***Sanctification  
Romans 15:14-16  
RO186-01***

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**Paul's Apostolic Authority**

Romans 15, our segment is Romans 15:14-16. Our topic is Authority for Boldness - Segment Number 3. The apostle Paul has been expressing his esteem for the Roman Christians, the Christians in the city of Rome whom he has never met. Two things that he has learned about them from various sources for which he commends them is the quality of goodness, which is a spirit of loving kindness and conciliation among them, and secondly, for their plain knowledge of doctrine. The Roman Christians in general, Paul indicates, were people who were filled with the Spirit. For that reason, they were qualified to admonish each other in spiritual matters. Paul encourages them to take the trouble to help each other out in their lives with helpful, God-oriented advice. Counseling one another with Bible doctrine instead of with Freudian human viewpoint Humanism, which can only leave one enslaved to the Old Sin Nature, is the great privilege of Christians who know God and who know His Word.

The apostle feels free to be very bold with these Christians that he has never met in giving his own advice to them because he has the authority from God of an apostle. For this reason, he has given them correction on some areas of spiritual weakness that he has heard among them. He has clarified several fundamental doctrines which Christians must understand clearly. And Paul knows that some of his instruction is not new to them, but he does not apologize to them for that. Instead, he says that these are things that bear repeating so that they do not forget them.

Paul's special area of ministry he has indicated is to the Gentile world. This was assigned to him directly by the Lord Jesus upon the point of his salvation on the Damascus Road. For this reason, Paul has great concern for Gentiles. Paul has labored very hard and faithfully among the Gentile population of the New Testament world. He has done this in spite of personal privation and at times has had to secure his own financial support via his own labors. Sometimes, Paul simply steps aside from what he is doing to earn the money in order to fulfill God's mission for him. That, of course, is what all of us do today. We have employment that enables us to earn the funds to exercise our spiritual gifts.

**Paul's Gospel Ministry**

This morning, we direct your attention to Romans 15:16, where Paul begins the subject of his personal ministry and his personal priesthood. In Romans 15:16, Paul has indicated that he is called to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Then he says, "ministering as a priest." This word "ministering as a priest" is one word. It's the Greek word "hierourgeo," h i e r o u r g e o. "hierourgeo" means "a sacrificing priest in God's service." Paul, as a Church Age priest, has ministered the gospel of salvation to the lost Gentiles. And so Paul views himself as a priest who is ministering to these Gentiles and what he ministers to them is telling them the gospel.

He specifically indicates that that's what he is ministering, the gospel of God. That's the Greek word "euaggelion," e u a g g e l i o n. "euaggelion" refers to God's good news of grace salvation by simply trusting in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior. For this reason, the word "euaggelion" is sometimes translated as "good news."

There are, of course, many non-biblical techniques in the world which are used to get people saved which simply confuse people and actually leave them as lost sinners. That's why we stress to you that when you do present the gospel, you be sure that you present the true gospel. And after you've told people what God has done for them to cover their sins, you must tell them what to do with it. And you must tell them what to do with it on the basis of what the Bible tells them what to do with it, which is to believe that God has made a provision through Christ to cover their sins.

Do not tell people to do things that the Bible does not tell them to do, inviting Jesus into your life, giving your heart to Jesus. All those pop Christianity phrases that are typically used, all of which in themselves, if you ever stop to think about it, are a violation of the grace principle. If you are going to be saved by giving your life to Jesus, if you're going to be saved by giving your heart to Jesus, if you're going to be saved by inviting Christ into your heart, does that not strike you as being a human work on your part? Does that not strike you as giving God something so that he'll give you salvation back? You see, all those phrases are such subtle deviations from people who are sloppy in their doctrine. I hope you will not be careless about the Doctrine of Salvation. Indeed, there are many people who spent years being lost because somebody misguided them on how to utilize what God has done for their salvation.

God's gospel, when it is understood and believed, produces genuine regeneration apart from any human works, apart from any human actions. Grace means it's a gift. Grace means you stand there and God places it in your hands. It's like the line in the hymn that says, "Nothing in my hands I bring." Do you realize that Christianity is the only religion in the world that says that? All other religions of the world say 'something in my hands I bring when approaching deity in order to escape the Lake of Fire.' Nothing in my hands I bring and therefore we present the gospel in the true biblical light so God the Holy Spirit will be pleased to use it.

Christian priests perform sacred acts. And the most sacred act that you and I as Christian priests ever perform is that of telling lost people the gospel of the grace of God. That's what Paul pointed out about himself. He indicated that he was a priest, a sacred minister of God, and what he was bringing in his ministry was the gospel. A false gospel, of course, is no good to anyone, since it achieves nothing at all for the lost person.

**Paul's Offering**

Now, Paul says, I am "ministering as a priest the gospel" of the grace of God to the Gentile world for a very specific purpose. He says that purpose being, "that my offering of the Gentiles." "My offering of the Gentiles," Paul says, 'I'm doing this so that some Gentiles will believe the gospel, they will be born again, and then I, in effect, am taking these regenerated Gentiles and I'm presenting them as an offering to the living God.' Those who believe the gospel are saved and they constitute this offering to God.

You have the same idea in the Old Testament in Isaiah 66:20 where the concept of believers being brought to God as an offering to Him. So, Paul's priestly service of proclaiming the gospel of the grace of God produces his offering to God of saved Gentiles. He is giving them this gospel so that he can present these Gentiles to God as 'an offering which is acceptable.'

There are many offerings that you may bring to God which are not acceptable to Him. The Greek word for acceptable looks like this. It's "euprosdektos." This word means "very well received." It is made up of actually three words. "Dektos" means "acceptable." It's an adjective. "Pros" here is a preposition, which means "toward." And "eu" is a word, an adverb, which means "very or well or much. So, it's "much toward acceptable," which means "very well acceptable." So, the apostle Paul is using a rather complicated word here to stress the fact that when he presents these Gentiles to God, he wants it clearly understood that they are going to be very well received by God. And the reason that will be true is because of the way under which he has brought them. This indicates that these Gentiles will be approved by means of God's standard of righteousness. An acceptable Gentile is one, first of all, who is born again by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Many unsaved Gentiles are offered to God in local church memberships who are totally rejected by God because they are unbelievers. God cannot accept somebody who is spiritually dead. God is governed by His own integrity in receiving people into Heaven, so, they go not by human viewpoint standards, but by His own standards. So, what we have very often in the Gentile community of local churches is a bunch of goats who are disguised as sheep. They fool people, but they do not fool God.

This is what the apostle Paul is saying. He is a minister who has proclaimed the true gospel. He's told people exactly what to do with that gospel so that they can benefit by it. He does this so that he can offer Gentiles to God who are acceptable to God because they are genuinely born-again people. Furthermore, Paul is also concerned, we know, that Gentiles who are saved must be taught the principles of the Word of God so that they will not live carnal lives, so that they, as believers now, will also be acceptable to God. The apostle Paul was very much concerned that born-again Gentiles should be able to serve God in such a way that God would receive their service, that they would be able to serve God in such a way that God could bless them. For this reason, the apostle Paul was the great teacher of doctrine and of the principles of the spiritual life.

**"Set Aside for God"**

The apostle Paul goes on to say, furthermore, that he is ministering the gospel to the Gentile world so that they would be truly regenerated and they then would become an acceptable offering that he could present to God. Then he specifies what makes them acceptable. Very specifically, a Gentile is acceptable to God because of work of the Holy Spirit has taken place, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word looks like this, "hagiazo," h a g i a z o, "hagiazo." This word sanctified means "to set aside from secular to sacred purposes." So, in the Bible we find that certain things are "hagiazo-ed," they are set aside to God's sacred use. Certain people are set aside, for God's sacred good use. Even something sinful or a carnal Christian can be set aside, sanctified for a divine purpose.

The Gentiles, to whom Paul has witnessed, are set aside "by," that is in connection with, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who sets a believer aside to God's plan and to eternal life in Heaven. People are not saved because of the cleverness of your presentation of the gospel. People are not saved because you have a track which cleverly carries them through step by step to an understanding of the gospel. That's very important. That is very helpful. But it is important for you to realize that the Bible says, "There is none that seeketh after God, no, not one!" No human being on the face of the earth, by nature, is interested in God. No human being on the face of the earth, by nature, is particularly concerned about whether he goes to Heaven or Hell. It is only when God the Holy Spirit comes in and removes the natural blinders off the eyes of a person that suddenly terror strikes his heart over what could happen to him to die without Christ. He then understands clearly the offer of grace salvation. Only then will he receive the Savior.

**Set Aside Only by the Holy Spirit, Not by the Works of Man**

This is the reason why you can be testifying repeatedly to some of your friends and relatives and they come back completely blank to you. They completely reject what you're saying. In the upper room discourse, this is one of the things that Jesus pointed out to the disciples, that the Holy Spirit was going to be very important in their ministry because their ministry was indeed, going to be dealing with telling the gospel to people and leading them to salvation.

It was on that occasion that the Lord Jesus said, 'I'm going to send you a helper in the form of the Holy Spirit. He's going to be very important to you, because when He comes, He's going to do something that He must do for the unbeliever.' (It's the only thing that God the Holy Spirit, does for an unbeliever. Everything else, the Spirit of God only works for Christians.) But the one thing, John 16:8 says, 'He, the Holy Spirit, when He comes, will bring conviction to the world, the world of unbelievers, concerning three things: concerning sin, righteousness and judgment.' He goes on to explain "concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me." God the Holy Spirit is going to make clear to a person that he is a sinner, that it doesn't matter how good he is. The question is, is how much he compares to God's absolute goodness and that if he does not believe in Christ as Savior, he is doomed.

So, the first thing an unbeliever has to understand is that he really is a sinner. Most people do not think they are really all that bad. Most people have relative righteousness. Their righteousness is better than the next person and they compare themselves to people. Now until the Holy Spirit comes in and clarifies to the individual that it doesn't matter how good he is, it's never good enough, that person will not understand the hazard in which he sits.

Secondly, Jesus says, 'In the issue of righteousness, while I have been here, you've seen what a righteous person is. You have seen what absolute righteousness is every moment of the day. I'm leaving. Now God the Holy Spirit is going to have to bring an awareness of what righteousness is from God's point of view; that's totally different.' That's a horrifying revelation to the individual when he finally realizes that the best human being is but a filthy rag in God's sight.

Then John 16:11, says, "and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world [that is Satan,] has been judged," to realize that Satan no longer has to control your life, to realize that Satan no longer is in charge of the world that was lost by Adam. And when a person understands that he can overcome Satan, then he is ready to believe the gospel.

Now, if you have been fortunate enough to be reared in a cultured, refined family, and even more fortunate to have been born and surrounded by Christian things in a Christian family, then the realization that Satan's domination over you has been broken is not as strong. But if you are a person who is deep in sin, if you are a person who's gone into the occult, if you are a person who's been in touch with the demonic world, then you are very fearful. Then you do have to understand that Satan's power is broken.

If you were listening to one of Bob Larson's radio programs within the last week or so, you may have heard his conversing with a young woman who is into demonism. He was trying to get her to say that she 'rejects Satan, she rejects demons, she accepts the authority of Jesus Christ and in Christ's name she condemns that demon spirit.' She couldn't say it! She stumbled and was in fear. She cried. Then the demon spoke through her with that gross, vile, ugly sounding voice. Her voice would come in and the demon would take over and speak, and her voice would come in, and a demon would take over and speak. Until finally, she uttered the name, "I accept Jesus Christ." Then the demon, with a howl of pain and anger, was silent. Now, that lady understands that the Holy Spirit had to make it clear that Satan is kaput. His power is broken.

It is very important that you understand this passage in John 16 so that when you do witness to people, this will give you a guideline for praying: 'God help this person to understand the consequences of the sin in which he resides and no hope without believing in Christ as his cover. Help this person to understand that God's righteousness is absolute and no person is good enough for Heaven. Help this person to understand that Satan no longer has to control him, that God has defeated the devil.' With that understanding, a person is ready to receive the gospel.

So, the apostle says that he's been very careful presenting the true gospel so that God the Holy Spirit, would have the materials with which to deal with this person in order to set this person aside to eternal life. It is God the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies a person. Philippians 2:13 says, "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." Even as a Christian, you go on in a spiritual Godly life because God the Holy Spirit encourages you to do it. You're not going to be a nice person on your own as a believer. You're not going to be preoccupied with the Lord's work as a Christian on your own. It is only when you are subject to the leading of the Holy Spirit, when you are filled with His power because you have confessed your known sins and God is there, ready to do his work. And then you will discover that indeed your heart, your mind, your thinking, your tastes are set aside to the things of God. God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, has taken His residence within every believer, 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, so that you are now the child of God.

The sanctification begins at the point of your salvation. This word "hagiazo" is in the perfect tense in the Greek Bible, which tells us that in the past, in your experience, at the point that you trusted in Christ as Savior, this setting apart took place. Then it has continued to this very point in your life and will continue. The perfect tense always tells you that something that starts in the past is of the nature that it will continue forever. What you have here, you see, is another grammatical evidence of eternal security and salvation. Furthermore, this is in the passive voice which stresses that you are saved as a result of something that God the Holy Spirit has done. You have not saved yourself by your human rituals and by your personal effort.

The Mormons are coming out with increasing attacks upon the concept of salvation without personal efforts. And they are condemning this as a satanic concept: that nothing is given away free and that God has always demanded that a person must prove himself worthy. And that's a word that you hear on the lips of Mormons many times, a person must prove himself worthy to have the benefits of Christ that apply to him. That's exactly what Roman Catholics teach. But then Joseph Smith was enamored with Catholicism. He loved the system and he structured the Mormon Church on the same concept as the Roman Catholic Church with its authoritative papal system. If you're interested in a study of Mormonism and other cults, please check our foyer bulletin board for some great conferences, a clinic, a seminar that's going to be held by the Watchmen people in Arlington. It is going to be a super, super conference.

So, Paul says, 'I am dealing with these Gentile's in such a way that they are genuinely born-again and God the Holy Spirit has therefore sanctified them, has therefore set them aside and I am putting them forth as my offering to God.' So, it is the Holy Spirit Himself who makes Paul's offering of lost Gentile sinners acceptable to God through spiritual regeneration and then through divine good works in His service. It is the Holy Spirit who sets each of us apart to a very specific work in the family of God. I remind you once more of Ephesians 2:10, which says, "For we [who have been born again] are His [God's] workmanship, created [for we who have been born again are His, specifically the Holy Spirit's workmanship created] in Christ Jesus for good works, [and specific good works,] which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

That is very sobering statement. God has a plan for you. God has works for you to perform. How well have you done this week? God the Holy Spirit has set aside your life and your resources to a specific purpose. How well did you do this week do you think? Those resources include your time, your natural ability, your spiritual gifts, your money, your physical strength and your emotional drive? Those are invaluable resources. How well did you do with consciously investing them in part of those works that God has planned for you? Did you get them: the resources of your time (the time you spent in God's service this week), your natural abilities (those skills you have that were invested in God's work this week), your spiritual gifts (one of those nine capacities for service), your money (where and how was it invested and to what extent, in the Lord's work compared to all those wonderful things you bought for yourself), your physical strength (You remember this week when you got tired, what made you tired? How many times did you say, I am tired, but it's been a good day in God's service and that's what exhausted you?), your emotional drive (Oh, I'm all worn out. I'm just a limp dishrag. What made you so emotionally drained? Was it God's work?)?

A Christian's sanctification, the Bible tells us, is the will of God for us. It is God's will that you set your life aside to His purposes for you. That is very important. We would do you a great disservice if we did not frankly tell you that and alert you to it. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, "For this is the Will of God, your sanctification, that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality." Here in this context, it's dealing with personal sins as part of sanctification. In 1 Thessalonians 4:7, he says, "For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification."

**The Three Phases of Sanctification**

The doctrine of sanctification is, of course, not based upon your personal experiences or your emotions, it is based only on the teaching of Scripture. And the means for your being set aside to God's work, that, of course, is the question you must ask. How can I, on a consistent basis, find that I am moving to be separated and all these resources I have into the Lord's work? This is one of the things up in the upper room discourse the night before the Lord was crucified, in John 17:17, He was careful to point out. The Lord said, "Sanctify them [praying for believers,] in the truth; Thy word is truth." What sanctifies you, what you're doing right now, sitting here in the sound of the eternal words of God in Scripture, I want to remind you of the sanctification briefly has 3 phases to it.

**Phase One - Positional Sanctification**

The first we call positional sanctification. This sanctification is dealt with in some Scriptures like 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 1:30, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 1 Peter 1:2. In these passages you will find that a Christian has been set apart by God to eternal life through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Hebrews 10:10 refers to that. Positional sanctification means that when God looks at you, you're in Heaven. When positional sanctification comes into play, you are already covered by the death of Christ. A Christian is a saint because of his permanent position in Christ as a result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which you receive at the point of salvation. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, 'you were baptized into Christ when you believed in Him.' That is positional sanctification. That position can never be changed. It is a position in Christ and it is the same for those of you who are spiritual Christians and for those of you who act like carnal Christians. That's why Paul could write to a terrible group of Christians in the city of Corinth and call them saints of God, because they had positional sainthood, they had positional sanctification. In God's eyes, you are as good as Jesus Christ and you always will be. Positional sanctification is never a means that a person attains. Let me put it this way: positional sanctification never means that you have become sinless. That's where this doctrine has been distorted. Your position in Christ means you're safe forever.

**Phase Two - Experiential Sanctification**

Secondly, there's a second phase of sanctification that is behind what Paul is talking about here, and that is in your experience, we call that experiential sanctification. This is described 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and the whole chapter of Romans 6 deals with it. This refers to being set apart to God in your daily life in terms of freedom from acts of sin. You are called upon to be yielded to God. Many times, teachers of the Word of God will call upon the people of God to be yielded to God. How are you yielded to God? You are yielded to God by confession of known sins, because confession means you've been wrong and you're going to change your mind and do right. This is setting yourself aside to God's righteousness in your personal experience.

Experiential sanctification is not a matter of feeling holy, not a matter of your emotions any more than justification is or forgiveness. If you base your justification on how you feel, you're going to be in big trouble.

I switched between two church services this morning. I don't know where one was, but it was jumping and jiving. The hands were over the heads. The women were rolling their eyes up in their heads. I don't know how they did that. I tried that once and couldn't see for a couple hours. But they have a way of doing that and they're swaying. And the music is hypnotic. The songs are very simple. They're all one-liners: 'Hallelujah, praise the Lord. Hallelujah, praise the Lord. Hallelujah, praise the Lord. Hallelujah, praise the Lord.' Five minutes later, 'Hallelujah, praise the Lord,' until you are driven mad by the sheer monotony of it. And indeed, that's what they must be.

Then I switched over to Dr. Kennedy's program, in Coral Ridge, Florida. What a contrast, night and day: the great hymns of the faith resounding from their organ and their choir and the word of Scripture being read and the exposition of the Word of God. He was talking this morning about the meaning of grace and its role in salvation.

Then I go back to the jumpin' an' jivin' station until I couldn't stand it anymore. Then I got back to Kennedy and then I'd go back because I was fascinated by watching these people. And it just went on and on.

If you were to ask a charismatic group how they know that they are sanctified, they say, 'I feel it right down here. Don't you feel it? Don't you have the spirit?' And they got the spirit, that's for sure. Some of it probably out of a bottle because there's something in them that's causing them to act like that, that's for sure. But if you were to ask people in Dr. Kennedy's church how they know that they have been justified and sanctified, they would say 'because of the authority of the Word of God that has told me this,' and they would quote a doctrine to you. One is really knowing that you can go out on eternity with very great confidence. The other is manipulation of your emotions by a preacher and a group and of Satan that will leave you in doubt. It's no wonder that one is a congregation of maturity. The other is a congregation of spiritual juveniles.

Experiential sanctification is something that you can progress in. You can become less sinless. God gives you the daily provision so that you can say no to sin. You do this through the intake of doctrine into your soul. Psalm 119:11 tells you that's how you will escape sinning. You have this because of the intercession of Christ in Heaven for you: Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25, Luke 22:31-32, John 17:1-26, all deal with Jesus praying for you 24 hours a day. Thirdly, you may make progress in experiential sanctification because of the enabling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:16 and Romans 8:4. God the Holy Spirit helps you to do right.

Now again, we stress that Christians can never eradicate the sin nature within themselves. They could never arrive at sinlessness. This is taught in Romans 7:21, 2 Corinthians 4:7, 1 John 1:8. The spirit filled status of the individual believer, sins confessed, gives you capacity to have victory over your sin nature, Galatians 5:16-23. The Old Sin Nature has been judged at the cross. It should no longer have absolute power over you. We learned that back in Romans 6. So, experiential sanctification is related to growth in spiritual maturity, therefore, it is progressive. 2 Peter 3:18 and 2 Corinthians 3:18 both teach that you can become more godly.

**Phase Three - Ultimate Sanctification**

Then there's a third factor of what Paul had in mind when he said these people are sanctified by the Holy Spirit and that is ultimate. Ultimate sanctification is what we are all looking forward to. The Bible teaches this in 1 John 3:1-2 where were told that when we see Jesus will be just exactly like Him (No more Sin Nature, no capacity to sin, no more sorrow, no more tears, nothing but absolute joy. 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 also tell us that and Philippians 3:21, that our bodies are even going to be transformed out of this sinless state. Ultimate sanctification refers to coming into the presence of Jesus Christ and having your Sin Nature removed. This is the final goal of salvation. 1 Thessalonians 5:22-23. This of course, is indeed, the state of sinless perfection. At this point you will be exactly perfect.

So, the apostle Paul has presented himself as an authority from God because he has the gift of an apostle who's writing to the Christians in Rome, these who are Gentiles and he is ministering to them in order to go from salvation to godliness and thus become both acceptable to God in terms of time and eternity, and that this is being done in them by an act of God the Holy Spirit, who is setting them aside to positional, experiential, and ultimate sanctification. And Paul says that he has been doing this specifically for the group of humanity known as Gentiles.

**Humanity Known as Gentiles**

In closing, let's summarize, get a good picture of who it is that the apostle Paul has been dealing with so that you'll have a little better appreciation of the enormous power of the gospel of the grace of God. This is what Paul said right up front in Romans before he hardly got very far into that first chapter, that he was not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that transforms a human life from a scum-ball animal to a prince in the royal family of God.

**God Creates Man**

Where did the Gentiles come from? They originated by an act of divine creation about 6,000 years ago, when God made Adam and Eve. These 2 people were made in God's own image. That means they had personality, they had soul qualities of intellect, emotion, and will. The Bible said they were also made in God's likeness, which means that they were separate individuals, as the separate persons of the Godhead are separate individuals. They were distinct from the rest of creation.

New Age Hinduism teaches us that we are not separate from creation, but we are one with the god of everything and we're just part of that. Likeness means you're like the separate persons of the Trinity.

Man is similar, of course, in his physical structure to animals, but he is totally different in possessing a human spirit and a human soul. His similarity physically only shows that he came from the same designer. Man's human spirit gives him contact with God. He has God's consciousness. Man's soul gives him people consciousness, contact with human beings. And man's body gives him contact through the senses, with the world of nature about him.

**God Gives Man Volition**

Adam and Eve, as you know, lived in a perfect environment in Eden. And they lived in moral innocence. They had total fellowship with the holy God who had created them, and they had all their needs supplied by God. Man, at this point, was given freedom of volition within the confines of God's will. This is the first divine institution, and it is one that has a very dangerous potential. It is nice to be free. It is nice to be able to make choices, to do what you want to do.

But here is the problem. I have been wondering why, because I had the advantage of having seen some lives over many decades, that I have seen people who should have been something very significant in their lives with God, now fritter away into nothing. Why people who once were very promising became spiritual casualties while people who had great opportunity of instruction and enlightenment and should have made a great impact upon the Kingdom of God, amounted to nothing. People who once walked with God, who now are groveling around in reversionism. How in the world, there's a prince up here who is walking hand-in-hand with the living God, get down here and he's groveling in the dirt, in the gutter with all the rest of the unbelievers? Volition is the answer. It's one of the most dangerous things God put in us. Sooner or later, the smart Christian understands to be very careful about the choices he makes. It is the choices that you make that you will also bear consequences.

Because that's what God said, 'Adam and Eve, I'm going to give you a statement of positive volition. You can eat from anything in this garden. It's yours. Take care of it. Do what you want with it. Move the trees around, dig the shrubs up, rearrange the furniture, whatever you want. I'm giving you a negative volition. Don't eat of that tree right there. If you do, you'll die. That's it. Now go to it. You're free to use your volition.' God was saying you can exercise your will, but there will be consequences.

I'm sad to see how often young people and older folks among us have frittered away their lives because they did not have an awesome respect for the divine institution of volition making choices and they blew themselves out of the water. You better do a little consulting with people before you make a move if you're not really sure. You better not get carried away on a high that you're confident that you know what's right, 'God is leading,' and off you go. You may find to your great sorrow, an irreversible sorrow, that you were completely off base.

**God's Line of Authority**

Adam and Eve enjoyed volition. They enjoyed each other. They enjoyed God. They knew what the rules were. The line of authority ran from God - to Adam - to Eve - then to their potential children. All of God's earthly creation was under Adam's authority, who was told to subdue nature and to use it as he pleased.

Adam and Eve entered a permanent marriage relationship within which they expressed sexual love. The basis of the family unit in society was designed by God for the bearing and rearing of children. No civilized society can exist without the human family. That's why it's under attack today. The human family does not mean two homosexuals or two lesbians with an adopted child. Adam and Eve operated under the divine institutions of volition. Now they entered into the divine institution of marriage, and soon they would enter the third divine institution of family. These divine institutions, of course, are all in effect to this day. They are applied to believers and unbelievers. They are God's way of controlling Satan so he does not destroy mankind.

Adam and Eve were commanded to have children to populate the earth, God's perfect earth. Adam and Eve lived a life of maximum happiness and perfect fellowship with God. How long this continued, we don't know. But we do know that each evening the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ met with them in the Garden and He taught them doctrinal principles. Then one day, along came the evil angel, Satan, who himself had already been cast out of his place of blessing in Heaven for his disobedience to God. And he tempted them to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit. Eve did and in turn, she coaxed her husband Adam to do the same, and he did.

Adam and Eve both died instantly spiritually because they both acquired a sin nature. At that point, also, they lost control of the world in which God had placed them and Satan was now the God of the world and he was in charge of mankind, in effect, as mankind's god. God Himself pronounced judgment of physical death on Adam and Eve. But He promised in time to send a Savior to redeem them from the Lake of Fire. The man and his wife were driven from the Garden of Eden and away from the tree of Life, so they would not eat of it and exist forever in their sinful fallen state.

Their natures were now contaminated, and that affected the world of nature about them, which began to deteriorate as well. Man had to survive now by hard labor on his own efforts to grow the food to meet his physical needs. This was the beginning of the Gentile world that Paul was talking about.

The posterity of Adam and Eve found that they too were contaminated by what their parents had done. They did bear children and they found that the children had the parent's Sin Nature. Sin Nature is a natural propensity to do evil. The oldest son Cain murdered his brother, Abel. All the children had to be born again spiritually by faith in a promised future Savior or they rapidly degenerated into an animal type of living. Some of the children trusted in this future Savior; some did not.

God provided them with explicit guidelines in the form of rituals by which to worship Him. Rituals which portrayed the shedding of blood for death in behalf of the sins of the world which the future Savior would do. Cain, the first born, who was a rebellious unbeliever, went off after murdering his brother. Cain went off with one of his sisters to form a civilization of his own. He created a society which completely excluded God. This was the first attempt on the part of mankind to live by the principles which we today call humanism, which deify man himself and which reject any instruction and any authority from God.

Cain's descendants, indeed, created a very impressive culture and very impressive civilization with great accomplishments. I cannot go into detail this morning, but the civilizations of early man were astounding, even by today's standards of technology and knowledge. But Cain's descendants devised a religious system which was based on the worship of the sun as their god, whom they saw as the source of all life. They made, of course, their own moral rules, all of which violated God's moral laws. The worship of the sun was expressed through illicit sex as an expression of fertility. The Cain line of mankind placed no restraints on the expression of the Sin Nature, so people rapidly degenerated into vile sin, hatred, and violence.

The human race was soon divided into unbelievers of Cain's culture and the believers of Seth's culture. The third son, born to Adam and Eve. All the great cultural and technological progress of mankind was used by unbelievers to do evil. The goal of the unbeliever was to create happiness without subjecting themselves to God. The divine institutions of Volition, Marriage, and Family came under attack as unbelievers became victims of Satan's lies.

The result was that the Bible tells us the thoughts of men became continually evil and the earth was filled with violence and moral corruption. So God dealt with this Gentile world, by sending a flood. He decided to destroy them with a worldwide flood to stop the rampaging moral degeneration and of Satan's total domination now of mankind.

He selected a man named Noah, who was a descendant of Seth and who was a believer along with his 3 sons and their wives, to create a huge seagoing vessel on which they would survive the flood and on which they would have representatives of all the land and air animals in the world. Mankind was warned through Noah for 120 years what was coming, and nobody believed them. Outwardly, human civilization was at the peak of its sophistication, but inwardly it was rotten to the core and was totally enslaved to Satan. The flood came and wiped out all the unbelievers, including that mixed breed of human demonic creatures which had been produced by the marriage of demons to women.

Noah's family survived the flood and they re-populated the earth. All of mankind has been descended from these three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth. God extended human diet at this time from vegetation to meat also, except that they were not to eat blood, in which was life, and which was characteristic of Satan. The new humanity was supposed to move out across the now dried out earth. The flood, of course, had created great changes on the surface of the earth. The earth now had seasons, it no longer had one uniform tropical climate. And there were now mountains, and there were great gullies, and canyons such as the Grand Canyon had been formed. And the fossil material had been laid down and preserved as sedimentary rock gradually settled after the rain stopped and the waters began drying off. So, God promised never to do this to mankind again, put the rainbow in the sky, and said 'I’ll never send a worldwide flood again.'

In order to prevent, however, a recurrence of the total moral degeneration of the pre-flood society, God established the fourth divine institution of Human Government. Noah was told that he was now a judge and he had the right to execute anybody who took another person's life in willful, premeditated murder.

The divine institutions are to preserve mankind from self-destruction in Satan's world. So, Satan constantly seeks to destroy these 4 divine institutions. Certainly, he's trying to destroy the institution of Human Government, Nationalism, and its authority of capital punishment. Capital punishment, of course, is still in force today. It is only debated by unbelievers and those ignorant of God's laws. It is enforced today. It does deter murders and it does keep the murderer from doing the act a second time.

Noah was the first civil authority of the government. He had great power and duties to perform for God. The civil authorities were appointed to establish government to maintain law and order in society. They would be sustained by taxation. Capital punishment was of course only to be applied on the eyewitness testimony of two or three witnesses who saw the person do the act, or if the person confessed. If God's laws for the establishment of human government are violated in a society, that society will self-destruct through violence, disease, wars, famine, tyranny, poverty and enslavement.

Well, mankind hadn't learned its lesson. These Gentiles would not listen to God. The post-flood humanity multiplied, but they would not move out from the Tigris Euphrates plains. They spoke one language, and a descendant of Ham named Nimrod arose to organize a false religion, which today we know as Hinduism. It was based on the deification of man as god. Nimrod was the great grandson of Noah through Ham. Nimrod used civil government as a tyrant, a dictator opposing God. He founded the City of Babel, in which he established the worship of the sun and established what we know today as the Babylonian Secret or Mystery Religion. It was based upon the mother and child worship, which was later incorporated into Roman Catholicism as Jesus and Mary. This tower was built to have a rallying point so people would not lose sight, an anchor point. They could get far away, yet they had a homing beacon to get back. They could not get away from one another. At the top of the tower was established a shrine to worship the sun, the stars of the Zodiac, and the planets. It was, in fact, the first center of Internationalism, such as we know today in the United Nations.

For with an international society, Satan hoped that he would be able to control all of mankind. That's exactly what happens. The reason that God says, "I approve only people living as nations, as national entities,' is so that you can't cut off access to the Word of God. What if all the world were under the domination of the communists? Internationalism would cut off access to the Word of God for everybody. As it is now, they cut it off in Russia and communist countries, but they cannot cut it off in free countries. For this reason, Satan, is opposed to nationalism and is in favor of internationalism. His greatest expression of this will be under the antichrist.

God forced mankind, however, to migrate from the Tower of Babel by breaking up their one language into many languages. That stopped construction on the tower. That stopped the system of worship. And people drifted off to different parts of the world and created the racial groups as a result of genetic transformations within them. Those who are through the line of the son Shem produced the Jews and Arabs. Those who came through the line of Ham produced the Egyptians, the Indians and the Africans and the Asians. Those who came through the line of Japheth produced the Indo-European people of Western nations. These national groups formed a base that broke Satan's power.

This period of time that we're talking about, of the Gentiles, was from Adam to the Tower of Babel, that's 2,000 years. We're not talking about a long period of time. God did not create the world much more than 6,000 years ago.

Satan was frustrated in this way from his attempts to destroy the human race and all efforts at peace through internationalism proved to be futile. The Gentiles, as you know, went on to form four great world empires: the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Greek, and the Roman. From the Gentile River of humanity though, one day God brought off a little tributary stream, through a man named Abraham, in the line of Shem and this tributary was to form the Jewish Semitic people in contrast to the Gentile Hamitic/Japhetic people. This line of Jewish descendants from Abraham brought the promised salvation to the Gentiles through the Savior Jesus Christ, born in Abraham's line and through the line of King David.

Upon the rejection of the Jews and their Messiah, God turned to a new royal family, composed mostly of Gentiles known as the Church, the body of Christ. This began on the day of Pentecost with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. First it was Jews only. Then, about 7 years later, at the house of a Gentile named Cornelius in Caesarea, Gentiles were saved and soon flooded, and became the dominant group in the Church body.

This is a group of people, very gross in past history, very sophisticated, very great intellectually, enormous technology. These are the people that the apostle Paul specifically called to minister in the doctrines of the Church Age and to bring them as a unique body of believers, the body of Christ. The present era in history in which we live is called the "Times of the Gentiles," because the Gentiles dominate the world and they dominate the Jewish people. The basically Gentile church body is going to be removed from the earth at the Rapture. Then the Gentiles will go through another enormous period of suffering. Christ will return. He will then govern the Gentile nations through the Jewish people, and the Church will act as His bride and reign with Him.

So, the apostle Paul indeed was a man who had a great and a historic ministry to fulfill. I traced for you who these Gentiles were to give you some idea, some sense of the enormity of the ministry of the apostle Paul to a major segment of humanity. What a great man and what a faithful man and what an example for us to emulate.

**Benediction**

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this review again of the Word of God and of the historical sequence that is behind the simple statements of the apostle Paul. Yes, he was the minister, the priest to the Gentile world. Yes, he did bring them as an offering acceptable sanctified by the Holy Spirit to Thee. But it was his faithfulness and the information that was delivered through him that is the source of our blessing as Gentiles to this very day. We thank Thee for his spirit.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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