I like to play soccer. Lord, in what way have you prepared me in my life to fulfill your mission for me? Show me!" Because I believe God will, if you are serious about fulfilling His Mission for your life.

My friends, your life is to be more meaningful than simply an employee, simply a businessman, simply being a student or a house maker. There is a high divine calling: make disciples of all nations, be leading people to Jesus Christ. Would you ask God to show you where, how and in what capacity? He will and you will realize that God has actually prepared you all your life to do what He wants you to do.

0:45:13.4.

### **3. I know my Message**

Friends, successful living begins when we know our Master. Successful living demands a knowledge of our mission. Finally, can I share with you: successful living demands us knowing our message. Paul says, "I am separated unto the gospel of Christ", or "gospel of God". He says "This is my message, the gospel of God." The word '*gospel*' simply means 'good news'. Hey friends, isn't it great that God gives us a message of good news? We should rejoice, we should jump, we should cheer, we should shout, "Hip hip hooray!" Why, because the Christian message is one of good news! We live in a day where there is plenty of bad news, isn't it? I mean, just this week, look at the bad news around us; Libya, Tunisia, Egypt- think of the unrest and turmoil in the Middle East, think about the inflationary pressures. Think about North Korea- I read of people struggling to feed themselves. Think of Christchurch and the earthquakes. My friends, this is a world where there's enough bad news. But Christians, we are called to give good news, the good news of God.

In those days, when they used the word '*euangelion*', it would be the word that describes the good news of Caesar. But, no, no, Paul is saying, "No, this is not the good news of Caesar, this is far better. This is the good news, the gospel of God." And

friends, what is the gospel of God? What is the good news of God? We don't have to guess, we don't have to try to imagine because God has already defined it for us. In

1Cor 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...

What is the gospel? (1 Corinthians 15) Verses 3-4

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”

What is the gospel of Christ? The good news that God's Son came to die for our sins, and he rose the third day, because he conquered sin and atoned for sin.

My friends, allow me to give you the good news this morning. If you are here and you have not followed Jesus, you have not trusted in Jesus as your Savior and Lord, can I encourage you today to receive this good news? My friends, God sent His Son to die for your sins so that you may not be slaves to sin any longer, but you can serve Jesus and find real, real living and life. This is the good news, this is the message of Christianity. My friends, this is the message we need to hold jealously. This is the day and age where people do not preach Jesus Christ, they do not preach sin, they do not preach that he died and rose again. This is the day that tells you there are many ways to heaven besides Jesus Christ, this is the day where the gospel is compromised. But Paul says “No, this is my message, and I hold and guard it jealously.” He says in 1 Corinthians 2, that “when I came to you, I'm not here to give you fancy preaching and knowledge and things like that, not with excellent speech, but I come to you determined to know nothing else but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

(1Cor 2:1,2 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.)

Let's not water down the message of God. We have no right to, isn't it? Successful Christian living is Christ- centered living. In fact, Paul is very severe, he says:

Gal 1:9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.



Sad, when we come to a day where people talk about anything else but the gospel. They tell you how you come to Jesus for health and for wealth, how you come to Jesus without a turning from sin, how you come to Jesus and just take a ticket to heaven, how you come to Jesus because He is simply a safety net, because you can still trust in other gods. What a sad day. "Let him be accursed," the Bible says. Because this is a message we must hold.

Paul knew that this is going to be tough. Paul knew that people would not receive even this tremendously wonderful news. He says, "Because to the Jews, it is like a stumbling block": "How can it be that the carpenter's son would be my Savior?" And to the Greeks, they think it is folly: "How ridiculous!" But that is the way that God has given. Paul says this is like an offense of the cross, people get offended when you share with them good news. "But I am separated unto the gospel, because the gospel of God is the power, the *dunamis* of God unto salvation."

Friends, Paul says to us today: be followers of me. He says again, in 1 Corinthians 11, "Be followers of me' and can I share with you again, Paul is saying, "Successful living begins in Romans 1:1." It begins when we understand that we are servants, bond slaves of Jesus Christ. It begins when we realize that we have a clear mission from Jesus to be leading people to Christ. And it begins when we are truthful and faithful to the message that he has given- the secrets of Paul's success. May it be the ingredients to a fulfilling and fruitful life for you as well. Let's bow for a word of prayer. Father, we are thankful once again for Your Word. Bless these truths to the hearts of Your children. We ask and pray in Jesus name, amen.