

The Gospel of God

Romans 1:1-7

B.I. The Gospel Paul preached is worthy of our trust because it is truly the Gospel of God.

LTS: Eph. 3:1-8

Intro:

Why should you believe the Gospel Paul preached?

This question is nearly as relevant today as it was when Paul explained it to the believers who lived in Rome.

Put yourself in Paul's shoes for a minute. For the past 25 years you have been traveling all over Asia-Miner (present-day Turkey) preaching the gospel. After a rather rocky start, the work of evangelism and church planting had really found significant traction. Churches were springing up all over that part of the world. So successful were Paul's spiritual labors at this time that Luke was able to record the following statement: "All the residents in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks (Act." 19:10). That's a pretty incredible statement when you think about it! And Paul didn't disagree. He made sweeping statements like this as well. For example, he said,

(Rom. 15:19) "from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ...". Again he said...

(15:23) "I no longer have any room for work in these regions."

Talk about successful ministry! And yet, Paul was dissatisfied with the progress. He was convinced that there were still many people in the world who had never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He wanted to go where no man had gone before. He wanted to be the first to take the Gospel to Spain. But in order to do that, he needed a new base of operation. He needed a new "Sending Church." So, Paul set his sights on the church that gathered in Rome.

If your Bible is open to the epistle of Romans, you are holding in your hand Paul's personal letter of introduction to the church that he hoped he would soon be able to call home.

Paul knows that it would be unwise to march into that body of believers and ask for financial help without first explaining who he is and what he believes. The members of that church needed to have assurance that he was truly an apostle of Jesus and that his gospel was orthodox and sound. After all, everyone knew about his past life as a persecutor. For these and other reasons, the first seven verses of Romans chapter One touch on five crucial issues about Paul and the message he preaches which he calls "The gospel of God." In rapid succession, then, Paul briefs the saints in Rome on these five crucial issues; namely...

- I. The Messenger of God's Gospel (v. 1)
- II. The Genesis of God's Gospel (v. 1)
- III. The History of God's Gospel (v. 2)
- IV. The Substance of God's Gospel (v. 3-4)
- V. The Mission of God's Gospel. (v. 5-7)

Before we begin drilling into this text, let's stand together and read it.

Read Rom. 1:1-7

The first issue Paul is compelled to address is about himself. Who is this man who claims to be a...

I. Messenger of God's Gospel

1. Now, as we have just read, Paul's first words are designed to introduce himself. It's clear that he had never visited the church of Rome before so there were probably a significant number of people who may have known of him only from a distance. Paul wants them to know something of his credentials. So, he begins with:

“Paul, slave of Christ Jesus.”

2. From the start, Paul wants the Roman believers to know that he is NOT his own man. He's NOT building his own brand or establishing his own celebrity status. Rather, he is content to be but a servant of the King, the Master whose authority he willingly lives beneath.

3. In addition to his status as a slave, Paul wants them to know that he is an apostle by calling. He writes,

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus called as an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God.”

4. In other words, “apostleship” is not something Paul conferred upon himself. In fact, he hadn't applied for the position, and truth be told, he didn't want to be an apostle. He was busy trying to kill the apostles! Paul was NOT an apostle by ambition. He was an apostle by calling. And by “calling” he doesn't mean by “invitation.” Jesus didn't invite Saul of Tarsus to become an apostle, he confronted him, threw him to the ground and blinded him. Then he said (Acts 9:15)

“He is a chosen instrument of mine... and I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

4. The manner in which he was called to apostleship was important, but the fact that he was “called by Christ” to apostleship would have put him on level ground with the other eleven apostles whom Jesus had “called.” And like the other apostles, he had been set apart for the Gospel, which, as we have already noted, Paul refers to as “The Gospel of God.”

5. Why should you believe Paul’s Gospel? You should believe it because God appointed Paul as a choice messenger to proclaim it.

Second: Paul talks about...

II. The Genesis of God's Gospel:

1. At first blush the term “Gospel of God, may strike us as somewhat unfamiliar. But it is actually used 7 times in the N.T.

- A. It’s used by Paul and Mark and Peter. And each time, it means “The Gospel whose origin is God.”
- B. You see, the Gospel is not something Paul made up, or that Jesus invented on His own. No! The gospel is an expression of the very heart of God!
- C. The reality is, God established His gospel before the creation of the world. It wasn’t a panicked response to man’s unexpected sin. No, the God who knows all things and rules over all things was fully aware of what was coming long before He created man. In fact, from the beginning he intended to use the sinfulness of man to exalt the glory of His Son.
- D. You will remember from Jesus’ high-priestly prayer (John 17) on the night before he was crucified, he lifted his eyes toward heaven and prayed...
“Father, the hour has come; glorify your son that the Son may glorify you... I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world began.”
- E. G. Campbell Morgan observes, “The deepest passion of the heart of Jesus was NOT the saving of men, but the glory of God; and then the saving of men, because that is for the glory of God”¹ So, God is for the saving of sinners because the saving of sinners glorifies God in Jesus.

¹ Kenneth O. Gangel, *John*, vol. 4, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 312.

2. Therefore, Paul taught Timothy, “The Lord desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). And Peter declared in his 2nd epistle, God is patient toward sinners, “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9)

A. O my Friend, God is not a reluctant Savior. He wants sinners to be saved and He is glorified in their salvation.

B. Therefore, he sends his apostles into the world to proclaim His Gospel – which is justly named “the Gospel of God.”

3. You see, beloved, the Gospel is NOT a man-made message. It finds its “genesis” – its origin – in the very heart of God.

4. Do you know what the word Gospel means? In GK it is the word *Euangelion*. There are two parts to this word. The first is “Eu” and it means “good.” You can hear it in the word “Eulogy.” A eulogy is prepared message that brings to remembrance good things about a person who has died. The second part of the word is *Engel* from *engelos* which means “angel,” or “messenger.” So the word *Euangelion* means a good message or Good news.

5. So when Paul speaks of the Gospel of God, he is talking about Good news that comes from God. Last week we learned a lot about the bad news confronting sinners. That message was mostly about the Judgment of God. But this week we are here to learn about the Good News that finds its source in the very heart of God.

Why should you believe Paul’s Gospel? You should believe it because it is the saving expression of the

Now, if it’s true - that the Gospel is the saving expression of the heart of God - then we should expect to find it all over the pages of God’s book, the Bible. And that brings us to Paul’s 3rd concern...

III. The History of God's Gospel

1. The first words of this letter have addressed the Messenger of God’s Gospel, the Genesis of God’s Gospel, and now The History of the Gospel.

2. Paul refers to the Gospel as the Gospel of God “Which He Promised Beforehand through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”

2. If that means what it sounds like it means, we should be able to discover O.T. promises about the Savior who was to come to reconcile sinners to God. And indeed, that’s exactly what we find. In fact, the first such promise was made before man exited the garden of Eden.

A. Gen. 3:15 The prophet Moses gives us what is known in theological circles as the proto-*euangelion* (First Gospel). After the serpent deceived Eve, God cursed him saying “I will put enmity between your offspring and her offspring; He (i.e. a son of Eve) will crush

your head, and you will crush his heel.” And that’s what happened on the Cross. The serpent bruised Jesus the Messiah when he was nailed to the cross, but Jesus crushed the Devil’s head rendering him powerless to overcome the Lord and His people.

- B. The O.T. also teaches that this Savior will come into the world through Abraham, and by Him all the world will be blessed.
- C. In the book of Daniel (7:14), He is called the “Son of man” to whom God will one day give everlasting dominion, and glory and a kingdom.
- D. The Prophet Isaiah predicted that a son would be born, and the government will be upon his shoulders. And he shall be called “Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6)
- E. Other O.T. prophets declared that he would be a son of King David whose throne will be established forever. And as David was born in Bethlehem, so Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
- F. In the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, the prophet describes in exquisite detail how the Messiah was to die in the place of sinners, but then God would raise Him up.
- G. And the list goes on and on.

3. All of this was important to the early church because at first it all seemed like a new thing, a new sect, a new religion. But it wasn’t New! The Jews had read these prophecies and promises thousands of times for millennia! It was all written down in the Scriptures.

4. At first, the disciples of the Lord were blind to it, but after the resurrection Jesus appeared on the Emmaus road to two grieving disciples and said (Luke 24:25–27)

O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

5. You see, my friends, Paul wants his readers to know that he is not advancing something NEW. All the precepts related to the Messiah were written down in the O.T. Scriptures. Though at first blush it may have seemed new, the “Gospel of God” was as old as the Scriptures. It had been disclosed in O.T. promises and OT prophecies concerning Messiah.

6. The significance of this can hardly be over-stated. Because these promises are written in the Holy Scriptures, they can be studied and examined to verify whether any messianic claim is true as it relates to one claiming to be Messiah.²

7. So Paul, when he stood before King Agrippa to make his defense before the accusing Jewish authorities, he declared (Acts 26)“...I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

8. All of this would have been especially important for the church of Rome to hear because it's membership would have been populated by a significant percentage of Jews.

9. The history of the Gospel is important. As Paul will argue in Eph. 2:19,

The “household of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

10. The reason so many Jews (such as Paul, Peter, Mark, Pricilla and Aquilla, Barnabas, and many more) put their faith in Jesus was because the claims of his Messiahship were clearly supported by the prophesies and promises of the O.T. This is why, when you read Paul's letters you find him repeatedly saying “for it is written,” “it is written,” “it is written.” Indeed, in Romans alone, he repeats the phrase 16 times!

11. Why should you believe the Gospel Paul preached? Because it is built upon the solid bedrock of the promises and prophesies of God.

Paul's Gospel is nothing less than the Gospel of God. You can have confidence in it.

12. So, Paul writes to the Romans about the Messenger, the Genesis, and the History of God's Gospel. Next, he writes about...

IV. The Substance of God's Gospel

1. Here Paul tells us (v. 3) that what was promised and prophesied in Scripture about the Gospel were things “Pertaining to His Son.” There is no good news for man about salvation apart from God's only Son. He is the sum and substance of the Gospel of God.

² Albert Barnes, *Bible Commentary on Romans*.

2. The question, then, is this: If Paul is promoting Jesus as the promised messiah, what qualifies him for that position? Verses 3-4 give Paul's answer.

Read Rom. 1:3-4

...concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ 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

A. First, Jesus is the seed of David according to the flesh. That is, he is King David's descendent.

- 1) Again, this was extremely important because (as we saw earlier) the O.T. prophesied that Messiah would be a descendent of David.
- 2) Anyone who reads the Gospel of Matthew for the first time must surely be perplexed as to why that gospel begins with 17 verses of BORING Genealogy . But the reason it's there is to answer a critical question; namely, was Jesus a descendent of David? The answer lies in the very first line of that Gospel (Matt. 1:1) "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham..." You see, every Jew understood that this was a major qualification for being Messiah.
- 3) Witness the occasion when Jesus asked the Pharisees (Matt. 22:41) "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he? They said to him, 'The Son of David.'"
- 4) John 7:42 we read "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"
- 5) 2 Tim. 2:8 "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David.
- 6) So, Jesus meets one qualification to be Messiah in that he is an offspring of David.

B. Second, Jesus is the Son of God.

- 1) We should note here that Jesus was a son of David according to the flesh. That is, according to his humanity. But in this qualification (Son of God) Paul is talking about Jesus' according to his deity.

- 2) How do we know that He is Son of God? Well of course we know it because on two occasions God himself announced from heaven, “This is my beloved Son...”
- 3) But Paul points us to something far more important. Jesus arose from the dead! If the wages of sin is death, then the only way Jesus could rescue sinners is to conquer death. This He did in His resurrection. Paul says (v. 4) that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power by the “Spirit of Holiness” (i.e. Holy Spirit) by His resurrection from the dead!
- 4) Who has the capacity to submit to death for three days and then rise again? Only the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the Substance of the Gospel of God.

3. Why should you believe Paul’s Gospel? Because the Son of God Himself is its very substance. Salvation comes through Jesus Christ and through Him alone.

So we have considered

- The Messenger of God’s Gospel,
- The Genesis of God’s Gospel
- The History of God’s Gospel,
- The Substance of God’s Gospel,
- And finally...

VI. The Mission of God’s Gospel

Read v. 5-6

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, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

1. Paul now comes full circle and mentions his call to ministry of proclaiming the Gospel of God. The “We” (v. 5) is probably a reference to the other 11 apostles who walked with Jesus for three years and who are now proclaiming the Gospel of God elsewhere.
2. How do they engage in this world-changing ministry of Gospel proclamation? Through Jesus they received grace (probably salvation) and apostleship to bring about the “obedience of Faith.” That is, the obedience that comes from faith. Faith is the root and obedience is the fruit. The word of God creates faith, and faith bears the fruit of joyful obedience to God.

3. Do you see the missionary heart of God here? Paul and the other apostles are laboring with the Gospel. They are unashamed of the gospel. They are preaching the Gospel with the hope of reaching the whole world with the Gospel for the sake of Jesus' name among the nations.

4. This means, they are seeking to reach Gentiles (the nations) with the Gospel of God. And some of them had already been reached and were part of the church in Rome. And do you see what Paul calls them? "Beloved by God." They are beloved by God and called to be saints. That is, set apart to be the objects of His eternal attention and affection.

4. What a marvelous way to begin this letter. But as we close, I wonder if any of you are wrestling with whether or not you should put all your hope in the Gospel of God - the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I assure you, if you turn to Him and surrender your life to Him, you will never be disappointed. a

B.I. The Gospel Paul preached is worthy of your trust because it is truly the Gospel of God.