

ROMANS (15:15-16)

Based on Grace

PART 91 - DECEMBER 17, 2006

RADICAL RABBI

Before Paul converted to Christianity he was obsessed with exterminating every follower of Jesus. This was because he believed that they were perverting the Jewish faith.

I ... was *convinced* that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ... On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. - *Acts 26:9-11 NIV*

Q: Did you know that Paul's *Jewish* name was Saul?

Saul was a radical rabbi who knew little if anything about God's grace ... until Jesus *Himself* tackled Saul on a road to Damascus.

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. - *Acts 9:3-6 NIV*

This first-hand encounter with God changed the course of Saul's life. Known now by the non-Jewish pronunciation of his name, *Paul* became a leading expert on the grace of God.

Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly ... - *1 Timothy 1:13-14 NIV*

Now let's read more of Paul's parting words to his Roman readers:

I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. - *Romans 15:15-16 NIV*

BASED ON GRACE

Last time we read Paul's three compliments to his readers:

[They] are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. - *Romans 15:14 NIV*

And now, just to make sure that they know that he doesn't think they're totally ignorant, he follows it up with:

I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again
(15:15-16a)

He's just "reminding" them of things he knows they know he knows they know!

See if you can guess one of his *bold points* from these examples:

[We] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (3:23-24)

The promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace ... (4:16)

We have gained access by faith into this grace ... (5:2)

We are not under law but under grace ... (6:15)

How much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of ... Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! (5:15)

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. (11:6)

Q: Any guesses?!

Q: And why does Paul consider himself so well-equipped to remind them of these subjects?

Because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles
(15:15-16a)

Effective ministry is based on grace. At its core, ministering to others is simply expressing the love and grace of God as you've received it through Jesus.



We look at our track record of stupid mistakes and dumb stunts and conclude that God can't use us, when it's just the opposite. A believer who is a non-practicing alcoholic or addict has far more potential to minister Christ to someone struggling with drugs or booze than I do. Which is why ...

- God uses broken, imperfect people to point the way.

PRIESTLY DUTIES

Q: Paul had to be knocked on his head by Jesus Himself! Who better to empathize with those who worshipped false idols?



Think about the irony of God choosing a Christian-killer to be the one to offer new life through Christ! Paul didn't deserve to be called, I didn't deserve to be called, and you don't deserve to be called. But called we are ... by grace! God uses the adversity from our lives to minister, model, encourage, support, correct, and assist others. God will never waste pain.

Q: What pain or hurt or conditions or situations or anguish or grief has God's grace equipped you to best minister to?

I'll admit that I ruffle a bit when people call me *Pastor Bruce*.



[Jesus] has made us ... his priests ... - *Revelation 1:5-6 NLT*

So I'll see your pastor and raise you a priest! When it comes to the body of Christ ... if you're a member you're a minister.

Paul may have seen himself as "the least of the apostles" (*1 Cor 15:9*)

... [I] do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church ... - *1 Corinthians 15:9b*

But, he saw his ministry (to others) in Christ's name as *sacred*.

With the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God (*15:16b*)

There's nothing more sacred than sharing a living Savior with a dying world! You and I have a priestly duty to demonstrate, illustrate, display, and explain God's grace through Christ. One of the primary duties of an O.T. priest was to go before the altar of incense (wearing the names of his people/tribes across his chest), and pray and intercede for them. Do you do this with the people God puts on your heart?

Wherever you live, wherever you work, wherever you go to school; wherever you have influence, you are God's priest in that place.

ACCEPTABLE OFFERINGS

- Paul sees salvation as a priestly offering to God.

So that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God (*15:16c*)

This turns witnessing on its head! We share our faith with friends and family to offer them relief from the shame of sin, to offer a relationship with Jesus, and to offer eternal life. Paul shares the gospel in order to offer something to *God*.



In the one act of sharing our faith and leading someone to Christ, we not only offer an eternal Father to those we love ... we offer an eternal child to the One we worship.

Q: What did the Old Testament priests place on the altar?

A: Sacrificed animals.

Q: You know why Jesus came as the final, perfect sacrifice?

A: God doesn't want dead animals, He wants living children! (*Rom 12:1*)



Let's say you're walking by a house, and there's smoke coming out the windows; you stop and call 911. But suddenly a father runs to the door, looks at *you*, and yells: "Will you help me save my children?!"

Q: Do you go in, or do you wait to see how he does on his own?

We not only share our faith to meet man's greatest need, we share to satisfy God's greatest desire.

Q: You want to see how simple it is to satisfy God's heart?



I put a note under every seat in this sanctuary; it contains a very significant message. Thing is, an enemy of mine came in earlier and tried to steal them. But he missed about four. Reach under your seat to see if yours is still there. Raise your hand if you found a note.

And because you were fortunate enough to receive the note (by grace, not because of you), you have an obligation to share it. If you don't know the important message, raise your hand. If you know what the note says, tell someone who doesn't.

God doesn't want to settle for converts; He wants children who long to grow into the glory and likeness of their Father. That's what it means to be:

Sanctified by the Holy Spirit (*15:16b*)

We have His Spirit to help us move toward His likeness. This means to think as Christ thought, to feel as Christ felt, to choose as Christ chose, and to behave as Christ behaved. Becoming a child of God is not a one-time vaccination. It's an ongoing, life-saving, lifestyle-changing, treatment plan.

And when it's based on grace, sanctification isn't about rules and religion, it's about a loving, adoring response to a devoted, affectionate Father.