
The Gospel: Shaping Us for Ministry

Romans 1:16-17

As we close this ministry year, I thought I would take us through the book Romans and see how what we have learned this fall should shape us for serving together in the coming ministry year. If the gospel is what Romans says it is, then how ought we to incorporate that into our lives – into how we think and what we want in a life pleasing to God?

Introduction: The *Centrality* of God in the Gospel

1:1-17

The gospel is about God – about who He is and what He has done in and through His Son to save His people and thus magnify Himself and show Himself to be worthy of ultimate admiration. The centrality of God in the gospel involves two key elements

The Person of Christ

The gospel is about Christ Jesus, the Lord. It is about the Messiah, the Lord Jesus who came for His people, not just as physical descendants of Abraham, but all who are spiritual descendants. The gospel is about the doing and dying of our Savior as promised, predicted, prophesied, performed and proclaimed.

The Power of God

The gospel is the power of God to bring about the salvation of His people. The gospel is powerful because it tells us how God has effected our salvation and is powerful because it effects that salvation in our lives.

What are the practical implications for Paul and for us?

We must not be ashamed of the gospel. We must have confidence in the gospel. We must be able to trust the gospel to do what God says it will do – to highlight Christ and to save sinners.

We must preach the gospel. We must be eager to proclaim the gospel, to weave it into our life's story, into counsel of the lost and the saved. We must be prepared and poised to share the gospel.

Doctrine: We Must Learn the Gospel

If we are going to trust and teach the gospel, we must know it. In this day when we are largely ignorant of the gospel, it is time to learn the gospel.

The Gospel: Good News to a Sinful World

1:18-5:21

The gospel is good news to a sinful world. It begins by describing the problem of sinfulness and declaring the provision for sinfulness.

The Universality of Condemnation

1:18-3:20

Every person is a sinner – by union with Adam and by personal acts with the resulting condemnation by God. The downward spiral of sin in history and in cultures and in individual lives is graphically portrayed. Therefore, both Jew and Gentile are on equal footing as condemned sinners, guilty, deserving of death and in need of God's grace. He reaches that awful conclusion, none are righteous, every mouth is to be closed and the whole world is accountable to God.

The Way of Justification

3:21-4:25

Since we cannot be accepted by God on our own work or worth, then God has moved in Christ to accept us based on His work and worth – His merits. God is just and the justifier of those whom He saves for He punishes their sin in Christ and puts Christ's righteousness to their account, accepting them by faith through grace. Once again, the Jew and Gentile are on the same footing before God – both are accepted by faith in the Messiah's work and worth., His doing and dying.

The Blessedness of Justification

5:1-21

The good news then is that because of this righteousness we have access to God, reconciliation to God, peace with God, life from God, union with Christ, and grace reigning in this life until glory reigns in the life to come.

What does this mean for us?

We must affirm that all are sinners. The moralists, the pagans, the Muslims, the philosophers, our sweet neighbors, our loving family members – they are all condemned unless they have faith in Christ.

We must stop pretending that there is a hope outside of Christ – either for ourselves or for others. We must trust utterly in the finished work and tested righteousness of Christ.

We must revel and savor the sweetness of all that Christ's righteousness brings to us. It must fill our minds and shape our desires and fuel our worship and purify our walk.

The Gospel: Good News to a Struggling Believer**6:1-8:33**

The gospel is good news to the struggling believer. It tells how not to be enslaved to the old person we were and the old way that has since been fulfilled.

Freed from Sins' Enslaving Power**6:1-23**

Since we have died to the old man we were, we ought to live by the power of the new man we have become in Christ. We must stop yielding ourselves to sin and we must stop presenting ourselves to the occasions of sin. We are not slaves to sin but servants of righteousness.

Released from the Law's Arousing Principle**7:1-25**

Since we have died to the old sphere of the flesh, we are freed from being under Law. We are now in the sphere of the Spirit and are under grace. The Law stirs up our old self while grace enables the new self. But there will be a struggle with increasing holiness as we trust and rely on the saving and sanctifying work of Christ.

Indwelt by the Spirit's Enabling Presence**8:1-39**

Since we are now sons of God by birth and have been adopted and recognized as sons, we have the Spirit who resides in us and in whose sphere of life and authority we live and walk. So we are more than conquerors, by the Spirit in the midst of groaning while headed for glory.

So how is this to shape us for the coming year?

We must not live as though the old man we were is the way we are now. We must understand what God has done and what we are to do. We have a responsibility to stop presenting our bodies to do sin and stop presenting ourselves to the opportunities (temptations) to sin.

We must not become functional legalists. Law systems of living will simply enflame the old self. We must not look to rules to empower holiness, but to grace by the Spirit to enable a life pleasing to God.

We must expect that, while we are sons by the Spirit, we will experience groaning - hardships, difficulty, struggle - until glory comes. We are pilgrims on the way - we are headed home - we are not there yet.

The Gospel: Good News from a Sovereign God**9:1-11:36**

The gospel is good news from our sovereign God. What God's wisdom has designed and His will has decided, His work has done and His Word has declared.

The Purposes of God in Election**9:1-33**

The good news is that salvation is sure. It is sure to those whom God has chosen. Salvation does not depend in human choice or exertion, but on a merciful God. The objections that commonly arise are Scripturally and theologically answered. God will show the utter greatness of His glory as He endures with patience those prepared for wrath and moves with power to save those chosen by His love.

The Principles of Faith for Salvation**10:1-21**

The salvation that God has purposed comes to His elect through faith. They believe in Christ and bow to Him. Thus God has chosen both Jews and Gentiles to be saved – but they both are saved by faith and repentance. Thus, anyone who calls on the name of the Lord, may be saved.

The Prospects of Mercy for Israel**11:1-32**

But what happens then to all the promises for Israel? The promises to Abraham and David are fulfilled in Christ. Being a physical descendent of Abraham does not give you a claim to the promises. Only those who were spiritual descendants, both among Jew and Gentile, were heirs of the promises. Among unbelieving Israel, there was always a remnant who believed. God's promises will be fulfilled when all the elect Jews are gathered in down through this age until the full number of all the elect are saved. Thus the wisdom of God and the worth of God are held up for all to admire and acclaim.

What does this mean for us?

We must be a people who are not afraid to affirm with joy and clarity the Biblical, God honoring, humbling doctrine of election. It is our aim as a church to savor the supremacy of God – and this truth is a sweet morsel.

We must clearly proclaim the gospel and call for Biblically defined responses. We must proclaim and invite people to believe the gospel and bow to Christ. It is not to ask Jesus in their hearts or any number of other unbiblical formulations. For the sake of their souls, call on them to believe, bow and call.

Our expectations for Israel must be defined by a New Covenant and Christ centered fulfillment. It is in Christ that all they (and we) are promised will receive as He has inaugurated the Kingdom and will bring it to fulfillment and consummation in the future.

Duty: We Must Live the Gospel

Since all this is true of the gospel, we must live by the gospel. We must live what we have learned.

The Gospel: God's Will for a Sanctified People

12:1-15:13

The gospel is first God's will for a sanctified people. It is about how we as God's people are to live in this world. We have two major challenges to face – purity in the midst of evil and unity in the midst of diversity.

Our Relationships as the Covenant Community

12:1-21

The gospel establishes the expectations and aims for Christians together in church community. Our relationships in our church – in the community of believers – requires self-sacrifice, radical transformation, grace-enabled use of gifts and powerfully authentic love.

Our Responsibilities in the Already and Not Yet

13:1-14

We are heaven's citizens. This truth and reality affects how we respond to sinners around us and the government over us. As aliens and strangers, our lifestyles are to be shaped by a law fulfilling love, a powerful urgency and a Christ-centered purity. What a humble, holy, wise, loving, gentle, generous, submissive and heavenward longing band are these pilgrims, these foreigners, these citizens of God's Kingdom.

Our Responses in the Matters of Conscience

14:1-15:13

Since we are a people of many diverse backgrounds and widely different cultures, we must know how to live together in peace when our opinions in matters of conscience differ. We are to welcome one another, but not to harmful disputes. We are to not judge and criticize others who are freer in their consciences and we are not to despise and look down on those whose consciences are not as free. We will do all we can to make for peace, not cause others to stumble because we recognize that God has received all of us, He is our judge, master and Lord and the realities of the Kingdom outweigh all personal preferences. Modeling our lives after Christ's self-sacrificial way, we will aim to glorify God in authentic unity, choosing the way of wisdom by faith.

Quite simply, we who seek to please God in all things will often find ourselves not only different from the world, but different from many claiming the Name of Christ. Setting our faces homeward, we will live here and now for the sake of our King and His people.

The Gospel: God's Will for a Serving People**15:14-16:24**

The gospel also defines God's will for a serving people. We are here to serve our King in the Kingdom – to minister in word and deed.

The Example of a Ministry of the Gospel**15:14-33**

We have a model of a ministry shaped by purpose, implemented with flexible planning that relies on prayer. It is a ministry that understands priorities and focuses on relationships with God's people. Gospel ministry is characterized by sacrifice and serving, never self-interest and self-ambition.

The Exhortation to a Ministry of Grace**16:1-24**

In a ministry of grace, we will welcome those who serve and savor. We will also warn against those who divide and destroy. Grace then enables us to stand with God's growing people and stand against dangerous and divisive people.

Conclusion: The *Glory* of God in the Gospel**16:25-27**

In conclusion, I want to read to you the two great doxologies in Romans.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

“For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?
Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.
(Romans 11:33-36, ESV).

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Romans 16:25-27, ESV).