

God's Gospel

Week 1: What is the good news of Jesus Christ by which all believers are saved?

I have spent most of my time in ministry working with believers who are just beginning to take their first steps in their faith. And it's always so exciting because in that position I feel like I get to be apart of setting a foundation in their lives to set them up for having a fruitful life and ministry of their own. But by nature of their position in life, we spend a lot of time talking about the basics of the faith.

And so as we were beginning to plant the new church, and I thought about where our congregation is and how I can best love and serve our people, I began to think about those experiences in ministry, those times of just focusing in on the essentials of the Christian faith, and God began to stir my heart for this study. So at first, I thought about just trying to gather all the new/young believers and we were gonna get together and study together, but the more I thought and prayed through this, the more God opened my eyes to the fact that there is never a time in our Christian walk where we leave the basics of our common confession. In fact, Jesus in the book of Revelation, rebukes multiple churches **for** leaving the basics. And so here we are, and all of us in this room are in different places tonight in our walk, but one thing I know is that we are being built upon the same foundation of the Church, namely Jesus Christ, and the gospel message He revealed to us through His life, death, and resurrection.

So then why the book of Romans?

Upon writing this letter to the believers in Rome, Paul had never actually met this church. He had heard good reports of their faith, but he had never actually been there with them to provide for them any sort of apostolic teaching. And so, he sends this letter to the church, not seeking to correct any specific problems, but to provide them with a detailed account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This letter stands as one of the most unique in the Bible because of its mix of the doctrinal and practical teachings for the believer. And since it was written with no specific issue in mind, it stands as one of most general and applicable teachings that every believer would do well to spend significant time meditating on. And this is why I believe God lead me to this book, for this study, with this people, for this time. So let's read together, today from the first 17 verses here in chapter 1:

Read Scripture

One of my aims in teaching this study is to be as applicable and reproducible as possible. If by the end of this study, you are no more able to teach and understand the foundations of the Christian faith, then this time will not have served its original purpose. So here's my outline for today, you will see the study is broken into two observations followed by two applications from our text today.

The first observation from the passage that I want to make is:

I . The Gospel is NOT a man made invention, but God's good news revealed to mankind through His Son Jesus Christ.

I think we see ample evidence of this even here in our passage today. Look at verses 1-4:

[Rom 1:1-4 ESV] 1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for **the gospel of God**, 2 which **he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures**, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

And even again down in verse 9:

[Rom 1:9 ESV] 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the **gospel of his Son**, that without ceasing I mention you

And even one more time here in the 16th verse:

[Rom 1:16-17 ESV] 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, **for it is the power of God for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the **righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith**, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

So why is this important?

1. The Gospel is the thread which connects all of history together; all the way from Genesis to Revelation

When you grasp this truth, it changes the way you read the Bible. So that when you turn the pages of the Old Testament, you aren't tempted to think that God was just winging it until He came up with the better plan of Jesus, but that all of redemptive history is centered upon the revelation of Jesus Christ into human history.

So when we read in Genesis 3: 14-15

[Gen 3:14-15 ESV] 14 The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

This passage is known as the proto-evangelism. Proto meaning first and evangelism meaning sharing of the good news. That even here all the way back in Genesis, the Lord was beginning to uncover His means for redeeming the world to Himself. That He would raise one up from the seed of the woman who would conquer over the beast; who would ultimately destroy him and render him powerless.

And then we can follow this thread all the way through the Godly line of Seth, to Noah, whose family was spared by ark during the great flood, to his son Shem, whom God promised in Genesis 9:26:

[Gen 9:26 ESV] 26 He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant.

And we keep pulling this thread all the way until we get to Abraham, whom God called into a special covenant with Himself in Genesis 12:1-3, where he says:

[Gen 12:1-3 ESV] 1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house **to the land that I will show you.** 2 **And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.** 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

That we see here, that God is continuing to reveal what He promised all the way back in Genesis 3. That He would raise up from the seed of the woman one to conquer the serpent, and to rule over the earth in the way God intended for man to rule in the Garden. And it's through the descendants of Abraham that this promise would come.

And time fails us, or else we could continue to pull this thread of redemption all the way through the David, whom the Lord promised He would raise one up from his descendants who would sit on the throne forever, all the way through the prophets, who foretold of a time of great spiritual blessing for the people of Israel that would come when the Messiah appears, all the way through Jesus' virgin birth, foretold by prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, or His birthplace, foretold in Micah 5:2, or His many miracles which He performed on earth.

And we would pull this thread all the way to Calvary, which is the tipping point of the Gospel, where Paul speaks about the cross in Colossians 2:13

[Col 2:13-15 NKJV] 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

And so we see, hopefully, that this Gospel message is not something that the apostles and early church members got into a room and came up with, or this was not some secret message received in a cave, or some story found on tablets out in the wilderness...

This Gospel is the work of the Lord. It is God's redemptive plan that was revealed to men through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.. It is not a logical deduction, but rather a plain fact upon which all other deductions are made.

The second observation from our text I would like to speak about is this:

II . The Gospel is *the* good news of how sinful, guilty man may be declared righteous through faith in Jesus Christ.

Notice the language Paul uses here in the last 3 verses of the text today:

[Rom 1:15-17 NKJV] 15 So, **as much as is in me**, [I am] **ready to preach the gospel** to you who are in Rome also. 16 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ**, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

It's clear that Paul sees the gospel as a message of victory and of good news, not bad news! He has an eagerness in his spirit to share it. He is not ashamed of it, because to him this gospel message is everything.

And why does he feel this way?

[Romans 1:16b] [because] it is the **power** of God to **salvation** for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

I want to take a few moments, and as clearly as I know how, present the gospel message to you all because I think by doing so you will see why Paul was so eager to share this good news with all those in Rome, both believers and non believers. I want to preface this by saying we are going to spend a lot more time through this study diving deeply into each one of these points, but for now, I just want to give you a clear picture of this gospel message that Paul is so excited to preach to these people.

So here we go starting with verse 18 in this same chapter:

[Rom 1:18 NKJV] 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

That the first element in this message of good news, is actually very bad news, but it's the bad news that makes the good news so very sweet to our soul.

But we see that because of our sin and rebellion toward God, we should have a fearful expectation of judgment that will come. The Lord is Holy, and He is Just, and all sin is in direct disobedience to Him.

And that goes for everybody. And I want to make this point very clear because I think a lot of folks who have grown up in church their entire lives don't quite understand this point of the gospel or maybe they do but they just don't grasp the seriousness of their situation outside the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We've all heard testimonies from guys who were ex-gang members or they were addicted to drugs or alcoholics or they were in prison at one point in their life and we tend to marvel at these kind of stories because God saved these people who were so far away from Him and usually it's these types of people whose love is infectious for the Lord. They have a depth and a seriousness in their devotion to Christ because they know how miserable life is without Him!

And then you have the kids who have grown up in the church their entire lives looking and thinking to themselves, " I could never love Jesus like that because I've never experienced what it was like to be a sinner"

Please listen to me carefully, and with all the love I can possibly pour out to you in this moment, if that's you, that is NOT biblical! Whether you have been a church kid all your life or you were a gang member or drug addict or you were sexually immoral at a young age, whatever your story is, the same thing is true for each and every one of us, and that is without the sacrifice of Jesus, the wrath of God and the curse of sin laid heavy upon us.

There is no separate hell for the gang member and the self righteous church kid who grew up with no love in his heart for God. And so if you are in here today, and that's you, who grew up and was baptized at age 9 and haven't really tasted what life is like outside the church, please do not be deceived. The bible says in Ephesians 2:1 :

[Eph 2:1-3 NKJV] 1 And you [He made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Notice please that Paul doesn't qualify this in any way. We were all dead. We were all children of wrath. We were all disobedient. And the wrath of God is on all people for the Bible says:

[Rom 3:23 NKJV] 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

And if that were the end of the good news, we would be in much trouble, for all we have established thus far is that we are firmly planted in the fiery grasp of hell.

But God, in His righteous love, grace, and mercy, has stepped in to save the day.

[Rom 3:21-26 NKJV] 21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being **justified freely** by His grace through the **redemption that is in Christ Jesus**, 25 whom God set forth [as] a **propitiation by His blood**, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

So imagine you are on trial before God. And on the other side of you stands Satan, your accuser. And he has his list of all your sins and all of the terrible, and they are terrible, things that you have done in rebellion to God. And you very well know that he's right, and that your sins demand that you be punished eternally. And so God turns to you and asks, "What defense do you give for these things before I execute judgment?" And in your weakness and your helplessness, you are able to utter no word of defense before the Lord. But then suddenly, from the back of the courtroom, a Man comes forward. And this is no normal Man, but the God-Man, Jesus Christ. And through no merit of your own, only because of His great love for you, He approaches the judge to make a deal for you. And so He steps down from that meeting with the judge, He walks willingly to a wooden cross in the courtroom, and the judge takes the list of your sins and your rebellion, and He takes the nail, and drives it through the God-Man's wrist. And

the judge turns back to Satan, and says, “ What now will you accuse this man of? For his sins have been forgiven, his debt has been paid for, and he is redeemed by the blood of the lamb.”

This is the picture I draw from what is one of my favorite passages in the bible right now:

[Col 2:13-15 NKJV] 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

The only damning weapon Satan truly has against us is unforgiven sin. That is the only thing he has over us that could cause us to be separated from God for eternity. And the Lord has taken our sin and nailed it to the cross. And so now who will bring a charge against God's elect? There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And to put an exclamation point on the whole gospel message, God raised Christ from the dead. And now He is seated at the right hand of God, making intercession for us, and one day, He will come back and establish His kingdom here on earth, and then doing away with all evil, will reign forevermore with His people.

It's this message that Paul was so eager to share, and in his absence from the church at Rome, has recorded for us here in this letter. So I want to end tonight with two brief applications that I draw from this text and other texts in the Bible

1. The Gospel requires a response; the only saving response is repentance and belief

Everyone responds to the gospel in one way or another. Some outright reject it. They consider the message foolishness. Even if they believed it were true, they would rather perish in their sins than to turn their lives away from the darkness and into the glorious light of Jesus. Jesus says as much in John 3, speaking to Nicodemus, where He says:

[Jhn 3:18-19 ESV] 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

Others will issue what I would call a “no response”. They do not outright reject the good news, but they really don't participate in its benefits either. They are unmoved and yet peaceable towards the message. They often look at what the Gospel has done to their friends around them and think “ That's great what the Lord has done in their life” and yet are totally content to be outside the true blessing of God themselves. They are what I would expect to be part of the

many on that day of judgment whom the Lord will turn away from the kingdom of heaven saying “ I never knew you”. They will look back and try to justify their indifference with a lot of religious activity. Wasn’t I a part of the church service? Did I not give charitably? And yet, they will find that the sum of their religious activity does not replace their cold heartedness towards Jesus Christ. They never really moved toward Him through repentance. They never really believed on Him for salvation.

But then there are the others, the ones whose hearts will break as the Gospel of Jesus Christ reaches through to the inner depths of their soul, awakening in them a genuine love, bubbling up like a spring of living water from inside them. It’s these people who will not but be able to turn away from their life of sin and spend their life in the pursuit of God. They will fix their gaze upon Jesus, and resolve in their hearts to go where He goes, even if that means they are crucified in this life. It’s these people who experience what Peter preached in Acts 3:

[Act 3:19-20a ESV] 19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

The second application I draw from this passage is this:

2. We must continue in the Gospel

There is one sense in which salvation happens in a moment in the Christian life. We can all hopefully look back to a moment or season in our life where those words to the famous hymn Amazing Grace rang true in our life:

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed!

That there was a first hour, in which we were made alive in Christ Jesus, that our spiritual senses were awakened and for the first time we were able to cry out to the Lord in gladness.

But there is also a sense in which we must continue in the Gospel now! Because although our ransom was paid, and our righteousness secured, we are still experiencing the saving work of Jesus right this instant! For if it were not so, Paul would have no reason to say in Philipians 1:

[Phi 1:6 ESV] 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

That yes, we were saved by grace through faith in the past tense from the penalty of sin , but we are also being saved even now in the present tense from the power of sin. And there will be a day in the future where we will be saved in the future tense from the presence of sin!

And all of this is a result of the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ! So that we may not boast, but that we may continue with one accord in the gospel of which we were saved in the beginning.

This should forever keep us on our toes. There is no room for lukewarm love in a gospel so sweet. There is no time to fall asleep. For the master is coming soon. And so we should continue on in the first love. Our love for Jesus Christ and the gospel message that He reveals to us.

May the Lord quicken our hearts to belief, and upon believing, help us to continue in the faith till the day we meet him face to face.