

Core Value: Mission**The Power and Obligation of the Gospel**

Romans 1:1–17; focus on 16–17

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh⁴ 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, ⁵ 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,

⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

PRAY**The Gospel: The Substance of Mission**

The Gospel is God rescuing sinners who cannot in any way rescue themselves. God counts as righteous the unrighteous, not through their work, but through the work of Jesus the Son. This is the good news. And considering the binary consequence of either eternal life or eternal death, it is the best news that there has ever been, or ever will be.

2

The Gospel is the possession of Jesus Christ (v. 1) — Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus,... set apart for the gospel of God. The Gospel of God.

The Gospel is not man's idea; It originates with, and is the possession of God, being planned before the foundation of the world, and first told in the *Proto Euangelion* — the first telling of the Gospel — in Genesis 3: He, that is Christ, will crush the head of Satan and destroy the sin that destroys us. There is no place for human boasting or work.

The Gospel is focused on Jesus: v. 3 — concerning his Son...

The Gospel is the good news of sin debt paid by Christ. It is not good news about how you can improve yourself; it is good news that Jesus did what you could never do by purchasing your salvation, making peace with God by the blood of his cross. It is rightly said that you contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary. The Gospel is laser focused on Jesus, the Savior of the world.

The Gospel is accomplished by Jesus: v. 4 — Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead...

He came in human form to live a perfect, righteous life, fulfilling the righteous requirements of God's law, which we cannot do. He bled and died as a substitute to pay the penalty of sin for those who come to him in faith. And he conquers death in his resurrection from the dead... He smashed the power of sin giving resurrection power to those who come to him in faith.

Jesus accomplishes the Gospel.

The Gospel that sinners can be counted righteous is the power of God: v. 16 — I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...

The proclaiming of the Gospel is the power of God

- the power of God to expose human sin — God is righteous, we are not;
- the power of God to destroy human pride — you cannot earn or reason you into righteousness;
- the power of God to exalt the divine Savior — righteous Son of God;
- the power of God call us to faith — given our spiritual bankruptcy, we must trust the work of another.

In other words the Gospel's power is the means God has ordained to make dead men live.

3

Note that there is one Gospel — there is no other source of power:

“**The**” Gospel — definite article— not a Gospel, or one variety of Gospel. The Gospel is definite and exclusive.

Paul points us to this singular Gospel that is the possession of Jesus, that focuses on Jesus, that is accomplished by Jesus. This is the only Gospel, and it is true for all people, at all times, in all places. There are no other flavors or versions or ethnic subcategories. The Gospel intolerantly denies any other way, any variance, any variety, any self-effort, or any alteration. *That the* Gospel is absolutely singular underscores the absolute futility of attempting any other way, any variance, another variety of the Gospel, any self-effort, or alteration of the Gospel to save anyone. We must not miss that. There is no other Gospel. There is no other good news. There is no other hope.

Sinners can be saved through Jesus Christ alone. This is the power of God for salvation. There is no power to save in anything or anyone else.

There is no power to save in religious efforts of tithing, in good deeds, in circumcision, in being part of religious body or church; there is no power to save in baptism, in communion, in attending a group bible study. There is no power to save in planting a church. These may be indicators of salvation, but they are not procurers of salvation. They have no power to save.

Gospel power is absolute in Christ and is exclusive of all other forms of help or power. There is no benefit to be found in horses or chariots (as Psalm 20 says), in kings, in politicians, in governments, in favorable policies. Conversely, unfavorable policies, hostile governments, and social media suppression have no capacity to diminish or temper the power of the Gospel.

These are neither the locus nor conduit of God’s power.

Social, cultural, and revolutionary movements have no power to provide righteousness to the human soul which will one day stand before the Righteous Judge and give account for everything done in this body.

There is no hope anywhere else except in the Gospel of Jesus.

There is no other name given among men by which we must be saved except the name of Jesus.

The Gospel is the power of God because of Christ’s finished, death conquering, sin-smashing work.

4

We are prone — dreadfully prone — to be spiritually ADHD. We can't stay fixed and focused on the sufficient Savior. We see shiny things elsewhere in the world that we think will help, or add to, or supplement our condition, or somehow improve or upgrade Christ's salvation. That is folly! And so Paul tells the Corinthians, who are dangerously distracted with personalities, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." Why? Because there is no power, no hope of salvation, no righteousness in anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ!

Beloved, let the truth of the exclusive power of the Gospel radically reorient our thinking, and anchor our hope and confidence in this turbulent time. Let's say with the Apostle, "We have decided to know nothing among ourselves except Jesus Christ and him crucified!" As it was for Paul, as it was for the Romans, as it was for the Corinthians, as it was for the Reformers, as it was for the Puritans, as it was for Jim Elliot — who was martyred in South America 65 years ago for the sake of the Gospel — There is no power of God or righteousness apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are compelled to proclaim His exclusive, converting Gospel at any cost because it is infinitely valuable.

*Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
The body they may kill.
God's truth abideth still;
His Kingdom is forever.*

Our hope is in the Gospel. What is that hope? Righteousness. The hope of the Gospel is righteousness revealed from heaven.

God is righteous, and He requires righteousness. If you are using the McCheyne plan of reading through the bible in a year, you saw this last week that God told Abraham he had to walk before blameless. That is, in sinless perfection. Did he do that? No.

God judges righteously according to his righteous standard, as we read in the Call to Worship from **Psalm 96 — he will judge the peoples with equity; he will judge the world in righteousness.**

The entrance into God's kingdom requires moral and spiritual perfection. Perpetual perfection in deed, thought, attitude and affection. When we are confronted with that standard, we realize we are not righteous by any standard in any area. Therein lies our hopelessness: righteousness is not in us.

5

But the hope of the Gospel is that sinners can be counted righteous, though they have none. What is inherent in us is sinfulness, as Romans 3 tells us: We are all seekers of sin and self, not God.

Since we seek sin and not righteousness, if we are to know righteousness, it must be revealed. So it is in Christ. He perfectly kept the righteous Law of God and imputes his righteousness to those who believe, who trust him. This is our hope.

The righteousness that is revealed is not supplemental or supplemented, as though we had some measure of righteousness that is simply below par. Righteousness is not earthly, as though we can lift ourselves up to God through some earth-bound ingenuity. Righteousness is from heaven. God undertakes to provide righteousness that is infinitely beyond us, but required of us. We cannot by doing good cut out the deadly root of evil we are born with.

The Gospel is received by faith ... from first to last.

We mentioned Abraham and God's requirement of moral perfection, which Abraham did not have. But Abraham is held up in the Scripture as a model. A model of moral perfection? No, a model of one who believed that God would do what God said he would do. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. Righteousness was counted to him... It was not earned by him. The source of righteousness was outside of Abraham. The requirement was righteousness. The source of righteousness was in God.

We do not begin in faith, understanding our spiritual bankruptcy, then at some point, with a little help from my friend Jesus, get my meritorious legs under me and somehow finish off by my own effort. Salvation is of the Lord from first to last, so faith is in the Lord from first to last.

The Gospel is Obligating — It obligates us to share, proclaim, preach, to give what we have freely received. The ministry years of Jesus saw him proclaiming the Gospel to the Jews first. He came to his own, but his own received him not. But as he concludes his earthly ministry, he gives this unlimited, sweeping commission out of the fullness of his absolute authority: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Gospel changes not only our eternal spiritual home, it changes our present global assignment.

6

When Paul uses the term “Greek” in v. 16, he is not referring to a defined ethnicity, he is using 1st Century language to describe the known world. In the Jewish mind, the world was binary: Jews and everybody else: the Gentiles, or Greeks, as it is here. When he says the gospel is the power of God to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, he is saying the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of every tribe, language, people, and nation. None are outside of the redemptive reach of the Gospel, and our assignment is to be proclaimers and ambassadors of the Gospel.

Once we were living apart from God, disoriented to anything that matters in eternity. But those in Christ are saved from worthless pursuits and wasted lives through the power of the Gospel.

- He has made us a holy nation — one that infinitely transcends geo-political boundaries — a people for his own possession, that [we] may proclaim the excellencies of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

- He has repurposed all of life, including our jobs and daily living, and elevated us from dusty workers to Royal Ambassadors, as we are told in 2 Corinthians 5:

¹¹ Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others...

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ**...

As people who have been rescued by the Savior, whose eyes he has opened to behold his beauty, grace, and forgiveness, we are under obligation to declare his glory among the nations.

One of the things Steve and I have prayed even before Redeemer’s Grace Church launched was that God would use this place as a launching pad for missionaries. We are obligated by the grace we have received, and the eternal life that he gives, to go into the all the world with Gospel. So we pray for you, and we pray for your children. Not just that you, and they, escape the fires of Hell, but that we

7

all would be Ambassadors of Christ as he commands, snatching souls from the Devil's Hell as though our hands were the hands of Christ himself. The Gospel obligates us to the this joyful, meaningful, eternally rewarding, Christ-exalting work.

I pray God will raise up children and give them a heart for people around the world who daily live with no awareness of the light and life of the Gospel of Christ, who have no hope, and no salvation.

This last week a list of the top 10 nations where it is hardest to a Christian was released. There are places where there is a high likelihood it will cost your life to believe in Christ:

- 1. North Korea. Estimated number of Christians: 300,000**
- 2. Afghanistan. Estimated number of Christians: Thousands**
- 3. Somalia. Estimated number of Christians: A few hundred**
- 4. Libya. Estimated number of Christians: 36,200**
- 5. Pakistan. Estimated number of Christians: 4,015,000**
- 6. Eritrea. Estimated number of Christians: 2,492,000**
- 7. Sudan. Estimated number of Christians: 1,963,000**
- 8. Yemen. Estimated number of Christians: A few thousand**
- 9. Iran. Estimated number of Christians: 800,000**
- 10. India. Estimated number of Christians: 66,194,000**

There are more than 10 families here. There are more than 10 children here. I pray that in the days and years ahead, as Redeemer's Grace Church, her families and her children joyfully embrace Gospel mission for the glory of God and the joy of all peoples, that 10, 20, 30 years from now, the people of North Korea and Afghanistan, right down the list, and inhabitants of the distant coastlands are rejoicing in the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, having a righteousness revealed to them, and counted to them as they come to saving faith in Christ. As you have no other hope apart from Christ's Gospel, they have no other hope. But we are hope-dispensing Ambassadors of this Gospel!

If you're thinking I don't have to go overseas, you are correct. Think about someone you love who needs to hear and come under the power of the Gospel. Think of one person to whom you can serve as Christ's Ambassador. Next week I'm going to give you an assignment with that person.

8

As we consider the Gospel of hope and our global mission, we must be mindful of our own spiritual bankruptcy, our desperate need of the Gospel, and the necessity for us to first come to Christ in faith. I must believe he has done what I cannot do. You may need to respond to the Gospel. All the good news of salvation in Jesus, all he offers, all he done, all of his abundant mercy, eternal life in him... All that Christ has done remains of no value to me as long as I remain outside of Christ. Then, rather than peace with God through Christ, my sins are counted against me and the wrath of God abides. You must have a substitute. You must have a Savior. Today is the day of salvation. If you hear the Savior's voice, if you see the beauty of righteousness offered in Christ, do not harden your heart. The exposure of your sin, the destroying of your pride and selfishness, the end of living for yourself — the end of these is the beginning of eternal life through his finished, saving work. Believe in him without delay.

GOSPEL THREAD

PRAY