***What is Truth?
Romans 15:17-21
RO186-02***

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Romans 15, beginning a new segment this morning, Romans 15:17-21. Our topic is The Pioneer Missionary.

The apostle Paul has written to the Roman Christians with great boldness and self-confidence on a variety of spiritual matters. He has done this because he has received from God the gift and the authority of an apostle. He also feels bold to do this because he has been sent by God to teach Church Age doctrine to Gentiles specifically. Paul himself has been taught Church Age truth by the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, he knows what he is talking about. This information is now recorded for us in the New Testament. Paul proclaims the gospel of the grace of God as a priest of God and the Gentiles who believe this gospel were saved and were now viewed as Paul's offering to God.

**The Truth of God's Word Sets Us Apart**

These saved Gentiles were made acceptable to God by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. The sanctification included a positional sanctification where these people are definitely set aside for eternal life. It included an experiential sanctification where they are given capacity for godly living on a day-by-day basis. It included ultimate sanctification, which is their final sinless perfection in the very presence of Jesus Christ.

The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, Paul indicated, was the product of the Word of God as taught by the apostles. This is the principle that the Lord Jesus tried to stress in the upper room discourse the night before He was crucified when in John 17:17, the first part of that verse, He prayed that His disciples would be sanctified, would be set apart to God, through the knowledge of divine truth. John 17:17, Jesus says, "Sanctify them in the truth." 'Set them apart to Yourself Father through the truth, set them apart to real living through the truth.' 'Set them apart to life where it really is, life the way it really works through the truth.' Then in the latter part of that verse, He goes on to indicate that this sanctifying truth is God's word as found in the doctrines of Scripture. For He says, "Thy word is truth."

Today as believers appropriate the doctrines of Scripture into their minds, their lives are transformed and they are set apart to God's glory, to His service and to their own eternal rewards. There are many people who indeed hear the truth of God's word, but their indifference to it or their rebellion against it and their rejection of it causes it to be of no value to them. But when you want people to do right, when you want children to do right, it all has to begin with the Word of God that they are willing to accept. They cannot accept what they do not know. So, the first step is to teach people what God has to say. When you find a person who is a genuine, receptive student of the Word of God, you find a person whose life changes. You find a person who stops being the slave of his Sin Nature. You find a person who is able to relate himself to everything and everybody in the world about him in a way that blesses him and that honors God. God's truth sanctifies the believer.

**What Is Truth?**

But the question, of course, that people ask is the one that Pontius Pilate threw back at Jesus as he spoke to Him, examining the Lord, trying to determine whether He was guilty of any crime worthy of death. And after Jesus gave a testimony to Pontius Pilate, gave him a private Bible class about what was happening, what was really true, what God was doing, which should have been the guidelines for Pilate's decision, Pilate threw up his hands. And in John 18:38, we read, "Pilate said to Him, [to Jesus,] 'What is truth?'" Indeed, that's the question; what is truth? What is truth from God's point of view?

We wrote that evangelism brochure that we use here at Berean Church on the principle of this question: how do I know what is truth from God's point of view about how a person gets into Heaven, not truth from all the conflicting viewpoints that human beings have, but from what God really thinks, not what people say He thinks, but some way that we know what He thinks.

That's what Pilate was asking, "What is truth?" The Lord Jesus Himself declared to Pilate in the previous verse, John 18:37, that God's word is truth. "Pilate therefore said to Him, 'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.'" Isn't that interesting? 'Everybody who thinks like the Almighty Creator God, believes what I, the God-Man Jesus say, what I say, Jesus says, is true.' Anybody in the world today at this moment, our world, who does not believe what Jesus Christ says, is a person who is believing a lie. He is a person who is a rebel against the truth. The people who are responsive to the truth are the people who believe Jesus Christ.

So, are the Jewish people today in the truth? Certainly not. Are the Muslims in the truth? Certainly not. Are the Hindus in the truth? Certainly not. Are the Mormons in the truth? Certainly not. Are the Roman Catholics in the truth? Not on your life. Are the Buddhists in the truth? Never. The Shintoists, the Taoists? None of them are in the truth because all of them consistently and persistently reject some phase of what Jesus Christ said. Some critical point of His claims as the God-man Savior and of access to eternal life as a gift from God.

So, Jesus made it very clear that His words were truth. And in John 14:6 He made it very explicitly clear that He is the truth, and access to God in Heaven is through Him. [John 14:6] "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me.'"

**The Freedom of Knowing God's Truth/The Consequences of Not**

So, every human being today has to make a decision on this issue of where can I find truth from God's viewpoint. In John 8:32, Jesus said to a group of people who were before Him, some of them receptive, some of them antagonistic, he said, "and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In the previous verse, He tells them that if you believe His word, if you accept Him as God's messenger, then His words will give you God's divine viewpoint truth, and this truth will make you free. It will free you from being enslaved to your Sin Nature. It will free you from being in Satan's slave market. It will free you from all of your moral guilt that is taking you into the Lake of Fire. It will free you from an eternity in Hell and from a life of misery on this earth now.

People who know the truth, who know the truth from God's point of view, are the people who are going to be free. And the word "know" that is used in the Greek Bible is the word that means "to know something as a result of your personal experience." So, we're not talking about all you people who know a lot about the Bible, but when it comes to applying something in some point of your life, some moral aspect, some performance, some conviction, you skip it over and pass it by; you don't know anything. You have not known the truth until you have intimately accepted it and applied it in your own experience.

Jesus says, 'For those of you who are positive to my word, you will know freedom.' Most of the human race, I think we all understand, ignores and dismisses the Bible as the only inerrant source of God's truth on this earth, the only source of information concerning entrance into Heaven. Most of the human race does not look to the Bible for that information. Matthew 7:13-14 make that clear when Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; [Speaking of entrance into eternal life in Heaven, enter by the narrow gate;] for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. [14] "For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it."

Those, to me, are always very chilling words because it reiterates again that only a small number of us in the human race are going to be in Heaven and most of humanity is going to be taken down by its Sin Nature into Hell for all eternity because most of the human race accepts the false Scriptures of mankind. People do not look to the Bible. They look to the Bhagavad Gita of the Hindus. They look to the writings of Confucius, to the writings of Buddha. They look to the Koran. They look to the ridiculous Book of Mormon. They look to the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church. They look to Protestant liberalism for the truth. Nowhere is truth to be found in any of those areas.

**Finding God's Truth**

You see, we today face the same issues that Martin Luther faced. Here was this young Roman Catholic priest of the Augustinian Order in a monastery in enormous personal agony because he had done everything that the Catholic Church had told him to do in terms of ritual and works to get into Heaven. But his conscience was gnawing down deep inside of him and saying, 'you're not going to Heaven.' He had no peace. He had no sense of being at rest about the matter. Suddenly, one day, in the process of his studies of Romans for his university class that he was teaching on this subject, he came across that tremendous verse of Romans 1:17, the end of which says, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." The person who is justified in God's sight, the person who is viewed as absolutely perfect with perfect, divine God's righteousness, is the person who gets that through an act of faith, a faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

And when that truth hits Luther, he saw it, finally. The Spirit of God illuminated his understanding and now into his soul, flooded peace. There was joy. There was victory. He was finally euphoric because he knew now that there was a way for certainty to know how God would take a human being into Heaven. It was on the basis of the work that God had done for him through Christ. He realized that his sins were all paid for. Sin was not a problem. Then following the joy came anger.

And when Martin Luther got mad, he got mad. The scholars are a little embarrassed sometimes to read Luther's writings because he doesn't always use nice language when he talks about the pope and the people who had been the instruments that have led millions into Hell and almost led him there. He was angry because he had been so deceived. Because suddenly he realized that it was not the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church, it was not what the papal authorities had taught him that was the truth; they had taught him lies. The reason, he realized, that now he knew he was going to Heaven is because he had found the truth. It hit him that where he had found it was in the Bible.

So, suddenly a simple truth came home. You want to know what God thinks, go to the Bible. You want to know how to go to Heaven, look in the Bible. The Bible is the voice of God.

Well, this upset the Pope, Leo didn't like this one bit. The cardinals hated it. And the Holy Roman Emperor Charles, he didn't like it either. So, finally, they said, 'we're going to have a conference on this. And you tell this dingbat monk from Germany to get himself down here to the city of Worms. We're going to have a conference on this.' Luther walks in, the king is there, the high and the mighty of the religious world are there, the political authorities are there. This is kind of scary for this young monk. He walks in there and there he sees a table and on the table are piled up all these books he wrote (because the printing press had been invented and his books were being printed like crazy and going out everywhere with this new doctrine of salvation by grace on the authority of what Scripture taught). He was condemning in those books what the teaching authority of the pope had taught, which was 'salvation by becoming good enough through your own efforts until God said, "OK, you have proven yourself worthy. I will let the death of Christ apply to you. You have not been very good. You have not performed enough good works. I will not let the death of Christ apply to you."' And it was in the hands of the Pope even to decide who was good enough to have the death of Christ apply to him. Luther was enraged at that. He wrote the 95 theses, nailed them to the church door, a lot of which were discussion of paying for your salvation through the indulgences that the Pope said, 'If you pay so much money to build a great cathedral, (which now stands in the city of Rome, the Basilica of St. Peter) that you will have your sins forgiven or for any of your family.'

The man who was in charge, stood up and said, 'Martin Luther, you've been brought here to answer 2 questions and 2 questions alone. Number One is, "are these your books?" Number Two, "do you now take back what you have taught in these books contrary to the doctrine of Holy Mother church?" [And what they meant was salvation by grace.] You take that back and you go back to what we have taught, salvation by your good works and the Ministry of Holy Mother church.' Luther started to give an explanation. He said, 'yes, these are my books about what I..' 'No! Don't say anything. Just give us an answer. Yes or no. Do you take back what you wrote in these books?' Because the master ceremonies had been warned, 'don't let this guy debate. This guy is teaching the Book of Romans at the university through the Greek New Testament. And he'll shred you! He is talking about not the teachings of the church and the fathers. He takes the students into the Greek New Testament and says, "This is what God has said." That would be very difficult if you let him bring that up. Don't let this joker say anything. Squash him!'

Luther said, 'I'll need 24 hours to think this over.' So, they gave him 24 hours. The next day they put the question, 'are these your books?' 'Yes.' 'Do you take them back?' Then he made that dramatic speech which finished with the basic concept that one cannot go against his own conscience. This is neither wise nor right, and that what he has written has been on the basis of his conscience, of what was true before God, on the basis of Scripture. Therefore, he said, 'if you can show me from Scripture where I have erred, then I will recant and revise what I have said. But if you cannot show me from Scripture where I am in error, then I cannot recant. To do so would be both wrong and unwise.' He said, "Here I stand, I can do no other."

Luther answered the question that everybody has to answer. Where do I find out what God thinks? And Luther said 'it's the Bible, and most explicitly the original languages of the Bible. There I have what God the Holy Spirit Himself recorded. Then I know exactly what God has said.'

Well, that enraged the Roman Catholic Church. It enraged the political authorities. They did not realize that with that simple little statement, (It didn't take Luther very long to say all that, but when he finished with that little statement directing the focus of attention on the Bible as a source of information from God,) they didn't realize that he had turned loose the Protestant Reformation and that all of Europe would be torn apart as people accepted Luther's premise, 'The Bible is the voice of God, not the pope.' Because, Luther in his presentation had said, 'I cannot accept the contradictory declarations of truth of the popes. One says "this," one contradicts, another says "that." These are the views of men.' So, Luther pointed to the truth. They didn't realize what he had turned loose. From then on, they were never going to put that genie back in the bottle again.

The pope, when he got the words, said, 'OK, we're going to send him to Hell. We're going to excommunicate him.' He wrote a declaration of excommunication. That's called a "bull," a "papal bull." And it was! The papal bull declared that 'he is going now to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.' When they brought it to Luther, Luther said, 'Just what I've been looking for on this cold day.' He burned it out there in front of everybody. He says, "It makes a jolly good warmth." So, much for the pope's declaration of being sent into Hell.

I was in a church in Rome that has a magnificent statue of a snake which is carved around 2 men who are in agony and they're being dragged down toward Hell. If you look closely, you see that on one man is written, the name "Martin Luther" and on the other, "John Calvin." Everybody who comes into this church looks at this statue and sees this snake representing Satan, pulling these 2 men who are now represented as those who are sent by the Mother Church through the pope into the Lake of Fire.

You must learn and you must never yield on the fact that people who reject the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ is the only source to God's truth concerning eternal life in Heaven, are in for a big, big surprise. In Matthew 7:21-23, that deception is laid out for us when Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven." Yes, the Muslims respect Jesus Christ. Yes, the Hindus view Jesus Christ as one of the avataras, one of the gods, one of the reincarnations. All the religions of the world see Jesus Christ as somebody special. So, they call Him "Lord."

Matthew 7:22, "Many will say to Me on that day, [the day of judgment,] 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'" Jesus doesn't deny that they did that; He wasn't doing it. They weren't doing it through the power of God; they were doing these things through the power of Satan, just like the Charismatics do today. [Matthew 7:23] "And then [Jesus says], I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" Those who reject the Bible and its message of salvation through Jesus Christ are in for a big surprise.

For those of us who are believers, we must remember that we are building our lives and we are building our future in Heaven. Yes, we are going to have Heaven, some perhaps by the skin of your teeth, but you are going to Heaven. But the nature of your heavenly surroundings and the quality determined by your rewards is being built by you. Now, either you're building that on the truth of the Word of God, or you're building that on the shifting sands of human viewpoint? That's what Jesus meant when He said in Matthew 7:24-27, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. [25] "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. [26] "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. [27] "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

That passage, Matthew 7:24-27 is not speaking about a person who is saved and a person who is unsaved. It is speaking now about 2 believers, one who built his house on sand because he does not look to the doctrines of Scripture as his guidance and as his lifeline, the other person who does turn to the Word of God who is building his house upon the rock.

**Paul's Reason For Boasting**

In Romans 15:17, the apostle Paul begins 3 verses dealing with something about which he takes a great deal of pride and wherein he feels he has a right to boast. He says, "Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God." The word, "therefore," is introducing an inference based on what he has just said up in Romans 15:15-16 about having an apostolic call to be a missionary to the Gentiles. He says, 'That he, in Christ Jesus, [that is, operating in some way through the Savior of mankind] has something.' And what he says he has, is a basis of "boasting." The Greek word looks like this, "kauchesis," k a u c h e s i s. This word means "an act of taking pride in something." Paul's ground of pride, he makes very clear, is not in himself.

Every Christian servant should have a basis of pride in his Christian service. Every Christian worker should have a basis of bragging about his Christian service. You can only do that if your work is the product of Jesus Christ; then you are not bragging and boasting about yourself, but you are bragging and boasting about what Christ has done. That's the point the Paul was making.

Paul says, 'I am just so proud of the Lord Jesus as I look at what he has done through me,' in the things he says, "pertaining to God," that is in spiritual matters, in these issues of eternal life and eternal death that he has been dealing with out there in the Gentile world, in these issues of teaching Gentiles who have believed the deep things of the Church Age. Paul is proud of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has used Paul to reach the Gentiles with the gospel of grace salvation. Paul is pleased with the good job that Jesus has done in reaching so many in the Gentile world with the message of eternal life. Paul's testimony to the Gentiles has indeed borne great fruit, and all over the ancient New Testament world, local churches have sprung up and the gospel message is going out into the hinterlands. Paul is not boasting about his accomplishments as a missionary, but of the Lord's accomplishments through Paul his agent. The idea here is 'in union with Christ Jesus, then, I can be proud of my service to God.' And you and I too have proper ground for taking pride in how we exercise our particular spiritual gifts, if that exercise has indeed been by the power of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the indwelling Christ. Then you are not bragging about yourself, you are bragging about the Lord.

Without Jesus Christ, a Christian leader, will only produce human good works. Those who teach the Bible should indeed be sensitive to the results in their students. The apostle Paul was very sensitive for this very reason. He wanted to be proud of what the Lord had done. And Paul was always sensitive that if the people he taught did not respond in the right way in their own lives, then he felt that he'd let the Lord down. He'd been a barrier; he'd been a hindrance. He knew there was nothing wrong with the doctrine. He knew there was nothing wrong with what he had taught. Someplace along the line, something had gotten fouled up. People were not responding for their blessing. It's not what a Christian does for God that counts, but what he lets God do through him. That's the issue. The apostle is saying that he was a man who just let God work through him.

Jesus did not, you will remember, tell His disciples that without His help, they could do very little. Do you remember what He said in John 15:5, how much they could do without His help? [John 15:5] "I am the vine, [He says,] you are the branches; he who abides in Me, [that is, remains in temporal fellowship,] and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." Nothing! He didn't say 'if you don't stay in temporal fellowship, if you don't operate on the principles of the Word of God, you'll do very little in Christian service,' He says, 'You'll do nothing! Your whole life will be one mass production of human good.'

On the occasion when the apostle Paul served God on the basis of his own judgment, on the basis of his own confidence, on the basis of his own resources, his ministry became useless. You should know that that happened to Paul. This very man who is telling us that he takes great pride in what he has accomplished because Jesus Christ has done the work through him and he's been pleased to be used and he considers that an honor, (and while he should,) this same man, knowing this principle of how all this works, was a man who also stumbled and took over and became the one who began running his own life on his own conditions, on his own conclusions.

So at the end of one of his missionary journeys, he goes back to Jerusalem. He says, 'I'm going to try to be nice to the Jews who've been kicking me around and who won't listen to me. And I'm crushed that they're rejecting our Messiah. I know what's before them. I hate to see what's ahead of them.' So, he says 'I'm going to try to show them that I am not antagonistic to our Jewish heritage, even though I am a preacher of a new thing that God is creating, the Church, the body of Christ, made up of Jews and Gentiles, a whole new different thing than Judaism. But I'm still a friend of the Jews and I'm much concerned for them.' But he does it on the basis of a personal human viewpoint decision. This is not what the Lord told him to do. He goes back to Jerusalem and he performs with the Jews did under Judaism, periodically taking a vow. They go to the temple; they go through certain ceremonies. He had his head shaved. He brought a lamb and he sacrificed it (even though God the Father had sacrificed His own lamb, His own Son, the last sacrifice for human sin, once and for all, so there was no need for any more symbolic sacrifices). He sacrificed this lamb. The result was that the Jews did not respond to him positively. They hated him so much that somebody created a lie and said he took a Gentile into the courts of the Temple where Gentiles are not allowed. Paul hadn't done any such thing.

He himself had been there going through the ceremony of several days, and the result was that he started a riot in Jerusalem. And when he tried to stand up and talk to them about Jesus Christ, they became enraged all the more, so that the Roman soldiers had to come in and grab Paul to keep him from being killed on the spot. He spent the next 2 years in prison in Jerusalem. So, much for the man who knew how to be used of God taking off on his own because he had such a cause. How many Christians do you know who are now spiritual casualties and basket cases because they felt so convinced they had a calling from God to a cause that they were going to give everything to, and nothing would dissuade them from it.

Finally, Paul takes his case to Nero in Rome, and the process is long and tedious. He sits for 2 more years in Rome before his case finally comes up. Four years later from that foolish move of taking that Jewish vow to show that he was not antagonistic to the Jews, (which God did not ask him to do) four years later, he finally was able to walk out a free man and get back to his missionary work, but only for a short time. The wheels had been spinning and a short time later he was brought back, and this time, Nero took off his head.

Paul himself when he was on track, permitting the Spirit of God to work through him, was so pleased with what the Lord Jesus Christ had produced through him. It was God's doing and not Paul. And God indeed had been pleased. Most of Paul's life, God used Paul's ministry to the Gentiles to bring thousands to salvation. Paul is very proud of the Lord Jesus, not of himself.

In Romans 15:18, Paul goes on to say, "For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed." "For" is an explanation of what Paul has said in Romans 15:17 about being pleased with how God has used him. He says that he "will not presume to speak" and he uses the strong Greek negative, "ou," o u, he "absolutely will not" presume "to," 'at any point in the future.' He "will not dare" is what the word means. The word "presume" here is the Greek word "tolmao," t o l m a o, that means "to dare to do something." Paul says, 'I would not dare at any point of time in the future to speak' (referring to his boasting), about "anything except what Christ has accomplished through me." He said, 'When I say I am proud of my ministry and I boasted in it, is because Jesus Christ did it, Jesus Christ did the work through me. So, I wouldn't dare to talk about myself, but I will dare to talk about Him, about what He has accomplished and what He accomplished was very powerful.'

The word accomplished is the Greek word "katergazomai." It is an intensive, strong word. "k a t e r g a z o m a i" it refers to what Jesus Christ accomplished among the Gentiles through Paul's ministry. He accomplished a great deal. Paul's boasting is limited to what Christ has done in reaching the Gentiles. God caused Paul to preach to the Gentiles, and he caused the Gentiles to believe the message unto their salvation. So, Paul is not bragging again, or stressing on what he's achieved, but what God has achieved through him as God's special messenger to the Gentiles.

"I will not presume" [I would not dare to speak of anything in such a boasting manner], except what Christ has accomplished through me. Those words "through me" really are an expression of humility: I didn't do it, He did it. The conversion of Gentiles is God's work and so Paul could speak freely about it without any self-exultation. You do have to have and be the faithful and true minister of the Word of God for the work to be done. If you're going to reach the lost, that's not going to happen without the information. But the accomplishments from that information will be the work of the Lord.

What this resulted in here, Paul says, was an act of "obedience." This word is referring to the fact that when the Gentiles heard Paul's message of salvation, there was a positive response. They obey the gospel. They trusted Christ as personal Savior.

"In the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed" - he is referring when he says, "word," he is talking about the Word of God. The "word" in the Greek is "logos," l o g o s, which is here referring to Scripture. Paul says, 'When the Lord Jesus Christ worked, He worked through the Word of God,' that is, 'Christ used the Word of God.' Paul was the messenger, but it was Jesus Christ who was proclaiming that word. And God does not bless, you want to remember, your oratory, He does not bless your logic, He does not bless your charm, your sincerity, your intelligence. What does He bless? He blesses His own word. So, when we give people the Word of God, then Christ would honor your efforts. That's what Paul says. Yes, it was a great deal of obedience on the part of the Gentiles. I was happy to see it. It was the result of God honoring His word, which I proclaimed to them.

Furthermore, God works by confirmation of "deeds." "Deeds" are "works," "ergon," e r g o n. Paul produced divine good work through the Holy Spirit in ministering to the Gentiles. The works of Paul were the works of Christ working through him.

The Lord Jesus Christ, you remember, impressed the 2 disciples on the Emmaus Road with the spiritual power it says, "of his words and deeds. Notice Luke 24:19, where that emphasis is made. Luke 24:19, "And He [Jesus] said to them, [to the 2 men] 'What things?'" He's pretending that He does not know what's going on. They said 'These things that have happened in Jerusalem. We thought all this was leading to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. Instead, Jesus our Messiah has been murdered. And He said to them, "'What things?' And they said to Him, 'The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people.'"

**How Then Should We Live?**

That's a significant point that the apostle Paul is making the same point. 'I have ministered to you with the Word of God. I gave you true doctrine. I gave you the real information on how to go to Heaven. But I also ministered to you by the fact that I did not live like a dog. I did not live like some immoral scum; I did not violate the Word of God myself. You watched me, you saw my work, you saw my conduct, you saw my actions and you saw that I was compatible to the word of truth. You saw that I was not becoming rich from the fact that you became a Christian and therefore you became sympathetic to handing your money over to me. You saw that I was not after some personal advantage over you. You saw that what I did was to get you into Heaven and to put you in the most blessed position on this earth and into the most prosperous position for all eternity.'

And that's the twofold impact, I guarantee you, that the analyzing unsaved world is going to direct toward us as Christians. They will listen to your message and your message may be a true gospel presentation, but they're going to look a little closer at you and make an evaluation of your life. It's going to be very tough if you're some foul-mouthed character down at work, to turn around and say, 'I'd like to tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ and how to go to Heaven. You get born again so that you have a new nature in Christ.' 'What, one like yours?' It's not going to help you to say, 'I'd like to tell you what God can do to you through Jesus Christ,' when the people who deal with you know that you're a deadbeat, you don't pay your bills, you beat people out of stuff, you'll rip them off whatever you can.

Some Christians are really weird. Have you ever noticed that? In fact, when you think about it, most of them are. But there are some of them that are really weird that they have this dichotomy that they're proclaiming something about God and the wonderful things that are there, and then as if there was no connection between life and faith, they live and act in a totally different way.

Paul says, "I gave you true truth of doctrine, and I confirmed it by the works that you saw in my life. And not only that as we shall get to next time, we want to enter the whole world that is of such interest today in certain religious segments, the world of performing miracles, the world of signs and wonders.

The Christian is always going to minister to people not only with the Word of God, but whether he likes it or not, with his deeds. Those must be compatible with the name of Jesus Christ. Colossians 3:17 therefore says, "And whatever you [you Christians] do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." So, however you act, at least make it compatible with what Jesus Christ stands for, that's what it means to do it in His name. Serving as God's ambassador requires the words of sound doctrine and the deeds that only God the Holy Spirit will produce in the life of a believer.

So, the apostle Paul in Romans 15:17-18, says that he himself feels that he has good reasons for boasting about his spiritual activity, his ministry for God. He says he does that not because he's presuming to speak of something that he has done, but because he is daring to speak only of what Jesus Christ has accomplished through him. And that's been awesome in his estimation, because it has resulted in the obedience of the most degraded, benighted resistant, antagonistic Gentiles that the world has ever seen. And yet, these people are melted, they're crumbled before the gospel testimony of Paul. And they accept Christ as Savior and their lives are transformed. Paul said 'I gave them true doctrine and I backed it up with my life. And Jesus Christ used that. And these people have stormed into the Kingdom of God. May Paul's example be ours indeed that we follow this week.

**Benediction**

Our Heavenly Father, we do thank Thee so much for the fact that we are the ambassadors of God, but we are nevertheless impressed with the awesomeness of that responsibility. There is upon us this great burden of knowing the Word of God so that we can proclaim it, of living the life that does not disgrace our Lord, our fellow Christians, our believers in the local assembly, but is indeed compatible with what we profess to be. Not so much what people see, it is the fact that we are always open to Thy observation. So, it's because we want to do right in Thy sight that we pursue this course of righteousness. May experiential sanctification, along with the proclamation of true and deep doctrine, characterize the members of this congregation to Thy Son's glory and to the forward movement of the testimony of the Church in these final years that we have left. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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