

Sunday Evening Sermon

November 22, 2020

“The Gospel of God” (Part 1V)

Romans 1:1-7

Pastor Marc Brashear

¹ Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God ² which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴ and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. ⁵ Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

***⁷ To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

In our text Romans chapter 1, verses 1 through 7, we are still in a mini-series here, that we've entitled “The Gospel of God,” Part 4 in that; considering verses 1 through 7 from Paul's first chapter in his epistle to the Romans. As we've been walking through this section of text, to put us within the context of our outline, remember with me how the text breaks down in this introduction. Each of these phrases are exceedingly important, exceedingly important and begging to be preached. Begging for us to understand and begging to be explained. And so, we want to take out time through the introduction to do that. We don't want to move too quickly. I don't think anybody would accuse us of moving too quickly. We want to take our time and understand what this means as a way of setting the table, so to speak, of laying a foundation for the body of the epistle that will follow.

So, think with me about verse 1. Paul begins by introducing himself; introducing the servant, so to speak, and then his subject. First, we have an introduction to the servant. The servant is Paul. He describes himself – introduces himself there as a slave of Jesus Christ; “a called apostle” literally. That's how that's worded in the Greek. Separated, set apart, consecrated to the Gospel of God. Consecrated to gospel ministry. That's his subject. His subject: The Gospel of God. Notice its divine origin. It's the gospel which comes from God, finds its source in God. And it's the gospel which God promised before (verse 2) through His prophets in Holy Scriptures. So, the gospel involves a promise and the gospel involves a Person. It concerns: ***His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*** And there we see two aspects or states of being of the incarnate Christ. His humiliation followed by His exaltation.

So, this morning we've found ourselves once more in verses 3 through 4 discussing Paul's introduction to the promised Person of the gospel, Jesus Christ our Lord. We've discussed His humiliation, His incarnation referenced in verse 3. This morning we began to consider His exaltation referenced in verse 4. With respect to His exaltation, verse 4, we're examining this statement of Paul under three headings: 1) An Exalted Status, first, meaning that Jesus Christ is appointed the Son of God with power. He enjoys, as it were, an exalted status. And

then we see 2) An Exalted State. That is according to the Spirit of holiness. We'll discuss that some tonight. And that is all through 3) An Exalted Means. It's by or through the resurrection from the dead.

1) An Exalted Status (Continued)

So this morning we scratched the surface with respect to His exalted status. And we saw how His exalted status is an appointed status. That translation of the word "declared" there would be far better translated "appointed," or "determined," or "ordained." Not merely declared to be the Son of God or seen to be the Son of God by the resurrection, Jesus Christ was appointed: ***the Son of God...according to the Spirit of holiness, (through or) by the resurrection of the dead.*** He is, in other words, the Last Adam, the True Israel, the first fruits of a new humanity. He is the true and faithful Son of God.

And as the God-Man, that exaltation was brought to complete fulfillment through or at the resurrection. At the resurrection from the dead when Jesus Christ was appointed the Son of God with power. We see His exaltation primarily consisting in the glorification and the enthronement of His humanity as the God-Man. Jesus Christ has eternally been God the Son. He is co-equal, co-eternal with the Father, always with God – from the beginning with God, as John would say, and was God – co-eternal with the Father, did not count it robbery to be equal with God. And Jesus Christ has always been exalted. He has been worthy of and enthroned in the praises of angels and of redeemed humanity. Jesus Christ is worthy of enthronement.

But His exaltation, His appointment as the Son of God with power really consist in the glorification, the enthronement of His humanity. And what we're looking at here basically as we're walking through this text are the three states of Jesus Christ: 1) His preexistence, 2) His humiliation or His incarnation, 3) and His exaltation. Three states of Christ. And I want you to see that from the Scriptures.

Turn to Philippians chapter 2 with me. Philippians chapter 2. And let me give you an example of this. We see this in several places in the Bible. One place in which it's laid out very well is the text which we're familiar with, Philippians chapter 2. Look there beginning with me at verse 5. We're looking again at the three states of the Lord Jesus Christ: His preexistence – His glory that He shares with God the Father from before the worlds began. We see that in the Lord's High Priestly prayer in John 17. 1) His preexistence, 2) His humiliation, 3) and His exaltation.

Philippians chapter 2, verse 5. Look first at His preexistent glory. Paul says: ***Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, (and he's speaking here of His preexistent glory) who, being in the form of God, (and remember, that doesn't mean that He merely looks like God or appears to be like God. It means He has all the essential characteristics of deity. He was in the form of God. He) did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, (preexistent glory. Then notice His humiliation, verse 7) but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form (or otherwise had the essential characteristics of a slave, a doulos) a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*** And in His humiliation or in His incarnation, Paul makes reference to that in Romans chapter 1, verse 3, when he says that Jesus Christ was: ***born of the seed of David according to the flesh.*** It's a reference to His incarnation.

But then notice, the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of His work, you could say, (verse 4) as a result of His exaltation, His appointment as "the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead." Verse 9: ***Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*** His preexistent glory, His humiliation, and His exaltation.

Now notice next, that exalted state that we began to discuss this morning also has, in addition to being an appointed state or an appointed status, is also an authoritative status. Look at verse 4 with me. He's not just appointed the Son of God, He is appointed the Son of God with power, Paul says. That word "power" – the word "power" isn't modifying or describing the word "appointed" or the word "declared." In other words, He wasn't declared to be the Son of God with a powerful declaration or it wasn't a powerful appointment. The word "power" is modifying or describing the Son of God. He is the Son of God with power. Jesus Christ in His humiliation, Jesus Christ in His incarnation, the Jesus Christ who in Philippians chapter 2, verse 7, made Himself of no reputation, the Son of God who took upon Himself the form of a slave, the One who came in the likeness of flesh, the One who humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross, that One who was co-equal, co-eternal with the Father, the One who took on flesh to become the God-Man to redeem His people through His own shed blood on the cross has been highly exalted! – has been highly exalted! Through the resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One appointed the Son of God has been raised from a state of humiliation to a state now of exaltation.

Therefore, Philippians chapter 2, verse 9: ***God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,*** (and listen to the authoritative status of that exaltation) ***that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*** In other words, no longer the Son of suffering. No longer the Son of weakness. No longer the Man of sorrows acquainted with grief. He has attained to a new and glorified and exalted status, and that status is an authoritative status. He is now the Son of God, raised from the dead, exalted to the right hand of God the Father, the Majesty on High, invested with all the power and authority rightfully due the Son in reward for His perfect obedience, even unto death; and He now reigns as the appointed Messianic King, the Promised Davidic Prince, who would be enthroned forever as the Promised Davidic King, enthroned in the praise of His people.

This is what Jesus is saying, what the Lord Jesus Christ means when, for example, in Matthew chapter 28, verse 18, we're given the Great Commission. Listen to what the Lord says: ***And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me*** (When was that authority given? It's given in response to His finished work as God the Son – as the Son of God who has been appointed "the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead." It came at His exaltation as the Son of God. He is given all authority. He enjoys an exalted status. He says,) ***"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*** Amen. He has been appointed to this exalted status.

2. An Exalted State

One of the fruits of, the implications of being appointed to that exalted status is that He reigns in an exalted state. If you're following along on your outline, this is point two under His exaltation. His exalted state. Paul tells us that His resurrection was according to the Spirit of holiness. And it's really important for us to understand exactly what Paul is talking about when he makes that statement. How does that relate to the exalted state of the Lord Jesus Christ? He is appointed: ***declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness,*** – Notice the contrast between verse 4 and verse 3 with me.

In verse 3: ***Jesus Christ...was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.*** And then look at verse 4. Jesus Christ was appointed: ***the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness,*** – You see the two statements set in contrast between verse 3 and verse 4. There's an obvious contrast being established by the parallel statements of Paul there. This is an intentional contrast. And what exactly is it that Paul is contrasting by his reference to the flesh and the Spirit – "according to the flesh" and "according to the Spirit." There are various explanations given for this apparent contrast.

Some, in this contrast, see a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit of Jesus Christ Himself in the same way that there is a distinction between the flesh and the spirit of any human being. They would see this as a contrast between the Lord's flesh as humanity and His own Spirit. Jesus had a body. Jesus had His own Spirit. And that Spirit was holy, so it's considered the Spirit of holiness. I don't see that in the text and we'll find a better interpretation.

Some see a contrast between the human nature of Jesus Christ, His humanity and the divine nature of Jesus Christ. He was the seed of David according to His human nature. He was declared to be the Son of God according to His divine nature. Far more plausible but still not the right interpretation, I don't believe. It doesn't seem to hold up with all that we considered this morning – appointed as the Son of God with power. At issue in our text is not a contrast between the Lord's human and divine natures; those two natures joined inseparably in one Person – the hypostatic union. But rather, the issue in our text is the fulfillment of His work as the God-Man, the incarnate Son of God.

Now what do we see in the rest of Paul's writings? Throughout Paul's writings we continuously see a running contrast between flesh, referring to the condition, or the state, or the nature of man; and Spirit, referring not to a human spirit but to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit's work, the third Person of the Trinity. This contrast between flesh and Spirit runs throughout – in particular in the book of Romans – but throughout all of Paul's writings. Often flesh and Spirit are terms used to distinguish two modes or two planes of existence for the believer – two spheres, two realms, two ways of thinking, two ways of living, two eras, two ages. There is the sphere of the flesh. The sphere of the flesh characterized by sin, by weakness, by frailty, by vulnerability; ultimately by death. And Job references this sphere of the flesh when he says that: ***Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away. He flees like a shadow and does not continue.*** (All flesh is as grass and withers away.) ***He comes forth like a flower and fades away –***

“The spirit indeed is willing, (the Lord says) but the flesh is weak.”

The body (Paul would say) is sown in weakness, – It is sown in dishonor, – That's the flesh.

And then there is, according to Paul, the realm or the sphere of the Spirit, the plane of the Spirit, referring to the Holy Spirit – characterized by holiness, characterized by righteousness, power, strength, might, characterized by life. And Paul says we are: ***strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.*** We have these two realms, these two ages, these two spheres, these two eons; the flesh and the Spirit. Now Jesus Christ clearly partook of flesh and blood. In Hebrews chapter 2, the writer of Hebrews says in verse 14 that: ***Inasmuch as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself (the Lord Jesus Christ) likewise shared in the same,*** – Now what is he talking about there? He's speaking of the Lord sharing in our humanity, sharing in our weakness, sharing in our vulnerability, sharing in our humanity, in our fleshliness.

In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ was not a glorified superhuman. He wasn't a Marvel character. He wasn't a super human, a Superman, a super hero. The Lord Jesus Christ was a human being, He took on flesh. He humbled Himself, Paul said, and came in the likeness of men. He took upon Himself our common human frailty, human flesh in its weak, temporal, transitory, vulnerable frailty; in its temporal condition. He subjected Himself to pain, subjected Himself to sorrow, to death, to weariness, to toil. And always: ***tempted as we are, yet without sin.*** He did not take upon Himself our sin nature. He subjected Himself to all the temporal consequences of sin that we face in this world; and yet, He Himself was sinless.

Ultimately Paul says that Jesus Christ was crucified in weakness, because He was crucified as a man. So, Jesus Christ: ***was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.*** (Paul would even say later) ***in the likeness of sinful flesh.*** Not sinful Himself, but in the likeness of our frail, weak human condition.

But now in verse 4, Paul says that Jesus Christ was appointed: ***the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness***, – or on the basis of the Spirit of holiness. In other words, Christ may have been born according to the flesh but He lives in that sphere no longer. He subjects Himself to that weakness, that frailty no more. In other words, His human nature now glorified. He has been appointed the Son of God with power.

Paul says the body: ***is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory***. In other words, Jesus Christ is no longer in that sphere that is marked by weakness, and suffering, and sorrow, and pain, and death. He now lives in that glorified sphere of Spirit-wrought life, and glory, and power, and strength, and might. The Lord Jesus Christ is still human. He is the God-Man, but His human nature has been glorified. And His glorification came through the resurrection from the dead – literally, resurrection “from among dead ones.” He has entered into the sphere or the realm of the Spirit. In Jesus Christ the new age, the new era, the sphere or the realm of the Spirit has come. It has invaded this present age. The new age has been inaugurated by the Lord’s resurrection from the dead.

The genuine believers, you and I brothers and sisters, were indwelt by the Spirit, aren’t we? Paul would say, ‘whoever does not have the Spirit of God is none of His.’ If you are in Christ, you’ve been given the Spirit of God. It’s the Spirit of His Son given to us in our hearts, by which we cry out “Abba Father!” And we have through the Spirit a down payment, as it were, a guarantee, the first fruits of the resurrection from the dead given to us in the form of the Spirit.

Turn with me to Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8 discusses this. We’re going to get there in a few years and it’s going to be good. Paul discusses this truth throughout Romans chapter 8, but look with me specifically at verse 1, and this Spirit-wrought life that Paul describes there beginning in verse 1. Paul says: ***There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit***. You see the dichotomy between the two. We’re not to walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. And here, specifically, “flesh” referring to our sinful condition, our inward corruption that still remains as a result of the Fall. We’re not to walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Verse 2: ***For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son (here it is) in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.***

Now, I want to draw this to your attention so you see the contrast again between flesh and Spirit in the life of a genuine believer. That Spirit-wrought life, that Spirit-wrought power, those Spirit-wrought fruits invade this present age in the life of the Spirit in those who have been born again, united to Christ such that we live by the Spirit. Verse 7: ***Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.***

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The same Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead – if you’re a believer, if you’ve put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, if you’ve turned from your sin, that same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you, in power to give life to our mortal bodies, as Paul says it here. The life of the Spirit bearing the fruit of righteousness. It’s an invasion, if you will, of that sphere, that age, that era that’s coming. It’s an invasion of that into this age for those who are united to Christ. And that took place with Jesus Christ at the resurrection, appointed: ***the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.***

3) An Exalted Means

And that brings us to the last point. That exalted state comes through an exalted means. Romans chapter 1, verse 3: ***concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*** The word there for “dead” is plural. It’s literally “from among dead ones.” Think about that with me for a moment. The Lord Jesus Christ enjoyed an exalted status and an exalted state by or through the resurrection “from among dead ones.” Now, who’s he referring to there in the plural? All those who have died in Him, all those who will one day be raised in Him. Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead. The first fruits of the resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ is the first of a general resurrection. All those who are in Christ by faith will be raised with Christ at the resurrection.

Think with me for a moment. How could the One who was the eternal Son of God having all power, having all authority as God the Son be exalted? How could He be given power? How could He be appointed the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness when He Himself has all power, He Himself as God is omnipotent? How could He be exalted when He has all glory with the Father, with the Spirit? This all consisted in the glorification of the Son and in the enthronement of His humanity. He is the first fruits of those who will be raised from the dead. He is exalted as the first fruits of those who would be exalted in Him.

Listen to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 20: ***But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*** (those who have died in Him). ***For since by man came death, (through Adam) by Man also came the resurrection of the dead*** (the Last Adam). ***For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order. Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For He has put all things under His feet. But when He says all things are put under Him, it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.***

It’s interesting to think about this brothers and sisters, with respect especially to what we were speaking about this morning in this text, that Genesis chapter 1 begins with God establishing His kingdom. It’s God’s place, God’s people, under God’s rule, establishing His Kingdom in Genesis chapter 1, establishing His Kingdom through creation. Genesis chapter 1, Genesis chapter 2 Adam is appointed as vice-regent. The son of God appointed to have dominion over all of God’s creation to spread the glory of God, to be fruitful and multiply, to spread the glory of God across the earth as the waters cover the sea.

All of redemptive history is moving us to Revelation chapter 21, Revelation chapter 22 when the Son of God in a new heavens and a new earth reigns. God’s people, God’s place, God’s rule. And Jesus Christ has been exalted to that position of authority, that position of power as the first fruits of all of those sons of

God, sons of glory who will be raised in Him to rule and to reign with Him. It's an amazing truth when you see that described in the Bible, cover to cover, Genesis 1 and 2 through Revelation 21 and 22.

Brothers and sisters, that should have an impact on how we think about things, how we live, how we act. It should impact, fuel our worship. It should fuel our joy, our devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. We should, as Paul says, set aside, look not to the things that are on the earth, but look at those things which are in heaven. To fix our gaze on eternal and unseen things in the heavens. This is not our home. And we have a home, a habitation made without hands, eternal in the heavens. And we look forward to that life, that Spirit-wrought life with Him in eternity. Pray with me.