

# THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING

## *“What is the Gospel?”*

Romans Series  
PBC 2025

**Text:** Romans 1:1-7; Psalm 103:10-12

**Romans 1:1–7** *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> 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, <sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, <sup>7</sup> 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.*

**Psalm 103:10–12** *He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

### **Introduction:**

When we started our journey through Romans a few weeks ago, we observed that Paul was motivated by three significant purposes that shape the contours of this remarkable letter.

- 1. Theological Purpose:** Paul wanted them to understand the magnitude of the Gospel he was called to preach so that it would bear rich spiritual fruit in them (1:13; 15:15-21).
- 2. Missiological Purpose** – Paul wanted them to partner with him in spreading the gospel to the nations (1:14-15; 15:22-24).

**3. Pastoral Purpose:** Paul wanted them to showcase the gospel's powerful transforming effect as a church (corporately – 15:5-7) and in their individual lives (individually – 12:1-2).

Ray Ortlund wrote a brief book about the gospel, *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ*, in which he powerfully observed: ***“Gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture.”*** In other words, when a church rightly understands and celebrates the truth of the gospel, it will experience and display a culture of grace that flows from the gospel and draws people to experience the beauty of Christ in the gospel.

This is Paul’s pastoral purpose for the church in Rome—and for our church as well! In other words, those who have experienced God's love (1:7), received salvation from Him (1:6), and enjoy the peace that comes from God's grace (1:7) should cultivate a strong culture of gospel grace among themselves.

NOTE: Gospel grace without gospel truth produces theological fragility, and gospel truth without gospel grace produces hypocrisy. However, when gospel grace is married to gospel doctrine, it creates a powerful gospel culture that draws lost men to Christ and renews strength in weary Christians!

This is why Paul wrote such a lengthy introduction to Romans. He wants them to understand that when God saved him, He called Paul to continue the mission initially entrusted to God’s Servant in Isaiah 49:6—to bring the light of God’s salvation to the Gentiles. In light of this mission, Paul was appointed the Apostle to the Gentiles and consecrated for the proclamation of the gospel through which God intends to save the world!

If we want to be a church characterized by a culture of gospel grace and filled with individuals who, like Paul, are committed to proclaiming that gospel, ***we must truly understand the gospel Paul unpacks in Romans.*** That unpacking starts in the introductory verses before us this morning.

## **I. The Gospel's Source and Character – God's Good News (1:1)**

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,*

- Paul opens his letter by mentioning two key themes he intends to unfold in the rest of the letter: God (153x) and the Gospel (12x).
- Romans is primarily a book about God—how He acts in salvation, how His justice is upheld, how the Law was fulfilled, how His mercy is granted, how His wrath has been satisfied, how His righteousness is received, how His purposes unfold in human history, and how His people are to worship and serve Him.
- God accomplishes all of this through the gospel!

### ***A. The Source of the Gospel***

- In this letter, Paul describes the gospel in various ways: “the gospel” (1:15, 16; 2:16; 11:28; 15:20), “the gospel of His Son” (1:9), “my gospel” (2:16; 16:25), and “the gospel of Christ” (15:19). However, on two occasions, he refers to it as “***the gospel of God***” (1:1; 15:16).
- Paul isn't just saying that the gospel is about God; rather, he highlights God as the source and originator of the gospel!
- This message (gospel) is neither the result of human speculation nor a reflection of human religion. It is a personal revelation from God regarding ***His intervention*** to save sinners from the consequences of His wrath, deliver them from the bondage of sin, and restore what sin ruined in and around them!

- Whatever the gospel is and whatever it achieves has been designed by God Himself! Paul has been set apart and commissioned to proclaim the gospel message to the nations!
- So, what kind of message is this gospel from God?

## ***B. The Character of the Gospel (10:15)***

*And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach **the good news!**”*

- The term Paul used in this remarkable text is “euangelizomenon” – translated in our text as “the good news.”
- This term is one of Paul’s favorite terms for the gospel—of the 76 times it occurs in the NT, 60 are by Paul!
- This term had a formal meaning in Romans, drawing on the world of Paul’s day and the world of the Old Testament.
- When Caesar wanted to announce great news intended for his people’s happiness, well-being, or good fortune, that news was referred to as a “euangelion” – a gospel.
- When the OT writers used this term, they did so to proclaim the joyous tidings and glorious news that **God was coming to act or intervene in some way to rescue or benefit His people.** Here are three key examples from Isaiah’s prophecy about Christ:

**Isaiah 40:9–11** *Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”* <sup>10</sup> *Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.* <sup>11</sup> *He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.*

**Isaiah 52:7–10** *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”* <sup>8</sup> *The voice of your watchmen—they lift*

*up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. <sup>9</sup> Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people and redeemed Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

***Isaiah 61:1–3*** *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because **the LORD has anointed me to bring good news** to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; <sup>3</sup> to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.*

- The gospel is the good news that God is sending a champion to save the world for His glory! God sent this champion/messiah to reverse an ancient curse, redeem an ancient race, remove an ancient enemy, and restore all that sin ruined.
- The gospel is how God redeems and restores fallen people to the likeness of His Son for the praise of His glory!
- This fantastic news seems almost too good to be true! It is unlike anything we have ever heard from God before! How do we know we can believe news this good?

## **II. The Gospel's Witnesses – Promised in the Old Testament (1:2)**

*which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,*

- Paul reminds his readers that God made promises about this gospel through His prophets, which are found in Israel's holy writings (OT).
- In other words, this good news is not new! The gospel Paul wants to bring to Rome fulfills the major promises God made to Adam and Eve (Gen 3:15), Noah (Gen 9), Abraham (Gen 15, 22), and David (2 Samuel 7).
- God promised Eve a Son who would crush the head of the serpent. He promised Noah that he would never again destroy humanity from

the face of the earth as a judgment for their sins. He promised Abraham that his heirs would inherit the earth and that through his seed, the nations would be blessed. He promised David a descendant who would rule an eternal kingdom set up on earth by God Himself.

- The gospel of God is the joyful announcement that the arrival of Jesus Christ changes everything!!
- And that is where Paul goes next – to the identity of this champion!

### **III. The Gospel's Content – Centered on Jesus (1:3-4)**

*concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> 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,*

- Paul withholds the name of this champion until the end of the paragraph because he wants us to understand who he is and the place he occupies in God's plan to save the world for His glory!
- Paul states that the gospel concerns ***“the Son of him”*** (literal expression – note the definite article). In other words, Paul wants you to understand that this champion is a particular individual. He is the unique, one-of-a-kind Son who has a distinct relationship with two important parties: David and God.

#### ***A. He was made of the Seed of David at His incarnation.***

- Jesus fulfilled God's promise to Adam, Abraham, and David that He would send a Son who, as a new and better Adam, would reverse the curse, redeem the race, remove the enemy, and restore and re-establish the kingdom of Eden that was ruined by the first Adam's sin!
- At his incarnation, the second member of the Trinity was born into the former age (old creation), which was marred by sin, dominated by the curse, ruled by Satan, and captive to death. This

realm is described here “*according to the realm of the flesh*” (as opposed to referring to Jesus’ human nature).

- In this view, the new realm (Rom 5:1-2) can be described as the new creation, empowered by the Holy Spirit and initiated by Christ at His resurrection.
- As the promised Son of David, Jesus served as the second Adam, fulfilling the Law perfectly and willingly paying the penalty for sin as the Lamb prepared by God to take away the sins of the world through His violent death on the cross as our substitute!
- In other words, at His incarnation, Jesus lived and died in the old realm of the flesh, dominated by sin and ruled by death. However, when He rose from the dead, Jesus inaugurated a new realm defined by grace and characterized by the abundant life from the Holy Spirit! This is why Paul uses the phrase “new creation” to describe us and our new status in an “*all things have become new*” age (2 Cor. 5:17).

***B. He was appointed/designated the Son of God in Power at His resurrection as the God-Man, Jesus of Nazareth.***

- Paul refers to Jesus as the “Son of God” four other times in his letters (2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13; and 1 Thess 1:10). ***He employs this term as a royal title for Jesus, based on Psalm 2:7!***
- At his first coming, Jesus came in humility as a member of the human race and as the second Adam. After the resurrection, Jesus was exalted to the former glory that was His as the second member of the Trinity – but with three significant differences:
  1. He would forever be embodied as Jesus of Nazareth, the God-Man in a glorified body.

2. When the Holy Spirit raised Him at His resurrection, He was formally appointed to the Messianic Kingship promised by His Father in Psalm 2! Jesus received the kingship, throne, and a people that God promised the Son of Man in Daniel 7—and one day, He will establish that kingdom on earth! Until that day arrives, Jesus currently occupies that kingly role as the God-Man who atoned for sin, paid the penalty for sin, and defeated the power of sin and death at His resurrection!
3. As the appointed Son of God in power, He inaugurated a new and better age—the age of grace and the Spirit of holiness—that will culminate in His establishment of a glorious, eternal kingdom on earth, marked by righteousness, flavored with peace, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and made accessible by grace! In other words, Jesus' resurrection marked the moment of His exaltation to power and signaled the start of the New Age referred to in Psalm 2, Acts 13:33, and Philippians 2:9-11.

***C. He was made the Head of a Community –Jesus Christ Our Lord***

- And now Paul reveals the identity of the Messiah – Jesus!
- As the Royal Messiah, Jesus has a community of people who belong to him and acknowledge him as their Lord and Savior.
- While the Roman Empire recognized Caesar as its lord and savior, believers gave their allegiance and loyalty to a very different Lord and Savior: Jesus Christ!
- They receive something from him that is vastly different from what Caesar gave his subjects. First, they are deeply loved by God; second, they receive immeasurable grace from God; and finally, they enjoy complete peace (shalom) from Jesus Christ, our Lord!
- So, how do pagan people enter this new realm ruled by Christ?

#### **IV. The Gospel's Demand – to bring about the obedience of faith (1:5a)**

*through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith*

- Theologians and commentators are divided as to what exactly Paul means when he describes the demand the gospel places on people as “the obedience of faith.”
- Some theologians believe that Paul means the gospel calls for a faith that produces an obedient life.
- Others claim the gospel calls for a specific type of obedience—wholehearted, single-minded, and fully trusting faith.
- There is no question that genuine faith produces a life of ongoing obedience – this is what Paul calls for in Romans 6 and 12!
- However, I think Paul has something different in mind when he describes his mission as bringing Gentiles to obedience (also in 16:26).
- I believe that the obedience God requires of sinners for salvation is faith alone, apart from any human works of righteousness. This kind of faith involves turning (repenting) from sin and idolatry to worship and serve the true and living God as we eagerly await the coming of His Son from Heaven! (1 Thess 9:9-10).
- The biblical evidence supporting this view is that God commands people everywhere to repent of their sins and believe in the man He has appointed to judge the world righteously, whom He has validated by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31)!
- Further evidence is that God condemns people to eternal punishment in hell for not obeying the gospel and repenting and believing (Romans 10:16-21; 2 Thess 1:8).
- What proof is there that this kind of faith exists in a person? It produces a life of obedience!
- Are there any people on this planet who have achieved this? Even Israel, God’s chosen nation, did not pursue this kind of obedience.

They worked diligently to attain the righteousness that comes from obeying the Law! Paul, could you point us to any individuals who have received righteousness from God in this way—by faith alone?

- Answer – You are the undeniable proof! You are deeply loved by God! You are called out from the nations to be holy saints! You have experienced grace from God and peace from Jesus Christ! And you have all of this through your obedience to the gospel of God – and you obeyed by responding to the gospel with wholehearted, single-focused, fully trusting faith in the work Jesus accomplished for you, not in the work you do to earn salvation!
- And Paul spent his life by word (his preaching) and deed (his actions and suffering) to bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles (Rom 15:18-21)

Which brings us to the question, “Why would Paul spend his entire life proclaiming the gospel to people he formerly despised? Why would he labor and suffer as he did to bring gentile pagans to the knowledge of God? Why did Paul do what he did?

## **V. The Gospel’s Goal and Effect (1:5-7)**

### ***A. A Glorious Goal: for the honor of God’s name (1:5-6)***

*for the sake of his name among all the nations, <sup>6</sup> including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,*

- Paul did not spend his life trying to convince men to believe the gospel primarily because of their need – though it was great.
- Paul labored as he did for two reasons:
  1. To exalt God’s great glory among the Gentiles (1:5)
  2. By calling all men to confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord!

- He sums this up in a powerful paragraph found in Philippians 2:9-11 – *“God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!”*

And when men and women confess Jesus as their Lord in this life, they experience the life-changing effects of the gospel!

### ***B. A Life-changing Effect – Grace and Peace (1:7)***

*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.*

- Those who obey the gospel and respond with wholehearted, single-focused, fully trusting faith experience two incredible, life-transforming effects:
- **Grace** – enablement, strength, and sustaining favor from God through the Holy Spirit.
- **Peace** – more than outer calm, lack of conflict or anxiety. Peace is a full-orbed, robust, joy-filled, unshakeable contentment and harmony with God and others regardless of circumstances.
- And these people receive this grace and peace from God Himself and the Lord Jesus Christ, who set you apart for Himself!

### **Conclusion: *Responding to the Gospel***

At the beginning of the message, we noted that understanding the truth of the gospel is essential to forming a culture of gospel grace in our lives and in our congregations, but it is not enough to sustain it over time.

Maintaining a culture of gospel grace requires that we experience the grace of the gospel personally and renew ourselves in that grace regularly.

If the gospel of God changes everything—if it is how God saves the world—has the Gospel saved you? And, equally importantly, is it transforming you into a person who thinks as Jesus thinks, values what He values, and responds to life, circumstances, and people as He did?

1. Do you understand the Gospel clearly?
2. Do you believe the Gospel truly?
3. Have you obeyed the Gospel personally?
4. Are you enjoying the Gospel daily?
5. Are you displaying the Gospel attractively?
6. Are you sharing the Gospel regularly?

Jonathan Edward contemplated the greatness of Christ and the true satisfaction that comes from being united to him this way:

*What is there that you could desire in a Savior that is not in Christ? What is there that is not great or good, what is there that is venerable or winning, what is there that is adorable or endearing, or what can you think of that would be encouraging which is not to be found in the person of Christ? Would you have your Savior to be great and honorable, because you are unwilling to beholden to a low person? And is not Christ honorable enough to be worthy that you should depend on him? Is he not high enough to be appointed to so honorable a work as your salvation? Would you not only have a Savior of high degree, but would you have him to be made of low degree that he might experience afflictions and trials that he might, by the things he has suffered, pity those who suffer and are tempted? Has Christ not been made low enough for you? Has he not suffered enough? What is there lacking, or what would you add if you could, to make Christ more fit to be your Savior?*