

The Gospel

ROMANS 1:16

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This morning, we have been looking at the GOSPEL. We have looked at a number of scriptures. We have also been singing some songs about it. I'm putting an image up here that we have over the baptistry downstairs, it's an image most of us have seen before, but it shows what the gospel really is. The scripture reference there is 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, where Paul says,

¹ Now I make known to you, brethren, the GOSPEL which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

The gospel, then, is the good news that Jesus came to this earth to give up his life for us. He took our place. He died, he was buried, and he was raised up from the dead. Just briefly, I would invite you to turn with me to another passage about the gospel - this one is found in Romans 1 (p. 1758). We will actually be looking at several references to the gospel scattered through Romans as we summarize what we've been singing and reading about today. I've put all of these references as well as a few supporting passages on the wall up here, in case you want to beat me to each one. But we start in Romans 1. Paul writes this letter to the church in Rome, and he starts in verse 1,

¹ Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as 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 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...

He continues, but the idea even at the beginning of Romans is that that gospel (or good news) is ***“of God”*** (in verse 1). In other words, it comes from God, it is about God, it is made possible by God, and the good news is about God's Son who was born and who was declared the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead. Sometimes we might think that the gospel is a New Testament idea, and it is. But I hope we also notice (in verse 2) that the gospel was ***“promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures.”*** In a

sense, the gospel was actually preached for hundreds if not thousands of years before Jesus ever came to this earth. In fact, in Galatians 3:8, Paul actually says that God ***“preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.’”*** The gospel, then, was preached in the Old Testament. When God promised Abraham that all of the nations would be blessed in him, he was speaking of Jesus. He was preaching the gospel.

This brings us to Romans 1:16, where Paul writes to this church in the capital city of the Roman Empire, and he says, ***“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.”*** The gospel, then, is the power of God for salvation. The gospel is good news, but as powerful as it is, the good news does not save everybody. We have the first hint of this as Paul explains that it is the ***“power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”***

As we learned in our song and scripture readings today, this belief starts with hearing. The gospel has to be preached. The gospel has to be taught. The gospel has to be shared. The gospel must be heard. The importance of preaching and hearing in God’s plan is outlined in Romans 10:14-17. In Romans 10, Paul is wishing that the members of his own physical family could be saved. He wants his fellow Jews to be saved. But as he is hoping that this happens, he realizes something. Notice, please, Romans 10:14-17,

¹⁴ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!” ¹⁶ However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

As we think about this good news, then, Paul states the obvious: It is impossible to obey something we have never heard. It is important, then, that we get the word out. We either preach and teach ourselves, or we send or support somebody who will. Maybe both. It’s important that we teach and preach, it’s important that we get the word out, because ***“faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”*** Faith comes from hearing. Faith is what happens when we hear the word of Christ in Scripture. When we come together as a church, then, it’s important that we study the Bible. We don’t come here to hear somebody’s opinion. We come here to hear the word of God. Our classes and our sermons need to be anchored in scripture. We also need to be reading and studying on our own. When we hear, we believe.

But as we have also been singing and reading this morning, there is more to it than just believing. Yes, believing is important. In James 2:19, James tells us that even the demons believe and tremble. The demons believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The demons believe that Jesus died, was buried, and was raised up. They know this. They believe this. The demons believe the gospel. The demons believe that Jesus died, that he was buried, and that he was raised up from the dead. But just believing something doesn’t save a person all on its own. If I go to the doctor and he or she gives me pills to cure something, I can believe that those pills will make me better, but I will never get better until my faith in the doctor causes me to take those pills. In a similar way: The gospel must also be obeyed. In 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Paul explains that the angels will deal out God’s retribution on ***“those who do not know God and...to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”*** Peter puts it in the form of a question in 1 Peter 4:17, when he says, ***“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*** The implication is: It won’t be good for those who do not obey the gospel.

So the question is: How do we obey the good news? We obey when we are so moved by what God did for us that we do what he tells us to do. We see what sin is, we turn away from it, and we imitate the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as we allow ourselves to be buried with him in baptism. This next image up here illustrates what baptism is. I would invite you to turn with me now to Romans 6:1-7 (p. 1765).

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.

We obey the gospel, then, when we re-enact the good news in our own lives. We die to sin, we are buried with Christ in baptism, and we are raised up to live the Christian life. If you are not yet a Christian, we are inviting you to take this step today. If baptism is for the forgiveness of sins (which the Bible teaches), and if baptism is how we are buried with Christ (as Paul explains here), then this is something we really need to do as soon as we understand how important it is. If you have any questions or if you would like to study this further, we invite you to investigate, we invite you to learn more about it. But if you are ready to take this step right now, we can fill up the baptistery we have downstairs, and you can obey the gospel within the hour. If you understand how important this is, you can let us know right now as we sing this next song. Let's all stand and sing together...

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