

This morning, instead of just looking at one verse, we are going to look at a series of verses and the basis of our thinking will be found in Romans 1:1-7. You may choose to look at the screen, it's a little bit small, but if you have your Bibles open, that would be even better.

Let's look at Romans 1:1-7. The Bible says:

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, 2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) 3 Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; 4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: 5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: 6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: 7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul opens the book of Romans with these seven verses. Now, we've got to take them together as one. The reason is because in the Greek, this is one complete sentence. Now, Paul writes long sentences sometimes and this is one good example of it. It is one long sentence divided into seven verses in our Bibles today, but it is 176 words to tell us about the gospel of God. He begins right there, "separated unto the gospel of God" and he goes on to describe for us the gospel. The gospel is the good news and here it is: the good news of God for His people.

There is a story told about a businessman who went to his banker one day. He went to his banker and said "I have a piece of bad news and a piece of good news for you." The banker was curious "What is it you want to share with me? Tell me the bad news first." "Well, the bad news is that I have not been able to pay my mortgage for 10 years and, you know the bank loan that I took from you, I don't think I would ever be able to pay you back. My business has gone bust, I have borrowed hundreds of thousands of dollars from you to buy my equipment and my machinery and my business has failed. I am afraid I am not able to pay you back anymore. I am going to owe you a lot of money. I'm going to hand over to you my business and you do whatever you want to salvage whatever is left behind." A minute of silence prevailed, the banker was trying to drink in that shock and horror and then

he remembered "You have a piece of good news, isn't it? Tell me the good news!" The businessman said "The good news is that I have chosen to continue banking with you." (Laughter in the congregation). Not quite the good news the banker is looking for. You know, this world tells you that there are good news, great messages around, but let me tell you the really good news of life.

The real good news of this world is the gospel of God, the good news that God is reconciling sinful man to Himself - that is the good news we should be passionate about and that is the theme of the book of Romans. The book of Romans is about righteousness. The book of Romans is about how men, sinful men could be made righteous and have a wonderful relationship, reconciliation with the Almighty God of the heavens. And it is as if Paul could not wait to get started. The whole book, 16 chapters, is really about righteousness, it's almost he can't wait and so right at the beginning, right at the start in verses 1-7, he gives a summary of the message of the gospel. And these seven verses are like a seed from which the rest of the flowers will blossom and bloom throughout the entire 16 chapters.

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This morning, let's look at the gospel of God and the title is simply "A good look at the good news."

I am proud to say that as a preacher, I preach good news, because that is the message of God. He comes to us with great news that you can be reconciled with Him. It's a little bit theoretical, not theoretical, that's not the right word, it's a little bit "chim", a little bit profound today, because we are going to look at some of the details, we are going to look at some of the content of what Paul has to say. But I believe as we come to the end of the message today, you will be blessed because it is God's Word.

#### 1. The Promise of the Good News

So, let's take a good look at the good news this morning. First of all, with regards to the gospel, I see that Paul tells us there is a promise of the good news. This good news, this gospel of Jesus Christ, is not a new idea. It is not a novelty, it is not a new message, it has already been promised from time past. You see, Paul said "I am separated unto the gospel of God, which He had promised afore."

So, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not a new invention, it is a message consistent with the whole of Scripture in time past. I like what Martin Luther had to say about this.

He said the gospel, the good news of God reconciling sinful man to Himself, "represents not a break with the past, but a consummation of it."

And so, what he's saying is that what is written before Jesus Christ leads up to the saving message of Jesus Christ. Absolutely, it is not a new idea, it's what God has promised in the Old Testament, and Jesus is the fulfillment of it.

Paul says in 1Cor 15, "This is the gospel."

1Cor 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*;

Everything that Jesus did and went through was in exact accordance to what the Old Testament has prophesied. It's not new, it is not a surprise to God. God had desired, God had planned it so that He would reconcile sinful man to Himself through the death, burial and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. In fact, our Savior Himself said this: "Search the Scriptures."

Now in those times, they didn't have the book of Romans, 1Cor, Acts or Revelation. When He said "search the Scriptures", it means look at what the Old Testament contains.

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life..

You have salvation. You have a relationship with God.

John 5:39 and they, are they which testify of me.

So, the Old Testament has promised before time what Jesus is already going to accomplish. "When did it start?" you say. You say, "Well Pastor, you say that it's found in the Old Testament. Where, where did it start?" I say it starts right at the Garden of Eden, I say it starts with Genesis 3:15 when God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman."

He is speaking to the devil here. The devil is the one who brought, in a sense introduced, temptation and produced in a sense, the sad state of sin. And God says, "I am going to reverse it all and I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed, her descendent. It shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

(Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. )

That victory over the devil is promised way (back) in the garden, Genesis 3:15. And if you read the Bible, throughout the Bible, whether it be a lamb that was sacrificed or the altar on which the lamb was sacrificed, it's pointing to the message of God reconciling sinful man to Himself.

I am told there are some 331 prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ that are fulfilled in His first coming. 331 prophecies- that's a lot. But you see, everything went according to plan. It's not a surprise to God.

There's a poem that speaks of how Jesus the Savior is found throughout the Scripture. It goes like this:

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I find my Lord in the Bible wherever I chance to look.

He is the theme of the Bible, the center and heart of the book.

He is the Rose of Sharon. He is the lily fair.

Wherever I open my Bible, the Lord of the book is there.

He at the book's beginning gave to the earth its form.

He is the arch of shelter bearing the brunt of the storm,

The burning bush of the desert, the budding of Aaron's rod.

Wherever I look in the Bible, I see the Son of God.

The ram upon Mount Miriah, the ladder from earth to sky,

The scarlet cord in the window and the serpent lifted high,

The smitten rock in the desert, the shepherd with staff and crook,

The face of my Lord I discover wherever I look in the book.

He is the seed of the woman, the Savior virgin born.

He is the Son of David with whom men rejected with scorn.

His garments of grace and of beauty, the stately Aaron deck,

Yet He is a priest forever, for He is of Melchizedek.

Lord of eternal glory whom John the Apostle saw,

Light of the golden city, lamb without spot or flaw.

Bridegroom coming at midnight for whom the virgins look;

Wherever I open my Bible I find my Lord in the book

It's amazing that God's message has remained consistent all these years. His plan of salvation has never changed. When Jesus came, He said, "I am not come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill."

(Mat 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.)

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And so, my friends, the good news is not an afterthought. It has been promised. The message of reconciliation with God is not something God was forced to come up with midway in the course of human history. Jesus is the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. And it's the message that God has promised afore time. It is tremendously precious because it is the only way whereby man can be saved. My friends, it's such a shame if you today can read the entire Bible and not come to Jesus Christ. You will not come to the way of salvation and life because it is not found only in one chapter, it's not found only in one book of the Bible, it is found throughout. It's the only way, it's the only way. Don't miss it- the gospel promised afore time.

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## 2. The Person of the Good News

But let me move on because Paul not only teaches us that the good news has been promised but he tells us secondly, the good news revolves around a person. The good news revolves around a person, the good news of how God reconciles sinful men to Himself is not wrapped up in a set of rules and regulations but it's in a

Person. Two thousand years ago, when the angels came, they said, "Fear not for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, because we send to you a set of rules and regulations." Is that what the angels proclaimed and heralded? No, the angels said "Fear not, for behold we bring you good tidings of great joy, why, for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior which is Christ the Lord." The good tidings of great joy, the good news of God is revolving around the Person of Jesus Christ. Christ is the center of Christianity. Christ is the focus of our good news.

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John Stott, a commentator, a preacher of our day, said this: "Take Christ from Christianity, and you disembowel it" What a word! Take Christ away and you empty out all your internal organs, there is nothing left. He says "There is practically nothing left. Christ is the center of Christianity; all else is circumference."

(John R. W. Stott: "Take Christ from Christianity, and you disembowel it; there is practically nothing left. Christ is the center of Christianity; all else is circumference.")

The core, the heartbeat, of the good news is that God has given us His Son, Jesus Christ.

Another man quoted: "Jesus does not give recipes that show the way to God as others of religion do. He is Himself the way." The good news is Jesus Christ Himself.

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The question now is, "Who is Jesus Christ and what did He do for us?" Looking at these verses, the Bible tells us, (in Romans 1:3) "Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord,"

Let me look at some words here with you. Who is Jesus Christ? Paul says Jesus is first of all the Son, the Son of God. He is divine, He is God, He is no ordinary man. He is the second Person of the Trinity. Secondly, Paul says His name is Jesus, which means 'God is Savior'. Jesus is Jehovah, Hosea, God, Savior. 'God is Savior', that's what his name stands for. The word 'Christ' means 'The Anointed One', 'The Chosen One', 'the One who has the anointing of the Spirit of God' and the word 'Lord' means He is Master, because He is always Lord, He has always been the Lord and He will always be.

(Romans 1:3-4 Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead)

And Paul, in these four words, describes who this person of the gospel is: He is the Son of God, He is the One who came to be the Savior, He is the Chosen One, the Anointed One and He is the Lord of our lives. But what did He do? Paul goes on to say this is what He did. "He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh". This speaks of Christ's incarnation, God becoming man; amazing thought.

You may have heard of this man, CS Lewis, well-known today because of the Chronicles of Narnia, and there was an illustration that he spoke of. He said "Imagine today you have a dog that you love and he is in distress, together with all the other dogs in the world, they are all in distress. The only way you can help this dog out of distress is if you are willing to give up your humanity, to give up your family, to give up your job, to give up your hobbies, to give up your home, to give up everything that you had and to become like a dog and to commune with the dogs. That's the only way you can save the dogs out of distress." He went on to say, "No man would be able to do so" and number two, more importantly, "No man would be willing to do so."

He went on to say, "What man is unable and unwilling to do, God is willing to do" and that's what Jesus did, isn't it? He left the glories of heaven that He may be born as man, 'God-Man', that He may save us from our distress, from our sins. That is the incarnation, that is, Christ coming as man. But he says there is more. The message of the gospel is not just about God coming to die for us, but the message of the gospel requires us to understand that He is now declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

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Jesus Christ was born, suffered and died and is risen again because a dead man is no good for us. A dead Christ cannot save us from our sins, a dead Christ cannot change our lives, a dead Christ is no good for us. In fact, if Jesus remains dead, Christianity is a hoax, it's a joke, it's a lie. But today, we worship a risen Savior and He is declared now to be the Son of God. I like the word 'declared', it's an interesting word. The word 'declared' here is the word '*horizo*'. Sounds familiar? '*Horizo*', from which you get the English word 'horizon'? Do you know what is 'the horizon'? If you are free this evening, go to East Coast, stare out into the sea and look at the horizon. What is the

horizon? Horizon is that line, that very clear line that separates the skies and the sea. It's the clear demarcation, and what Paul is saying here is: He is clearly marked out, 'horizoned' to be the Son of God. Why, because of the resurrection from the dead.

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You know, there can be some people who walk around today and say "I am the son of God, I am the savior of the world, I have great teachings for you." You know what's the question you should ask that person? Don't ask him "What are your teachings?" Don't ask him, "What are the miracles you can do?" Ask him this: "Did you rise from the dead?" (Laughter in the congregation) Because that is what marked Jesus Christ. You know, when the Jewish leaders were asking, "Lord, what is the sign that you will show us you are the Son of God?" Jesus said, "I give you no other sign but that of the prophet Jonah." Jonah, he was in a fish belly for three days and he rose again. And that is the picture Jesus left behind for us. He is marked out, declared, *horizo*, to be the Son of God, by the resurrection from the dead. And you will realize that if you go to the book of Acts, that is the primary emphasis of the apostles' teaching, that Jesus is crucified, yes, but He is risen again, witnessed by many of us.

The gospel is about how Christ died for our sins and rose again and He lives today. That's why, He is the good news. He is our Savior, He lives in us today.

There's a theological university where they had a class going on and they had guest speakers to come and speak. One day, a liberal speaker came. A liberal speaker is someone who denies the Bible and the supernatural aspects of the Bible in particular. So they denied the miracles, they don't believe that there are miraculous, supernatural happenings according to Scripture. So the liberal lecturer came and said "There is no such thing as a resurrection from the dead in the life of Jesus Christ, it's a lie, no such thing happened" and he went on to quote scholar after scholar, book after book, that Jesus did not rise from the dead. Two hours went on and then a man sitting at the back, an old man, took out an apple and started to crunch on the apple; a very loud crunch, crunch. And the lecturer looked at him and said "Sir, do you have a question?" He crunched his apple and said "Yes, I do. I have not read all the scholars you've just quoted," crunch, crunch, "I am not able to give all the quotes that you gave", crunch, crunch. "But, Sir I have a question for you," crunch, crunch, "This apple that I eat, is it sweet or is it sour?" The lecturer paused for a moment and said "Sir, I am afraid I cannot answer your question because I have not tasted your apple." To which the man said "Neither have you tasted my risen



Jesus Christ." And to which the entire class stood up and gave the man a round of applause. What a wonderful answer!

The world tells you today Jesus is not risen. But I tell you today Jesus is risen because He has changed my life. And you can stand up today and say "Jesus is alive because he has changed my life", but more than anything else, we know that He is alive because God says so. He is risen from the dead.

My friends, this is the Person of the gospel. It revolves around not the rules and regulations but around the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is not about someone who is detached from us and wants to help us by remote control. Oh no, it tells us about the God who loves us and came to become like us. And it tells us about the God who is risen and victorious today. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so we see that the gospel today, the good news, is promised afore time and then we see today that the gospel revolves around the person of Christ but can I end lastly with this: the purpose of the good news. And, that's what Paul is going to give us in the remaining verses.

### 3. The Purpose of the Good News.

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What an encouraging part, we come to verse 5. It says here:

"By whom", that is Jesus, "we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name"

Now, when you received the message of the gospel, what do you get? What is the purpose?

1. It tells us here, we received grace. Grace is the unmerited favor of God and what a beautiful word 'grace' is. When I had my son, there's only one name I want to name him- Grace. Ha! (Laughter in the congregation) No, ha ha ha, of course, I was not foolish to call my son Grace. I think, when he goes to school, he has an identity crisis: "Girls stand this side, Grace where would you want to stand?" (Laughter in the congregation). No, but I like the concept, the teaching of grace, so we call him Shaun, which is another form of John, which means 'God is gracious'. I gave him the Chinese name Hau En, not Hau Lian, (meaning 'boastful' in Hokkien) (Laughter in the congregation). Hau En, Hau means great or mega and Hau En means, 'mega grace'. I

hope that Shaun, if there's anything he needs to learn in this life, is learn to declare, to depend on the grace of God. Grace - and as you come to Jesus, as you receive the good news, you know what you receive? You receive grace, the unmerited favor of God.

My friends, isn't this astounding? Absolutely amazing- that sinful men like we are can receive the favor of God because of Jesus Christ. We deserve nothing but hell, we deserve nothing but wrath, we deserve nothing good from God whom we have sinned against. But because of Jesus and what He did on the cross and how He is risen again, we receive favor and this favor is so amazing that Paul goes on to say in verse 7, 'When you received this grace, God looks at you in a very different light' He says, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God". If I may say, you are God's darling, you are God's precious jewels, you are "beloved of God".

(Romans 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.")

There is a theologian who was asked this question: "Sir, you have studied the Bible, you have read so much, you have come across so many sayings. Can I ask you a question? What is the most profound statement, theological statement, you have ever heard or read in your life?" Without skipping a beat, the theologian says "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so." The first song we sang this morning, isn't it? Jesus loves me this I know. Don't you think that is the most profound statement in the world? That God could love a sinner like me? Oh, this is what it is: we are beloved, we are beloved of God.

I like what Max Lucado wrote about this. He said "There are many reasons God saves you: to bring glory to himself, to appease his justice, to demonstrate his sovereignty. But one of the sweetest reasons God saved you is because he is fond of you. He likes having you around."

If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If he had a wallet, your photo would be in it. If he had an iPhone, your picture would be the wallpaper on it too. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, he'll listen. He can live anywhere in the universe, and he chose your heart. And what about the Christmas gift he sent you in Bethlehem - His only begotten son? Face it, friend, He's crazy about you!

I think all the ladies here say, "Oooo!" (Laughter in the congregation) That should be the response of the ladies, "Oh, this is so nice, so sweet." It is! You are beloved of

God! The men should also say “Wow!” (Laughter in the congregation). You should! Because that's what the Bible says. Hey, in the past you fear God, you fear hell, you fear a lot of things. You are unsure of your standing before the Creator but because of Jesus, because of the good news, wow, I received grace, God's unmerited favor towards me. I received a description- I am “beloved of God”.

Paul goes on to say, “Not only are you beloved, you are called to be saints.” You are set apart from the world, you are special to Me. God tells us that you will receive peace. My friends, because of Jesus Christ, every good and perfect gift comes your way.

In the past, you can't expect anything else but the judgment of sin. But now you can expect everything through Jesus Christ, who has blessed us richly with every spiritual blessing in high places. What a blessing it is!

This story would be familiar to you- It's about an old man, an old tycoon, who left behind a huge inheritance. But, it's unique in a sense, his inheritance are all in pictures and art. He had no son, he had no children because the only son he had died when he was very young, a teenager and so this man decided that all this wealth will be auctioned off. And so auction day came. Men and women flooded the place because everyone wanted a piece of the masterpieces, wanted a piece of the beautiful art. There were so many paintings just waiting to be gotten by the highest bidder. Auction began, and the first piece to be auctioned off was a very simple, humble painting of a young boy. The boy was the man's son and this painting was very ordinary. The people saw it and knew that there was no value in this painting. It was a very amateurish work of art and so nobody wanted to bid. But the auctioneer waited for a long time. People started to whisper, “Let's get on with this. Come on I want that piece, that masterpiece, not this lousy one” and everyone was restless until an old man stood up and said, “Sir, I have not much money. This is all I have but I am going to give all I have to have this painting because it is the painting of the old man's son. I used to work as the servant of this house, I love this son. Can I have this painting?” Everybody was cheering, because (they thought) ‘at least we can get this over and done with’. ‘Now, give this painting to the poor old man.’ But as the painting was handed over, the auctioneer now pronounced the second part of the will. The tycoon has decreed that whoever bids for this painting of his son gets all the paintings. Because he said, “He who has the son has it all.”

That's the same with our relationship with God. The only difference is you don't even need to pay.

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My friends, if you received Jesus as your Savior, you have it all, that's what it says. You are beloved. You are graced, you are given peace, because of the gospel that is promised afore time and revolves around the person of Jesus Christ who came as man, who went to the cross to die and rose again the third day for your sins. You received it all.

But my friends, there is more. Paul says the purpose of the good news is not only that you will receive grace, but look at the second part, you will also receive apostleship. First a blessing, next you will be a blessing, receiving apostleship. The word '*apostleship*', is '*apostole*' from which we understand the word 'to be sent on a mission'. Paul is saying we received the grace of God and now, we received the mission from God. Now it's interesting, if you look at your Bibles, verse 1, Paul begins as 'Paul, a servant'. So, he begins with himself, 'I'. But when he comes to verse 5, he says "By whom *we* have received grace and apostleship."

That subtlety tells us that he's not saying that this apostleship, this sense of mission, is given exclusively to 'me'. We, in a sense, have received a mission. We are all in a sense sent on a mission. We are all in a sense 'an apostle' now, not the apostle with capital "A", the office of an apostle, no, we don't. But we are all in a sense sent on a mission just like Paul is. Because, when you received the good news, God says, "You are now to be my ambassadors, you are to be the salt and the light, you are to be making disciples of all nations" and it cuts across all ethnic groups, cuts across all kinds of background. Those who belong to Jesus are sent on a mission.

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You know, there is that thinking, a lie, in the church today that says, "Only the pastor who is ordained can be a preacher of the good news, only those who are full-time can be the messengers of the gospel, only those who have been through seminary training are on a mission. The rest of us, we can be contented to be church pew warmers." My friends, that's a lie because if you received Jesus, he says, "By whom ye receive not only the grace, but also the apostleship, the mission." You don't have to wait for your pastor to say "Hey, let's get preaching" or "Let's get serving" or "Let's be a blessing to others", you don't have to wait for your pastor to put his hand on yours before you can say, "I am now ordained to go." Jesus has already appointed you to go.

I read about this man, Donald Grey Barnhouse, and about how he was ordained to the ministry one day, and this is what he wrote- a very, very humorous man I must

say as he wrote these words- words that confirm the fact that we are sent by Jesus and not by men. Let's look at what he said.

“The moderator of the Presbytery asked me questions, and I answered them. They told me to kneel down. Men then came toward me, and one man was asked to make the prayer. I felt his hand come on my head, and then the hands of others touching my head, and pressing down on his and the other hands. The ring of men closed in, and one man began to pray. It was a nice little prayer and had one little pet phrase in it, ‘Father, guard him with Thy love, guide him with Thine eye and gird him with Thy power.’

I kept thinking about those three verbs, ‘guard, guide and gird’. It seemed as foolish as performing a marriage ceremony upon two people who had been living together for a quarter of a century and who had a family. I knew I had been ordained long since, and that the Hands that had been on my head were Hands that had been pierced and nailed to a cross. I knew I had been ordained by Jesus long ago.

Years later, the man that made the prayer that day signed a paper saying that he was opposed to the doctrine of the virgin birth, opposed to the doctrine of the deity of Christ, opposed to the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, opposed to the doctrine of the miracles of Christ, opposed to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures, as tests for ordination or a man's good standing in the ministry.

When I read his name on that list, I put my hand on the top of my head and smiled to myself wondering how many dozen times I had had my hair cut since his unholy hands had touched me. And I had the profound consolation of knowing that the Hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, wounded and torn because of my sin, had touched me and given me an apostleship which was from God and which was more important than any that men could approve by their little ceremonies.

So strange, isn't it? We feel we cannot go unless someone puts his hand on us. But my friends, Jesus has already put His hand on your life. When He called you to salvation, He called you to grace and He called you to apostleship. He called you to be bringing the message of the gospel, He called you to be reconciling sinful men to a Holy God. All are sent on a mission, none excepted.

It's a sad thing, you know, when the church feels we can all be comfortable sitting on where we are and not realizing He has a greater commission for you. Ah, my friends, it doesn't matter where you work, where you live, who you are with; your mission

remains the same. 'Sent on a mission', a gospel mission. Not a political mission, not a social mission but a spiritual mission reconciling sinful men to a Holy God.

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But what is the result of this apostleship we should aim for? What is the result we should aim for? What should we expect to see if people are properly reconciled with God?

Let's look at what Paul says. Paul says you received this apostleship by Jesus Christ, "for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name." Let me start from the end.

1. The word 'nations' is the word '*ethnos*', from which we get the word 'people groups'. The gospel message is to be given to all people groups. There is no group that should be exempted or deemed impossible for the grace of God. It is for all people.

2. Let's look at the word 'faith'. The word 'faith' here refers to the whole body of truth. Jude says, "Earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to you". It represents the teachings, the entire body of teaching in the Bible. And what is the result you should aim for? He says, "As you go about your gospel mission, your apostleship, the result is that men and women of all nations should have obedience to the faith." You can circle, underline, highlight the word 'obedience'. Go ahead and do it, do it! Because that's where we often miss out, *that's where we often miss out*. Because the church today is contented, aiming for professions of faith but it is absolutely truncating the will of God. The will of God is more than profession, the will of God is more than a hand raised, or a head bowed, or walking down the aisle. The will of God is that men and women of all people groups would come to obedience of faith.

Time stamp in audio 0:41:12.2.

It's amazing - this is so clear in the great commission and yet we miss it. Jesus says "Go, make disciples, baptize them and teach them to observe", if I may put another word, "teach them to obey all things whatsoever I have commanded you." But the church today seemed to miss out just that last phrase, 'obedience', and Paul is serious about this because at the end of the epistle, he repeats in Romans 16:19 "For your obedience is come abroad" He saying, "This is what is well known about the church in Rome: that you are obedient to the faith."

(Rom 16:19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.)

Ah friends, this congregation ought to be known for our obedience to the faith. We are not to be known because we have a nice auditorium. We are not to be known because we sing the loudest. We are not to be known because we use PowerPoint for sermon slides. We are not to be known because we have good attendances on Sundays. But this ought to be known of God's people: that we are obedient to the faith.

Again, he repeats in Romans 16:26, "But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith"- Obedience. Let's not truncate the great commission, let's not truncate the work of God. My friends, obedience is what God looks for because I think, in a sense, it is the best evidence of our relationship with Jesus Christ. If you belong to Jesus Christ and if you really have a living relationship with Jesus Christ, it should be marked by obedience, should be marked with growth, with a relationship with Him.

Time stamp in audio 0:43:29.5.

Two days ago on Friday, we invited Sister Betty who is in charge of our children's ministry to help our staff in understanding what it takes to reach children. We are reaching some children in the Jurong area and we need to learn some of the simple tips and advices on how we can connect with children and teach them. She gave a very simple illustration and I will share it with you. She said, "Imagine I have a plant in my hands" and she took out a water bottle and said "I water the plant every day. I water it for months but it has not grown. Why?" We have very cheeky people in our staff group and they gave funny kinds of answers, they said "Oh, because there's no water in a water bottle, because the water bottle cap is not taken off". They gave all kinds of reasons, but what do you think is the reason?" I see whether you are cheeky also. Why is it that after watering for months the plant doesn't grow? (Congregation responds) Sorry? No sun? Alright, I say also got sun. I also bring it out to the sun, got water, also got sun. It's true, where there is no sun it is very hard to grow. Alright. It's plastic? Good. No fertilizer? Wah, like you guys we were buzzing... and then, when she was disappointed with our lack of intelligence (Laughter in the congregation), she finally said, "The plant didn't grow because it is dead."

You can water it all you want but it will not grow because it is dead. My friends, if your life is not marked with obedience, you know why? Maybe it is because there is no life to begin with, in the first place. Didn't Jesus say, "Many would say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, have I not prophesied in your name and done great works and miracles?'"? And Jesus said "I never knew you." Doesn't matter what you profess, you can argue all you want, but by their fruit you shall know them. And Paul is determined to say, as we bring about the message of the gospel, this must characterize those who received the gospel - a life of obedience.

Obedience is not a requirement for salvation, but it is a reflection of your salvation. We are not saved by works but we are saved unto works. You don't do obedience to get salvation but salvation leads to obedience. My friends, are you saved today? Oh you say, "Yes, Pastor. I remember I raised my hand ten years ago. I remembered one night my sister prayed for me that sinner's prayer. I remember, in a stadium, I walked down the aisle." But, what is your life today? What has your life been for the past ten years? Is your salvation hinging on that one raise of your hands? By their fruits you shall know them. It is the life of obedience that marks out a true believer in Jesus Christ. It is a life of obedience that God is looking for. You know why? Because the Bible says, "for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name." That which glorifies the Holy God of the heavens is when sinful man is reconciled with God and is living a life of obedience, of conformity to the holy scriptures, a life that is truly righteous. That brings glory to God.

My friends, do you know why God gave us the gospel? "Yes," you may say, "He gave us the gospel that we may be saved from hell". Yes, it may be that God gave us the gospel that we may have a passport to heaven. Oh but primarily, God gave us the gospel for His name, that the redeemed, amongst all nations will praise Him by our obedience in our lives. This, I think, is a good look at the good news of God.

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It is not an afterthought, it is the desire and the plan of God before the foundation of the world, promised afore in the Scriptures. The gospel centers around the person of Jesus Christ, not a set of rules nor regulations, but a God who loved us and lived amongst us and died for us and is risen again, living in us by His Spirit. And the gospel is that we as His people may be graced, beloved, endowed, blessed and that we may be sent on this mission that all nations would come to the same obedience of faith. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ and this is what the church must know, that we may glorify Him. Shall we bow for a word of prayer?



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Friends, take this time and consider in your own life the state of your heart: Where are you? When Adam and Eve sinned against God, God asked them the question: “Where are you?” This morning, maybe God would have to ask you the same question: Where are you? Where are you? Do you hear the good news of God and chuck it aside or would you say, “Dear God, I thank you for the good news and I need the good news this day. The best that I know how, I want to turn from my sin and trust in Jesus for salvation and life. I accept Him to be my Savior, my Lord, my Master. I want to live that life of righteousness, I want to live for you“.

Maybe some of us are in church today this morning, and we have assumed for a long time we are God's children because we raised our hands, we said that prayer, we come to church. But has there been evidence of fruit and obedience to the faith? The lethargy of your life may be rooted in the fact that maybe you have never quite come into that life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. Where are you, my friends? Are you sitting today on your blessed assurance? And you say, “I have been a Christian for twenty years, I am a mature man now, let me enjoy the rest of my retirement years” Ah, my friends, you are sent on a mission, not by your pastor, not by your discipleship leader, but by your Lord, who gave His life for you. Where are you today? The good news- it should change our lives. Father, thank You for Your Word, bless it to the hearts of Your people, we pray. Make us obedient to the faith. We pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen, God bless.