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Paul, Apostle

Romans 1.1

Series: The Pure Gospel

The Village Church

March 19, 2023

I. **The GOAT**

- A. Remarkable how the meaning of words and phrases changes over time
 - 1. Sometimes, the very same word can mean the opposite as common usage evolves
 - 2. “Silly”
 - a. We know what it means now – frivolous, lacking in substance or reason
 - b. But early in the 13th Century “silly” meant pious – someone who was serious about their religion
 - c. Then later in the 13th Century it meant someone who was to be pitied
 - 3. “Leech”
 - a. Worm-like creatures that attach themselves to animals, including humans, suck their blood
 - b. But we know there was a time when such creatures were used for medicinal purposes
 - c. But in Old English it actually meant a physician
 - d. Try calling your doctor a leech; see how they react; smile when you tell them
- B. Goat
 - 1. We used to think of a goat in strongly negative terms
 - a. One could be the hero or the goat
 - b. The hero was the one who did something remarkable to save the day
 - c. The goat was one who made the worst possible mistake at the worst possible time, and plunged the constituency into disaster
 - 2. In athletic terms in might be the kicker who missed the chip-shot field goal to win the championship at the last second
 - a. Or the basketball player who had two foul shots at the end of the game to win the game – and missed them both
 - 3. It’s possible that the negative connotation came from the Bible
 - a. The Hebrew’s use of the scapegoat, one of a pair of goats released into the wilderness taking with it all the sins that had been transferred to it from the people
 - 4. Truth be told, the guy who missed the easy field goal did not make the only mistake of the game for his team

- a. There were plenty other mistakes by plenty of other players that might have made the field goal unnecessary
- b. But his timing was lousy; he becomes the scapegoat
- 5. And the guy who missed the two foul shots at the end of the game was not the only player on his team to miss foul shots
 - a. But again, his timing was lousy; he also became the scapegoat
- 6. So the goat became the opposite of the hero
 - a. And is viewed negatively

C. GOAT

- 1. But today the word GOAT is actually used in the opposite way
 - a. In a most positive way
 - b. In fact, in the most positive way possible
- 2. It is used as an acronym
 - a. Where the letters represent words, and the word represents a phrase
 - b. The phrase is Greatest Of All Time
- 3. And its use is predominant in the world of athletics

D. Football

- 1. Tom Brady has been designated by many as the GOAT as a quarterback
- 2. Since the quarterback is the de facto leader of a football team, he gets a great deal of credit when his teams win
- 3. And win they did
 - a. 18 division titles
 - b. 14 conference championships
 - c. 10 Super Bowl appearances
 - d. 7 Super Bowl championships
- 4. Now there have been many other great quarterbacks
 - a. Many of whom have surpassed Brady in a number of statistical categories
 - b. Joe Montana, Peyton Manning, Johnny Unitas
 - c. Some have passed for more yards, had higher quarterback ratings
 - d. But since winning is the name of the game, Tom Brady seems to top the list
- 5. He's the GOAT as a football quarterback

E. Basketball

- 1. The debate rages in basketball
- 2. Michael Jordan or LeBron James
 - a. Both dominant during their times; never played each other
 - b. Jordan won 6 NBA championships; James 4 (but is still playing)
- 3. But then, what about Jerry West
 - a. The NBA logo is modeled after West
 - b. In a different era he was dominant
 - c. But he didn't win as many championships – only one!
- 4. But none of those guys did what Wilt Chamberlain did
 - a. Scored 100 points in a game
 - b. Averaged 50 points in a season

- c. Got 55 rebounds in one game
 - d. Averaged 30 points and 20 rebounds in a season – 7 times!
- F. So judging the GOAT in basketball is a highly subjective process
- 1. Fraught with deciding what statistical criteria one should use
 - 2. And it gives sports fans something to obsess on when they call in the sports talk shows

II. **Paul – The Greatest Christian**

- A. It's probably also a subjective process in trying to identify the GOAT Christian
- 1. Not that the Bible even wants us to speculate about such things
- B. But last week we embarked on our study of the book of Romans
- 1. A book authored by the apostle Paul
 - 2. A book which is said to be Paul's magnum opus
 - a. The Magna Carta of Christianity
 - b. The most complete and concise explanation of Christianity every produced
- C. I believe a case can be made that the author of Romans, the apostle Paul, was the GOAT Christian
- 1. That it's hard to identify another believer in Jesus who surpasses the apostle Paul in a wide range of categories
- D. Why would that be significant?
- 1. Let's say Tom Brady was the GOAT quarterback
 - a. If you're a serious football fan, and Tom Brady wrote a book on being a quarterback
 - b. You'd go right out and buy it, and read it!
 - 2. And let's say the presumed GOAT Michael Jordan wrote a book on basketball, you'd go right out and buy that book too!
 - 3. In fact, the jacket cover of the books that they would right would list all their accomplishments
 - a. And those would be the credentials to give validity to what they would publish
- E. So if Paul wrote a book – and he wrote a bunch of them – what would be on the jacket cover of his books
- 1. What would the publisher list by way of credentials to encourage other believers in Jesus to buy, read, and study his books?
 - 2. Well, in one way or another, the publisher would want you to know that Paul is the GOAT Christians
 - a. And then various categories in which he is exemplary would be enumerated
 - 3. And so, by way of introducing, in our study of Romans, the author of the book of Romans
 - a. I will provide his credentials
 - b. And in the process, we'll learn a lot about Paul
 - c. We'll learn a lot about what is important in the Christian faith
 - d. And we'll probably learn something about ourselves in the process

- F. Before we do that – need to clarify one thing
1. Some of you may be thinking, “Now wait just a minute. Isn’t Jesus the Greatest Christian of All Time?”
 2. And I will immediately say, “Absolutely not!”
 3. Jesus is not a Christian
 4. Jesus is the Christ
 5. Christians are Christ-followers
 6. There is nobody in the category of Jesus
 7. He is unique – not in the sense that a lot of people misuse that word today
 - a. Unique doesn’t just mean unusual
 - b. Unique means one of a kind; there is no one like Him
 8. He alone is the One to be worshiped
 - a. Not Paul, or any other Christian – no matter how great as Christians they may be

III. **The Greatest Bondservant**

- A. **Romans 1:1** (NKJV) — 1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ...
- B. Paul’s own self-designation, his own personal credential, is that he is a slave
1. **Doulos (Gk) = slave**
 2. There’s another word for “servant” in Gk – pais – whether indentured or otherwise
 3. Doulos designates compulsory service
 4. Also established a relationship with a **Lord – Kurios (Gk)**
 - a. Slave purchased by a Lord
 - b. Owned by a Lord
 5. In the ancient world, a doulos was of the lowest stature in Roman society
- C. If you want to be a great Christian you must be a great slave, a great bondservant, a great doulos – of the Lord Jesus Christ
1. Jesus, talking about masters lording it over their servants
 2. **Matthew 20:26–28** (NKJV) — 26 “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”
- D. The theme of slavery is prominent in Romans – as it is in his other books
1. Understood that having grown up as a Roman in Tarsus
 2. And so in Romans Paul prominently contrasts the human condition in terms of slavery
 - a. Either slaves to sin
 - b. Or slaves to God
- E. And so Paul’s own self-designation, the one that he would insist be placed on the jacket cover of his books
1. Is that he is a bondservant, a slave, of Jesus Christ

IV. **The Greatest Missionary**

- A. About half of the book of Acts is about Paul's missionary journeys
 - 1. Three journeys are described, and there may have been a fourth
 - a. Originating from the church in Antioch in Syria
 - 2. Planted churches in Cyprus, in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), in Greece and elsewhere in Europe
- B. Evidence of him planting 14 churches in the places he went
 - 1. May have been more
- C. More importantly, the churches he planted were multiplying churches, reproducing churches
 - 1. From the churches he planted, dozens of others were planted
- D. It's possible that he even went as far as Spain to plant churches
 - 1. That was certainly his expressed desire
- E. Doubtful that Christianity would be anything more than a minor, middle-eastern Jewish sect without Paul
 - 1. The Greatest Missionary
- F. If you want to be a great Christian, you need to be missions-minded just as Paul was
 - 1. We can't all go as he did
 - 2. But we can all participate, do our part

V. **The Greatest Theologian**

- A. He wrote 13 books of the NT – 14 if you count Hebrews (which the church has historically attributed to Paul)
 - 1. That's about half of the NT
 - a. More than Peter
 - b. More than John
 - c. More than any other apostle
- B. The only systematic theological treatise – Romans – written by Paul
- C. His writings were regarded by the early church as scripture
 - 1. **2 Peter 3:14–16** (NKJV) — 14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.
 - 2. So Peter includes Paul's writings as scripture
- D. Paul was arguably the Greatest Theologian
 - 1. No theologian can even begin to develop a theology apart from the writings of the apostle Paul
 - 2. Without Paul, it's hard to imagine where the church would be theologically

VI. **The Greatest Pastor**

- A. Usually we make a big distinction between theologians and pastors
1. We say, “So and so is a wonderful pastor, but he leaves something to be desired as a theologian”
 2. Or, “So and so is a wonderful theologian, but I wouldn’t want him to visit me in the hospital; he’s not so much a pastor”
- B. Not so with Paul
- C. **Romans 1:8–15** (NKJV) —
1. 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.
 2. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,
 3. 10 making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.
 4. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—
 5. 12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.
 6. 13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.
 7. 14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.
 8. 15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.
 - a. That’s a pastor speaking, isn’t it?
- D. **2 Corinthians 2:1–4** (NKJV) —
1. 1 But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow.
 2. 2 For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me?
 3. 3 And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all.
 4. 4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.
- E. **2 Corinthians 11:22–31** (NKJV) —
1. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.
 2. 23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.
 3. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

4. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;
 5. 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;
 6. 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—
 7. 28 **besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.**
 8. 29 **Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?**
 9. 30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.
 10. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.
- F. This is a pastor speaking
1. The Greatest Pastor

VII. **The Greatest Jew**

- A. **Philippians 3:1–6** (NKJV) —
1. 1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.
 2. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!
 3. 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,
 4. 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:
 5. 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;
 6. 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.
- B. **Acts 26:4–5** (NKJV) —
1. 4 “My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know.
 2. 5 They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.
- C. Jesus was a Jew
1. Arguably – the Greatest Jew
 - a. Because he was a true child of Abraham
 - b. A child of faith
 - c. A child with a circumcised heart

VIII. **The Greatest Intellectual**

- A. Even apart from his theological writings in the NT
- B. Studied in Jerusalem with Gamaliel
1. Most famous rabbinic teacher of his day

- a. Wrote “The Glory of the Law”
 - 2. Gamaliel was the grandson of the great Hillel
 - 3. President of the Sanhedrin through 3 emperors
- C. Engaged in a rigorous study of the scriptures with Gamaliel
 - 1. Read all the commentaries, the midrash
- D. Required to learn a trade, to support himself
 - 1. Typical Tarsian trade – tent making
- E. Fluent in Hebrew, Greek, Latin
- F. Well read in Pagan philosophy
 - 1. Quoted from Aratus in the NT, Stoic philosopher of Cilicia
- G. Welcome in courts of religious and cultural leaders
 - 1. High priests
 - 2. Governors and kings
- H. Had the equivalent of 5 Ph.D.’s by 21
- I. Master of logic
 - 1. As will be evident in our study of Romans
- J. As an intellectual in his day, he was without peer
 - 1. The Greatest Intellectual as a Christian

IX. **The Greatest Man of Culture**

- A. **Tarsus – “no mean city”**
 - 1. Center of commerce
 - a. Mouth of the Cydnus River
 - b. Major overland trade routes
 - 2. Free city
 - a. No required to pay tribute to Rome typical of conquered cities
 - 3. Intellectual center – meeting place of philosophers and poets
 - a. Known for Stoicism
 - b. University city – Tarsus was home of a great university
 - c. Received the finest secular education available
 - 4. We ought not underestimate the value of a secular education
 - a. Cf Moses (Egyptian) and Paul (Greco-Roman)
 - 5. Athletic center
 - a. Paul used many athletic analogies and illustrations
 - b. Understood that world as well as the academic world
- B. Family
 - 1. Strict Jewish home
 - a. Pharisee
 - 2. Saul – Jewish name
 - a. Paul – Roman name
 - 3. Roman citizen
 - a. Used frequently to facilitate his journeys
- C. Well educated in a synagogue school
 - 1. Best of education, both secular and religious
- D. Greatest man of culture

X. **The Greatest Martyr**

A. **2 Corinthians 11:22–27** (NKJV) —

1. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.
2. 23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.
3. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.
4. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;
5. 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;
6. 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—

B. You think you've had a bad day?

1. We all have bad days
 - a. But he went through those things because he was a Christian
2. Willingly

C. **2 Timothy 4:6–8** (NKJV) —

1. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.
2. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
3. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

D. We don't know for sure how he died

1. Tradition has it that he was beheaded by Nero around the time Rome burned – which Nero blamed on the Christians
 - a. Peter was said to have been crucified – upside down as Peter did not want to appear too much like Christ
 - b. Paul was beheaded because he was a Roman citizen

E. But the word for martyr – martyria – means “witness”

1. And Paul took that seriously
 - a. He spoke in Romans 12 about being a living sacrifice
 - b. He said in 1 Corinthians 15 that “in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily”

F. The story goes that some of the first Alliance missionaries, on their way to Congo, were on a ship

1. Told someone on the ship where they were going, and that they were going as missionaries
 - a. The person said, “You know you could die doing that.”
2. They answered, “We died before we left”

3. That was Paul
 - a. He was the Greatest martyr
 - b. Willing to suffer and die for his faith

XI. The Greatest Sinner

- A. But you know what else Paul was?
 1. He was the Greatest Sinner
- B. 1 Timothy 1:15 (NKJV) —
 1. 15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,
 2. of whom I am chief. (The foremost, the worst)
- C. Paul – the chief of sinners
 1. Of course he had in mind the fact that for a time he persecuted the church, rounding up Christians, putting them in prison
 - a. And in the case of the apostle James, approving of his execution
 2. But it was more than that
- D. Romans 7 – “wretched man that I am!” speaking of his flesh
 1. You can’t be a great Christian unless you are a great sinner
- E. Clarify
 1. Do I think Paul was really the greatest sinner as a Christian?
 - a. No, I don’t
 2. But the closer you come to knowing Christ, the more you become aware of how far short you really are of His righteousness
 3. And you come daily to Him, casting yourself on His mercy
 - a. Relying ever more on His grace
- F. Are you a sinner?
 1. Are you a great sinner?
 2. Are you saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone?

XII. The Greatest Christ-lover

- A. Paul’s view of his accomplishments
 1. Philippians 3:7–11 (NKJV) —
 - a. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.
 - b. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ
 - c. 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;
 - d. 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 - e. 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.
- B. Romans 1:1–7 (NKJV) —

1. 1 Paul, a bondservant **of Jesus Christ**, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God
 2. 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,
 3. 3 concerning **His Son Jesus Christ our Lord**, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,
 4. 4 and declared to be the **Son of God** with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.
 5. 5 Through **Him** we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for **His name**,
 6. 6 among whom you also are the called **of Jesus Christ**;
 7. 7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and **the Lord Jesus Christ**.
- C. Paul's love for Jesus is not separated from his being the great sinner
1. Jesus was anointed by a sinful woman in the home of a Pharisee
 2. **Luke 7:44–47** (NKJV) —
 - a. 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.
 - b. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.
 - c. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.
 - d. 47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, **for she loved much**. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”
 3. Paul, the Great Sinner, received great forgiveness
 - a. And loved greatly
- D. J. Gresham Machen:
1. Paulinism is to be accounted for by the love of Paul for his Savior...
 2. the religion of Paul was not founded upon a complex of ideas derived from Judaism or from paganism.
 3. It was founded upon the historical Jesus.
 4. But the historical Jesus upon whom it was founded was not the Jesus of modern reconstruction, but the Jesus of the whole New Testament, and of Christian faith;
 5. not a teacher who survived only in the memory of his disciples, but the Savior who after his redeeming work was done still lived and could still be loved.
- E. Boice:
1. Many of us, at least those who take time to read a study of Romans or certain other Bible commentaries, are convinced of the truthfulness of Christianity.
 2. Perhaps we can even articulate the doctrines of the faith, as Paul does.
 3. We can systematize theology.

4. Ah, but do we love Jesus?
5. Are our thoughts constantly occupied with him?
6. Is he at the forefront?
7. Is he the center?
8. Is he the beginning and the end?
9. When we talk to one another, do we speak often of him?
10. Are we content to let the honors of the world pass by, so long as we can be known as Christ's servants?
11. This gets very close to what is chiefly wrong with our contemporary Christianity.
12. Our religion is one of personalities, plans, and programs, of buildings, books, and bargains.
13. Because it is not the faith of those who love Jesus; it is shallow and selfish, constantly shifting in the ebbs and flows of cultural standards.
14. As we grow in grace we will think less of these things and more of him who "loved me and gave himself for me."

XIII. Conclusion

- A. That is the author of the book we are studying together
 1. Bondservant
 2. Missionary
 3. Theologian
 4. Pastor
 5. Jew
 6. Intellectual
 7. Man of culture
 8. Martyr
 9. Sinner
 10. Christ-lover
- B. And this author beckons you elsewhere
 1. **1 Corinthians 11:1** (NKJV) — 1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.