



BETHEL  
PRESBYTERIAN

# MINISTRY OF THE WORD

---

Volume 8 Issue 37

September 20, 2009

## The Gospel of God, Part 4

The story is told of Bill. Bill was a big man with a big heart who hadn't a clue when it came to his job. He was hired as the night guard of a warehouse in Boston. To pass the time and desirous of pleasing his boss, Bill set his energies to cleaning, painting, and fixing up the warehouse. The problem was he got so side-tracked cleaning, painting and fixing that one Wednesday morning after a very active evening of cleaning, it was discovered that the safe of the warehouse had been robbed!

Now guys, let me tell you: on that Wednesday morning there was no

- Cleaner warehouse.
- Tidier warehouse.
- Better looking warehouse.

in all of Boston. Nor was there any poorer warehouse!

See, Bill was so busy doing so many good things he neglected his job! I wonder how many "Bills" are here this morning when it comes to the Kingdom of God? We are diligently laboring and striving at so many things. And yet, what of the things we are doing really is fulfilling the Master's will?

The text at which we are looking gives us a clear description of God's will for our life Paul has been describing.

- The Messenger of the Gospel of God, v. 1b.
- The Validity of the Gospel of God, v. 2.
- The Essence of the Gospel, vv. 3-4.
- And in our text he turns to The Purpose of the Gospel, vv. 5-6.

In essence Paul is describing God's will for every child of God. Let's look at this text and discover the purpose of the gospel beginning with the end of the gospel, Christian maturity.

Romans 1:5, [speaking of the Gospel of Christ] "through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles."

Literally, the purpose of the gospel is to bring about "faith's obedience" or "the obedience which arises from faith." The gospel is to secure obedience! A ministry which strives towards any other goal for its people contradicts the very purpose of the gospel of God.

This is a very important truth we all must grasp. Today, the emphasis is on

- The New Birth.
- Wholeness and purposeful living.
- Conversion: The Beginning!<sup>1</sup>

And yet this is opposite to the emphasis found in the Bible. In Scripture, the focus is on...

- Faithfulness to the end.
- The completion of the Christian life.
- The "obedience of Faith."

Paul speaks of the goal of spiritual gifts:

2 Corinthians 10:5, "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

1 Corinthians 9:24, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win."

Hebrews 12:1, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, ...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

This is not to say that we should therefore ignore evangelism. Indeed, the Bible has much to say about it.<sup>2</sup> Rather, it is to say that the PURPOSE of the Gospel of God is NOT conversion BUT completion: "the

---

<sup>1</sup> We have our choice of Gospel presentations, as though one were not enough. We have 1000's of Gospel tracks to choose from. We have 100's of books on evangelism. And there are even seminars on how to do evangelism.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Matthew 28:19 and 2 Timothy 2:2

obedience of faith!”

Romans 1:5, “to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.”

This was the specific mission field to which Paul had been called as an apostle<sup>3</sup> Now we obviously are not “an apostle.” Does that mean we don’t have a calling? Indeed we do. Recall the Great Commission?

Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore [as you go] and make disciples...”

Truly, all of us have the calling to labor in the Kingdom of God unto “faith’s obedience.” From this we see that the PURPOSE of the Gospel is Christian Maturity! And this is an important truth us. So often we can be found much like Bill. We are busy laboring for so many important things. But when it comes to the Master’s will — here identified as obedience — we fall way short. I am reminded of the words of Jerry Bridges, commenting on 1 John 2:1 wrote:

“The whole purpose of John’s letter, he says, is that we *not* sin. One day as I was studying this chapter I realized that my personal life’s objective regarding holiness was less than that of John’s. He was saying, in effect, ‘Make it your aim *not* to sin.’ As I thought about this, I realized that deep within my heart my real aim was not to sin *very much*.”<sup>4</sup>

Brothers and sisters, the PURPOSE of the Gospel — God’s will — is NOT to secure a people who don’t sin *very much* BUT RATHER to secure a people who don’t sin at all- who are obedient on account of their faith.<sup>5</sup> And so let me ask you these questions:

- Is obedience to the Lord a high priority on your list?
- Do you guard your eyes and heart from defilement?
- Is holiness a serious concern to you?
- When you look at Broomfield Presbyterian Church/your spouse, children, people is this your goal for the body? Or are you here in order to get?

Listen, if you miss the boat on this one, you’ve missed the boat! See, I don’t know what God’s plan is when it comes to...

- Your life spouse.
- Your career.
- The size of your family.
- How He will use this church.

But this I do know, God’s will for you, your family, this church, His people is obedience! Titus 2:14 says that Christ, “...gave Himself for us, that (1) He might redeem us from every lawless deed and (2) purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” And yet it doesn’t stop here. Paul furthers our understanding of the purpose of the gospel to include divine exaltation.

---

<sup>3</sup> Compare Acts 9:15; 22:21; Romans 11:13; Galatians 1:16

<sup>4</sup> *The Pursuit of Holiness*, page 96.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Titus 2:14 and Romans 6:16

## *Divine Exaltation*

Romans 1:5, “[again, speaking of the gospel of Christ] through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name’s sake.”

To understand what Paul means here, we need to know a little about “name” in the Bible. In the Old Testament and New Testament “name” is used as a summation for the whole person. Thus, name could be translated “character.” Not to take God’s name in vain<sup>6</sup> is not to take His character lightly!

And so here we see another PURPOSE of the Gospel of God: It is for the sake of God’s character, which is another way of saying, “for the sake of God’s glory.”<sup>7</sup> See ultimately it is NOT the advantage of...

- The nations that is paramount in the promotion of the gospel.
- The sinner that is paramount in the promotion of the gospel.
- You that is paramount in the promotion of the gospel.

RATHER, it is the honor and glory of Christ! We see this in Judah’s return from captivity. In 586 BC Judah was taken into captivity by the Babylonians. And yet, this captivity caused God’s name to suffer reproach because the heathen nations around Judah were saying that Jehovah God was not strong enough to save His own people. Yet, God promised that He would deliver and re-gather His people. But the purpose would be primarily to

Ezekiel 36:23: “...vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord.”

Truly, God’s glory is the supreme concern of God! Why is it that God upholds His word?

2 Corinthians 1:20, “For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”

Why did God save you?

Ephesians 1:5-6, “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace...”

Why did God welcome you into His forever family?

Romans 15:7, “Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”

Why is it that the sinner ultimately refuses to repent? They don’t want to give God glory; they love their own glory and praise!

Revelation 16:9, “And men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of

---

<sup>6</sup> Compare Exodus 20:7

<sup>7</sup> Compare 2 Corinthians 1:20 and Romans 15:7

God who has the power over these plagues; and they did not repent, so as to give Him glory.”

And so we see here the second stated “end” of the gospel: God’s glory! Accordingly God’s glory must be our supreme concern. You know as the family of God, it is easy to fall into the error of comparing and evaluating our ministry against that of others in the push for glory. In those situations when our...

- Children seem better behaved.
- People seem more mature.
- Bible Study seems more popular.

It is easy to look down upon others in pride, and draw attention to ourselves. Or in those situations when our...

- Children aren’t as behaved.
- Bible Study isn’t as popular.
- People don’t seem more mature.

It is easy to look with jealousy upon others and hope with all our being that they fail! We must see that our PURPOSE in life, parenting, marriage, work, ministry, and the like is to exalt and glorify God! What does this mean?

It means that the end to which we strive and labor is for people to say NOT “What a Christian!” BUT, “What a God!” We are content to be unnoticed, unappreciated, neglected, and looked passed when it comes time for recognition! When others come to us and say, “He to whom you have born witness, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.”<sup>8</sup> We respond, as did John, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”<sup>9</sup> The end to which we are laboring upon this earth is NOT...

- To fashion people after our image.
- To build our kingdom.
- To promote our own cause.
- To feel fulfilled.

BUT RATHER to advance God’s name and His kingdom! And when this occurs, our ministry will change. Efforts to fulfill the ministry of the Gospel will NOT be out of...

- Pity for those in darkness.
- Pride.
- An argumentative attitude.
- The attempt to move someone to jealousy.

BUT RATHER for the Praise and Glory of God! That the world might pause and say, “What a God!”

A friend in Seminary related this story to me about a dude-ranch at which he worked one summer.

---

<sup>8</sup> Compare John 3:26

<sup>9</sup> Compare John 3:30.

One of the yearly competitions that the staff had was navigating a course in a jeep in the fastest time possible. Every summer the end was always the same- the owner of the ranch won. While he was driving the course, the employees didn't say, "Look at that Jeep go!" Rather they said, "Look at Bob go!"

So it is in our lives as well! Our life has been given that the world might say, "Look at God!" With this we see the two ends of the gospel...

- Christian Maturity.
- Divine Exaltation.

...now the question is, "How are these ends secured in our lives?"

### *The Grace of God*

Romans 1:5, "through whom we have received grace to bring about the obedience of faith."

Of the one hundred fifty-five New Testament usages of this word, grace, Paul uses it one hundred times. Paul was the Apostle of Grace! Grace primarily refers to unmerited favor. Donald Grey Barnhouse said, "Love that gives upward is worship, love that goes outward is affection; love that stoops is grace."<sup>10</sup>

Thus generally, grace is God giving man what he doesn't deserve.<sup>11</sup> Yet God's grace can and, many times, does refer to the means by which the Christian is enabled to carry out the task allotted to him<sup>12</sup>...

Romans 12:6, "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly..."

1 Corinthians 15:10:, "But by the grace of God I am what I am [today], and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."

Romans 1:5, "...through which we have received grace... to bring about the obedience of the faith... for His name's sake."

Thus, for Paul it is the grace of God that ENABLES the Christian to fulfill the call which God has placed on their lives. And that is the idea behind this verse. The grace of God is the means whereby the Christian is enabled to fulfill his call to the Gospel of God!

Well, in what way does God's grace enable the child of God to serve the Lord? To answer this, consider. Every man, woman, and child are born with a passion to relate to God on the basis of their conduct. When God created man, He formed him to have a relationship with the Lord- "to walk with Him in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8). Yet this relationship was created with the expectation that if man disobeyed God in any way, he'd lose this relationship (Genesis 2:15-17).

---

<sup>10</sup> *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, Vol. I [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952], p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Romans 1:7, Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:7

<sup>12</sup> See also 1 Timothy 1:13b-14; Galatians 1:15.

Accordingly, housed in every one of us is the passion to ....

- Earn the right to stand before God.
- Please God by our conduct.
- Establish the fact that they are righteous .<sup>13</sup>

In light of this, we could say that much of what we naturally do as sinners is by the law of merit. If we prove faithful to God, we expect blessing. If we do wrong, we expect a curse. We rear our children like this; we relate to one another like this; we approach God accordingly. Yet having been saved through the sacrificial life and death of Christ, Paul learned another way, the way of grace. As you know, “the gospel of God” the good news is that...

- Because there is not one of us who actually could succeed in pleasing God on our own, God Himself became man...
  - He was born under the covenant of works.
  - Unlike the first Adam, He fulfilled it (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:22, 47).
  - And then He gave His life as a sacrifice for our sin.
  - Accordingly, if we as condemned sinners rely upon Christ’s sacrifice as both...
    - The payment for our sin.
    - The fulfillment of the covenant of works.
  - We will stand before God as ones who have fulfilled the covenant of works! That is what we mean by saving grace!

Now with this paradigm, the Christian is freed for the first time in his life from relating to God on the basis of their conduct. So rather than

- Read the Bible.
- Go to church.
- Witness.
- Strive for holiness and purity of life.
- Go to great lengths to serve the Lord.

We do these things in the hopes that by doing so we will make God happy. The Christian starts his day with the assurance that God is salvifically happy with them and that there is nothing in all the world that can change that.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, rather than living by merit, the Christian lives by grace such that...

- He reads the Bible.
- He goes to church.
- He strives for purity and devotion of life.
- He obeys the Lord.

---

<sup>13</sup> Compare Romans 10:2-5

<sup>14</sup> Compare Romans 8:38-39

NOT in order to get God to love him, BUT because he is assured that God already does!

You live here long, and the passion to obey God and so exalt Him will NOT be another thing you have to do, BUT the natural inclination of your heart. And conversely, if you lack a passion to obey God and so exalt Him, it most likely is because you don't understand grace!

Titus 2:11-12, "For the grace of God has appeared... instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age."

### *Divine Call*

That is the first tool which enables us to fulfill the Gospel ministry: Grace! Notice the second and last tool Paul gives us here: Knowledge of the divine call. I'm not going to say much here since we've already covered this when we looked at Romans 1:1b. But notice at least this:

Romans 1:5, "Through whom we have received<sup>15</sup> ... apostleship."

This was Paul's call and the basis upon which Paul fulfilled the gospel ministry!

1 Corinthians 9:16, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel."

Yet what about us? Do we have such a call?

Romans 1:6, "Among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ."

Again we saw in our study of Romans 1:1 that here Paul is expressing the truth that not only have apostles been called by God to proclaim His Gospel, but so has EVERY believer.

All believers have been chosen "of Jesus Christ" that is, they have been gathered and intimately united to Christ for this purpose: The Gospel Ministry of Obedience and God's glory. That's what this text is saying! In other words, we are no ordinary image bearer. We are kings and queens of God most high!

And what an important truth to understand! When difficulties come in our lives...

- Loosing your job.
- The death of a loved one.
- Struggles in our family.
- Failure when it comes to holiness.

Those who understand that their identity is NOT wrapped up in their...

- Success.
- Accomplishments.
- Impact.
- Obedience.

---

<sup>15</sup> Paul is using what is known as the epistolary plural with the meaning of "I."



BUT rather is based on God's calling that I am a child of God called to minister will be moved to continue to serve the Lord regardless of their situation. Christian, let me ask you...

- Why do you stand when the world would have you fall?
- Why do you love when others hate?
- Why do you faithfully serve the Lord year after year in spite of your sin?

While heretofore you may not have answered this way, yet now we must understand that the divine call has been placed on our lives. We can do no other!

- What are you, Christian?
- Do you understand whose you are?
- You are not prostitutes, vagabonds, gypsies, orphans, or widowed. You are...
  - The child of the living God.
  - The bride of Christ.
  - The apple of God's eye!

### *The Restoration of the Heir*

Years ago, a prince who had been kidnapped was recaptured and restored to his place on the throne of his kingdom. Yet in the twenty years of his imprisonment, he was forced to...

- Eat with his hands.
- Sleep on the floor.
- Fight for his food.

Though he was born a prince, he was raised as an animal. And do you know what? Though he was restored to his throne, at first he constantly had to be reminded that he wasn't an animal, but the heir of the Kingdom!

Knowledge of his position changed the way he lived- his expectations, desires, goals, and the like. Christian...

- Do you understand you are an heir of God's kingdom?
- Do you understand that you are the called/chosen of God?
- Why obey? Why strive for the glory of God? Because...
  - Not only do you know the grace of Christ.

But you also have been called by God, given a glorious inheritance, and so chosen to co-reign with the Lord. Obedience and the glory of God are the only option!

### **About Bethel Presbyterian Church**

*The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word* is published regularly. It is distributed via the internet.

### **VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO**

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10<sup>th</sup> Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. There is no recording for this sermon. The web address for all sermons at Bethel Presbyterian Church can be found out as follows:

<http://bethelpresbyterian.sermonaudio.com>

### **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on September 20, 2009. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.