

## I. Paul

### A. More than just a name to read past

1. Don't read past the names
2. Easy to read the names and just move on to the "good stuff"
3. But, if we believe
  - a. that every word in the Bible is God's word
  - b. and is there for our edification and spiritual benefit,
  - c. then the names serve the purpose of God's revelation as well.
    - (1) **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)** *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*
    - (2) **1 Corinthians 10:11** *Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

### B. Why Paul and why now?

1. We encounter Paul throughout the NT
  - a. **Acts 7:58-8:3 (ESV)** *Then they cast [Stephen] out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

*And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.*
  - b. **Acts 9** Conversion (recounted before the crowd in Jerusalem in Acts 22)
  - c. **2 Corinthians 11:21-12:10 (ESV)** <sup>21</sup>... *But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that.* <sup>22</sup> *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I.* <sup>23</sup> *Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.* <sup>24</sup> *Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.* <sup>25</sup> *Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was*

*shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; <sup>26</sup> on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; <sup>27</sup> in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. <sup>28</sup> And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. <sup>29</sup> Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?*

*<sup>30</sup> If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. <sup>31</sup> The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. <sup>32</sup> At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, <sup>33</sup> but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.*

*I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. <sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. <sup>3</sup> And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—<sup>4</sup> and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. <sup>5</sup> On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses—<sup>6</sup> though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. <sup>7</sup> So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

- d. **2 Peter 3:15-18 (ESV)** *15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 18 But grow in the grace and*

*knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

2. But why Paul, and why now?
  - a. The Bible is equally full of portraits of other saints and sinners, so why Paul and why now?
  - b. The immediate reason: Romans
    - (1) The *Magna Carta* of the Christian life
    - (2) Hard, glorious, wonderful, beneficial, life changing, faith forming, God honoring, Christ exalting
  - c. But that doesn't really answer the question, "Why Paul and why now?"
  - d. **If the Bible is the inspired, self-revelation of God, who cares about the human author?**

## II. Who cares about Paul?

### A. God cares

1. Think about the personalities whose experience with God is recorded on the Bible
  - a. Their experience with God and His truth molds them
    - (1) in their person,
    - (2) their understanding of themselves
    - (3) their understanding of God
    - (4) Their understanding of their relationship to the Creator
    - (5) Their understanding of God's chosen role for them in the world
  - b. Think of
    - (1) Moses: who gave up a kingdom in this world to serve God and His people
    - (2) Hosea, called to marry a prostitute as a living illustration of God's love for His constantly wandering people of choice
    - (3) Isaiah, the prophet of God's judgment who God called to live naked for three years as a testimony to the nation God was sending them into exile for their sin
    - (4) Jesus, who learned obedience by the things He suffered
    - (5) Paul
      - (a) **Philippians 1:21 (ESV) *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.***
      - (b) **Philippians 3:4–11 (ESV) <sup>4</sup> . . . *If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss***

*because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ<sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—<sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,<sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

2. God makes those who serve Him a living message of grace and mercy and sovereign purpose.

## **B. History cares**

1. The lives of men and women recorded in the word of God have influenced the quality and conduct of other lives, cultures, and even entire civilizations.
  - a. Moses
  - b. Jesus
  - c. Paul
2. Jukes - Edwards
  - a. By contrast there was another man named Max Jukes, born about 1720. Jukes was an atheist, who married an ungodly woman. In 1900 American pastor and educator Albert Edward Winship wrote a book entitled “Jukes-Edwards: A Study in Education and Heredity.” In it he traced the posterity of the two men. Of Max Jukes’ 540 studied descendants, 310 died as paupers, 150 were convicted criminals, there were 7 murderers, over 100 drunkards, and 190 female prostitutes.
  - b. From Jonathan Edwards’ 1,394 studied descendants came an American vice-president, 3 senators, 3 governors, 3 mayors, 30 judges, 13 college presidents, 65 college professors, 100 lawyers, 60 physicians, 75 military officers, 100 preachers and missionaries, 60 prominent authors, and 80 other public officials. How we who are fathers live our lives, treat our wives, and relate to our children now will affect generations after us, for good or for evil.

## **C. We care**

1. We find in the biographies of godly and great men and women renewed courage, hope, and direction for our own journey
  - a. Saul thought he knew God until he met Jesus for himself
  - b. Grace didn’t just change Paul’s conduct and career. It changed him.
  - c. Grace encountered is the grace offered.
2. Who cares about the human author of the book of Romans?
  - a. We do.

- (1) Romans is the book on the grace of God extended to sinful human beings like you and me.
- (2) Romans is the story of how God reaches into a life being lived as an enemy of God and turns that life into a friend of God
- (3) Romans is Paul's story, and it is your story.
- b. **God is at work in the world, God is at work in you to do in you what He did in Paul, gather to Himself, through grace, a people of faith and obedience who will face the worst the world has to offer and manifest the glory of God in the joy of God.**
- 3. Paul describes himself as a man "in Christ," "by Christ," and "for Christ."
  - a. Jesus is the focal point, the very reason for Paul's existence.
  - b. For Paul, life and death have one meaning: Jesus.
  - c. The man demonstrates a depth of faith and love and devotion and commitment rarely seen in the church today but desperately needed and readily available.
    - (1) Too many of us focus on the world and what this world has to offer us.
    - (2) Paul focuses on Jesus and the eternal, glorious things of God.
    - (3) We have much to learn from Paul
  - d. Paul understands grace!
    - (1) Not only as an essential theological concept but as a personal, soul-saving, life-changing, mind-focusing, heart-shaping experience.
    - (2) Paul, the self-declared chief of sinners and least of saints, can tell us about grace because he KNOWS grace.

### III. Plan

- A. **Next week Fisherman's Picnic and Waterfront Worship (9:30 AM) - bring your own chairs.**
- B. **August: Paul**
  - 1. Conversion
  - 2. Confession
  - 3. Commitment
  - 4. Counsel
- C. **Connection: What God did for Paul, He willingly does for all those He calls to faith in Christ.**