

Romans 1:1-15 "Gospel the Gospel!"

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Date: 11 January 2026

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that it is your desire that we belong to you, that we belong to you. We accept what you have done for us in the person and work of your Son. And to hear about it and to accept that offer and that call, respond to that call so that we will belong to you. And that we will learn to live, not in the hope that we will belong to you someday, but that we will live out of knowing that we belong to you. And that you want us to belong to you for our good, our deep, extensive, and surface, and eternal good. And so Father, may your Holy Spirit bring your word deep into our hearts this morning to form us. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated.

So a few years ago, it's hard to remember how many years ago, but I realized it was before COVID shut everything down, off and on, off and on, off and on, off and on. But there was this young man who was troubled. He was from a very, very, very Christian home. He might have been homeschooled as well, actually, but he was from a very, very Christian home. He was going to the University of Ottawa, and he really came into deep contact with a lot of people who were outside the Christian faith for the first time in his, like really in a substantial way for the first time in his life. And he, I guess he was really challenged by the way they challenged him being a Christian. And full credit to him, he let it out that he was a Christian, but they really started to come with them a whole pile of things that he'd never thought about before. And so one day he came to me troubled. We were talking about a variety of things. And one of the things he said to me is he said, George, you know, why isn't there more evidence for the resurrection of Jesus? And I said, well, I said, I think there's actually pretty good evidence. Like, what do you mean? Well, he said, like, like, this is what my friends say to me. He said, like, why aren't there things like, I don't know, like, why aren't there letters written by people like a couple of years after the death and resurrection of Jesus that talk about it?

[3 : 22] And I looked at him funny. And I said, like, you do realize that's what most of the New Testament is. And he looked at me funny because he had grown up, you see, in such exclusively Christian circles that he, on one level, he'd lost the plot. That it wasn't as if, you know, one day, some major international committee said, we're going to commission Paul to write all this stuff about Jesus, Jesus, because we already have established these truths. No, just Paul one day, I, you know, in our particular case, this letter that we're about to look at started from Paul, he wrote it in around the year 57. So about 24 years after the resurrect, death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul, probably writing from where, uh, from Corinth, what we now know of as Greece, wrote a letter to a group of people who had grown up pagan who had become Christians who lived in Rome. And in that, and that's what it is. It's a letter. In fact, that's what Galatians is, Thessalonians. We actually, in fact, have a whole pile of letters written from a few years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, talking about the fact that Jesus actually rose from the dead. We actually have that historical evidence. It was that historical evidence first recognized as scripture later. And, uh, so that, that just, as you're going all through this and listening through the weeks to come, that's what the book of Romans is. And we're going to, of course, listen to it as also then, uh, something which is a profound and ultimately from God word directly to us. But the guy who wrote this letter, he's also very, very interesting because it, if you ever wonder whether God has a sense of humor, you just have to think about, um, about Paul.

Paul, Iran's been in the news a lot lately, uh, more in, if you, if you do like me, uh, you look at BBC World News and, uh, you look at some American news sources. It's been more in the American and British news sources that I think than Canada, although it's now Canada's sort of catching up.

There's huge things going on in Iran right now. Uh, it's, so it should be something of our prayers, by the way, that that country, things can happen in that country that will, um, will end the heavy hand, uh, that has fallen upon that people. Uh, but one of the things which Iran is famous for is their type of, uh, religious police. I can't remember the, the Islamic, uh, and Farsi name for it. Uh, but, uh, and, and, you know, they'd go around again and make sure that, you know, women were properly covered and, and that, you know, things are the right length and all of that. And you'd get hit by a stick if it's not.

So, what you have to understand that is, in one level, Paul was the Jewish equivalent of that. He was the Jewish equivalent of that. In fact, if you not look just at Acts, but other letters, it's implied that he actually even took this enforcing of rigorous religious rules, even to the point of having a hand in, in, in several people being killed and being thrown in jail. And so Paul, who was so intolerant of his brother and sister Jewish people, if they weren't actually being absolutely meticulously observant of how he understood the law to be observed, you can just imagine what he thought of people who worshipped gods and goddesses, what worshipped Aphrodite and Zeus.

Like, he wouldn't even have been, wanted to be in the same room with them. And this is the guy that Jesus appears to after his resurrection. And that's how Paul, his life is completely and utterly changed from a man who is so hateful and intolerant and intolerant and he meets Jesus and his whole life is turned around and God, in a sense of humor, says, you're going to be the one I've chosen you to tell pagans about me.

[7 : 22] Like, nobody would have saw that coming, right? They picked the guy who's the most intolerant to be the guy who's going to bring to learn a very profound Christian gospel-centered care and concern for the other and will even end up being the great apologist for the fact that pagans and Jews, for that matter, who become Christians, don't have to keep all of those minute rules that he used to enforce.

So if you ever wonder if God has a sense of humor, just think about Paul. So that's the guy who's writing this letter. So if you turn in with me, you'll look. It's very easy to find in a sense, Romans 1 verse 1. And it'll also be up on the screen, but it's good to have a Bible and look around.

And by the way, as you're reading ahead in the book of Romans, you know, you can make questions. Send me emails if you have questions about texts coming along the line. I'll see if I can weave it into the sermon. I can't always promise, but if you have questions, feel free to email them to me.

And so the letter begins like this, Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. Now, one of the things, so actually, so here's the first very, very simple point from this. If you could put it up, Claire, that would be very helpful. The gospel is good news from God about the Lord Jesus Christ. A very, very simple thing. The gospel is good news from God about the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, how do I get that? So there's something in the original language which doesn't exist in English. And that's, if you look again at verse 1, and when it says the gospel of God, the original hearers of that would have heard two things being said at the same time.

They would have heard, first of all, actually, before I say that, what they heard, the word gospel would have jumped out at them, because that was a very common word in the ancient world. And in the ancient world, when the emperor or an important general had defeated an enemy and conquered a new land, he would send out a gospel, a declaration, a declaration, Rome has won, I have won, our enemies are conquered, Roman peace and security is now here. And that was called a gospel. It was a proclamation of this particular type of good news. And Paul is taking this word, and he's turning it into something about what Jesus has done. So the Roman hearers, they would have been very familiar with hearing these gospels, these proclamations, these declarations of victory.

[10:03] And he says that he is set apart for the gospel of God, this type of declaration, and that the two senses of the word of God that you don't get in English, but it's there in the original language, they would either hear that this is good news about God, or they would, and they would also hear that it's good news from God. They would hear that, and it's, you can't get it in English, but in the original language, they would have heard the two things going along. They would have said, that's really interesting. We're used to hearing gospel, so to speak, when an emperor has just killed a whole pile of people and taken over more land. But he says there's this declaration of victory that's made public, and it's from God, and it's about God. And that's how the book opens. And so one way to understand it, very simply put, is the gospel is good news from God about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so you hear that it's news. It's not advice. It's not therapy. It's not metaphor. I mean, you know, there are therapeutic results of the gospel, you know, and there's all sorts of implications of the gospel, but it's not ritual. It's not new yoga techniques. It's not metaphors.

It's news of something that was done that's going to be transformative. And it's news about a person. And this is really important, because one of the deep longings of our human heart is to not be alone.

Not be alone and die alone. To be alone, to be lonely, to be absent and distant and not having a people, a person, others that are connected to us. That is a very, very deep ache. And we have a far deeper ache for that than we do for new rituals, new techniques, new, you know, new ways to lose weight or make money. I mean, we like, might like all those things. But if we, if God was to say, we can have those things, but you won't actually know anybody. At first, we might take it. But after sick, after even a month or so, we'd all say, God, can I change my thing? I'd rather not have any of those things and actually have connections with people. That's what we would choose. Because that's a far deeper longing. And so this is very profound. This is good news. The gospel is good news from God about a person. And that person is the Lord Jesus Christ, which we're going to see in a couple of verses. Now, I'm not making any comment for those Christians who differ over whether Christians can read Harry Potter or watch the Harry Potter films. I'm not going to get into a big discussion. But there's a really, for those who've read the book, some of the books, or those who've seen some of the movies,

I can't remember which movie it is. There's a really interesting and actually very, very profoundly Christian idea in one of the movies. And I can't remember which it is, but they're out and they set up a little tent. And there's, of course, a magical tent. And they set up a magical tent. And you go into the tent, and it looks like it's just like a, you know, maybe a tent that three people could sleep in. And they go into the tent, and it's huge. It's like there's a mansion inside. And one of the people goes, looking around. And then they get out of the tent. And when they get out of the tent, they look around, just a little tiny tent. Like wilderness all around. And then they go back in the tent.

[13 : 26] And inside of the tent is bigger than the outside of the tent. Why is this a very interesting Christian idea? Inside the stable in Bethlehem was one bigger than the universe. Right? It's a Christian idea. And so one of the things you're going to see throughout the entire book of Romans is, so it begins with this very simple thing. You know, Paul is serving the Christ.

Jesus called to be an apostle set apart for the gospel of God. And I just explained what the gospel of God is. The gospel is good news from God about the Lord Jesus Christ. Very, very simple idea. And as I was talking about at the 10 o'clock service, the 8 o'clock service, like those of you who have young children, you could say to a three-year-old, you know, the gospel, there's this really good news about Jesus, who's the Lord. And God will use him to make you right with Jesus. And you can tell that to a three-year-old or a four-year-old. And then you could say to them, would you like Jesus to be your Lord and Savior? And they'll say yes.

But you go in, in the book of Romans, you're going to now go into this a little bit deeper. In the next little bit, you go understand that those words are actually way bigger than they look. And then the next part of Romans, you're going to see it's even bigger than that. And then you go to another part of Romans, and you're going to see it's even bigger than that. And then you're going to go to a room within that room, and it's even bigger than that. It keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger in the same way that that precious little four-year-old can say, yes, I'd like to give my life to Jesus.

And 40 years later, he's just completed, or she's just completed the fourth volume, every volume this thick of systematic theology. And it's just all, that's, it's nothing different from that simple proclamation. It's just as you enter into the words, and the words enter into you, it's bigger on the inside than it is from the outside.

So we begin to see this opening up. That's what happens now in verses two and following. Let's look. So actually, the end of verse one, for the gospel of God, and now he's going to explain a little bit more about what the gospel of God is. He says here, which he promised, that's God, which God promised beforehand through his prophets, that's the Jewish prophets, only Jewish prophets, no others, which he promised beforehand through his prophets, his Jewish prophets in the Holy Scriptures, which is what we call our Jewish brothers and our friends call us the Tanakh, which we call the Old Testament.

[15 : 38] So God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, 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. Verse four again, 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 we'll pause there.

Now all of that can get bigger and bigger and bigger, but here's a very simple summary. If you could put up the point, Claire, that would be helpful. Jesus Christ is God, the Son of God, fully human, the one promised by God, and fully vindicated by his resurrection. Now it's opening up about who Jesus is. What is this? The good news is about the Lord Jesus Christ. It's about a person. Who is this person? Well, this person is described in these types of things that for centuries and centuries God has spoken through his prophets and has declared that he is going to do something unbelievably salvific and make all things right, that everything sad will become untrue.

All that he has kept in a very decisive way. He's kept his word in the person of his son. And this person is God, the Son of God. That's what it means when it says he was declared to be the Son of God. I mean, that's what it actually says, right? And that he's completely and utterly human. That's why in verse 3 it says, according to the flesh. And that's as I've talked about in other sermons. In this particular context, flesh is emphasizing fully human and all of human frailty. So all of human, he's completely human, even being frail and finite as regard to his human nature. He's also God, the Son of God, but he's just one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now you can see how there's big books of theology that can be read, written. And this is going to get even, he's going to talk about this more as it comes up in the things. He's just sort of setting the stage and the table. And why is it that anybody with half a brain would ever believe something so completely and utterly, on one hand, wonderful, but also completely and utterly impossible? Well, it was completely, this news, and who he is, is completely and utterly vindicated and established by the fact that on, that hundreds and thousands of thousands of people saw him crucified on a cross on a Friday and fully and utterly die, even to the point of blood and water coming out of the side of his body. And he was embalmed, and he was put in a tomb. And on the third day, the tomb is empty, the body is gone, and he has appeared over a period of time showing people that he has defeated death and that which causes death, and he is alive.

And if the resurrection is true, Christianity is true. And I'm not saying you can't puzzle over whether there's a young earth or an old earth or six days or whatever, and I'm not saying you can't puzzle over questions of predestination, and I'm not saying you can't puzzle over questions of the problem of evil, but all I can tell you is that, in fact, if Jesus rose from the dead, Christianity is true. And there is an answer to those particular questions, which will be intellectually and emotionally satisfying and better than any answer you will ever find from any other system of thought, because Jesus Christ, by his resurrection, has been vindicated to be what Paul has just said he is. And if you were there saying, Paul, I don't know, he said, no, boy, if you knew what I was like 24 years ago, and you could see me now, you would know. I saw him.

That's why the grave is empty. That's who Jesus is. Now, some might say, George, that's, I mean, that's okay, that's all interesting, and I'm really glad you said all that. And I don't know, George, if you happen to know this, but I have a little bit of a sub-hobby.

[19 : 45] I don't meet very many Christians, like, it's sort of interesting to meet you. I have a little bit of a sub-hobby. I love arguing with Christians. I love poking them about this and that. I like trying to rattle their chain on things, you know. I mean, there's a whole pile of people, they find out I'm a Christian, they want to rattle my chain to see if I'm going to say something for or against Trump or some other type of political issue. They like to try to do things like that, right? And I just, I try as often as possible not to take the bait on those particular things. It's, but, you know, so somebody might say, George, that's all really interesting, but you know what? What on earth does it have to do with me, other than the fact that I can now, you know, really poke you about a whole pile of things? Well, there's a fellow by the name of Stephen Covey who used to be, I don't know if he's still many people read him or his techniques, and Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. I read the book and it's very, it was very helpful to me. And one of the things he talks about early on in the book, which is also very helpful, is he talks about how effective people work in their sphere of influence, and ineffective people spend their time in their, the sphere of concern. Now, what does he mean by that? The language is a little bit misleading. Take, take two different people living next door to each other in the same condo. And Andy comes home from work, and while he was coming home from work, he's scrolling through his phone and is checking TikTok and Instagram and, and his, and, and X and news feeds. And he comes home and he's so enraged by what's going on in the world that he decides after, because he gets home, he keeps just scrolling. He's so enraged, he can't actually make a proper supper supper. So he sticks something from a, that can be microwaved. He wolfs it down. And then after that, he spends more time and he looks on news sources. And then he, he sends out a few little answers and tweets ranting about, I don't know, Trump or against Trump or, you know, ICE or against ICE or whatever it is. And, you know, and then he, then he does a little bit of watching of Netflix. And then after he's done some Netflix, you know, he listens to some music, and then he has a couple of beers, and then he goes to bed. And he spent most of his night in his area of concern. Right next door to the fellow, we'll call him Andy, is, is Bob. And Bob on the way home was listening to an audio book.

And before he got home, he stopped off at the grocery store around the corner and he bought himself some salad making stuff and bought himself a chicken breast. And he went home, listening to the audio book. He made himself a really healthy meal with some boneless, skinless chicken breast and a salad and, you know, maybe some corn meal with a bit of spice and some peppers. And he had his meal. And then after that, he washed his dishes and he cleaned his house and got his laundry ready to do the next day. And then he went to the gym and he had a workout for an hour.

And then when he came back, he actually looked at some of his bills and got his bills sorted out and then he went to bed. He spent his whole time in a circle of influence, things he could actually do. Bob's going to have an effective life and he's going to have a completely and utterly ineffective life because he did things that were all of concern to him, but he couldn't do absolutely anything at all about. So you might say, George, this just sounds like one of those things that now Christians can be concerned about, but it has nothing to do with your daily life. To which Paul would say is, did you miss the part about the resurrection from the dead?

Like, what could be more concerning to you about the fact that you're going to die? Like, did you notice that? Like, shouldn't that maybe be of something that, and it's been told to you in the sense that there might be something you can do about that? Like, I think that actually qualifies for something that should be in your circle of things you can do something about, not just something that you're only concerned about. So if you, let's, so this is what Paul immediately goes to, by the way. He doesn't just stop at verse 4. Look at verse 5. So it says, you know, just before, through the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, verse 5, through whom we have received grace, that's God's unmerited kindness and favor. Surely that should be something that is of interest you to receive unmerited kindness and mercy from God, and apostleship, which it's a bit of a, you know, they can't all receive that, to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations. And the obedience of faith, that's the really big particular idea there.

And what obedience of faith means is, if you could put up the point that would be helpful, God's good news is call, is a, God's good news, the gospel, is a call to you personally to the obedience of faith, the obedience of faith. Now that's a bit confusing in English, and we can get the order wrong, but the order is essential to understanding the gospel.

[24 : 58] And it's part of the gospel. It's not just a declaration of what Jesus has done, a huge victory, which is relevant to you. And part of the relevance to you is the obedience of faith.

That's a call that God is, God's good news is a call to you personally to the obedience of faith. But the direction is important. It's not that you obey, obey, obey, obey, obey, obey, obey, obey, obey, obey, obey the faith. It is that you have faith in Christ, and out of that obedience, a type of very particular freeing type of obedience will come.

It'll be a little bit clearer if we look at the next verse, and then I'll put up a couple of points. So look at verse 5 again. Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at that verse 6. Including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

Remember I said part of the good news is it's about a person. It's not just a principle, a metaphor, techniques, a whole pile of disciplines. It's actual person, and it's actually speaking, therefore, at one of the deepest longings and yearnings of our hearts.

[26 : 27] Our fear is to be completely alone, and our desire is that there are persons that we are connected with who know us and love us and respect us and will treat us with integrity and open their lives to us and allow us to open our lives to them.

And he's saying it's not just this, it's that you'll actually belong to Jesus Christ. And the idea of belonging here, it's really important because it's not like, you know, many parts of the world continue to be embroiled in the terror and the evil of ISIS and different offshoots that come from the Muslim Brotherhood.

And you know that when groups that have been radicalized according to the Muslim Brotherhood and brought in a sense the full teachings of the Koran, including the really cruel teachings of the Koran, into the modern world, when they capture places that they'll belong to Islam, they'll belong to ISIS, it means the hurt and diminishment of all women and most people.

And it's terrible. But how you have to understand belonging here is in terms of grace, in terms of love, and even that word set apart, which implies set apart to be precious.

A good way to understand the setting apart to be precious is you decide you want to get a new dog and there's nothing wrong with going to get puppies from breeders, that's a very, very good thing to do, but you decide you'd like to get a rescue dog.

[28 : 10] That you'd like to get a dog that was abandoned, that you know that if it's not adopted at a certain point in time, it'll be euthanized. And so you go and you look at all the dogs and you set one apart to take home, to belong to you.

And as soon as you bring it home, very shortly after, even before that, you buy a bed for it, you buy food for it, you take it to the, maybe the doggy hairdresser, and get it all cut up, get the hair cut and trimmed, and you get toys for it, and you play with it, and this now dog belongs to you. That dog was set apart to belong to you, so you could pour out your heart and your love to that beautiful little dog.

And the reason so many people love dogs is no matter how day, how bad your day is when you come home, the dog is happy to see you. One of the reasons so many people like dogs, right? The dog is happy to see you.

And that's the way you have to understand this verse 6, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. So if you could put up the next point, Claire, I think it should be number 4.

Here's very important then to understand this obedience of faith and belonging to Christ. You do not live in the hope of belonging, but live in hope because you belong.

[29 : 53] If you don't have that order, you're not hearing the Gospel. For many Christians, it's like, oh, I got it all reversed.

The order is unbelievably important. You do not live day by day hoping that someday you can belong to Christ, but you live every day in hope because you belong to Christ, because Christ has done something to set you apart for himself because you're precious to him and he loves you and he wants to pour out his affection to you.

He wants, just as you know what, you take home a dog and you do the hairdressing stuff and all, and don't go really crazy and, you know, really crazy with it, but in a sense you want to have the dog groomed so the dog can be more doggy.

And the dog's essential personality can come out by dealing with the health and other types of issues and having it properly fed. And that's what Christ wants to do for you. Isn't that such fantastic news?

How can that not be of interest to people in terms of your circle of influence? That God is calling you to that, inviting you to that. And here's how it goes in a very theological way.

[31 : 17] If you could put up the next point. This is the theological way of expressing it. You are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for God's glory alone.

That's what this is saying. That's what classic Anglicanism is. You are saved. In other words, God does something to rescue you, to make you his.

He is the one. His call is a call with power. It's going to get, you know, we're going to keep opening it up as we go in week by week by week. You get these simple words. You get into it, you know, in a couple of verses down.

And you go, whoa, it's way bigger than I thought. And you get into that. Whoa, it's way bigger and way more beautiful and way more marvelous than you thought beforehand. It just keeps getting more marvelous. You are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for God's glory alone.

Now, in closing, there's three, Paul now goes through three important implications. Each one of them will be quite brief, but they're important.

[32 : 22] And Tim Keller has famously said, the gospel has implications, but the implications are not the gospel. Okay?

The gospel is the gospel, but the gospel is going to have implications. Okay? But those implications aren't the gospel. The gospel is the gospel, but they're going to have implications. And so, in a sense, you see, how Paul has written the letter is, just take a step back, a bit of a nerdish moment for a second.

Those of you who are nerds about books and stuff, take a step back. You know, verses one to seven, primarily, it's in a sense a summary. A lot of it is actually all at the end as well.

There's an inclusio, if you're really into geeky stuff like that. And it's setting forth, in a sense, the big idea of the book on one type of level. You know, and then the next few verses are a few implications, a few biographical stuff.

That's verses one to 15. Verses 16 to 17 is, in a sense, the theological praesi. It would be the praesi of the whole book. Verses 1, chapter 1, 18 to chapter 3, verse 20 is, what is the problem that the gospel, that only the gospel will solve?

[33 : 29] Chapter 3, verse 21 to the end of 11 is, what on earth is the gospel? And keeping on bringing in more and more aspects of it, and how beautiful and glorious it is. And then chapters 12 through 16 is, how do you then live, given that the gospel is true, and you've given your life to Christ?

That's how the book is set up. And so, Paul even has some implications here. Let's look at where they are. I'm going to show three important implications. It begins at verse 7. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you.

What a good attitude, right? I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you. That is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

Look at that verse 12 again. That is, we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. So here's the first sort of implication, if you could put it up.

[34 : 40] In belonging to Jesus, you will know your need and your calling to encourage others and to allow others to encourage you.

I'm really weak at allowing others to encourage me.

You can pray into that for me. And, you know, there used to be, for those of you of a certain age, I don't think they teach it anymore. They used to teach kids this song, and it had a line, where seldom is heard a discouraging word.

I don't know how many of you know that song. And a lot of Christian pastors would say, unfortunately, that doesn't describe churches. A lot of churches' names could be the Church of Discouraging Words.

But we should pray that that's the type of church that we are, that we understand, I have a need to encourage others and to have others encourage me.

[35 : 47] And I have a call to do that. And that we could pray that the gospel will come so real to our heart that that becomes an implication of what it means to have been welcomed to Christ.

Another very important brief implication. Just keep reading. Verse 13 and 14. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers. And just by the way, one of the things which I love the ESV translation, but a really big mistake, I think, the ESV translation made is translating this word brothers.

Brothers, every time you see the word brothers, I mean, virtually every time, every time maybe except, anyway, never mind. Every time you see the word brothers in the new test in the ESV, you should, it's brothers and sisters.

It's not just brothers. It's brothers and sisters. I don't know why they, I mean, I know why they did it, but I think they made a mistake. So, I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented, in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles, the pagans.

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. And that's the second implication right there.

[37 : 02] If you could put it up, Claire, that would be helpful. In belonging to Jesus, you now have a debt to pay towards those outside the Christian faith. In belonging to Jesus, you now have a debt to pay towards those outside the Christian faith.

The word obligation there is literally that you are indebted, that you have a debt. That's what it literally means in the original language. And so, there's more than, there's lots of different senses of debt, but for this point, it's important to think of two different ways that I might be in debt.

The first way I might be in debt is that I go to Andrew and Lisa and I ask if I could borrow \$5,000 from them. And they lend it to me, and now I'm now in debt to Andrew and Lisa for \$5,000.

A second way I can be in debt is if, let's say, Andrea and Laurie would say, George, we'd like to give \$5,000 to Andrew and Lisa, and we don't want them to know that it comes from us.

So, I'm giving you \$5,000 to give \$5,000 to Andrew and Lisa. Now, I have a debt that has to be paid.

[38 : 10] I have to, I am indebted to making sure that that happens. I have an obligation to pass that money on to them. The longer I keep hold of it, the more I'm in defiance of what, of what, of what Laurie and Andrea have wanted.

And that's the sense which is here. You might feel like you're a very unworthy and very unskilled Christian, but if you belong to Jesus, Jesus, he has given you several, at least several precious coins of the gospel to pass on to others.

Now, you don't know who it is, but that's why you see you share the gospel with Muhammad, your next door, your condo, next door in the condo. That's why you share the gospel with the woman with green hair and lots of piercings.

That's why you share the gospel with your atheist university professor. That's why you share the gospel with the person that you know that seems as if their life is vastly more successful and better than you.

Because you don't know. But God has given you, in a sense, the pearl of great price, a coin of great price to pass on to others. And that pearl, that coin, is the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[39 : 32] And you now, we now as a church, have that debt. Not just to those in our neighborhood, but to the world. And we're going to talk about more of that in the weeks to come.

And then the final one, verse 16. If you could put up the point, Claire, this is the last one.

In belonging to Jesus, you will know your need and your calling to gospel the gospel when you gather. Ha, ha, ha. In belonging to Jesus, you will know your need and your calling to gospel the gospel when you gather.

You see, in the word there, in verse 16, the word for preach. So, gospel is a noun. Sorry, another geeky moment. Gospel is a noun. The verb form of gospel is that.

That's translated there as preach. So, it's literally saying gospel the gospel, but gospel is now treated as a verb. And he's doing this to Christians. By the way, folks, if you are wondering why it is, people say, George, every week you mention the gospel.

[40 : 38] Why is it? Well, I don't know if I always did that in my ministry. But I know that I got asked to speak at an inter-varsity chapter 30-some-odd, 35, 37 years ago.

And they asked me to speak on this text. And I'm preparing the sermon. And I said, good grief, Paul feels he needs to preach the gospel to Christians. It never dawned on me before because I was poorly trained.

He wants to go to Christians to gospel the gospel. And so, that means if you have a young adults group, you have a youth group, you have a Sunday school group, in a sense, borrowing the words of Spurgeon, there should always be enough of the gospel in that for those who do not yet know Jesus to come to a saving faith in Jesus.

The actual structure of the gospel should be the structure by which you share all the other teachings of Christ. We need, when we gather, to hear it, to gospel the gospel.

And as you gospel the gospel, you go on the implications of what the gospel means for your emotions, for your moods, for your time, for your politics, for how you deal with things at work, for your neighbors.

[41 : 47] I mean, there's a whole pile of implications of the gospel. And the implications are not the gospel. The gospel is the gospel, but the gospel has implications. But even when you're talking about the implications, you talk about the implications because you've gossiped the gospel.

And bring out the implications. That's our task, folks. Pray I can do it. Pray our small groups can do it. Pray the young adults in college and careers and youth group can do it.

And the Sunday school can do it. And whatever other small groups you have, pray you can do it. Don't think, oh my, they've heard the gospel before. I need to hear the gospel. Because it's so easy when I leave here to think it's all about me doing all enough of the right things to actually be pleasing to God.

And I forget that he did everything that had to be done to make me right with himself. And I now belong to him and I need to live out of it. I need to be reminded of that.

That encourages me. Let's stand and pray. Father, thank you that there is good news that comes from you, about you, and what you've done.

[43 : 06] Thank you for Jesus. Thank you, Father, that he is God's son, your son, and fully human, yet one person. That he is our Savior and our Lord.

Thank you that in his life and death and resurrection and ascension and coming again, everything that needed to be done so that we could belong to you, set apart objects of your love and affection and grace, that he did what had to be done and we just receive it.

We just receive it. We cannot add to it or subtract from it or change it. We just receive what you have done for us in Jesus. And we give you thanks and praise that it's not just a declaration of victory, but a declaration of victory that matters to us at the very center of who we are, that you desire to have us belong to you for all eternity, and not just privately and individually, but that you call us, that the church, local churches, are part of your design and plan, that Christians can know other Christians, and that we can encourage each other, and we can be encouraged, and that we can share the gospel with each other and pray for those that we're trying to share.

Father, thank you so much for that, and we ask that you would make us a church that's gospeling the gospel and encourages each other. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior, and all God's people said, Amen.

Amen.