

The Gospel of God

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- [0 : 0 0] I'm going to be with you for, you can tell I'm a little bit rusty with the presenting side of things. I apologize.
- I was in St. Columbus for two years with my family and Hutch was three months old when we moved over here and Nola was born here in this city.
- She's very excited to come back and to work on her Scottish and we walked by Blackett Avenue last night and saw where she was born and unfortunately in Blackett Avenue.
- That's a different story for a different time. But we were here with the congregation for two years and then I joined the congregation up in Strathpefer and Dingwall and was there for two years.
- So it's a delight to be back. I did not pick up a Scottish accent. I still have my southern redneck accent which is not quite as novel where I'm from.
- [1 : 0 6] So I wish I had picked up the Scottish Brogue but I didn't. But I'm excited to be back with you for these next few weeks. For our time together, Dan and I are going to be passing off times morning and evenings for the next few weeks as Dan's at placement here and I'm able to be here and Derek is off having a sabbatical which is much needed for him.
- And during our time together we are going to be looking at the Gospel. You're going to be looking at in a five part series how Paul in the letter to the Romans defines the Gospel.
- If you're a Christian you're familiar with the term the Gospel. If you're not maybe it needs a little bit of explaining but it's basically the good news about Jesus.
- And before we kind of look at our passage for tonight introducing the book of Romans, I think we want to keep a couple of things in mind not just for tonight but also for the coming weeks as we talk about the Gospel.
- I think for one, for those of us who are Christians and if we've been Christians for quite some time and in conversations with other Christians we probably throw around the term the Gospel fairly regularly.
- [2 : 3 4] But it can be a little bit confusing. You know do you understand you use terms quite often and maybe here in Scotland it's like I, right?
- Where it was a joke to me when I first arrived here that a Scotsman can have a five minute conversation with another Scotsman and just use the word I. I, I, I, I.
- And you're like got it. Okay, there you go. And so you use the terms so often but there would be a time when in that conversation they go I and you go I, right?
- Because you have a sense of maybe we're not talking about the same thing. And that I think is true when we talk about the Gospel as Christians.
- We all use the term and we assume our familiarity with it but oftentimes I think as Christians we only talk about a portion of it.
- [3 : 3 7] We limit the scope of the Biblical Gospel. We don't broaden it to its full implications and I'll just say for the, for next week we're going to talk about sin.

Hey everybody come back. And then in the next couple of weeks that we'll be here I'll be talking about justification, sanctification and glorification.

Now if you're not a Christian here and those terms are weird to you, it's okay for some of us Christians they're weird too and we don't understand them and so we're going to look at them.

But what I want to argue is that it's the whole of Jesus' plan to not only justify us but to sanctify us and then ultimately to resurrect us and to make us like him that is the Gospel that we should be speaking of.

And then secondly as we talk about this concept together I think that we need to recognize the context in which we live.

[4 : 43] You know right before the service people are ducking in and out of the sanctuary. They're looking at the grand pulpit that Derek won't let me preach from.

And coming in and they want to kind of preview the history and kind of get an understanding of what we're about. But what if you've been in the congregation for more than about ten minutes what you will find is that we in the free church don't often times reflect the culture out there.

Not just the free church but as Christians you go outside of these walls and probably honestly inside the walls as well but there are tons of ideas outside of these walls.

There are this city and the beauty of this city is that it is a melting pot of ideologies. There are spiritualists and there are atheists.

There are Christians and there are agnostics. There are secularists. There are those who just kind of claim I've been there and done that.

[5 : 55] But all of those wherever you come from if you're one of those people you come with a kind of view of life. How life fits together for you.

What love means. As Dan was talking about this morning why do we suffer. Those are not just questions and conundrums that Christians face.

Everyone of us faces those kinds of questions. One of the things that I want us to do as we're examining the gospel in our time together is that we examine not only what does it mean for us who claim Jesus, who follow Jesus but also what does it mean for us interacting with our unbelieving friends and our neighbors.

How do we equip ourselves to talk about the good news of Jesus in a way that actually engages the imagination, the joys that as Dan said this morning it brings comfort to those who are in sorrow so that we're always kind of interacting with the alternatives.

As we talk about our good news we know that there are other people out there that think that there is better good news or an alternative good news. We always need to have an eye both to what it means for us as believers but also to our unbelieving friends.

[7 : 21] That's really what I want us to do. I hope in the next few weeks that we actually you walk away, here's my goal, is that you walk away with going wow the promises of the good news of Jesus are bigger than I thought they were or if you're not a Christian here that you will at least begin to think, huh I need to evaluate my view of life in light of what Jesus says and I hope that St. C's is a place that you can kind of come in and belong before you believe that you test out the gospel ground and see if it's solid for your life.

So I want to both internalize it as well as think about how to communicate it to our friends. If you would look in Romans chapter 1 verse 1 down through 17 we're going to do an introduction as Paul talks about the centrality of the gospel of God in our lives and then we'll kind of unpack it over the next few weeks.

This is God's word. Paul a servant of Christ Jesus called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.

The gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures according to his son regarding his son who as to his human nature was a descendant of David and who through the spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the son of God by his resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him and for his namesake we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles all the nations to obedience that comes from faith and you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

[9 : 42] First I think my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is being reported all over the world. God whom I served with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his son is my witness how constantly I remember you.

In my prayers at all times and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be open for me to come to you. I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong that is that you and I may mutually be encouraged by one another's faith.

I do not want you to be unaware brothers that I planned many times to come to you but have been prevented from doing so until now in order that I might have a harvest among you just as I have had among other Gentiles.

I am bound both to Greeks and to non Greeks both to the wise and to the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes. First for the Jew and then for the Gentile for in the gospel the righteousness from God is revealed a righteousness that is by faith from first to last just as it is written the righteous shall live by faith.

[11 : 23] Thus far God's word may add his blessing to it. The first thing that I want us to look at this morning this evening together is what Paul is kind of pushing to the forefront even in his opening statement there Paul a servant of Christ Jesus called to be an apostle set apart for the gospel of God.

The first thing that I want us to understand is this that the gospel is at the center of the Christian life that Paul is pushing the good news of Jesus to the front of the line as a descriptor of what it means to follow Jesus.

And the reason that I think that now that is a fairly simplistic comment but I think it's also profound how we distort it sometimes.

And I know in my own story I have done that in the past that I have become I've been a Christian now for 19 years and I can remember early on my confusion because I came to Jesus and then I kind of fell into this trap of kind of having this idea that the next step is kind of lead Jesus over here and become this kind of theologian.

That real discipleship is actually kind of going off and intellectualizing the faith. And Paul by encouraging us to center our lives on the gospel is putting that to death.

[13 : 01] But the gospel for Paul as he continues to come back to it in these first 17 verses and will expound it over the next several chapters Paul is saying you don't leave Jesus.

Jesus and the gospel are not kind of hey come in by Jesus and then kind of grow through something else. The gospel over arches all of it.

But the gospel is not merely the entry point of the Christian life but it is the vehicle of the Christian life and it is the goal of the Christian life.

And I think sometimes we have the tendency to kind of think about the gospel as any other kind of theological concept. Yeah the gospel the good news of Jesus salvation I got that yes resurrection got that virgin birth got that yes the church and the way we should relate to one another got that baptism got it.

Paul is not saying that. What he is doing here is he's setting up a paradigm through which we as a church must look at the Christian ministry.

[14 : 10] And it is a paradigm of more like concentric circles out than a kind of continuum where you kind of come to Jesus and then kind of move forward. It is more concentric circles where we come to faith in Christ initially and as we trust Christ we grow and grow and grow and grow in our understanding in our desire what our affections lead toward the way we steward our money the way we love the unlovely the way we minister to our city all of those things grow out of the gospel.

Paul wants us to understand that the gospel is at the center of the Christian life and it's important that we point that out because Paul not only says is it the center of the light Christian life but it's always been the focal point of history look at verse two.

He says the gospel which was promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures regarding his son who as to his human nature was a descendant of David and who through the power and through the Holy Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the son of God by his resurrection Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do you see what Paul is saying is the reason I'm centering upon the gospel is because all of this from beginning to end is about it.

It's always been about it. All of the law of the Old Testament the three quarters of the Bible that comes before the name Jesus enters in is about him.

[16 : 03] Christian that should affect in some ways just the way we read our Bibles that we don't kind of abstract the story of David as though it's somehow about you know finding our five stones somewhere to knock down our giants but that it's about Jesus it's about he who is weak overcomes.

In his weakness he finds strength and so Paul is driving this point home and I think it's important for us to remember that because there's always a tendency to opt for an alternative story than the gospel upon which to center our lives.

That's true certainly for our unbelieving friends for those of you who are who are acknowledge yourselves as not Christians here you have a story you have something that you're constructing your identity and how you fit together reality in your mind that's understandable but I think even as Christians what we do is oftentimes take the narratives of our world which is in large part be a good person and do your best and we Christianize them that we create a new morality that Jesus came to make good girls and boys and I'm just trying to do the best I can.

Sisters and sisters that good news is as destructive as any form of secularism ever has been because what both of those things do is they put us at the center of the story that I'm the one that achieves I'm the one that either does good in the world and kind of you know I've got 80 years on this earth and I'm going to kind of help to leave it a better place than I did but even so many Christians we struggle with the same concept of well you know I know that God talks a lot about grace but just going to really kind of do the best I can and really not hope on God's grace I'm going to kind of hope in myself.

Both of those stories are utterly destructive because they are false foundations. About 20 years ago the people of Colorado Springs Colorado in the United States Colorado is a beautiful scenic place tons of the mountains people go on holiday to to snow ski there or in the summertime to hike the mountain peaks of the Rocky Mountains and there's a community there called Colorado Springs and it's a fairly new community long ago it was a coal mounting town they pulled millions and millions of tons of coal out of that place they dug all around that what is now Colorado Springs and then the mines closed down most

[19 : 27] Americans don't burn coal for kind of house anymore and those types of things and so the mines gradually slowed down and shut down and the grass began to grow over what was formerly kind of this rugged land where they were moving around and had tons of trucks moving out and this that and the other and there was there were a lot of efforts to kind of wall off the the tunnels and and then they began to see this landscape and they thought this would be a great place to build because it become beautiful it's it's it's it's kind of in between all the mountains is a beautiful place to be so what they did was people started moving there people said man this is a beautiful place to live and more and more people started moving there and and and strip malls and started coming in and and and people began to build businesses there and banks moved in and and and grocery stores were there and all of a sudden people started noticing when they'd walk out their house out of their house the porch seemed to slope down more than it used to a door would stick as it was attempted to be closed and then more noticeable things people would literally be driving and all of a sudden sinkholes would open up people began to freak out naturally if you had a sinkhole in your backyard you would freak out and what they began to notice was that the caverns underneath this city that had long been boarded up were still empty and they were fine when there were no one on top of them but as soon as all those people moved into the city the weight began to press down on those empty tunnels and the houses began to fall in people would come back and their house was five feet lower than it used to be which is not going to make you happy but what what happened there you see what happened was when life really came into that city it sat down on a false foundation and it crushed in on itself and what Paul is saying here is I want you to center life on the gospel because it is the only solid foundation upon which to plant your feet and your hopes and your identities he's going to drive that point home throughout the coming weeks and all these other false hopes whether they are religious or irreligious that have us at the center of the story will cave in is what Paul is saying so Paul says you must keep the gospel center in the Christian life and then he goes on to establish the foundation and says so why why is Jesus a good foundation and he says Jesus is the only one with power look at what he says in verse 16 Paul says I'm not ashamed of the gospel shame of course comes when we're insecure we're afraid that what what is real might be found out about us and he says come on in test it stand here stomp on the foundation of the gospel be assured

I'm unashamed I will let you be here and as I said earlier I know that I can speak on behalf of Derek and the rest of the congregation if you are not a Christian here or if you are kind of wrestling with how to invite your unbelieving friends around this is a safe place to invite people in and say test it out no pressure but come we are unashamed of the story that Jesus tells because it is true and it is solid and firm and you can come and test it out and stand upon it but he grounds this idea he says I'm not ashamed of the gospel why because it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes now words are powerful we could spend some more time kind of evaluating the powerful speeches throughout history we could look at we could look at the American president Abraham Lincoln after the war torn devastation of the American uncivil civil war and his speech at the get his address and get his bird as he tried to reunite what had been devastated by a nation we could look at Churchill how he was this this bulldog who was a firm pillar of the nation as war erupted in chaos broke out we could look at Martin Luther King juniors I have a dream speech that's still inspiring generations to hope for something better words are very powerful but I want you to understand from Paul's perspective here when he talks about the gospel and he talks about it being center central to your life he is talking about something more than words look at what he says and where he grounds the gospel in verse three you see what was promised beforehand this gospel rests the words rest on the back of Jesus regarding his son who in human nature was a descendant of David and through the spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the son of God Paul says why is this good news why is Jesus is good news the best good news why is it a better and more firm foundation upon which to found your life and your identity and he says Jesus and he specifically points to Jesus is humanity and his deity the fact that Jesus entered into my pain and yours the Jesus is not a God that sits on the clouds like those you know Greek gods that basically use humans as their pawns to kind of serve them in their own interests the gospel talks about Jesus who enters into your story who will enter into your story who walks with you in the midst of pain and he knows it all so well because he bore sin and death and experienced the fullness of hell that you might not that's why it's good news and as we evaluate Christian as we evaluate how to share the good news with our unbelieving friends around our city

and our workplace and those kinds of things I hope that you do not preach the gospel in such a way that it's kind of pie in the sky by and by but did you say you know what you know what's good about Jesus is not that he's going to kind of eliminate everything but that he's honest and we can be honest and that I can look sin and death fully in the face as it takes me down and hurts me as I hurt others as I fail you and you fail me that kind of honesty that's what we're going to be talking about next week by the way is free but he not only grounds the power of the gospel and the fact that Jesus identifies with our broken story but that he also identifies the power of the gospel and saying that Jesus overcame that broken story that is not your identity Christian yes you are a sinner and we all will be until we go to glory and Jesus wipes away every tear and he wipes away every lust and every fear and every anger and every hatred and the sin and plagues of death that are all around us but your identity is in him when Paul says in Galatians 2 20 it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me the life I live in the body is not defined by sin and death but by faith in the one who gave himself for me that is power and he says he promises in his death and resurrection that there is a power a righteousness from God verse 17 that is apart from us that is by faith that is not something we provide and by the way righteousness certainly is a legal element but there is also a sense that we need to hear in the gospel there is a promise of rightness that Jesus promises something full and whole and good the last thing that I want us to see is not only that the gospel should be the center of our lives and that there is power and that Jesus is the power of the gospel but because the gospel is a gospel of grace it is a gospel that is big not small Paul drives home the point that says the gospel is good news for all people verse 5 it is that I am going to preach the gospel among the Gentiles verse 8 that I am going to proclaim I proclaim that your faith has been proclaimed all over the world that

I long to be with you verse 13 that I might have a harvest among you too verse 16 that is not just a gospel for the religious folks of the day but for you pagans too that's good news for all of us for all of this city it is a good news that demands to be declared among us to understand that there is no one outside the grace of God that's good news I want us to understand too that St. Columbus we are not owners of the gospel but stewards of the gospel it is not ours it is not a free church gospel it is Jesus's gospel it is not principally inviting people into our denomination as great as it might be it is principally inviting them into the kingdom of Jesus and we are either wise and faithful stewards of that gospel we have given or we bury it in the ground the other thing that I want us to understand as we think about communicating the gospel all throughout our city is this you will not Amenbo you will not persuade anyone I will not persuade anyone come be a part of what Jesus is offering you to be a part of come and be a part of this community where we love and fellowship together come and test and see if this is solid that you can build your life upon it it's not going to wash out from underneath your feet no one's coming if you don't believe it first one of the things that we struggle with as a heritage of people is assurance we've got this weird idea that somehow being confident that Jesus is mine and all that he has promised is mine is somehow uppity and not humble and that is a lie it chokes the life out of the church and it chokes the life out of missions and it chokes the life out of the gospel St. Columbus we must believe the gospel those people in Colorado Springs as they were facing the devastation of their city and as they looked around and kind of everybody's freaking out where whose life and whose house is going to be devastated next and is my job going to be there tomorrow because it fell into the earth what they did was they got out a huge grid they looked all over kind of like the Lothian bus map you know they looked all over and all the tunnels and ins and outs around that community and you know what they did they brought in trucks huge cement trucks and they would open up this 10 foot hole in the ground in front of somebody's yard and they would pump in cement to create a new foundation where there wasn't one before now it hurt

people to cut out their lawns their gardens were torn up but then they had something that they could rest upon that is the gospel mission for us it is messy it is tough it's going to mess with our lives but it will fill you up Jesus is a sure foundation may we believe the gospel together in way we proclaim it to an unbelieving world that they may see and that we might like the Roman church be a church that says your faith St. Columbus has been proclaimed all around the city and it is filling up like the tunnels under Colorado Springs filling up and providing a foundation for many many other people as they come and see and believe the gospel let me pray for us Father we thank you we thank you for the joy of Jesus we thank you for the simple but profound promise that there is life in him bless us as we go as we both internalize and believe the gospel anew and have our paradigm of the gospel refreshed and broadened and assured in our hearts and may that carry us into this city to labor to serve to die that others may experience the grace of the gospel to in Jesus name. Amen.