

\* These notes are provided for personal devotional and study purposes only. They may not be published, distributed, or disseminated to others without the permission of the author.

**Apostolic Authority**

**Romans 1.1**

**Series: The Pure Gospel**

**The Village Church**

**April 23, 2023**

I. Introduction

- A. Today we find ourselves back in the book of Romans
  - 1. Series we began – believe it or not – more than a month ago!
  - 2. A couple of interruptions
    - a. Palm Sunday
    - b. Easter
    - c. I was away for two weeks
- B. When we began the series we had two messages
  - 1. **The Magna Carta of Christianity**
    - a. The significance of the book of Romans for us as Christians
    - b. And for the history of the Church
    - c. And, in fact, for the history of western civilization
  - 2. Then we looked more specifically at **Paul**
    - a. Any legitimate study of a book of the Bible, especially one as important as Romans, requires some sense of its author
    - b. We, as believers in Jesus, know that the author of all of Scripture is God the Holy Spirit
    - c. But God uses human authors
    - d. Uses their gifts, personalities, experiences to communicate His word to us
    - e. And there is no greater example of that than Paul – who wrote about half of the New Testament
    - f. And whose magnum opus, his greatest exposition of the Christian faith, is Romans
  - 3. We saw in that message that Paul was the GOAT
    - a. **The Christian Greatest of All Time**
    - b. The Greatest
      - (1) Bondservant
      - (2) Missionary
      - (3) Theologian
      - (4) Pastor
      - (5) Jew
      - (6) Intellectual
      - (7) Man of culture
      - (8) Martyr
      - (9) Sinner

(10) Christ-lover

- C. All of those are compelling reasons to take seriously what Paul says
  - 1. In Romans
    - a. Or in any other of his writings
  - 2. But none of them – as impressive as they are, either individually or collectively – are the ultimate basis for Paul’s writing commanding our obedience
    - a. For Paul’s message to bind our consciences
    - b. For us to be convicted
    - c. For us to be humbled
    - d. For us to cast ourselves on God’s mercy
    - e. For us to be transformed into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ

II. **Who Says?**

- A. Text
  - 1. **Romans 1:1** (ESV) — 1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...
- B. We saw that Paul identifies himself as a servant of Christ Jesus
  - 1. Servant – **doulos (Gk); slave, bondservant**
- C. So Paul was a slave
  - 1. Who listens to slaves?
    - a. After all, aren’t slaves among the lowest human beings on the planet in terms of social status
    - b. As far as their capacity to influence others
    - c. Who listens to slaves?
- D. Social media has given us new categories of humans
  - 1. Used to regard certain people as worthy of guiding the thought and activity of a society or culture
    - a. Used to regard pastors and theologians that way – not so much any more!
    - b. Then there were statesmen or politicians – forget that!
    - c. Then scientists, or artists, or intellectuals
  - 2. The early 2000's there were people who were famous for being famous
    - a. Not because they had accomplished anything of significance; just because they were known, were famous
    - b. They were on the covers of the fashion magazines and the tabloids
    - c. Speaks to the vacuous character of our generation – that we would pay attention to such people as if they had some great insight to offer our dysfunctional culture
  - 3. But then, even more recently, we have a new category – influencers
    - a. People who sway public opinion, not because they are authorities on any given matter
    - b. Or because they have any sense of accomplishment

- c. But simply because they have a popular YouTube channel, or a Twitter account that has a million followers, or a Facebook page with thousands of “likes”
    - d. Even though many of these influencers have been on the planet barely long enough to have learned to tie their shoes
  - 4. Truth be told, we shouldn’t – and especially our younger generation shouldn’t – be captivated by the ideas of people who are either famous for being famous, or are the new generation of influencers
- E. But in this case, I’m going to suggest to you that instead you should cast your lot with a slave
  - 1. A slave of Jesus Christ
    - a. One particular slave
    - b. Paul of Tarsus
- F. Because v. 1 tells us a bit more about this slave
  - 1. And what it tells us makes all the difference in the world
  - 2. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus...
  - 3. **Called**
  - 4. **To be an apostle**
  - 5. **Set apart for the gospel of God**
- G. What does it mean that Paul was called as an apostle?
  - 1. Whether we should listen to him – and even obey him – depends on the answer to that question
    - a. Which in itself will help us to understand the basics of Christian theology and the nature of the Word of God
  - 2. The issue revolves around the use of two words
    - a. **Call**
    - b. **Apostle**
  - 3. Both words are used in different ways in the NT
    - a. And sorting them out is one of the necessary competencies of this course on Christianity 101

### III. **Called**

- A. The word “call” is used in three different ways in the NT
  - 1. We need to understand each one
  - 2. Not only to understand Paul’s authority
    - a. But to understand our own standing as believers in Jesus
- B. **General Call**
  - 1. General call is one that is extended by God, or by His representative, to all human beings
    - a. A call to repent and believe the gospel
  - 2. It is general because it is indiscriminate
    - a. It is broadcast widely
  - 3. It is summarized by the statement by Jesus
    - a. **Matthew 22:14** (ESV) — 14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

4. Context for that statement is Jesus' parable of the wedding feast
  - a. Original invitees declined the invitation
  - b. Others were invited in their place
  - c. One of them tried to get in without the proper attire – without wedding clothes
  - d. He was denied – because many are called, but few are chosen
5. General call is an invitation to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ
  - a. Many receive that invitation
  - b. But few actually act upon that invitation, and come to the wedding in faith, clothed with the righteousness of Christ which is received only by faith
6. All of you have heard this gospel invitation
  - a. All of you have received the general call
  - b. But just having heard the gospel invitation is, in and of itself, no indication of your spiritual well-being
  - c. I've been in the Church long enough, and in ministry long enough, to know that not everyone who sits in church week in and week out has actually believed in this Jesus
  - d. That being in the church doesn't make you a believer any more than being in a garage makes you a car
7. That's not me being judgmental; that's Jesus being realistic
  - a. Many are called, but few are chosen
8. Another parable that Jesus uses is the parable of the seed (Matthew 13)
  - a. Seed sown is the general call to believe the gospel
  - b. Some seed falls on the path
  - c. Some on rocky ground
  - d. Some among thorns
  - e. Some on good soil
  - f. Only the seed sown on good soil that actually bears fruit – the fruit of believers
9. The general call goes everywhere – that's what evangelism is all about
  - a. That's why we go to the ends of the earth, to every people group
  - b. To sow seed; to preach the gospel; to issue the general call to believe
  - c. Even though not everyone who receives the call will believe
10. There are those who might hear this message who aren't here this morning
  - a. Either on TV or on the internet
  - b. They might never come physically to this church location
  - c. But they hear the gospel – they receive the general call
  - d. But do they respond to the invitation?
  - e. Some will; but many won't
11. That's the nature of the general call
  - a. It's important to understand that as well-taught believers
  - b. But this general call is not what is being referred to when the text says that Paul was called

- C. **Special Call**
1. The special call is much more specific than the general call
    - a. And everyone who receives this kind of call actually does believe
  2. Referred to in Romans
  3. **Romans 1:6–7** (ESV) — 6 including you who are **called** to belong to Jesus Christ, 7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and **called** to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - a. These are all people who are believers – saints
    - b. And the call they have received has been effective
    - c. They have heard the general call and they have believed
    - d. They have been born again, born of the Spirit – Jesus says to Nicodemus in John 3
  4. **Romans 8:28–30** (ESV) —
    - a. 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are **called** according to his purpose.
    - b. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
    - c. 30 And those whom he predestined he also **called**, and those whom he **called** he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
    - d. Those who love God are called in this sense – not in the general sense, but in this special sense
    - e. There is the Golden Chain of redemption – all those who are predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son are called; all those who are called are justified; all those who are justified will also be glorified
    - f. This is not a general call – not all who receive the general call are justified (saved) or glorified in the end
    - g. Many who receive the general call reject the invitation
  5. But in this case – the special call is effective
    - a. Effective in every case
  6. This is an internal, spiritual call
    - a. Supernatural, personal, inward
    - b. Effectual
    - c. Because it comes directly by the Spirit of God
    - d. God prompts the one who receives the general call
    - e. The Holy Spirit convicts the one who receives the general call
    - f. The Holy Spirit infuses the gift of faith in the one who beforehand had no faith in Christ
    - g. So God accomplishes the work Himself
  7. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ – you have received this special call
    - a. You have been born of the Spirit of God

- b. You have been granted the gift of faith – **Ephesians 2:8** (ESV) — 8  
For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...
    - 8. Our response to that special call is to fall on our faces in humble gratitude and worship
    - 9. Paul received a call like that; as have presumably, most of you
      - a. But even that special call is not what is referred to here in v 1
      - b. Paul is called to be an apostle
- D. **Extraordinary Call**
  - 1. Personal call of the Lord Himself
    - a. A call to a particular office
  - 2. Jesus' call of the apostles
  - 3. **Luke 6:12–16** (ESV) —
    - a. 12 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.
    - b. 13 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:
    - c. 14 Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew,
    - d. 15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot,
    - e. 16 and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.
  - 4. Paul's call as an apostle is this kind of extraordinary call
    - a. Which we will examine in a few moments
  - 5. **Romans 1:1** (ESV) — 1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle...

#### IV. **To Be an Apostle**

- A. **The Basic Meaning**
  - 1. **Apostolos (Gk) – sent one**; messenger
    - a. Root is to send
- B. **The Greatest Apostle**
  - 1. Paul?
    - a. Remember – he's the GOAT!
    - b. But no, not Paul
  - 2. **Jesus**
    - a. **Hebrews 3:1** (ESV) — 1 Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession...
    - b. Why was Jesus an apostle (*the* apostle)?
    - c. He was sent – by the Father
    - d. Six times in John 17 Jesus says that the Father sent Him
  - 3. Jesus is the greatest apostle, because unless the Father sent the Son
    - a. We are all toast

- b. We have no Savior
  - 4. **General sense of messenger** in NT
    - a. **2 Corinthians 8:16–23** (ESV) — 16 But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of **Titus** the same earnest care I have for you. 17 For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is **going to you** of his own accord. 18 With him we are **sending** the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. 19 And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will. ... 22 And with them we are **sending** our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. 23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are **messengers** [apostoloi] of the churches, the glory of Christ.
  - 5. But there is a distinction to be made
    - a. It's important to our understanding of the nature of scripture and of authority in the church
    - b. Official and unofficial apostles
- C. **Official Apostles**
  - 1. Inner circle chosen by Jesus
    - a. We saw that in the passage from Luke 6 where Jesus called the original 12
  - 2. After Judas' betrayal, the apostles were reconstituted and Peter was explicit regarding the requirements for being an official apostle
  - 3. **Acts 1:15–26** (ESV) —
    - a. 15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,
    - b. 16 “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.
    - c. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” ...
    - d. 20 “For it is written in the Book of Psalms, “ ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and “ ‘Let another take his office.’
    - e. 21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,
    - f. 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”
    - g. 23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.

- h. 24 And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”
- i. 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.
- j. The calling of Matthias
- 4. Qualifications
  - a. With them from the time of John the Baptist through the ascension
  - b. Limited to 12 to replace Judas Iscariot
  - c. Witness of the resurrection with the apostles
- 5. Evidence of apostleship – signs and wonders
  - a. **Acts 2:43** (ESV) — 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.
  - b. **Acts 5:12** (ESV) — 12 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles...
  - c. **2 Corinthians 12:12** (ESV) — 12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

#### D. **Unofficial Apostles**

- 1. At the same time, the word apostles can be used in a more general sense, an unofficial sense
- 2. **Romans 16:7** (ESV) — 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, [among the apostles] and they were in Christ before me.
- 3. **Galatians 1:19** (ESV) — 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord’s brother.
  - a. James, the Lord’s brother, was not one of the original 12 – not that James, the brother of John the apostle
- 4. Paul seems to speak of Apollos in the same way
  - a. **1 Corinthians 3:4** (ESV) — 4 For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?
  - b. **1 Corinthians 3:21–23** (ESV) — 21 So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, 23 and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.
  - c. **1 Corinthians 4:6** (ESV) — 6 I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.
  - d. **1 Corinthians 4:9** (ESV) — 9 For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.
  - e. So Paul appears to include Apollos with himself as an apostle in that general sense

5. Paul also speaks of Silas and Timothy in that way as well
  - a. **1 Thessalonians 1:1** (ESV) — 1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.
  - b. **1 Thessalonians 2:3–6** (ESV) — 3 For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as **apostles of Christ**.
  - c. Silas and Timothy were regarded by Paul as apostles in this unofficial sense
6. An in that sense, we have a slew of unofficial apostles in TVC
  - a. We have in our data base more than 80 who were missionaries
  - b. Missionaries are those who have been sent
  - c. The meaning of apostle is one who is sent
7. Janice Quinlan is an apostle in that sense (Thailand)
  - a. So is Lisa Munson (Malaysia)
  - b. And a whole bunch of you people were apostles in that sense
8. Not in an official sense, but in the sense that you were sent by God to be a messenger of the gospel

#### V. **Paul's Call**

- A. But Paul's call was unique, extraordinary
  1. **Romans 1:1** (ESV) — 1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...
- B. Personal call from the risen Christ
- C. **Acts 9:15** (ESV) —
  1. 15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”
  2. Purpose of his call – chosen instrument to go to Gentiles and others
- D. **Acts 9:18** (ESV) —
  1. 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized...
  2. Salvation was confirmed by the church at Damascus
- E. **Acts 9:20** (ESV) —
  1. 20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”
  2. Began to preach
- F. **Acts 9:26–27** (ESV) —
  1. 26 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.

2. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.
  3. Confirmed in his apostleship through Barnabus
- G. **Acts 9:28** (ESV) —
1. 28 So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.
  2. Clearly accepted by the apostles who were in Jerusalem at the time
- H. **Acts 9:30** (ESV) —
1. 30 And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.
  2. Then he was sent – to Tarsus, his hometown, to bring the message of the gospel there
- I. **Acts 13:1–3** (ESV) —
1. 1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
  2. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”
  3. 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.
  4. Associated at that time with the church in Antioch
    - a. Sent with Barnabus
    - b. Supernatural call of the Holy Spirit
    - c. Confirmed by the church
- J. **Galatians 1:1** (ESV) —
1. 1 Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—
    - a. Not called through agency of human beings; called personally by Christ Himself
  2. **Galatians 1:11–21** (ESV) —
    - a. 11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel.
    - b. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ...
    - c. 15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,
    - d. 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;
    - e. 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.
    - f. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.

- g. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.
    - h. 20 (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)
    - i. 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.
  - 3. Call, by God, as an apostle, was confirmed by Peter and James
    - a. Then he was sent on mission
- K. Paul's call in Romans 1.1 was not
  - 1. A general call – which we've all received
  - 2. A special call – which all genuine believers receive
    - a. Though he did in fact receive that call as well
- L. Paul's call was extraordinary
  - 1. A personal call by Jesus Himself
  - 2. To fulfill a particular office
  - 3. The official office of apostle
    - a. With a primary mission to the Gentiles

## VI. **Apostle of What?**

- A. **Romans 1:1** (ESV) —
  - 1. 1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...
- B. Every apostle has a message
  - 1. These apostles – the official apostles – have a focused message; just one
    - a. Set apart for the message
- C. **Gospel of God**
  - 1. **Gospel = euaggelion (Gk)**
    - a. Eu = good
    - b. Aggelion (angel) = message
  - 2. Good message
    - a. Good news
  - 3. Of God
    - a. God is the source and origin of this message
  - 4. Later we'll see the gospel of God is the gospel of Christ and the gospel of the kingdom
- D. His message is good news!
  - 1. Great to be the bearer of good news!
    - a. Usually we shoot the messenger of bad news
  - 2. Ironic – being the bearer of good news got Paul into a heap of trouble
- E. Message Paul bore was good news
  - 1. God exists and cares about humanity
  - 2. God has acted in Christ to provide for the greatest need human beings have
    - a. Human beings are separated from God by their sin
    - b. God has, in Christ, taken care of that
- F. Message is what separates Paul (and Christianity) from all other religions
  - 1. All religions are bad news

- a. Only Christianity is good news
- 2. John MacArthur – only two religions
  - a. Religion of human achievement
    - (1) All other religions
  - b. Religion of divine accomplishment
    - (1) Only Christianity

## VII. Applications

- A. Paul's call was legitimate as an apostle
  - 1. Personal encounter with the risen Lord
  - 2. Became a witness of the resurrection
  - 3. Clearly appointed as apostle with a mission
  - 4. Agent of revelation
  - 5. Evidence of signs and wonders
  - 6. Confirmed by other apostles
  - 7. That's why he must be, not only taken seriously, but believed and obeyed in what he speaks
    - a. The apostle carries the authority of the one sent
- B. No additional official apostles
  - 1. No one else could be a witness of the resurrected Christ
  - 2. No one else could be confirmed by other apostles
  - 3. Nicene Creed: I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church
    - a. Catholic = universal, spiritual
    - b. Apostolic = church founded by the apostles
  - 4. Word of the NT is Scripture because it bears apostolic authority and origin
- C. Paul was great – the GOAT
  - 1. But the reason we are called to believe his word is because he was called as an apostle