

What is the Gospel?

Sunday Sermons

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I want you to take your Bible and turn with me to the book of Romans, to Romans 1 and as our conference focuses on clarity, my topic is clarity on the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you're a note-taker, the title of this message would be "What is the gospel?" Question mark. And I can think of no better place to which we would turn than to Paul's magnum opus to the book of Romans, and I want to begin by reading the first seven verses, a text with which we are all very familiar, and our key focus will be found at the end of verse 1. The Apostle Paul writes, and this is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, all-sufficient, authoritative, invincible, immutable word.

1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for [here it is] the gospel of God, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It has been my privilege these last couple of decades to have known R. C. Sproul, who has recently gone to be with the Lord. He was a professor of mine in my Doctor of Ministry program, and the imprint that he left upon me was very significant and is very significant to this day, and I was allowed to spend a lot of time with Dr. Sproul. And I remember on one occasion he said, "Steve, I taught systematic theology for decades and I would always begin the semester by asking this question: what is the gospel? This was addressed to the best and to the brightest men who have answered the call of God upon their life, who have sold their house, who have packed up their family, who have moved across the country, who have come to this particular seminary to sit in this classroom, and to ask them this question: what is the gospel?" Dr. Sproul told me that he was absolutely stunned at how few students could answer that question accurately and biblically.

I wonder how you would answer that question. What is the gospel? We have to be right about the gospel. To be wrong about the gospel is to be wrong where it matters most, with your relationship with God. To be wrong about the gospel means you will be wrong 100 other places in theology. And to be wrong about the gospel means you are a false prophet and means you are a false teacher. To be wrong about the gospel means you are unconverted and unsaved and you are perishing. You cannot be right with God and be wrong about the gospel. Getting the gospel right is that important.

So what does the word gospel mean? It is a compound word in the original language, euangelion, and the primary root word angel, angel, messenger with a message. There is a prefix put at the front eu, e-u, which means good. A eulogy is a good word that is said at a funeral. And when you bring the two together to form the compound word, euangelion, it means good news, the good news of salvation that has come from God in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, to people who are under the wrath of God and who need to be delivered from eternal destruction.

The good news. Now it's not just good news, it is the greatest news that anyone has ever heard. And Martin Luther when he translated the Bible into the German language after he was kidnapped and taken to the Wartburg Castle and there he worked in hiding on translating what would become known as the September Bible 1522, Luther comes to this word euangelion, how does he translate it? William Tyndale a couple years later would translate it glad tidings. And before Luther translates the word, he writes this, "Euangelion means a good message, good tidings, good news, a good report, which one sings and tells with rejoicing. So when David overcame the huge Goliath, the good report and the comforting news came upon the Jewish people that their terrible enemy had been slain, that they had been delivered and that joy and peace had been given to them, and they sang and danced and were happy because of the good news." Luther writes, "So the gospel of God, the euangelion, is a good message. The gospel has resounded in all the world, proclaimed by the apostles. It tells of a true David who fought with sin and death and the devil and overcame them and thereby delivered without any merit of their own, all those who were held captive in sin and were plagued by death and were overpowered by the devil. He made them righteous. He gave them life. He saved them. They were brought back to God."

The gospel is the greatest news this world has ever heard and Romans is Paul's magnum opus, his major writing, and when you open your Bible there's 21 epistles, in every one of our Bible's Romans is first. It was not written first. It was the seventh epistle to be written. It was the sixth epistle to be written by Paul. James, Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, all preceded the book of Romans chronologically. But when they compiled the New Testament and put the books in order, Romans always is in the premier place and as Paul writes the book of Romans, it is to make his major presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the other 20 epistles in one way or another support and supply that which Romans teaches. Luther called Romans the gateway to heaven. He called it an open door into paradise. He called it the chief part of the New Testament. Luther called Romans the very purest gospel. It can never be read too much or pondered too much.

So as we're thinking about clarity with the gospel, I want us to look at these first seven verses, time permitting. We may only look at the first part of verse 1, who knows. But as we look at this, it's as if in this opening prologue the entire book of Romans will grow out of the seeds that are found here in these opening verses. What Paul will have to say about the gospel is found in concentrated form here in these opening verses. So I want to set some headings before you as we walk through this passage.

I want to begin with the servant of the gospel, and as we look at verse 1, Paul wants us to know right up front, he is not the author of the gospel, he's only the messenger. And so we begin, "Paul." Let's just stop right there. That is shocking that we see Paul. He is the most unlikely messenger of the gospel that has ever walked the earth. He himself says that he was a blasphemer, that he was a persecutor of the church, that he was a violent aggressor of the church, and that he was the chief of sinners. He was the one who most opposed the gospel. And that's exactly the one God chose to be his messenger.

It says he was a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, meaning he is a slave, bought by his own Master and belonging to his Master completely to do his Master's bidding. He's called as an apostle, sovereignly chosen, effectually called, set apart from his own mother's womb.

And he says here set apart for the gospel of God. This is the highest calling that can come upon anyone's life, and especially any man who is called to preach, to be set apart for the gospel of God. There is no higher calling under heaven than to be set apart for the gospel of God. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "If God has called you to be His servant, why stoop to be a king?" It is the loftiest calling that there is.

And so we see the servant of the gospel, and this should be encouraging to us because God delights in reaching all the way to the bottom of the barrel to find his choicest servants. The greatness of the gospel is not found in the messenger, it is found in the message, and God delights in taking the most unlikely messenger to spread his gospel.

And note second, now the source of the gospel. Who is the author of this gospel? If Paul is only the messenger, from whence does it come? At the end of verse 1, we read these four words, "the gospel of God." This is what we call a subjective genitive, which just very simply means this, that the gospel is from God. The gospel is about God, no doubt about that, but what this is stressing is that the gospel has come down from the heights of heaven, the gospel has come from outside of this world, the gospel has come down from God to man, that God is the source of this gospel, that God is the author and the architect of this gospel, that this gospel has not been designed by any denomination. It has not been scripted by any seminary. It has not been crafted by any church. No, this gospel has come from the infinite genius of God and there is not a man here today who could have ever thought up the plan of salvation that is found in the gospel.

This is God's solution to man's dilemma. This is God acting and God speaking his gospel. If we were to divide up this conference right here into small groups, and if we were to meet for the next 10,000 years, there is not one of the groups that would have come up

with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I mean, who but God could have thought up in eternity past that God the Father would send his Son into this world to be the Savior of a fallen race and that he would enter this world through the womb of a virgin? Who but God could have thought up the virgin birth? Only God could have designed the virgin birth. He would be born under the law and that he would fulfill all righteousness on our behalf. The life that we could not live, he has lived in our place and by his active obedience to the moral law of God, he has secured perfect righteousness for us. Who but God could have thought up the active obedience of Christ? That Jesus would go to Calvary's cross, there he would be lifted up to die, and that all the sins of all the people who would ever believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ would be transferred to Jesus and him who knew no sin God made to be sin for us. Who but God could have thought up the substitutionary death of Christ upon the cross? That he would be taken down from the cross buried in a borrowed tomb and on the third day he would raise himself from the dead. He said, "I've authority to lay My life down. I've authority to take it back up again. This commandment I received from the Father." Who but God could have designed the resurrection and that he has now ascended to heaven and seated at the right hand of God the Father, and everyone's eternal destiny is dependent upon their right relationship with Jesus Christ? Only God could have designed this gospel. It is the result of the infinite genius of Almighty God.

Would you also notice at the end of verse 1 the word in front of gospel, the gospel of God. Every time the Bible mentions gospel, there is a definite article "the" in front of it. You'll notice in verse 9, "the preaching of the gospel of His Son." You'll notice in verse 15, "I'm eager to preach the gospel to you." In verse 16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." This is the exclusivity of salvation that is in this gospel. It doesn't say "a gospel" as if it is one of many possibilities. There are many roads that lead to hell. There is only one road that leads to heaven and it is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man but the end thereof is the end of death." Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." When Peter stood before the Sanhedrin he said, "There is salvation in no other name for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," and Paul added his in 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony born at the proper time."

There is a zero tolerance policy for any tampering with this gospel. You may not add anything to it. You may not take away anything from it. And on the last day, every one of us will give on account of ourselves to him who has called us into his ministry that we have preached the purest gospel that we could possibly preach. This is the source of the gospel. This is God's gospel and this is God's solution to our dilemma. And what is our dilemma? How can holy God and sinful man come together? How can unholy man, sinful man be made right with holy God? And it is only through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This leads now, third, to the stability of the gospel in verse 2. Paul wants us to know that this gospel is not a new message. It is not recently come onto the scene. It is not a trendy contemporary message but this is an old old story. So he says in verse 2, "which," and the

word which refers to the gospel not to God, "which He," God the Father, "promised beforehand," long ago, Old Testament times, ancient times, God promised proclaimed the gospel. How did he do it? It says "through His prophets," and there was a parade of prophets down through the centuries throughout the Old Testament who heralded and proclaimed and declared this gospel. Where would we find this gospel that the prophets proclaimed? Note, "in the holy Scriptures." Now the word Scriptures, *graphé*, means writings. In the actual writing of the Old Testament referring to the entire Old Testament, in words that have black and white meaning that have a specific objective meaning, words that can be studied, words that can be parsed, words that can be analyzed, words that can be interpreted, not fuzzy feelings, not ambiguous thoughts, nothing of the sort. It is recorded and written in the Old Testament.

The gospel was announced to Adam and Eve. It was believed by Abraham. It was recorded by Moses. It was pictured in the levitical system. It was cherished by David and foretold by Isaiah. It was announced by Ezekiel. And what we learn from this in verse 2, that the gospel that is proclaimed in the New Testament is the very same gospel that was promised in the Old Testament, again, affirming there is only one way of salvation. There was not an Old Testament way to be saved and then a New Testament way to be saved. Then you've got two gospels. There was not one way for the Jew to be saved and now a different way for the Gentile to be saved. You would have two gospels if that was the case. But no, the gospel that was proclaimed in Old Testament is the very same gospel that is proclaimed in the New Testament. Anytime, anywhere, anyone has ever been made right with God, it has been by the one same gospel. It has been by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. There is no other gospel. And people in the Old Testament were saved by looking ahead to the first coming of the Messiah, just like you and I are saved by looking back to his first coming and we all meet together at the cross, putting our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole Bible, the entire message was of Christ. The Old Testament said he's coming. The four gospels say he's here. The book of Acts, they proclaim him. The epistles, they explain him. The book of Revelation, he's coming back. It is all pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The entire gospel rests upon the sturdy foundation of the Old Testament concerning this one who would come. It was prophesied and written in the Scriptures that he would be born to the seed of a woman, Genesis 3; of the seed of Abraham, Genesis 17; of the seed of Isaac, Genesis 21; of the son of David, Psalm 132. He would be born of a virgin and called a Immanuel, Isaiah 7; born in Bethlehem, Micah 5; adored by great persons after his birth, Psalm 72; called out of Egypt, Hosea 11; preceded by a forerunner, Isaiah 40; anointed with the Spirit, Isaiah 11; a prophet like Moses, Deuteronomy 18; a priest after the order of Melchizedek, Psalm 110; commencing his ministry in Galilee, Isaiah 9. He would come into the temple, Malachi 3; and be marked by meekness, Isaiah 42; and tenderness, Isaiah 40. He would be without deceit, Isaiah 53; full of zeal for God, Psalm 69. He would preach with miracles, Psalm 78. He would work miracles or he preached parables, Psalm 78; worked miracles, Isaiah 35. He would bear reproach, Psalm 22. He would be rejected by his brethren, Psalm 69. He would be a stone of stumbling to the Jews, Isaiah 8; hated by the Jews, Isaiah 49; rejected by the Jewish leaders, Psalm 118; betrayed by a friend, Psalm 41; forsaken by his disciples, Zechariah 13; sold for 30 pieces

of silver, Zechariah 11, and the money would be given to a potter's field, Zechariah 11. He would be engulfed in suffering, Psalm 22; yet suffer for others, Isaiah 53. He would be patient and silent under suffering, Isaiah 53. He would be struck on the cheeks, Micah 5. He would be marred beyond the appearance of a man, Isaiah 55. He would be spit on and scourged, Isaiah 50. He would be nailed through his hands and feet, Psalm 22. He would be forsaken by God, Psalm 22. He would be mocked, Psalm 22; offered gall and vinegar, Psalm 69. He would be left naked without his garments, and they would be parted and lots would be cast for them, Psalm 22. He would be numbered with the transgressors, yet he would intercede for his murderers, Isaiah 53. Not a bone of his body would be broken, Psalm 34. He would be pierced, Zechariah 12. He would be buried with a rich man, Isaiah 53; and yet his flesh would not see corruption, Psalm 16.

It is recorded throughout the whole of the 39 books of the Old Testament, this gospel, this one who would come and bring salvation to his people. It is rooted and grounded in the fertile soil of the Old Testament. The mathematical possibility that all of these prophecies would be fulfilled in one person is so astronomical that it has been said that if you took the state of Texas, which is 801 miles from the top of the state to the bottom of the state, and you covered it with silver dollars up to the shoulder of a man, and you flew over with a helicopter and just one of those silver dollars in the entire state of Texas somewhere in the mass has been marked with an X, and you only have one chance to reach down and pick up one silver coin, you would have a greater statistical probability that you would reach down and pick up that one coin than that all of these prophecies would be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is all contained in the Old Testament. This is the stability of the gospel. This now leads, verse 3, to the subject of the gospel. We now come to the very heart of the gospel because beginning in verse 3 to the first part of verse 5, we see the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the gospel is about a person and Paul will devote the largest part of this opening prologue now to the subject of the gospel, to the substance of the very gospel, and he now begins to focus his attention upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And verse 3 is one of these remarkable verses in which the deity of Christ and the humanity of Christ come together in one person, and Michael Riccardi will be talking about that in his message in the next session. But here is one of these verses that it's almost as if the universe is contained in one tiny little acorn of a verse.

He begins with the deity of Christ. He says "concerning His Son." The gospel concerns the Son of God. It doesn't concern any other peripheral matter, it concerns the Lord Jesus. He is the very sum and substance of the gospel. He is the Alpha and the Omega of the gospel. He is the first and the last of the gospel. If you want to preach the gospel, you must fly with wings to the Lord Jesus Christ and preach Christ and him crucified.

So he says "concerning His Son," that is a statement to the deity of Christ, that he is the Son of the living God, that he is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Spirit, and he is the second person of the Trinity of the same essence as the Father and the Spirit. Colossians 2:9, all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form. John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Isaiah 9:6,

"You shall have a son and his name shall be called, "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father."

So here we see the deity of Jesus Christ, but then suddenly we read in the middle of verse 3, "who was born." The Son of God was born. He entered the human race. He got into our skin. Here is the virgin birth and he was born not just any birth but "of a descendant of David according to the flesh." He came according to the messianic line. He was the Son of God from all eternity and he is the son of David as he now enters the human race. Jesus had to become a man in the gospel of God. Why did Jesus have to become a man? Well, because we could not raise ourselves up to the heights of heaven in order to climb into the courts above. All of our righteousness is as filthy rags. God must leave heaven and come all the way down to us and enter into this world of sin and strife in order to raise us up and take us to heaven. He had to be born of a virgin so that we could be born again. He had to become the Son of man so that we could become sons of God. He had to come down to us in order to take us up to heaven. But further, he had to become a man because the wages of sin is death and God cannot die. God is immortal from eternity past to eternity future, and in order for Jesus to die as our Savior, he must take upon himself sinless humanity in order to suffer the curse of the law which is death.

So the Son of God had to become the son of David in order that he could die in our place and make the only atonement for our sin, but further in order to be our mediator, a mediator is one who stands in the middle between two parties who have had a falling out, between two parties that are at enmity one with another, between two parties that are irreconcilable, a mediator must stand in the middle and be equal to both sides. He had to be truly God in order to represent God to man. He had to be truly man in order to represent man to God. There's only one who could have stood in the middle, the Lord Jesus Christ. And no angel could have mediated this, and no prophet could have mediated this, no good man or righteous man could have been equal to both, but the Lord Jesus truly God, truly man, alone could stand in the middle.

That's the gospel of Jesus Christ, and what did he do as our mediator as he stood between the two sides? Let me give you five words what he did. 1. Propitiation. The Lord Jesus Christ as he bore our sins upon the cross, the Bible says in Romans 3:24, that he propitiated the righteous anger of God toward us. By his substitutionary death and by his absorbing the wrath of God in our place, Jesus alone placated the righteous anger of God toward us. Let me remind all of us that God is angry with the wicked every day, and God is at war with sinners but God has demonstrated his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us and in that death he satisfied the righteous anger of God. The Bible says now in Romans 8:1, "There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." And the Bible says in Romans 5:1, "Therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." When he took that cup and drank it in the garden, it was emblematic that he took all of our judgment unto himself and the righteous anger of God towards you and me who are in Christ has been fully placated and appeased. Propitiation.

Second, reconciliation. Listen, we are at enmity with God. God is at enmity with sinners. There is a chasm between. There are two offended parties who have no way to come

together and to be reconciled and Jesus upon the cross as he shed his blood upon Calvary's cross, he reconciled sinful man and holy God and he has brought the two together and there is no coming together with God outside of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The third word is redemption, that by the shedding of his blood upon Calvary's cross, Jesus bought his bride out of the slave market of sin and Satan and this evil world system. Jesus bought us with his shed blood. We now are his possession and if the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed. And he has delivered us out from the slavery to our former manor of life. 1 Peter 1:18 says you "have been redeemed not with silver or gold as from your former manner of life inherited from your fathers, but with precious blood as of a lamb, unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." And so upon that cross not only did Jesus propitiate the wrath of God and reconcile the two offended parties, he also bought us out of our former slavery to sin and we now are slaves of Christ.

The fourth word is expiation. Jesus as he took our sins, he bore our sins in his body upon the tree. 1 Peter 2:24, he was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus by his death upon the cross has removed the penalty of our sin and has taken it far far away. You say, "How far away?" The Bible says that he has buried our sins in the depths of the ocean. He has taken our sins and placed them behind his back. He remembers our iniquities no more. He has removed our sin just like on the Day of Atonement as the high priest laid his hand upon the sacrificial goat and it was released into the wilderness, it was emblematic that there would be a Lamb of God who would take our sin and carry it far far away.

And then fifth is the word justification. Justification as Jesus stood as our representative, as we heard that was preached by Phil Johnson, as he stood in our place in his final act of obedience in his what's called passive obedience upon the cross. He was not passive. It speaks to the passion of Christ. In that one act of obedience, he has made the many righteous and righteousness and justification has come to us through the substitutionary sin-bearing death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

What a gospel this is. What a glorious gospel this is. This is good news from heaven and now in verse 4. If verse 3 is about the person of Christ, verse 4 is about the proof of Christ. It says, "who," remember the gospel is about a person, it's a personal pronoun, "who was declared." Not whispered. Not muttered. But "declared the Son of God with power," with power that is earthshaking power, history-altering power, "by the resurrection from the dead." That was God's ultimate validation upon the cross. That was God's apologetic upon the sufficiency of the death of Christ by raising his Son from the dead. Thousands of men died upon crosses at this time. Josephus, the Jewish historian, said that there were so many crucifixions they virtually ran out of trees upon which to crucify men. Thousands were crucified. Only one was raised from the dead, that is the Lord Jesus Christ himself and the resurrection validated and vindicated that his death was a perfect once-and-for-all time death for those who put their trust in him.

And Paul now as he comes to the end of verse 4, he concludes emphatically by saying, "Jesus Christ the Lord." All three names, if you will. Jesus is his saving name. It means

Jehovah saves, that he was Jehovah come in human flesh to rescue a perishing people. Matthew 1:21, "You shall call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins." Luke 19:10, "He came to seek and to save that which is lost." All that is bound up in the name Jesus, and you may ask, "So what do we need to be saved from?" The answer is God. We need to be saved from God and there is only one who can save from God and that is God. And so the gospel is that salvation is from God, by God, to God. Only God could save us from himself. Only God could save us from his own wrath and his grace has triumphed over his wrath and that is contained in the name Jesus.

The name Christ, which is really a title, means the anointed one. If Jesus is his saving name, Christ is his strong name. It means that he is anointed in the power of the Holy Spirit, that he has been endued with power within his humanity by the third person of the Trinity, and as he entered his public ministry, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God came upon him like a dove. And you remember after that Jesus went into the synagogue and he took the scroll of Isaiah 61:1 and he read it and he said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me for the Lord has anointed Me to preach." He was anointed with power by the Holy Spirit to successfully carry out his saving enterprise here upon the earth.

And then Lord is his sovereign name, kurios. It means ruler, despot, master, monarch, owner, sovereign one. Jesus said Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given unto Me." He possesses all authority to bring about every detail and every affair of providence to bring about the salvation of his chosen people.

He then says in verse 5, "through whom," the "whom" refers to Jesus Christ. "Through" is the word "dia" that means like a channel. It means a means. It's almost like a pipe and there is something that is going to be flowing through the Lord Jesus Christ on the basis of substitutionary death, and he says "through whom we," referring to all believers and only believers, "have received," the idea is to receive it as a free gift, not worked for it, "grace." All saving grace flows through the person and work of Jesus Christ to those who will put their faith and their trust in him. And this one word "grace" really represents the entirety of the gospel message. All of it is flowing through Christ. This reconciling grace, this redeeming grace, this saving grace, every aspect of the grace of God is flowing through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other pipeline for the grace of the Father to come to us except it come through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not one drop of saving grace outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is all exclusively coming to those who believe in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then he adds, "and apostleship," and what Paul wants us to know is not only has his salvation come through Christ but so also has his ministry come through Christ who is the head of the church, who has given gifts to men and some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as pastors, and teachers, and evangelists. It's all come by grace from the head of the church to each member in the church.

Do you see that Christ is the very epicenter of the gospel? That Christ is the very circumference of the gospel? That Christ is everything in the gospel? Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "If you want more conversions, put more of Christ in your sermons. If you want more revivals, put more of Christ in your preaching." He said, "A sermon

without Christ is an awful thing." He said, "If you leave out Christ, you've left the sun out of the day. You've left the moon out of the night. You've left the waters out of the sea. You've left the floods out of the river. You've left the harvest out of the year. You've left the soul out of the body. You've left joy out of heaven." He said, "There is no gospel worth proclaiming if Jesus is forgotten." He said, "A sermon without Christ is like an empty whale that mocks the weary traveler." He said, "A sermon without Christ is like a cloud that will never send rain. A sermon without Christ has no saving power for He is the Savior of sinners. He is the Savior of the world."

Do you preach Christ? Do you preach Christ and him crucified? Paul as he brought the entirety of his theology together as he addressed the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:23, he said, "We preach Christ and Him crucified." He said in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "I resolved to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." In Colossians 1:28, he tightened it even tighter and he said, "We proclaim Him." Let us preach Christ. Let us preach him.

So let's continue, number 5, the strength of the gospel. The gospel has power to change and transform lives. The gospel does more than give pardon. The gospel gives power to live a new life. That's what he'll say in verse 16. But here he says in verse 5, "to bring about the obedience of faith." Faith here is the subjective element of the gospel. There is in the gospel the objective element and the subjective element. The objective element is the facts of the gospel, that is found in verses 2, 3 and 4. The hardcore facts of the gospel, the person and work of Christ. But here in verse 5, we have the subjective element of the gospel which is faith. The only way that the work of Christ is applied to the guilty sinner is by their act of faith in Jesus Christ. "For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not as a result of works lest any man should boast."

But this saving faith is not just a mere intellectual assent. It is not a mere emotional response. It activates the will. It's more than just the mind and the emotions, there is the volition that is activated in true saving faith and it begins at the moment of conversion. The first step through the narrow gate is a step of obedient faith and he says here "to bring about," meaning the gospel brings about, "the obedience of faith." The obedience of faith means the faith that produces obedience or the obedience that faith produces. All true saving faith produces obedience to the will and to the work of God. There is no easy-believism here. There is no antinomianism here. There is no non-lordship here. It is obedience that is the mark of true saving faith.

Matthew 7:21, Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven." In Romans 10:9, Paul says, "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Obedience is an essential component element in true saving faith. This is the strength of the gospel. It provides all that we need. And the faith that God grants as a result of regeneration, it is a faith that is active, that is dynamic, that is submissive to the Lordship of Christ, and it is obedient to the will and to the work of God.

Now very quickly, notice number 6, the scope of the gospel. So to whom should this gospel be preached? He says "among all the Gentiles." All the Gentiles is a way of saying, there is amazing grace for every race, that out of every tribe and tongue and nation and people, the gospel must go. The Gentiles here referring to all the nations, and Paul will specify and break that out in verse 14 when he says both to Greeks and to barbarians. The Greeks were the upper class, they were the educated, they were well read, they had social graces, they were very polished, and Paul said, "I want to reach the Greeks," but then he says the barbarians. That's the lower class. The barbarians were so rough with their mouth they could barely be understood when they spoke. They were unlettered, untaught, unread. They were crude and when they opened their mouth to the Greeks it sounded like this, "Bar, bar, bar, bar, bar." "You're one of those barbarians. We can't even understand what you say. You just murder the language." And Paul said, "I want to reach those who are in the basement. I want to reach those who are in the penthouse." And what this is, is a literary device known as inclusio or inclusion and it means and everything in between. It would be like saying from the east coast of the west coast and what is implied, and every part of the United States in between. And what Paul is saying here is that he is under obligation to preach the gospel from those who are at the top, to those who are at the bottom, and everyone in between that the providence of God would bring across my path. And he does the same at the end of verse 14 when he says to the wise and to the foolish. The wise or the Greeks are at the top, they're wise in the things of this world, and the foolish are the barbarians who have never been educated and have never been trained and they're just foolish even in the ways of the world.

And so Paul is saying that this gospel is for all the Gentiles and is "for His name's sake," it is for the fame of his name so that there will be more voices in the Hallelujah chorus, so that there will be more followers of Jesus Christ, so there will be more worshipers who will be singing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," so there will be more being conformed into the very image of Jesus Christ.

I have one more heading that I want to leave with you and it is in verse 6 and the first part of verse 7 and I want to call it the success of the gospel, and before I read verse 6, I want to tell you that God guarantees the success of his own gospel. Christ will not die in vain. There will be a chosen bride who will be redeemed and who will come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel will not return void. God himself will guarantee the success of his own gospel and he will send out a call to all of the elect, and when the gospel is preached by you and me, God will effectually, irresistibly call to faith in Jesus Christ those whom he chose from before the foundation of the world.

So he says in verse 6, "among whom you also are the called." When he says "you also," that means there are called not only in those who are called in Rome but there are also those who are called in Corinth, and in Ephesus, and Colossae, and Philippi, and in all different places, they're just scattered all around the world.

"Among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ." The definite article "the." Do you see that? That is designating a very specific group, those who have been called out of darkness and into light, those who have been summoned and subpoenaed by the

sovereign power of God himself. A theologian must always make distinctions and we must make a very careful distinction between the two calls that are related to salvation. There is the external call and there is the internal call. The external call is the call of the messenger. It is the call of the preacher. It is the call of the Sunday school teacher, the evangelist or the parent, the call that goes out as the gospel is preached and it can go no further than the ear. For anyone to be saved there must be the second call that is extended. That call is not given by a man. That call is given by God himself and it is the internal call of God that draws into saving relationship with Jesus Christ those who are saved from before the foundation of the world. God does not call internally until you and I call externally, and we must preach the gospel, and as we preach the gospel, God will send forth his internal call at the appropriate time, at the right place according to his sovereign will and providence, and God's call overcomes man's resistance. God's call always is effectual, meaning it is effective. He makes us willing in the day of his power.

And so God himself guarantees that there will be those who will believe in Jesus Christ and there are those who put up resistance, there are those who live in unbelief, who have reprovved the gospel until that time when God summons them to himself. Those whom he foreknew he predestined, and those whom he predestined he called, and those whom he called he justified, and those whom he justified he glorified. The group that God began with in eternity past is the group that God will complete his work in in eternity future. The first two took place in eternity past, those whom he foreknew, meaning those whom he previously loved and chose to love with a distinguishing love, are those whom he predestined in eternity past, and where that sovereign eternal saving will of God intersects within time is with this divine call. And God called me at one point and he called you at another point, and we were at different places but all according to the sovereign will of God, and God overcame our resistance and God conquered our once proud heart, and God took out our heart of stone and he gave us a heart of flesh, and he gave us the gift of repentance and faith, and he raised us from the grave and we answered the call because he gave us ears to hear. He gave us eyes to see. He gave us a heart to believe. And in that moment that we were regenerated, we called on the name of the Lord because he first called us, and he justified us and one day in eternity future he will glorify us and there will be no dropouts along the way. No one will be added along the way. God has this whole gospel enterprise wired and if you don't go preach the of gospel, God will have someone else go preach the gospel that every word one of his elect will be called after a preacher calls them to faith and Jesus Christ.

And so God guarantees the success of his own gospel and Paul won't let that go and it carries over into verse 7, "to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints." That does not mean that they are called saints, they are called to be saints. They are called out of the grave of sin and raised by the power of the Spirit. They are called by God. When Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," if he had not said Lazarus the whole graveyard would have emptied. But he has the power in his voice to call the dead to life and so as you and I preach the gospel, the power of God is activated in our ministries and all of those whom he foreknew and predestined will be called. When they're in Rome, they're in Philippi, they're in Los Angeles, they're in Dallas, they're in Atlanta, we just go preach the gospel to everybody and we leave the results to a sovereign God who will call his own people to

himself. Spurgeon said, "Preach the gospel, the gates of hell shake. Preach the gospel, prodigals come home. Preach the gospel to every creature, it is the Master's mandate and the Master's power to everyone who believes."

As I bring this message to a conclusion, it would be naive of me to think that everyone in this building is a believer in Jesus Christ. Jesus had only 12 and one was a devil. How many among us here today would be yet outside of Christ, would be yet outside of the kingdom of God, and as you find yourself here today and as you have heard this gospel message, are you sure that you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Have you come to repent of your sins? Have you forsaken your own religiosity and your own self-righteousness? Have you renounced your life of sin? Have you turned to the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you thrown yourself upon his mercy? Have you said, "Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me, the sinner"? Have you denied yourself? Have you taken up a cross to become a follower of Jesus Christ? And Jesus says, "Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me for I'm meek and lowly in heart. You shall find rest for your souls for My burden is easy and My yoke is light." The only thing you'll give up is your sin and you will receive his righteousness. He will wipe the slate clean. He will give you a new heart. He will give you a new life. He will give you a new standing before him. Why would you hesitate? Why would you procrastinate? Why would you prolong coming to faith in Jesus Christ? And if you find yourself here today without Christ, he says to you, "Enter through the narrow gate." He himself is this narrow gate. Come to him. "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink and out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water."

It would be the greatest decision of your life to forsake your sin and turn to the Savior and receive his forgiveness, his pardon, and the lavish of his redemption. If you have never believed upon Jesus Christ even here at a Shepherd's Conference, believe the gospel, believe the good news, believe upon Jesus Christ. Without Christ you're perishing. Without Christ you have no hope. Without Christ you're under the wrath of God. Without Christ you're the object of his wrath. But in Christ you have salvation and deliverance from destruction. In Christ you are rescued from all ruin. Jesus said, "Him who comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." He is the friend of sinners. He has come to seek and to save that which is lost.

What a glorious thing it would be for you to be found at Grace Community Church during a Shepherd's Conference and for you to come to the saving arms of Jesus Christ and to receive his glorious salvation. If you've never done so, do so at this moment. Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, today is the day of salvation. He who hardens his heart being often reproved shall suddenly be cut off and that without remedy. Boast not yourself of tomorrow, you know not what a day may bring forth. Just come to Christ this moment, today, and receive his saving grace that is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.

Father, thank You for the power and the purity, the profundity in this gospel message. We have been set apart from our mothers womb to preach the gospel, to testify of this gospel, to take this gospel to the nations and, Lord, we pray that You would stir our hearts here today to give ourselves to this gospel with even yet greater commitment, submission and surrender. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.