

Gospel according to Christ - Romans 1

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[0 : 00] Good morning. I too welcome you here this morning.

And indeed, it is good to fellowship together. We sang, It Is Well, with my soul.

And my question is, is it well? Is it well with our soul? We had the privilege of attending a counseling seminar taught by John Elias in Peace River.

He's from Mexico, or at least has worked there quite a bit. And he kind of reminded us, we come to church and we greet each other and we have the standard greeting, how are you?

And I am good. I am good. And so often, I am good on the outside, but inside, it is not so good.

[1 : 13] And God, Jesus, wants it to be good in here as well.

And so maybe, instead of asking, how are you? Is it well with your soul? As believers, that would be not traditional, right?

Unconventional. But that would be more proper, that we deeply care for one another. Is it well with your soul? Well, I would like to encourage all of us, if there's something that is not well, Jesus wants to make it well.

And if you're struggling with how to find a path to it, ask someone to help you.

Ask someone. It could be one of the pastors, or it could be a brother or sister here in church.

[2 : 25] But for God, for it to be well in all of us, just like we do. And when we do struggle, there is a longing for it to be different.

So I would encourage, let us be there for one another, and let us take courage and go for help if we need it. It is a good thing.

This morning, we're going to start the book of Romans, and thank you, Cliff, for reading that for us.

As I mentioned earlier, we're going to do a bit of an introduction to the book of Romans, Romans, and I've titled this message, The Gospel of Christ.

The Gospel of Christ. And are we ashamed of the gospel? Is that a fair question?

[3 : 33] Are we ashamed to tell others? Paul said, I am not ashamed. We're going to end with those verses.

I am not ashamed, for it is the power of God unto salvation. It's eternity. And thus, we need to ask ourselves, am I willing?

How often do we get an opportunity to share the gospel? And how often do we take that opportunity?

There can be a difference between the two. Or maybe further, how many of us feel, I don't know enough to share the gospel?

These are real things, right? And yet, as we go through this this morning, the gospel is so simple, a child of God, you can share the gospel with someone else.

[4 : 58] Each and every one of us that is born again has that ability to do so. So, let's look at this book.

I'm going to do a little bit of background to start. The author is Paul. Very clear. And written to Rome, or the Romans, the church in Rome.

And Rome is in what country? Italy. Italy. Italy. And is Rome still there today?

It is. And not only is Rome there, it is the home of our Pope.

I should reword that. Not our Pope, but of the Pope. And so on. It's very much alive.

[6 : 04] Rome. Well, back in Jesus' day, that was the world headquarters for government. The Roman Empire ruling the better chunk of the world at that time.

And so the emperors resided in Rome. Government was in Rome. And Israel was under that influence of that government.

And so that was the situation back then. And so that was the book of Romans. And so that was the book of Romans being written.

Around the year 60. Take or give or take a couple years perhaps. But around the year 60. Or maybe late 50s.

This book would have been written. So less than a year after Jesus ascended to heaven. And just prior to the writing of this letter, a few years, the emperor had banned all Jews from Rome.

[7 : 16] He had cast them out. And with the death of that emperor, they had started to come back in.

The Romans. And the current emperor is Nero, who was just starting his reign. And he was a holy terror later in his reign as he persecuted the church very, very heavily.

In fact, likely more than all the other emperors. Nero. And so they're at the beginning of Nero. And yet the Jews have moved back in.

So it gives us a little background with that. Paul is writing a letter to Rome. And he has never been there.

He's never set foot in Rome. And he feels compelled to write this letter. Now, this letter has often been referred to as the deepest theological letter in scriptures.

[8 : 27] It's such a deep, deep book of theology. And its central theme is the righteousness of God.

The righteousness of God as applied to us who are in the faith. That theme will be throughout this book as we go through it.

Very, very deep. It's a fascinating book. And I've never preached through it before. So it'll be good to do that.

So if Paul has never been there, who brought the gospel there? It's obvious there is a church there.

Quite a thriving church. And we're not told specifically who were missionaries.

[9 : 32] If anyone. The letter was sent by Phoebe? Yeah. Yeah. So, but she may not have been the original missionary.

Many believe that back in the day of Pentecost, Pentecost. So, 30 years prior, or almost, there would have been men and women from Rome in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost.

And remember, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out. And everyone heard the gospel in their own language as the power of God was revealed.

And the birth of the church happened on that day. And how many were baptized? 3,000? What a start.

Day one. 3,000 people joined or were baptized as professing Jesus Christ. And so, very likely, there will have been Rome there and will have taken that back home.

[10 : 48] Now, they may not have been preachers or pastors, yet believers taking the message back. And so, hence, we have a church there.

And Paul has a desire to go visit there and to share, to meet these people. But now he's writing to them.

I thought it would be good to do a little bit of background here. Acts 19. Acts 19. Verse 20 and 21.

And Paul is on his third missionary journey. And he is traveling north up through Ephesus and back down into Greece.

And he is at Corinth. And so, verse 20 says, So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. And when these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the spirit when he had passed through Macedonia and Acacia to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

[12 : 09] And the background of that is that the churches on his third missionary journey have been taking collections because Jerusalem was in a state of drought and need and the churches in Asia are desiring to help.

And Paul has been entrusted with some of this money. And so he's saying, I set my face to go back to Jerusalem for the feast days and to deliver that.

And after that, it's going to be Rome. I long to go to Rome. Let's turn also to Romans 15. Romans 15.

verse 22 to 25. He says, For this reason, I also have been from coming to you, but now, no longer having a place in these parts and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you, for I hope to see you on my journey and to be helped on my way there by you.

If first I may enjoy your company for a while. But now, I'm going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. So we glean a little bit of Paul's heart as he has a desire to go to Rome.

[13 : 42] And did Paul actually end up going to Rome? Yes? No?

He did. He did. And his fourth journey was the end of Acts chapter 27 and 28. And so he goes to Jerusalem after this.

There, they take him a prisoner, put him in jail, actually desiring to kill him. the Roman system protects him.

And several years in jail, he goes, he's sent as a prisoner to Rome to stand trial in Rome. And so Paul, desiring to see the church in Rome, actually ends up there a few years later in chains.

having suffered shipwreck along the way, gone through much stress, and he ends up in Rome, and there he is able to further present the gospel in chains.

[14 : 50] And I think many, a guard had to listen to him about Jesus as he was chained to a guard as the Romans did it.

So that's a little bit of background here. I also find it interesting that Paul ends his letter to Romans in chapter 16, and he mentions Phoebe, who likely took this letter to the Romans, but he sends greetings to a whole list list of saints by name.

And not only by name, he knows what they've been doing, their activities. And so how could Paul have all this inside information having never been there?

And Italy is a long ways away. He didn't have email. He didn't have a jet.

How would he have known? And it is evidence by all the names given that travel among Christians was very prevalent or done a lot.

[16 : 18] Christians traveled a lot from church to church and country to country, and some of it because of persecution. they would have traveled. And so many fellow workers he greets here, and so there's a lot of missionaries going back and forth between the different churches that Paul has planted.

And so we see that back in his day already, difficult as it was, there was much travel. And so I think that is how Paul had the inside on all these people.

and no wonder he had a longing to meet them, a deep desire to see them face to face, these people that he has been hearing about.

And so hence we have the book of Romans, a deep theological book. All right, so we have the first 11 chapters are theory, are theology, and then the last five verse 6, 12 through 16, are practical.

Living it out is a basic, simple breakdown, and all of it promoting the righteousness of God. So let's start in chapter 1 here.

[17 : 37] Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God. So Paul identifies himself in this letter, as the author, and as a servant of Jesus Christ.

Now what is a bond servant? A slave? Was Paul a slave?

He was. Not in the sense that we may look at slavery today, but he had made himself a servant for Christ.

And a bondservant, he is a willing servant. And I think in the sense of slavery, the way we look at slavery today, or at least that I do, is that slaves are bought and sold as property, right?

well, who bought us? Jesus. And am I willing to serve him? We're bought at a price.

[18 : 53] And so, in that sense, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, and an apostle is simply a sent one for God's purposes.

And maybe a missionary would be the best term of that word today. Sent out with the word of God to preach. So he says, I'm called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.

And let's turn to Acts 9, where that happened. Just read that portion, just to get refreshed. Acts 9. We'll start in verse 1.

And we have Saul starting out, and Paul that comes out. Conversion of heart and of name.

Verse 1, then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the way, whether men or women, bring them bound to Jerusalem.

[20 : 20] And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. And then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he said, who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.

And so he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what do you want me to do? And then the Lord said to him, arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.

So Saul, on his way to Damascus, with evil intentions of working against the way or the church, is met by the Lord himself.

And here is the turning point for this man. And as we jump down to verse 10, he says, now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, Ananias.

[21 : 34] And to him the Lord said in a vision, Ananias, and he said, here I am, Lord. So the Lord said to him, arise and go to the street called Straight, and acquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.

And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him so that he might receive his sight. And then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem.

And here he is, here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name. But the Lord said to him, go, for he is a chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. Here is the calling of Saul to become the apostle of God to the Gentiles, to kings, and to the Jews.

And so Saul, who then was named Paul, did not only come before those of lowly status, but he presented to the gospel to kings.

[23 : 13] And in Acts, we see that happen both in Israel and in Rome, where he went in chains, and he was able to witness before authorities.

And so the calling is upon him as an apostle, directly from the Lord Jesus himself. Why was Paul chosen and not the twelve?

the team was complete, right? And when Judas Iscariot hanged himself, they cast lots and had another man replace Judas, so they had their team complete.

So why did God choose a thirteenth man to go to the Gentiles? Because he can?

That's a good answer. Very well educated. Saul of Tarsus, of the province of Cilicia, he was educated, he was a born Roman citizen, and he was educated in the law, or in the law of the Jews, under the feet of Gamaliel, a Pharisee, and so he was well versed in scripture, in fact, the first five books would have been in here, in his life.

[24 : 56] He understood the Jews to the T. He was right there. And unlike the tax collectors and the fishermen, who were uneducated, whom God used in other areas, Paul was educated.

And God used him to write the majority of the New Testament. And Romans is his first book in our canon. And so the depth of theology came through the handwriting of Paul as God led him.

to send to the Gentiles. So that's the only answer I have, why God used another man to send to the Gentiles. All right, so that's a little bit about Paul.

And so he's separated to the gospel of God, and that's our theme this morning as well, that the gospel of Christ.

And he says in verse 2, this gospel which he promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. So the Old Testament spoke of the gospel.

[26 : 12] It was promised. And now Paul is preaching it as he has received instructions from Jesus.

So he is an apostle to the Holy Scriptures. And then in verse 3 he says regarding the Holy Scriptures, They're concerning his son Jesus, Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead.

So why is it important that the gospel, the center figure, is his son, Jesus Christ, who was born of the seed of David?

Why did Paul mention that? And perhaps more for the Jews' sake, the Messiah had to come through the lineage of King David.

That was written in Scripture in the Old Testament. They would look for the Savior as a descendant from King David. And Jesus Christ, born of Mary, was a descendant of David.

[27 : 43] So that is mentioned here, I think, for that purpose. And not only that, he is the Son of God. The Son of God.

Many Jews today, and many other people, Gentiles, look at Jesus Christ, not as a son, but as a good man, and perhaps a prophet.

But the Son of God? We stop short. Many, many religious groups will know that Jesus is the Son of God.

Paul comes right out. this is our Messiah. God's Son. And we know in Scripture that to test the spirits, to have clarity means to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God.

If we don't have that clear, then we're likely not in the faith. So very, very important aspect of the Gospel.

[29 : 02] And also in verse 4, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

And so Jesus, not only in his walk on earth, did he raise up some dead, a number of situations.

Lazarus is maybe one of the more known ones. But not only did he do that to prove where he came from, he laid down his life and he took it again.

He laid down his life on the cross and he came out of the grave before the stone was rolled away.

He was out of there. And he proved himself to be the Son of God with power, with power.

[30 : 08] And this is the power that you and me have in Christ. As we look forward to the resurrection as well.

That power exists. So this is the heart of the Gospel. It is so simple. It is so simple.

It's all about Jesus Christ. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. 1 Corinthians 15, 1-4.

1 Corinthians 15, 1-4. Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you, first of all, that which I also received. And here is the gospel in one and a half verses. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that he was buried and that he rose again on the third day according to the scriptures.

[31 : 50] The gospel. Jesus died for me, he was buried and he rose again. Can we share that with others?

I think we can. I think as God gives us opportunity, we can share that. it's truth. And if you have experienced that, then it's living in your heart.

And you can speak from your heart, you can share this without even opening your Bible. That Jesus died for me and he was buried and rose again.

And as God leads you, you probably will open your Bible and share more. But, it's that simple and we start with that kind of simplicity to understand who Jesus is.

So I, I take this chapter one as an encouragement for myself that God has enabled me to share.

[33 : 14] And for each one of us, he has enabled us to share the gospel, the good news. To, to Romans one and, and, uh, move along here to, to wrap up.

So Paul, Paul has given us his purpose, his calling, and, and the purpose to share the gospel. he explains the gospel. And, uh, and so he's identifying all of this to the church in Rome.

And, um, and then he goes on in, in verses, uh, seven through 14, just to, um, remind them he has heard about them.

He's heard much about them. He's heard about their good works. Uh, their, they have a reputation already. And so let's just skim through them. I'll just read them. Uh, to all who are in Rome, in verse seven, beloved of God, called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. for God is my witness with my spirit in the gospel of his son that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making requests if by some means now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.

[34 : 52] For I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift so that you may be established and that is that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Now, I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you but was hindered until now that I might have some fruit among you also just as among the other Gentiles.

I am a debtor both to Greeks and barbarians both to wise and to unwise so as much as is in me I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

So it tells us a little bit of what Paul has been hearing and back Paul's heart is for them he says I pray for you without ceasing every day in my prayers I long fervently to come to you and so that connection is there and he makes mention of that.

but then verse 16 and 17 kind of brings us to our focal point for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes for the Jew first and also for the Greek for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written the just shall live by faith.

[36 : 30] Paul exposes his heart I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ why not?

I am convinced I am convinced it is the power of God unto salvation I am convinced has given us the power to lead others to the Lord and Paul is confident with that and he says I am not ashamed I will go I will go where God leads me be it before kings or before the Gentiles I will go are we that convinced that we have the power of God to share with others Paul says I am called and he had a special calling to go among the

Gentiles and he would suffer much for God but I believe God is challenging us are we willing to go where he sends us and maybe to a neighboring village or right here or to Bolivia or to some other country am I open to go and I think Paul is bringing that out I am sold out for God I am a bond servant and I am equipped with the power of God and when we catch that vision and that truth there is no stopping us there is no stopping the gospel praise the

Lord for that he says I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes for the Jew first and also for the Greek for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written the just shall live by faith the gospel of Christ contains the righteousness of God contains the righteousness of God from faith to faith and as we look at that righteousness a couple of quick thoughts the righteousness of God always does what is right the gospel contains that always does what is right God is never unfair he's never wrong he's never dishonest this is the righteousness of God as applied to us the righteousness of God justifies the sinner as a sinner comes to him by faith he declares us and Paul spends much time in the book of Romans explaining that and we will be visiting a lot of that the righteousness of God can declare the sinner righteous and thirdly the righteousness of God provides a perfect standing for those in the faith and we go from a sinner to a saint our standing in Christ and only the righteousness of God can bring that about it's the power of God when when we started out in ministry

I did not have the conviction that I do today in my heart of the fullness of that power and I trust in 10 years further or 20 years further it will keep on deepening but just to go to Bolivia I felt weak unprepared and unqualified and I really wrestled with that why had God chosen us to go and God through those years revealed to me that it's not about me or my ability to understand it is that he has given us the power of God and the confidence that we represent

[42 : 35] God with his word here on earth and God will use that word to convict to draw and to convert and this is this is where God wants us to realize we have that kind of power we do not need to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ in fact Jesus says whoever is ashamed of me today when I come in my glory with my holy angels I will also be ashamed of him the words of Christ and so thus thus we are challenged here I am God I want to close with a short illustration it's from several hundred years ago in Europe and it says it's in the old

English so bear with me with that it says Hugh Latimer once preached before King Henry the eighth Henry was so greatly displeased by the boldness in the sermon that he ordered Latimer to preach again the following Sunday and to apologize for his message so we have the king of the country demanding this preacher to re-preach and to apologize the next Sunday after reading his text he thus began his sermon Hugh Latimer does thou know before whom thou are this day to speak to the high and mighty monarch his most excellent majesty who can take away thy life if thou offendest therefore take heed that thou speakest not a word that may displease but then consider well

Hugh does thou not know from whence thou comest upon whose message thou art sent even by the great and mighty God who is all present and who beholdeth all the ways and who is able to cast thy soul into hell therefore take care that thou deliverest thy message faithfully he then preached the same sermon he had preached the last Sunday with considerable more energy you know he was standing before a physical king but he was standing even more so before his heavenly king and he says I cannot but obey my heavenly king may God bless you let's pray God we we stand before your presence in awe of your power of salvation the gospel the good news and that

Jesus Christ died for us and Lord as we have tasted the rewards of salvation may we too be bond servants like Paul willing to go willing to serve where you lead us God Father my prayer is this morning if there is anyone present that does not have this clear in their heart whether it is well with my soul may you gently lead them bring them to a point of surrender that they too can experience the may your will be done may your power be displayed in Jesus name amen