

INTRODUCTION

Today I'm starting a verse-by-verse message series of the book of Romans. It will probably take us a couple of years. We are going to take a journey through this wonderful book over the next couple of years. This book has really changed history. If you have ever been to St. Augustine, Florida, you probably know the man after whom that city is named. It was the year 386 A.D. when Aurelius Augustine was teaching rhetoric at a school in northern Italy. By his own testimony he was living a debauched lifestyle of sexual orgies and drunkenness. His mother, Monica, was praying for his salvation. One day Augustine was very despondent. As he was sitting outside he heard children playing a game in the area next door. Part of the little saying in this game was, "Pick up and read, pick up and read." He heard that and walked in the house. He was staying with someone who had an attraction to Christianity and he picked up what we are going to be looking at today—the book of Romans. He opened it and his eyes fell on Romans 13:13-14. "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." This young man who was living a sinful life, suddenly his life turned around and Augustine became one of the early theologians in the Christian church.

1,200 years later an Augustinian Catholic monk and professor of theology at Wittenberg University in Germany named Martin Luther, was reading the book of Romans. It led Martin Luther to understand you don't get to heaven by taking the sacraments or by buying indulgences from the Catholic Church. He came to the firm conviction that salvation is by grace through faith, and he gave 95 statements of what he believed. They are called the 95 Theses. He nailed them to the door of one of the buildings at the University of Wittenberg. Those hammer blows are echoes that have been heard around the world. It was the book of Romans that led to what we now call the Protestant Reformation.

Two hundred years later, in the Anglican Church in England, a young member of the church whom by his own admission was not a Christian at the time went as a missionary for the Anglican Church from England to the American colony of Georgia. He was going to evangelize the pagan American Indians, not realizing was a pagan himself. This man's name was John Wesley. John Wesley was a total failure as a missionary to the Indians. So he got back on a ship and sailed back to London. Halfway back to Europe the ship encountered a terrible storm at sea. The boat was tossed and thrown about by the waves and they were afraid they were going to sink. John Wesley was afraid he was going to die, and was afraid he was not going to go to heaven if he died. He looked over at a group of Moravian Christians who were holding hands, singing praises to the Lord with smiles on their faces. When he looked at those people who were not afraid to die, he said, "I do not have what they have."

When he reached London, he went to a meeting on Aldersgate Street. That night, someone read from the book of Romans. On May 24, 1738, John Wesley wrote, "About a quarter until nine while he was reading the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust in Christ and Christ alone for my salvation." John Wesley founded the Methodist denomination, and there are thousands and millions of Christians who have been brought to Christ through the influence of John Wesley.

Augustine, Martin Luther and John Wesley not only had life-changing experiences from the book of Romans, they in turn changed history. I am praying that during our study of Romans not only will your life be changed for the positive, but even the culture in which we live and that Jesus Christ will affect even our community positively.

Today I want to talk to you about the résumé of a real Christian. A résumé is a statement about who you are, what you have accomplished and what you hope to do. There have been Texas politicians who have encountered a lot of trouble because they sometimes put things on their résumés that were not true.

What does a résumé of a real Christian look like? We see it right here in Romans 1:1:

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God...”

To me that is the résumé of a real Christian. What is on your spiritual résumé? Do you even have a spiritual résumé? Do you have things on your résumé that are not really true about you? There are three marks, or characteristics of a real Christian we see in this verse.

I. CHANGED BY JESUS: SALVATION

A real Christian is someone who has been changed by Jesus. And that's a picture of salvation. I get that from the very first word of Romans 1:1 with Paul's name. It was not the name he was given at birth. When he was born, he was given the name Saul—somewhere it changed to Paul. He had undergone a life change that was so marked he even changed his name. I think even what those two names mean tell us something. The name Saul means “aggressive, ambitious.” He was a “go-getter.” Paul's name in Greek, *paulos*, means “little, small.”

Have you ever wondered what the apostle Paul looked like? While it is true we do not have any written eyewitness description of Jesus' physical appearance, we have a fairly reliable one for Paul the apostle. A pastor living in the second century (which means the 100s) who perhaps as a child had actually seen Paul, describes him: “A man small of stature with a bald head and crooked legs in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel.” Can you just see this little man so full of energy? Before he became a Christian, he was full of energy for the wrong thing, but once he was tamed and changed by Jesus Christ, he used his energy for the right cause.

Paul was changed in three ways, and I hope you have these three changes in your life:

1. From religion to a relationship

He changed from religion to a personal relationship. Paul was a very religious guy before he met Jesus. In fact, he was more religious *before* he became a Christian than *after* he became a Christian. Religious is going through some kind of motion or some kind of ritual to try to please

God. You've heard me say, "Religion kills." America does not need more religion. We have too much religion. What we need are people who have a personal, life-changing relationship with Jesus. If you want to know what religion does, go to Northern Ireland and watch the Catholics and the Protestants shoot one another. Go to Bosnia and watch the Bosnians and the Serbs killing one another. That's religion!

When you stand before the gates of heaven, don't say, "I'm a religious person." In fact, don't say, "I'm a Christian" because Christianity as a religion never got anybody into heaven. Jesus Christ is the only one who can take you into heaven. Jesus Christ is the only one who can change your life. Paul went from a religion to a personal relationship with Jesus. The problem with some people—even in the Baptist church—is that you are still into the ritual of performance rather than "knowing Jesus." Sometimes we look at churches that may be more ritualistic than ours, and we scoff at them, and say, "Hey, at least we don't come in and genuflect (kneel) and take the sacraments and things like that." For some people getting up on a Sunday morning, putting on a coat and tie or a nice dress, and coming to a place where you don't cuss, and you don't smoke and you don't drink while you are there is religion. If you act one way when you are in church and another way when you are not in church, you don't know Jesus. All you have is a dead religion, because when you have a relationship with Jesus, it is seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. If the only time you ever open the word of God is here on Sunday morning, the only time you ever pray, the only time you ever sing praises is when you are in a corporate worship service, you'd better examine whether you are in a religion or a relationship. There's a big difference between the two. The difference is heaven and hell.

2. From guilt to grace

Paul was trying to keep the law. "Do this, don't do that." All he did was find himself guilty, guilty, guilty. Later on he said, "The things I want to do, I just don't do them. The very things I don't want to do, those are the things I find myself doing." He was under a burden of guilt, but one day he discovered grace. He discovered that what you do or don't do never makes you more or less acceptable to God. He discovered salvation is a free gift. You cannot earn it. Paul says in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The sad thing today is we still have some Christians who are still trying to "obey the law." I am not talking about Old Testament law—what you can eat, and what you cannot eat—but we have a lot of legalistic Christians who have not discovered grace. Some Christians still think your performance earns brownie points with God. There is nothing you can do to make God love you more or less. He loves you unconditionally.

I love to hear Chuck Swindoll speak and I love to read his books. The title of his book, *The Grace Awakening* says it all. When you understand what grace really is, it is like a personal spiritual awakening and Paul was changed from guilt to grace.

3. From hatred to humility

Paul was the kind of man who hated Christians, but he was totally changed and he loved them. When you take a moment and read Acts chapter 6, there was a Christian in the early church named Stephen. Stephen had the audacity to stand up before the Sanhedrin and point his finger at

the Jewish Pharisees and say, "You have just crucified the Son of God, but don't worry because God raised him from the dead and he is alive today!" That made those people so angry, they rushed Stephen out of the hall and threw him to the ground and stoned him. The Bible says there was a young man named Saul of Tarsus who stood there and witnessed the whole event. When the Pharisees laid their coats down so they could loosen their arms to throw those stones, they put their coats at Saul's feet. Saul was a witness. He watched as Stephen said, "I can see heaven opening and I can see Jesus standing at the right hand of God the Father." That made the Jewish Pharisees even angrier, and they picked up huge, jagged rocks and began throwing them until Stephen was dead. Saul listened as the stones thudded into the body of this Christian. He watched as the blood covered the skin of the saint, and then Saul listened as the last thing Stephen said before his life ebbed away. Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, don't lay this sin to their charge." In other words, he was saying, "Father, forgive these people for killing me." That touched Saul. He could not understand a man who was being murdered having the kind of love to be willing to forgive the people killing him. I imagine Saul didn't sleep much that night, but he "shook it off" and became even more violent in his hatred of Christians. Saul himself became the one who dragged Christians out of their homes and had them put to death. He became a "secret agent" for the Jewish underground to purge Christians from the Jewish faith.

One day he was on the road to Damascus going to arrest Christians. Suddenly right there in the middle of the road, Jesus appeared to him out of nowhere and said, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" When you persecute the church of Jesus, you are persecuting Jesus. When you say an evil word about the church, you are saying an evil word against Jesus. Saul said, "Lord Jesus, what do you want me to do?" Suddenly he was a changed man. That's salvation.

Salvation conversion is a one-time instantaneous experience. You grow up to it and you grow from it, but there is a point in time and space when you are "born again." It happened to Saul on the road to Damascus. It was March 11, 1961 for me. Many of you know exactly when you were saved. You may not have a Damascus road experience. It may be a quiet acceptance of who Jesus is, putting your faith in him, but there is a point at which one second you were lost and the next you are "born again." Well, Saul became a Christian. Suddenly, he started loving Christians. He returned to Jerusalem and said to the people he had been arresting and putting to death. "I'm a Christian now. I love you guys." As you can imagine, they were not real anxious to receive him. They didn't believe him. It would be like Dennis Rodman of the Chicago Bulls claimed to become a Christian and came to church here next Sunday, and said "Hey, I'm a believer now. I want to give my testimony." I'd be reluctant just as they were reluctant. In time he proved what had happened was real and suddenly this man who had hated Christians found himself loving them.

Have you ever had a life-changing experience with Jesus? Has there ever come a time when you were one way and then Jesus changed you and now you are a different way? When you are so different people could even give you another name? Is that on your résumé? Salvation. A real Christian is

II. CHAINED TO JESUS: SUBMISSION

Look at Romans 1:1 where it says, "Paul, a servant," because it's the word for slave. Now he was a slave to Jesus. Look at 2 Corinthians 2:14: "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession." In English, it's five words. In the original Greek it's one word. I'll explain it in a moment. "Who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him." Paul says, "I'm such a slave to Jesus that this is my position to Jesus." Let me take that word I just told you about, that single Greek word and explain it to you. In the Roman Empire, Roman generals sometimes went out to fight a battle, and if they were victorious, as they were most of the time, there was a victory parade in Rome. When the general was about a single day's journey from Rome, he would send a runner ahead. The runner would arrive breathless in the city of Rome and would say, "Tomorrow the general is coming. We are going to have a victory parade."

1. Conquered by Jesus

Do you wonder how they got the word out about what was happening? They didn't have television, they didn't have radio, didn't have beauty parlors or barber shops back then so how did they get the word out? They had certain incense they burned on the morning they were going to have a victory parade. If you lived in Rome at the time and woke up one morning and smelled that particular smell, you would say, "There's gonna be a victory parade today!" and you'd know to line the streets. That's the way they did it and that's why they said it was a fragrance. Well, here comes the parade. At the head of this parade was the winning Roman general. He would be in a beautiful chariot pulled by a team of white horses, just like Ben Hur, and he would come back into the city. Chained to his chariot were the officers of the conquered army. They were chained to the chariot of the conquering general. That is the word Paul uses in II Corinthians 2:14 when he says, "That's my position with Jesus Christ. He is the conquering general and I am chained to his chariot. I am only his slave."

I know some of you don't like that picture and don't want to be anybody's "slave." That's your problem. You're not willing to surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ. You're not willing to take the position of a slave when it comes to Jesus. It means two things: First you have been conquered by Jesus and just like the Roman general conquered those officers, you've been conquered. You say, "Well, I never was in a fight with him. How could I be conquered by him?" Your will and God's will are in contra position and those wills are fighting against each other. As long as you say, "I'm going to do what I want to do," you haven't been conquered by Jesus. When you come to a place in your life like Jesus, and you say, "Not my will, but yours be done" and you allow your will to be conquered by God's will, you'll understand what it means to be chained to Jesus.

2. Controlled by Jesus

It means something else too; it means you are controlled by Jesus. Different things happened to the captured officers. Some were killed. It was up to the conquering general to decide what he would do with the officers in the opposing army. Some of the generals set them free; some of them allowed them to serve in their household as slaves, but it was entirely up to the general. These slaves were under their control.

Have you ever come to a place in your life when you say, "Lord Jesus, I don't want to control my life anymore. I want *you* to control my life." That's a pretty dangerous thing to say, isn't it? All of you who drive know what it is to drive with cruise control engaged. You're driving along, usually down the interstate. When the speedometer gets to an acceptable speed, you push a little button and the cruise control takes over. You take your foot off the accelerator and the cruise keeps the car at that particular speed. When you come to a hill, the cruise control senses you need a little more power. When you get to the top of a hill and start down, the cruise control senses you don't need as many rpms so it backs off. Your speed is determined by the cruise control.

In the Christian life there are a lot of demands placed upon every one of us, demands beyond our ability to fulfill. You and I know we are supposed to love all people, but let's just say suddenly you are confronted with a mean, ugly, despicable person who treats you terribly. You want to love them, but you just can't. Just engage Jesus control and he can love that person through you. Let's say there is someone who has mistreated you, said terrible things about you and you know the Bible says you are supposed to forgive them. In your own sinful, selfish flesh you just say, "I can't forgive them." Just engage Jesus control and Jesus can control that person through you. It's amazing what will happen in your life when you engage Jesus control instead of self-control.

The first part of a Christian's résumé is salvation. You've been changed. The second part is surrender to the lordship of Jesus. You're chained to the chariot. The third part of the résumé is

III. CALLED BY JESUS: SERVICE

1. To be: An apostle

Romans 1:1 says, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God." When we are called, we are called to *be somebody*. When you become a Christian, God wants you to be a certain thing, a certain person. For Paul, it was an apostle. It may be different for you. God may be calling you to be a disciple, he may be calling you to be a missionary, he may be calling you to be a teacher, he may be calling you to be just a good old general servant in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he calls every one of us to "be somebody." The apostle Paul was in a category no longer available. You can even capitalize the "A" in apostle, because there are only twelve of them. In Revelation 21:14 when it is describing the new heavenly Jerusalem, the new city, it says there are twelve foundations and on each of these twelve foundations are the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. Who were they? Peter, James, John, Andrew, you know the rest. One those twelve, Judas, was eliminated. In Acts chapter 1 they said, "Oh, we have to get this number back to twelve and so they rolled some dice and drew some lots and they chose a guy by the name of Matthias. That's the only time we ever hear about him.

Paul claimed to be an Apostle. We won't know until we get to heaven, but I want you to join me over there by that foundation when we get there. We're going to read those names and we'll see if Paul's name is there or if Matthias' name is there. I think Paul's name is going to be there.

What were the requirements for an Apostle? They had to have seen Jesus in His resurrected body. Paul did on the road to Damascus. Also, Apostles had to be able to perform miracles. Paul did that too. Once when Paul was preaching in the book of Acts, it was late at night, and he kept on preaching and preaching, and this guy went to sleep. (It's a dangerous thing to go to sleep when the preacher is preaching!) The man fell out of an upstairs window and broke his neck. He died. Paul ran downstairs, laid hands on him and the man jumped back up, alive. If you go to sleep and hurt yourself while I am preaching, I can't raise you up. I'm not an Apostle. But Paul performed miracles. He was one of the twelve Apostles, I believe. God has called you to *be* something, a disciple, a follower of Jesus.

2. To do: Share the good news

Secondly, you are called to do something. The philosophical debate through the centuries is: Is it more important to be, or is it more important to do? To be, or to do? Socrates said, "To do is to be." Jean Paul Sartre, the French existentialist said, "To do is to be." I like what Frank Sinatra said, "He said, "do be do be do." That's a debate that will never be settled, but it does not have to be. As a Christian you are called to be somebody, but you are also called to DO something. We are called to do the same thing Paul was called to do, to share the good news! Look at verse 1 again. He says, "called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God."

The word *gospel* means "good news." Have you ever been to a church where all the preacher does is walk up one side and down the backs of the people with hobnail boots? "You are a terrible sinner who will burn in Hell." People feel miserable when they leave, saying, "Man, I really heard the gospel today." Oh no. The gospel is not the bad news; the gospel is the good news. You have to know the bad news before you know the good news. It's the good news that makes the bad news bad; it's the bad news that makes the good news good. If you understand the gospel as good news you will want to share with people; you don't have to go to classes to learn how to share—you just share it.

CONCLUSION

Imagine I woke up one day and my right foot swells up and the left side of my mouth starts getting out of kilter. Before long it starts hurting me. My foot gets bigger, my mouth is pulled down more and more, so I go do see a doctor. I walk into the doctor's office, and he says, "Man, I don't know what's wrong with you. I've never seen that before. So they run some tests. They run test after test after test, and they can't find out what's wrong. Finally I go to see a doctor who is a specialist on diagnosing illnesses, and he says, "It seems like I heard about a case like that in medical school and he pulls out an old, dusty medical book. Blowing the dust off, he says, "Well, I can't believe it." First case we've had in over a century. You have Texas hoof and mouth disease. That's right. It's a very rare disease. I hate to tell you, but it is fatal 100% of the time. There is no known cure."

Now, I'm pretty discouraged. I walk out of the doctor's office, and coming down the street toward me in front of the hospital is one of my old friends. He says, "Hey, David, what's wrong with you?" I say, "I've got Texas hoof and mouth disease. What's it look like?" and I say, "The bad news is I'm going to die. There is no known cure for it." My friend says, "Hmmm...it seems

to me my great grandmother told a story about that one time. Somebody she knew had it and got over it." I said, "Tell me about your great grandmother." He tells where she lives so I go find the great grandmother. When I walk in the door, she says, "You have Texas hoof and mouth disease." I say, "Yes, ma'am, I sure do." She says, "My grandmother came up with a natural cure for it using some sassafras roots and some herbs and things. I think I still have that recipe written down." She mixes it all together there and she hands it to me. It is this ugly looking, foul smelling drink, but she says, "You drink that, and you will be cured." What have I got to lose? I drink it down, and in just a matter of moments, it is miraculous. Suddenly, the swelling in my right foot goes down, my mouth returns to the proper position, and I am cured! I'm healed. I say, "Thank you ma'am, thank you!" I walk out of there and let me tell you I have a song in my heart and a spring in my step, and everything is going great! I am walking down the street and here comes an old friend of mine. This old friend is looking a little "funny." He walking at me with a limp, and his mouth was all distorted. I say, "Man, what's wrong with you?" He says, "You won't believe this, but I have Texas hoof and mouth disease. He says it's very rare and it's fatal in 100% of the cases. I want to ask you, what am I going to do? Am I going to say, "Well, too bad, buddy, that's tough. Glad I'm not in your shoes. See you later. I'll send flowers to your funeral, by the way." Is that what I'm going to do? NO. I'm going to say, "Hey, man, you don't have to die! There is a cure. I used to be just like you are and there's a cure. I want to tell you about it. There's this great grandmother. You go to her, she'll give you a potion and you'll be healed." I'm going to tell him about it because it's good news.

Every single day of every week, you and I encounter people who are terminally, eternally ill because of sin sickness, and you and I know the cure. The question in my mind is this: Why aren't we telling people about the thing that saved us, cured us and healed us. It is good news, so tell it!

OUTLINE

I. CHANGED BY JESUS: SALVATION

1. From religion to a relationship
2. From guilt to grace
3. From hatred to humility

II. CHAINED TO JESUS: SUBMISSION

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. *2 Corinthians 2:14*

1. Conquered by Jesus
2. Controlled by Jesus

III. CALLED BY JESUS: SERVICE

1. To Be: An apostle
2. To Do: Share the good news

APPLICATION: Lord, this is what I hear you saying to me:



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes