

The Book of Romans
Introduction, Pt. 3, The Gospel
Rom 1:1-7

Rom 1:1-7

- 1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
- 2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
- 3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
- 4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:
- 5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:
- 6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:
- 7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. KJV

Introduction:

We have been introducing the book of Romans for the last two Sundays and we continue with that project today. We have given a survey of the book itself and then we have looked at how Paul described himself in v.1, “Called,” “Commissioned,” and “Separated.” Today I want to look at this thing concerning which he was those three things, “the gospel of God.” Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones in his study of the book stops here and does a study of the Triune God but we are going to save that for another time. I would have you notice that Paul referenced God, the Father, His Son Jesus Christ (v.2), and The Spirit of Holiness (or “the Holy Spirit”) (v.4).

But, what is the ***gospel of God*** to which Paul was Called, Commissioned, and Separated? This subject was the center of his being, the very core of his identity, as well as his lifelong project and assigned task.

The word that our English translators have rendered ‘gospel’ is a peculiar one to us. ‘Euaggelion’ is the basis of our words ‘evangelist’ and ‘evangelize’ and those words associated with them. At its root it is the word from which we get ‘angel.’

Now, most of us know that the word ‘angel’ means ‘messenger.’ If we take that word ‘angel’ and attach a prefix to it the meaning becomes ‘messenger of good news’ which then can be modified to the idea of ‘a message of good news’ or, simply, ‘good news.’ This is our word.

Now before Paul encountered Jesus Christ he was a messenger but the news he had then was not good. He was a messenger of the Law, which demanded perfect obedience with the threat of death for anything less than perfection. In fact, he was an agent of the Law system at Jerusalem and was sent to various cities with the task of arresting and punishing those whom he considered in violation of the Law.

Paul will go on to teach in this letter to the Romans that there are only two messages from

heaven to men. If you look down to v.16 you will see where he takes up the issue of the gospel which will carry all the way through to chapter 12 where the topic will change.

But notice how he begins the discussion.

Rom 1:16-18

- 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
- 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.
- 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; KJV

In connection with the good news of the gospel another message from heaven is revealed, the bad news against which the gospel stands in contrast, “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven,” and he will go on to exhaustively explain, all the way through chapter 3, that the reason for this wrath is that man has broken His laws - all of them - and has done so without remorse and without repentance.

Paul, in his earlier days as a teacher of the Law, had been a herald of that message of the Law, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

Now this thing of the gospel, the message of good news, is greatly misunderstood in our day. It has been reduced to the teaching that if one says a little prayer his sins can be forgiven and he can be assured of an eternal home in heaven when he dies. But almost all of us know multiple stories of people who prayed that prayer but their lives have turned out horrible because nothing was changed about their behavior after the prayer. It is difficult to think of such a message as “good news.” It leaves a man in his sins and, we fear, under the anger of God because of his sins.

Look again at vs. 16,17. This “good news” contains something unheard of, “it is the power of God unto salvation”... deliverance... not just from the penalty of sin but from the power of it. Furthermore, he said, in this gospel, “the righteousness of God is revealed,” by those who believe to those who will believe, “from faith to faith.” Now, there is a message which can truly be called good news.

I would like for you to notice another thing in v.16. Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel” and because of the difference in languages and cultures this seems to fall far short of a ringing endorsement. It sounds soft and almost tentative. We tend to hear language like this as a grudging acknowledgment as if he were saying, “well, I am not very thrilled about it, no one could really blame me if I were ashamed of it, but I can say, if you press me, that I am not ashamed of the gospel.”

But nothing could be further from the truth. In this culture it was very common to affirm something by stating it as a negative, affirming the total opposite of what is being denied. Paul was stating his absolute delight in the gospel. He was thrilled by it, excited to be a part of it so

much so that he was “ready,” anxious and full engaged to preach the gospel to whomever he came across: Greeks, Romans, barbarians, even his own people, the Jews.

It is our great poverty and failing that we think of the gospel as an embarrassment. It seems that our culture is dead set on making Christians feel ashamed about the greatest thing that has ever happened to the human race, the sending of the Son of God by the Father with the cooperating of the Holy Spirit.

John 3:16-18

- 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
- 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.
- 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. KJV

This is the bold statement of Jesus Christ about Himself and while it may make some folks uncomfortable there is nothing here for the believer to be ashamed of.

In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed.

God, we have always known, is Infinite in all of His Attributes.

He is Omniscient, He has perfect knowledge of all things.

He is Omnipotent, He has all power, there is nothing impossible to Him.

He is Omnipresent, something our minds cannot even grasp.

He is Just, never doing anything wrong.

He is Merciful and Kind - Infinitely so.

BUT—

The Most Wonderful Thing about Him is that He is Holy... Righteous... without any flaw whatsoever in His Moral Character.

This is the thing that the cherubim declare.

Isa 6:1-3

- 1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.
- 2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.
- 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. KJV

And in the Gospel that Righteousness, that Holiness, is declared and revealed to all who will believe on Him in the way He demands.

So many think of the gospel only in terms of the forgiveness of sin. And, since sin is such a small thing in the minds of many people, the gospel itself seems like a small thing.

But it is the Merciful Message of the Infinite God and in it His Righteousness is demonstrated in an elaborate display of planning and working. This miraculous work is the crowning monument to the Wonder of this Being Who is Our God.

So, how does the gospel reveal the Righteousness of God?

I was hoping someone would ask! Well, first of all, that is not exactly a proper question because Paul did not actually state it that way.

Look again at v.17. The gospel is revealed “from faith to faith,” from the one who has already believed to the one who is willing to believe.

But we must take note that the person who has closed his/her mind to the possibility of Deity and of Deity revealing Himself through a book, inspiring the writers to convey critical truth, there is nothing in the gospel for that person. It is revealed from faith to faith.

So, here goes the explanation.

God made man and gave him laws to obey, creating the penalty of spiritual death as the consequence for disobedience. There was one particular law that would be the real test, “Do not eat the fruit of that one particular tree.” “If you do, the moment you do it, you will die.”

And, you know what happened. Adam and Eve ate of the tree and God withdrew from them, cutting them off from Communion with Him, which is the real essence of life, everything else is some form of dying. He enforced upon them and all of their offspring spiritual death, alienation from God and from any hope of Communion with Himself in this life or in the one to come.

It was Just. We insist that judges penalize those who flagrantly violate human law. We think them unjust if the guilty walk free because of their negligence or unfaithfulness of the law. None of us would ever be satisfied to see the murderer of our child go without punishment when he had been proven to be guilty.

So, God is Just and Perfectly so. He enforces His Own Laws with absolute precision. “The soul that sinneth it shall die,” He said and none will escape. To fail to be Perfectly Just would be the failure to be Holy and God is simply never going to do that.

But for the rest of the Perfections of God, that would have been the end of the story. All of humanity would have been born into this world ultimately to be turned into eternity without God forever.

But God is as Perfect in His Mercy and in His Love as He is in His Justice. He desired that at least some of His human creation would not perish under His Judgment and He determined to remedy the problem.

But the task was impossible. Reconciling the Infinitely Holy God and sinful man without compromising His Holiness or His Justice was a thing which just could not be done. He would

be contaminated by taking man into Communion with Himself, become less than Holy, become less than Perfect, become less than God. It was not one of those things like Creation when simply a word or a look caused the thing to be done.

Think about an Infinitely Perfect Justice System for a moment. Every judgment must be spotlessly accurate and precise. Every ruling must conform to His Law without flaw. Every criminal must answer for every crime fully and completely. No one may escape Wrath when duly convicted. He will not simply wave an offense away and dismiss it. That would not be Just.

So, how does Infinitely Perfect Love and Mercy acquire pardon for those who are love without compromising Integrity or Justice?

And, how can the ones who are loved be brought into Communion with Him unless they are perfectly clean, holy themselves?

To human eyes and minds this is a conundrum without a solution. It is the old philosopher's debate concerning what happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object? The Irresistible Force of God's Love would not permit those He loved to perish but the Immoveable Object of His Justice said they must be punished to the fullest extent of the Law because they have sinned.

Rom 3:10-19

- 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
- 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
- 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
- 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:
- 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:
- 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:
- 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:
- 17 And the way of peace have they not known:
- 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.
- 19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. KJV

“Simply forgiving sins is unjust,” said Justice, but Love said, “a way must be found,”... and it was.

The Plan of God was laid out by Paul. The Second Person of the Divine Trinity would disrobe Himself of the Glories of Deity.

Phil 2:5-8

- 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

- 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. KJV

But this would be no ordinary death on a cross. The world had already seen hundreds of thousands of those. Peter would describe it this way.

1 Peter 2:21-24

- 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:
22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:
23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:
24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. KJV

And, Paul would describe it this way.

2 Cor 5:20-21

- 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.
21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. KJV

Two phrases you should notice for they make the whole thing possible... “bare our sins in his own body,” and, “He hath made His to be sin for us.”

A way was found in the Infinite Mind of Absolute Deity to merge the identities of all who would ever believe with that of the Savior, the Son of God, so that their guilt became His, but without contaminating His Holy Person.

This merging, we like to call it “Union,” was so complete that Perfect Justice was completely satisfied concerning the punishment of the sins of those in Union with Christ. Isaiah foresaw and prophesied as much.

Isa 53:11

- 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. KJV

That was enough to satisfy Justice, the sins had been paid for and the sinners had been punished by their Union with Christ in His Suffering and Death. But there was another party to the equation, Divine Holiness, which would refuse to touch the sinner even though Justice was done with him. He was not guilty of sin but he also was not holy.

But go back to 2 Cor 5:21. The sinner was not merely made innocent of any crime against God's Justice... he was made positively holy... and how?

Rom 6:4-10

- 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:
- 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.
- 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.
- 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:
- 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.
- 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
KJV

His Union with Christ did not end at the Death of Jesus. It was an everlasting Union which meant that the identity of the sinner and that of the Savior is an unending one. Jesus was buried but then three days later He rose from the dead and when He did, the sin was gone and He was raised in holiness sufficient for Him to return to the Father. But all of His people were in union with Him still. His Holiness became their holiness and will ever abide upon them.

Paul said it this way.

Eph 2:1-6

- 1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
- 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
- 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.
- 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
- 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
- 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: KJV

Do you think anyone can have a seat in heaven without Holiness?... Righteousness? The cannot. It is not allowed.

So, the Gospel reveals the Righteousness of God.

The 'gospel' that many preach reminds me of that employee we have all had or worked with, the

one who does only half of his job. No one is happy with him, not the boss, and none of his co-workers. He never gets the job done.

But I have heard preachers tell people, "God had done all He can... now it is up to you." In other words, "He has done half the work of your salvation..."

But I am telling you that He has done all of the work and Perfectly satisfied Himself in the process, His Justice, His Holiness, His Mercy and His Love. And, He has not compromised His Perfections in the slightest degree.

Rom 1:16-17

- 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
- 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. KJV

Do you believe? Will you believe? The alternative is dangerous beyond your wildest imagination.

Rom 1:18-19

- 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
- 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. KJV

God has shown you His Gospel and revealed to you His Righteousness. Oh, do not doubt Him but believe the gospel.