

Sermon Title: Called to Preach the Gospel

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Scripture Reference: **Romans 1:16-17**Thesis: **The Apostle Paul was called by God to preach the Gospel;**Purpose: **Today, I will share about my call to preach and how we are to share our personal testimonies.**

Key Word: "Evangelism or Discipleship"

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Romans 1:16-17** (Black 152;Red 184)

A) The Setting:

1) **How do you feel when you hear someone sharing their faith or personal testimony? Encouraged? Excited? Or Uneasy? Angry?**(a) What about sharing your story; **does it embarrass you to share your faith testimony?**

(b) Do you believe that you have a testimony worth sharing?

2) **Well, Paul certainly has something to say about his feelings when it comes to sharing the gospel.**

(a) In fact, in Paul's letter to the Christians living in Rome, once he finishes his greeting, Paul gets into the heart of the matter of sharing His faith.

(b) Paul wants everyone to know how he feels about the matter right up front.

B) **Therefore, let us take a peek at what Paul has to say in our scripture reading for today in Romans 1:16-17 (Black 152;Red 184)**II) *Sermon Prayer*

A) (The Hook)

1) **Paul is clearly not ashamed to share the Good News of salvation.**

(a) The word Gospel comes from the Greek word meaning Glad Tidings.

(b) It is simply the good news that God has sent His one and only Son to rescue us from the penalty of our sin nature, which leads to death and eternal separation from God!

(c) Jesus died on the cross so that we could be restored into a right relationship with God.

(d) That is indeed good news.

2) **Paul says it is the POWER of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.**

(a) Jesus brought this message first to the Jews and then to everyone else.

(b) It is a faith based on our belief that Jesus was who He claimed to be, the Son of God who has the power to take away the sins of the world.

3) **That faith teaches us that if Jesus is God, who saved us from death to eternal life, then we need to acknowledge He is our Lord and King.**

(a) This restored relationship leads to God sending another part of Himself to abide, to live in us in the form of His Holy Spirit.

(b) The job of God's Holy Spirit is to begin the Holy work of transforming us by renewing our minds.

(c) This is in preparation for our life which will be spent with God in eternity.

4) **What is there to be ashamed about in that?**

(a) A little ridicule from those who reject the truth?

(b) Persecution for caring enough to share with others so that they too can experience God's grace?

5) **Ah, but some of you are thinking . . . I don't have anything to share?**

(a) That is the problem identified right there.

(b) If you have Jesus in your life there should be visible changes called fruit being exhibited in your life.

(c) You no longer can continue to sin without it bothering you.

- (d) You crave things of the Spirit like God's Word and drawing near to God.
- 6) **When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden what did they do?**
- (a) They hid from God.
 (b) As sinners, our natural reaction is to want to run and hide.
- 7) **But when you have had a transforming – life - changing experience with God just the opposite is true.**
- (a) Your desire is now to draw near to God.
 (b) You now want to become more like Him.
- 8) **Paul wrote this letter after his life changing experience of personally meeting Christ on the Road to Damascus.**
- (a) Paul, himself, was persecuting the followers of Jesus until he personally met Jesus.
 (b) While your or my story may not be as dramatic as that, **we all should have a story of how God's spirit is transforming your life.**
 (c) God called Paul that day to a new life.
- 9) **Paul wrote later in this same book of Romans in Chapter 12:1-2, "I appeal to you brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect."**
- (a) When we submit our will, and allow God to reveal His will,
 (b) God will help us to know what is the good and perfect will of God for each of us.
- 10) **When I met with your search committee more than 5 years ago, I gave them a paper which contained my own personal testimony and call to serve God.**
- (a) Over the next few weeks I would like to review with you the contents of that paper.
 (b) I think it is important that you know how God has shaped me and transformed me since I placed my faith in Him.
- 11) **So, that is where I am starting today.**
- (a) In the weeks that follow, I will share with you other important truths from the Word of God that have shaped my beliefs and walk with God.
 (b) It is my hope that in sharing these truths you will deepen your own beliefs and testimony of how God is shaping you.
 (c) While many of you may have heard this or parts of this before I think it is good to review from time to time.

TS: **So, let us begin with . . .**

III) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **My Personal Testimony of Christian Conversion**

- 1) **I have always believed in God and His Son, Jesus.**
- (a) Brought up Catholic and was an altar server
 (b) But, eventually I had problems with some of the doctrines I was taught, such as you had to be Catholic in order to go to heaven.
 (c) I always prayed every night before going to bed.
 (d) Thanks to a Godly mother, from the time I was a small child I could feel God's presence in my life and His call for me.
- 2) **Stopped going to the Catholic Church when I about 16**
- (a) Needed to work weekends to help make ends meet due to an alcoholic father.
 (b) I began to attend the Essex Street Baptist Church in Bangor because there was a girl involved.
 (c) It was there that I felt God's presence and I began to ask what it meant to be saved.
 (d) In May 1975, I accepted Jesus as my Lord, was baptized, and joined the church.

- 3) **I tried to live the Christian life; but really had not fully surrender my life to Jesus as Lord . . . that is not until July 1986.**
 - (a) Trying to advance my career to be a successful provider for my family.
 - (b) Problem was that I was living by the world's standards.
 - (c) Working seven days a week; was miserable, and frustrated.
 - (d) My stubborn self-will kept me from acknowledging how much I needed Jesus until I was broken
- 4) **I then realized I needed a new relationship with Jesus.**
 - (a) This changed me and from that point on, I would work for Jesus and not for myself.
 - (b) I was determined to let Jesus live in and through me.
 - (c) I immersed myself in my church, my family and working for my new boss, JESUS.
 - (d) From then on, no matter what I did, it was to serve the Lord,
 - (e) Be it a firefighter, clerk, or pastor; **Jesus would be in control of my life.**
- 5) **After this, my life and work took on new meaning.**
 - (a) Now, I trust that God was going to be in control and I will be satisfied with doing the best job I can for Him.
 - (b) I no longer just have a job; I have a mission to be the best I can for Jesus wherever He put me.
- 6) **As you may know, I have recently been told my Spurwink program is ending in December.**
 - (a) While I had planned to stay there for several more years; God has apparently another plan.
 - (b) Should I fret and worry about what is going to happen?
 - (c) Well since I work for God, I believe that He has this covered and will use me in ways I have not anticipated; but that is up to Him.
 - (d) God is still teaching me to abide in Him; my mission has not change; only the location.

TS: **So, now let me share a little about . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **"MY CALL"**

- 1) **Around 1992, I began feeling God's call to go into the ministry.**
 - (a) I made one excuse after another of why I thought it was a bad idea, but, I could not lose the desire to enter the ministry.
 - (b) I continued to ignore the call and make more excuses until finally, God brought a storm into my life, much the same way He did to Jonah.
 - (c) Depressed, I finally reached the point when I knew I had to change my job and so I prayed intensely about where God was leading.
 - (d) One morning, while alone fasting, and praying for God's leading, I heard God speak to me saying **"I want you to be a pastor."**
- 2) **It was like everything that I had gone through in my life seemed to be pointing me into this direction. I told the Lord:**
 - (a) How unworthy I felt and God reminded me that it was not my worthiness that counted.
 - (b) Surely Lord, you can't mean me. Still, I wrestled with the decision.
 - (c) I could come up with anything else.
 - (d) Every time I prayed about it, I felt God directing me to the ministry.
 - (e) God simply would not take "no" for answer.
 - (f) Finally, I realized I did not really have a choice and gave in.
 - (g) I told God "Okay, I will do whatever you want no matter how insane I feel it is."
 - (h) Immediately, my depression was lifted and yet . . .
- 3) **I was terrified with the awesome responsibility that would go with becoming a pastor.**
 - (a) I found that I would have to learn to rely totally on His strength.

- (b) In Jesus' parable of the vine and the branches in **John 15**, He says we need to abide in Him.
 - (c) **Branches aren't the heart of the tree; you can remove a dead branch and the tree survives.**
 - (d) But the branch needs its roots and trunk to survive;
 - (e) The branch cannot exist unless it abides in its connection to the trunk.
 - (f) **The branch is not the fruit**; but, a healthy branch connected to a healthy trunk will produce much fruit.
- 4) **My only question now is why did it take me so long to learn to trust Him?**
- (a) Since that point in May 1998, I have been a new person and God has continued to bless and confirm my decision.
 - (b) I looked into schools I could attend.
 - (c) God led me to meet with my mother's interim pastor, Rev. William Inman, who was also then President of New England Bible College.
- 5) **On the same day, we were to meet with Pastor Inman, I was offered a permanent work position in a job where I had been working temporarily.**
- (a) Both Debbie and I wondered what that was about.
 - (b) Why was God offering me a chance to have a full-time job if He was leading me to go to school?
 - (c) We looked to God to make it clear.
- 6) **When we met with Pastor Inman, who had no knowledge of the job opportunity, he told us about the same thing happening to him just before he made his commitment to go to Bible College.**
- (a) My wife and I looked at each other and knew that this was God's answer.
 - (b) Rev. Inman went on to explain that if we were going to do this that Satan would try to distract us from the goal.
 - (c) On our way home, we both felt that this was what God was trying to teach us.
 - (d) We made the commitment right then to follow through with His leading.
- 7) **I completed my freshman year of school, going to school half time and working full time. I just loved Bible school and was learning and growing so much.**
- (a) The long hours took their toll as Satan continued to work to keep me from attaining my calling.
 - (b) Debbie became ill, depressed with chronic back pain.
 - (c) Finally, she had to give up working and I needed to work a lot more to keep up with the bills.
 - (d) I had to dropped out of school when it became apparent that our relationship was in trouble and that I would need to work even more to pay the bills.
- 8) **Were we wrong about God's call?**
- (a) Through it all God encouraged me and thanks to my pastor, who continued to give me opportunities to grow and use the gifts he saw in me, I was able to preach a number of times at Court Street Baptist Church in Auburn.
 - (b) Once, during an illness that put my pastor in the hospital, I was asked to fill in for him for three weeks.
 - (c) I found that I loved to teach God's Word and to serve God through His people.
- 9) **Debbie and I needed some counseling and needed to work on our relationship.**
- (a) I believe that all the adversity that we had to experience in our life has only strengthened and served to make us better equipped to be in ministry.
 - (b) God was getting our house in order to prepare us for the job.
- 10) **In February of 2003, I was asked to do pulpit supply at the First Baptist Church of Woolwich.**
- (a) In May of that same year, I was asked by their Deacon Chairman if they could consider me as their Interim Pastor.

- (b) I said yes and served there until they found their new pastor in July 2004.
- (c) All this only served to affirm my call.
- 11) **I then pursued a Church as a permanent pastor.**
 - (a) With God's timing and leading, I was presented with the opportunity to be a bi-vocational pastor of the United Baptist Church in Canton, Maine.
 - (b) I served in this position from September 2004 until April 2012.
- 12) **That is when I felt the call to come here to be your pastor now more than 5 years ago.**
 - (a) I have to admit that we have not experienced growth in the direction we would have liked.
 - (b) We have lost several members who have moved or gone to their eternal home.
 - (c) Not that it has been all bad; there have been many good things we have experienced in our ministry here.
 - (d) However, I am just admitting a truth that we all can see.

TS: **So, what is God trying to tell us . . .**

IV) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) **Well, first of all, I think God is teaching us how to abide in Christ.**

- 1) This is a lesson we all need to learn.
- 2) As we shared a couple weeks ago; we must first **master the art of being in the presence of Jesus before we can be active doing for Jesus.**
- 3) We need to stay connected to the roots and the trunk, the life blood of the vine.
- 4) With a healthy connection, God then can and will produce fruit.
- 5) Remember it is not about our ability; it is about what God will do through us.
- 6) And when we surrender to Jesus; God can do amazing things.

B) **We need to not be ashamed of sharing the Gospel.**

- 1) **For there is POWER in the good news of hope that we can bring to the rest of the world.**
- 2) We need to be ready to share our testimony of what God has done and is doing in our lives as God transforms us into Kingdom citizens.
- 3) **When we share what God is to us;**
 - (a) Others may ridicule or even persecute us for our faith . . .
 - (b) But, we never know **when** God will use our honest testimony to bring another soul into His Kingdom.
- 4) **You have heard my testimony and call this morning and that is my story.**
 - (a) But each of you has a story; if you don't, then how do you know you are a kingdom citizen?
 - (b) Each of us has a walk with God that takes a different path; but we are all on a journey to heaven or . . .
- 5) **Christians are not on this journey alone . . . God has sent His spirit to guide and help us if we are seeking it.**
 - (a) So, just remember, it is not about what you can do for God . . .
 - (b) It is about what God can do through you if you are open and willing to let Him.
- 6) **So, don't be afraid or embarrassed.**
 - (a) Be bold and courageous and trust God to give you the words as you share.
 - (b) Our world desperately needs the Message of the Gospel and God has put each of us in a place where we can share.

V) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**