

Romans 1

Meditation
Martin Luther
Commentary on Galatians 2:17

The True Way To Christianity

The true way to Christianity is this, that a man first acknowledges himself by the law to be a sinner, and that it is impossible for him to do any good work. For the law says: You are an evil tree, and therefore all that you think, speak, or do, is against God. You cannot therefore deserve grace by your works: which if you go about to do, you double your offense; for since you are an evil tree, you cannot but bring forth evil fruits, that is to say, sins. "For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin" (Romans 14:23). So he who would merit grace by works going before faith, goes about to please God with sins, which is nothing else but to heap sin upon sin, to mock God, and to provoke His wrath. When a man is thus taught and instructed by the law, then is he terrified and humbled, then he sees indeed the greatness of his sin, and cannot find in himself one spark of the love of God; therefore, he justifies God in His Word, and confesses that he is guilty of death and eternal damnation. The first part then of Christianity is the preaching of repentance and the knowledge of ourselves.

The second part is: if you will be saved, you may not seek salvation by works; for God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. He was crucified and died for you, and bore your sins in His own body. Wherefore the law does nothing else but utter sin, terrify and humble, and by this means prepares us to justification, and drives us to Christ. For God has revealed to us by His Word that He will be to us a merciful Father, and without our deserts (seeing we can deserve nothing) will freely give to us remission of sins, righteousness and life everlasting, for Christ His Son's sake. For God gives His gifts freely to all men, and that is the praise and glory of His divinity. This briefly is our doctrine of Christian righteousness.¹

¹Martin Luther, *Commentaries on Galatians*, (Simpsonville, SC: Christian Classics Foundation) 1997.

Romans 1:1
Structural Analysis:

Salutation

The letter began with a three-part salutation, which included the writer's name, the person addressed, and a word of greeting.

Paul states his name, then it is not until verse 7 that he mentions the ones addressed and not until then to we find the cordial word of greeting

So even as he identifies himself, Paul does so in Christ.

The real writer behind the letter, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Observations:

Paul: His Hebrew name was Saul, meaning "asked for". But he using his Roman name Paul. According to Strong's Greek dictionary, Paul means "little".

Paul states in 1Cor.15:8 that he is the least.

As Christ was descended from David, (Rom.1:3)the youngest of his brothers, Paul is descended from Benjamin (Rom.11:1) the youngest of the sons of Jacob, the twelve tribes which is Israel. After Solomon, Benjamin was the only tribe to remain with Judah. Benjamin was chosen by God to present it's first king, Saul. Benjamin was the least (1Sam.9:21, Ps 68:27).

Both Paul and Jesus have a tie to Bethlehem. Bethlehem is the least (Matt2:6).

In the Old Testament the gospel was revealed through Israel, the least. Israel was not chosen because of their righteousness (Deu.9:6) to inherit the land.

Calvin's Commentary:

They who think that the Apostle attained this name as a trophy for having brought Sergius, the proconsul, to the faith of Christ, are confuted by the testimony of Luke, who shows that he was so called before that time.(Acts 13:7, 9.) Nor does it seem probable to me, that it was given him when he was converted to Christ; though this idea so pleased Augustine, that he took occasion refinedly to philosophize on the subject; for he says, that from a

proud Saul he was made a very little (parvulum) disciple of Christ. More probable is the opinion of Origen, who thought that he had two names; for it is not unlikely to be true, that his name, Saul, derived from his kindred, was given him by his parents to indicate his religion and his descent; and that his other name, Paul, was added, to show his right to Roman citizenship; they would not have this honor, then highly valued, to be otherwise than made evident; but they did not so much value it as to withhold a proof of his Israelitic descent. But he has commonly taken the name Paul in his Epistles, and it may be for the following reasons: because in the churches to which he wrote, it was more known and more common, more acceptable in the Roman empire, and less known among his own nation.

Three statements of who Paul is (some at Rome knew him many others did not):

1. *A bond-servant of Christ Jesus:*

Paul has freely given himself as a bond-slave to Christ.

The word bond-servant is DOULOS, which means "slave". The gentile mind of the Romans would see this as a bond-slave, one that serves under debt, so the translation is accurate.

The greatest bond-servant in history was the Lord Jesus Christ. He is described prophetically in the OT as God's servant.

In Philippians 2:7 we are told that Jesus Christ emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

More than 50 times in the NT the believer is referred to as a SERVANT.

BECAUSE THERE IS NOBILITY in being the servant of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

2. Called to be an Apostle:

652 apostolos { ap-os'-tol-os}

from 649; TDNT - 1:407,67; n m

AV - apostle 78, messenger 2, he that is sent 1; 81

GK - 693 { apostolo" }

- 1) a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders
 - 1a) specifically applied to the twelve apostles of Christ
 - 1b) in a broader sense applied to other eminent Christian teachers
 - 1b1) of Barnabas
 - 1b2) of Timothy and Silvanus²

In order to be first called and then sent, an apostle would be required to have met Christ.

apostéllō is a strengthening compound of *stéllō* and is common in Greek for “to send forth,” differing from *pémpō*, which stresses the fact of sending, by its relating of sender and sent and its consequent implication of a commission, especially in Hellenistic Greek.³

²Enhanced Strong's Lexicon, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

³Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

3. *Set apart for the Gospel.*

873 aphorizo { af-or-id'-zo }

from 575 and 3724; TDNT - 5:454,728; v

AV - separate 8, divide 1, sever 1; 10

GK - 928 { aḡforizw }

- 1) to mark off from others by boundaries, to limit, to separate
 - 1a) in a bad sense: to exclude as disreputable
 - 1b) in a good sense: to appoint, set apart for some purpose⁴

Bible Knowledge Commentary:

This calling was from God (Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:1), though it was acknowledged by men (Gal. 2:7-9). It involved being **set apart** (from aphorizō; cf. Acts 13:2) **for the gospel of God**, the message of good news from God that centered on “His Son” (Rom. 1:2, 9) which Paul was “eager to preach” (v. 15) without shame (v. 16). This setting apart did not keep Paul from making tents to support himself and his companions (Acts 20:34; 1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:8) nor from mingling freely with all levels of pagan society. It was a setting apart to something—a commitment and dedication, not from things in isolation like the Pharisees. (Interestingly the word “Pharisee” means “separated one” in the sense of being isolated and segregated.)⁵

⁴*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

⁵Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.