

Why does the church need to hear the Gospel?

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[0 : 00] We're going to read the first sort of 17 verses. We'll concentrate on those this morning. So Romans chapter 1, beginning at verse 1, now hear God's Word.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of 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, through whom we have received grace and apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his namesake among the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, to all those in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his saints.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, 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 someone, 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.

[1 : 52] I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, 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.

I am under obligation, both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish, so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

Well, may God... Romans chapter 1. In many ways it begins with a question, why does the church need to hear the gospel?

Isn't the gospel something that the church has to take out into the world? It was Vance Havner who said, you know, that people don't come to church to hear the gospel, the church take the gospel out into the world.

[3 : 11] Now there's a certain amount of truth in that. Paul, however, says, no, the church does actually need to hear the gospel. But it does raise a question, and it's this. Why does the church need to hear the gospel when the church can only exist if it has already heard the gospel?

The only way you can have a church is if people have heard the gospel, repented, believed, followed Christ. Why then does the church need to hear the gospel?

You know, the church is full of people who have hopefully experienced the power of the gospel within their own life. You know, they know what it feels like, they know what it looks like, they know how it turns up and invades almost every compartment of our life.

We can see where the gospel has been at work within us. Well, Paul says, you know, there are several reasons. There are a few here that come to the forefront in Romans chapter 1.

The first is this, that only the gospel can create a people and make them obedient to God. Only the gospel can create a people and make them obedient to God.

[4 : 29] What does that mean? Well, that means in the church, are everyone obedient to God? Is everyone obedient to God? Well, no. Number one, that's why you need to hear the gospel.

Because the gospel is the power of God that causes you to live obedient lives before him. So we don't just need to hear it once, but we need to hear it all the time.

It's the only thing that can promote obedience in our life before God. Secondly, there are a few issues here in Rome.

Yeah, there's some Christians not really being, well, all that Christian. You know, and Paul says, you know, I might have to tread on a few toes here. Well, how does he tread on a few toes?

Well, he does it again with the gospel. Why? Because the gospel is the only thing that can sort out people not being the way that they should be between each other.

[5 : 30] Summed up in the first two commandments, love God and love your neighbor. Well, how can those two be fulfilled? Well, they can only be fulfilled through the power of the gospel. That's why the church needs to continually hear the gospel.

not because you need to be informed all over again to take it out. You know, that might be true. You might need to hear and understand the gospel so that you proclaim it faithfully.

But you also need to hear it so that you can live faithfully before God. But let's not overlook that fact. You are to know and tell the gospel.

As a Christian, you are to know and tell the gospel. That's one of the things that makes you, you know, who you are in many ways.

The gospel has made you who you are, and now with that new creation, you are to take that saving message to others. Now, the most famous verse in Romans, perhaps the whole of Romans, perhaps more so in Romans chapter one, is that you're not to be ashamed of the gospel.

[6 : 41] But are you ashamed of the gospel? I mean, that's a challenging statement, isn't it? You know, I'm not ashamed of it. Well, why would you be ashamed? If it is the power of God, why would you be ashamed?

Well, the only way to not be ashamed of the gospel is to know it. is to really know it. And then when you know it, you're not ashamed, and when you're not ashamed, you will then tell it.

Because you're not embarrassed to tell it. You're not sort of, you know, oops, the gospel's come up, let me hide my head for a few moments. No. When you know the gospel, you will not be ashamed of the gospel, and then you will tell the gospel to people who don't know it.

Here's another thing to think about with the gospel. How many of you only see the gospel in terms of what it saves you from? It saves me from death.

It saves me from hell. It saves me from judgment. It's interesting how Paul doesn't mention any single one of those in Romans 1 when he explains the power of the gospel.

[7 : 52] In other words, if your gospel starts with you and what you're saved from, you've not understood the gospel. The gospel starts with what you're saved for, not what you're saved from.

It does get to that. It does get to the fact that you're saved from eternal damnation. You know, it does go there, but you need to understand that the gospel tells you what you're saved for.

Do you know the answer to that? The answer is that you're saved for obedient living before God.

That's what Paul says. To bring about the obedience of faith, verse 5. You are saved to live obediently before God.

That's why God saved you. Ah, you were thinking he wanted to get you out of hell. No, he does get you out of hell. You were thinking he wanted to spare you from the judgment. No, he does do that.

[8 : 54] But what God wants more than anything else is to save you in order that you become obedient to his will and purpose. That you become sons, and by becoming sons, become just like Jesus, who did not do his own will, but did the will of the Father.

Total obedience. That's what you are saved for. So, Paul says, verse 5, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among the nations.

And how is he going to do that? Well, he says, I want to come to you and preach the gospel. That's the only way he can bring about the obedience of faith. So, let's start with a couple of things. Number one, the gospel is centered, on God, not on man.

If you want to find out why Paul wrote Romans, you have to wait until you get to the end of the book. I don't know why he does that. You know, why don't I put it at the beginning and make it simple for all of us?

No, he waits until Romans 15, and he says, look, look, I preach the gospel, not because you need saving, but because God deserves to be worshipped.

[10 : 11] That's why I preach the gospel. Now, you getting saved is a benefit that comes to you, but the motivation here is his namesake.

For his namesake. God is at the center of his very own gospel. Jesus Christ is at the center of his gospel. The son, dead, crucified, dead, buried, resurrected from death, lives now forevermore as Lord and as Savior.

What does that mean? Well, it means that he's king of everyone. It means that now we all live under the lordship of Christ. Now, whether you're a Christian or not, it doesn't matter.

Jesus is in charge. The gospel is effectively an only God-centered. Man benefits by God-centered gospel.

Because everything that God does is for you. Remember God, remember what Irenaeus said a couple of weeks ago? Well, more than a couple of weeks ago. God doesn't need you. He doesn't need anything.

[11 : 23] And so for God to do anything concerning you, it's not because he needs it. It's because you need it. So God-centered gospel is in your best interest.

Because God doesn't need anything. And therefore, everything he does, not to benefit him, but to benefit you. That's the gospel that Paul is preaching here.

And so this is what he's saying in summary. Salvation is seen in people who live obedient lives. Are you obedient to God? Then you're saved.

Salvation is seen in people who live obedient lives. Why? Because that's the whole purpose of salvation. That's the whole purpose of what the gospel brings about. It is to make you obedient before God.

It is to bring about the obedience of faith in all nations. Romans 1, Romans 16. That's the whole reason the gospel goes out into the world. To make people obedient to him.

[12 : 33] Why? Well, it should be fairly obvious. Because we're not. Even in the church, we struggle with this. Hence why we need to hear the gospel all over again. We struggle to be obedient to God.

I mean, we really struggle sometimes to be obedient to God. The easy things, yeah, we concentrate on those things. Some of the hard things, well, you know, maybe tomorrow.

No, the gospel is the only thing that can bring about obedience in your life. You stay away from the gospel, you're going to end up drifting into acts of disobedience.

Thoughts first, feelings second, or a mixture of the two. And then the acts follow. You know, so the gospel has to be central.

Why? Because it's the only thing that keeps us in the way that Jesus says that we have to follow. I am the way, the truth, and the life. Okay? You can say, I'd show you the way. He says, I am the way.

[13 : 36] The gospel is Jesus-centered, it's God-centered. Stay in the gospel, in the power of the gospel to keep you on track with God. Here's the other thing.

Because the church is the only witness of God on earth, it's not the only one, but it is the one where God places himself most predominantly. You better obey. Why?

What's at stake? Well, his name's sake. Verse 5 is its sake. God's very character is at stake. People judge God by how they look at the church.

People make up their mind about God. Primarily. You know, out of guesswork. But when they're a little bit more sort of searching, where do they look first?

The Bible? No. They look at the church. Why don't they want to look at the Bible? Well, I think quite clearly, because the Bible will make a clear distinction between what is obedient living and what is not obedient living.

[14 : 43] And now you begin to see that not all sheep are sheep. So, the church needs to be obedient to God. It needs to be the obedience of faith.

Why? For his name's sake. What then does this phrase mean? The obedience of faith? It's kind of a strange phrase, isn't it? The obedience of faith.

What is Paul referring to? Well, believe it or not, it's easy enough to understand. Paul says in Romans 10 that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. And the word of God is the power of God, the gospel.

And that faith brings about obedience. In other words, is it disobedient to not obey the gospel? You know, are you disobeying God when you don't obey the gospel?

Well, Paul's to Thessalonians, yeah. You can disobey the gospel. You know, let children make up their own mind. Well, are you disobeying God by letting children make up their own mind?

[15 : 45] Yeah, absolutely. That's why we have Sunday school. Why? Because their minds need to be made up. If we don't do it, somebody else is going to. Whether it be their own sinful heart, or it be someone else in the world, or it's going to be us, proclaiming the gospel.

It's as simple as that. It really is that simple. So, you can obey God without faith, and if you have faith in God, all faith leads to obedience in God.

That's the obedience of faith. It's challenging, isn't it, to think that it really is both that simple, and yet that challenging. That you are saved to live by faith.

And to live by faith is to live obedient lives. What are we obedient to? Well, we're obedient to the fact that Jesus died for our sins.

We're obedient to the fact that he was crucified for us. We're obedient to the fact that he did die. We're obedient to the fact that we serve a resurrected Lord.

[16 : 51] This is why we're not ashamed, because we know all these things to be true by faith. And then Paul goes on to say something else.

You're obedient by speaking the gospel to others. How so? Well, if you are saved by the power of the gospel, and that is to bring about the obedience of faith, and one of the issues of being obedient is being obedient to the Son of God, what did the Son of God say?

What was the Great Commission about? It was to go out and preach the gospel to all nations, you know, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and to teach them to obey all that I have taught, including go out to all nations, teaching others to obey all that I have taught.

In other words, we haven't actually obeyed everything that Jesus taught if we forget that that includes the Great Commission itself.

So salvation is seen in people who speak the gospel to others. That's what Paul was saying. Because from the heart, you have become obedient. Why? Because the power of God in the gospel of God has been at work in your life.

[18 : 11] So saved people live obedient lives. And saved people speak the gospel to others. That's what he's saying. That's why he wants to come to Rome. That's why he's writing this letter to the Roman church, or to the church at Rome, rather.

Why? Because that's what obedience looks like. I want to tell you the gospel. The next thing I think which is encouraging is the act of encouragement itself.

In verse 12, Paul says, look with me, well, verse 11, for I long to see you that I may impart you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.

That is, we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. You know, I think we all need encouragement.

I think we all need a lot more encouragement than what we get. But I think we all need a lot more encouragement of the type of encouragement that Paul is speaking of here. Is it a pat on the back?

[19 : 16] No. The type of encouragement here could actually be a slap across the hand. Why? Well, think about it this way. If Paul wants to come to encourage each other in their faith and be mutually encouraged, what is faith?

Well, it's the obedience to God. And what Paul is saying is this, look, as you have been saved by the power of God yourself to live obedient lives, encourage others to live obedient lives in the faith.

And how many of us actually do that? You know, come alongside one another and say, not the type of encouragement to say, it'll be okay and you spill out this mantra, everything will be all right, everything will be all right, everything will be all right.

As if to say that if you say it enough, you can sort of hypnotize yourself into a convincing position. That's not the type of encouragement Paul is speaking about here. The type of encouragement, the reason why he wants to come is saying, look, you're not walking in line with Jesus.

Come on. Come on, let's get back in step with Jesus. Let's really follow him. Let's live obedient lives.

[20 : 30] How much of that encouragement happens in the church? Answer, not a lot. More people turn a blind eye. Well, I don't want to get involved. That's their personal life.

It's not their personal life. You're a body. That kind of personal position, where this person does what this person does and that person has no place in the church of God.

You know, James says, if you see your brother erring, if you see your sister sinning, go after them and bring them back. Why? Well, Paul says, Romans 1, then you're encouraging one another in your faith.

you're encouraging one another to obedient living. But how much of that type of encouragement happens? You know, I've been in the church long enough now.

You know, within ministry for 17 years, first two part-time, granted, bivocational, you know, although, you know, I still, you know, spoke the gospel to those who I was on a building site with.

[21 : 38] But nevertheless, you know, in the church itself. So, I've experienced quite a lot. And one of the things that I've experienced is Christians will cover up other people, other Christian sins. Christians will even tell another Christian that they're not committing a sin.

You have become teachers and greater judgment awaits the teachers. We've got to be careful about what we say.

We have to know and tell the gospel. Why? Because if we don't, we're going to undermine it with all these other type of things. If we don't know the gospel well enough, we will call things that are sins as not sins.

And they clearly are. How many people in the church are just saying, I'm not going to pick on anyone or look, you know, I'm not stupid.

I've been around a bit. And so, you know, I see people who, you know, it's none of your business. Actually, it's all of my business. Because God, unfortunately, has put me in this position, whether I like it or not.

[22 : 45] And I am obligated, just like Paul's obligated, to tell you the gospel. Why? Because I have the same problems you have. I struggle to be obedient to God.

And I need you to put me right as much as I need to encourage you in the gospel. So, do we encourage one another? Well, it's a challenge, isn't it?

You need to really think about whether or not you're challenging one another, encouraging one another, rather, in the gospel, in your faith, to obedience and good works.

What does salvation look like? Well, salvation looks like one brother coming alongside another brother or one sister coming alongside another sister saying, look, let's walk together as we follow Jesus because on our own we seem to be making a mess of it.

Let's encourage one another to obey God in every single step. Let's do that. Let's make the commitment to do that now. The next thing is eagerness.

[23 : 50] Paul is really eager, verse 15, to come and preach the gospel to those who are in Rome. And he's eager for all the reasons that I've just mentioned. He wants to bring about the obedience of faith in them.

He also wants to see lives that are changed through that way. He himself, verse 12, wants their encouragement as well. He wants the mutual encouragement that comes from sharing your faith with each other.

But he also knows primarily that it's for his name's sake. What he does glorifies God. The motivation that he has, the eagerness that he has, is for, verse 5, his name's sake.

Everything is about the glory of God. Why? Because it's about the work of God. Why? Because it is God-centered. Yeah, Paul's not ashamed. Why? Because he's understood.

He has felt the gospel at every level. He's thought the gospel through. It doesn't just make sense. It is powerful.

[24 : 53] powerful to change the lives of people, even the lives of Christians continually, to become more like Christ.

So, Paul says, I'm not ashamed. I'm not ashamed. It is the power of God for salvation, and in it, God's righteousness is revealed.

Jesus is Lord, resurrected from the dead, and everyone who believes in this gospel shall be saved. So, I ask the question, quite a simple question, is, why would Paul be ashamed of that type of message that can create such a transformation in people's lives?

Why would you be ashamed of it? I think, I think, it may be a little difficult, but, you know, we think that, to preach the cross of Christ is hard today.

Listen, it was much harder in the day of Paul. Why? Because everyone knew that curse was everyone who hung on a tree. Jesus hung on a tree. It was the crucifixion.

[26 : 03] I can, you can understand how, well, I'm ashamed of that message. Why? Because people are going to have a hard time appreciating that that's how God saves people. How does God save people?

Well, believe it or not, he sent his son to die on the cross and to rise from the dead. Yeah. Yeah, it might have been more palatable if Jesus died in another way and then rose.

Would we be ashamed of that? Well, probably not. It's the very fact that we are proclaiming to someone that their sins are forgiven by the very fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross. but here's the reason not to be ashamed.

It is the only power, it is the only message that can save. So don't be ashamed of it. Rather, take hold of it and realize that it is the power of God that saved you and it is the same power of God that can save other people that you speak to.

So Paul says, look, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Why? Because it's the power of God unto salvation. That's why. For everyone who believes and in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed.

[27 : 22] You know, when you look at the cross, just looking at the cross with Jesus still on it, he's not on it, is he? But you look at the cross, you look at the crucifixion, it doesn't mean anything.

You need to, you need the gospel to understand the meaning of the cross. The gospel is explaining what the cross is about. And with that meaning, you are no longer ashamed.

You see, without the meaning of the cross, it doesn't make any sense. Without the gospel, it doesn't make any sense. Without the resurrection, you wouldn't even have it. So, don't be ashamed of the gospel.

It is the power of God. So, here's the exhortation as we close. Number one, the work of God is the gospel, and salvation is seen in people who live obedient lives.

Having faith in the message of the gospel is obedience to God. to know and tell the gospel is to be obedient to God.

[28 : 34] Salvation will look like in your life obedience to God, but salvation will always turn up in your life as in identifying Mark, the fingerprints of salvation, as you telling the gospel to other people.

But then Paul says there's another thing, remember? Salvation also looks like encouraging one another to obey God. That's salvation. Notice.

Notice what's not there. We don't spend enough time reading scripture noticing what's not there. We ought to spend a lot more time doing that. Why? Here's why. Because you've all got your own mind made up about what the gospel is.

And so often you read what's there, but you'll notice that you read this and not once as he said what you're saved from. It's implied you're saved from disobedient living, but he puts it in the positive.

You're saved for. You're saved for God. You're saved for obedient living. You're saved to tell the gospel. You're saved to encourage one another to live obedient lives before God.

[29 : 46] You're saved for a lot of things. Here's the final thought. As you make your way through Romans, Paul says, one of my favorite verses in the whole book of Romans, in Romans 6.

Paul says this, you can look back on your life, even your Christian life, and there are things that you're ashamed of. you look back on them, you don't want anybody to find out about them.

You don't want anybody to know about them. And the shame that comes upon you when they do is unbearable. And there's a whole number of things, both in your life and in my life, I'm sure, that we are ashamed of.

You know, we look back on them and we feel ashamed. So let me ask you the question, all those things, do you want to go and tell people those things?

I want you to go and tell people all the things that you're ashamed of. There's just no way you're going to get me to do that. No, guess what?

[31 : 03] I'm not going to do it either. What's the point? Here's the point. Then don't be ashamed of the gospel that saved you from all those things. Okay?

Don't be ashamed of the gospel that saved you from all of those things. Amen.