

Guest Preacher

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[0 : 00] Now I'd like to turn back to this portion of scripture we've read together from the epistle to the Romans and chapter 1.

And focusing particularly as our text on verses 16 and 17. Verse 16.

The apostle tells us in this particular chapter that he has intended to come to visit the Christians in Rome often.

Verse 13. He has been preaching in various other places.

And now he longs to come to see the Christians and preach the gospel in Rome. As you know, Rome was a great city in the apostle Paul's day.

[1 : 47] The population was around one million people. One million. That's in the first century AD.

And it was a very busy city according to what we read. There is an inscription recording that there were 268 different occupations in the city of Rome.

Textile and clothing production was a major source of employment. Also there was construction, metal workers, artists, writers, bankers, government officials and so on.

It was a very vibrant, populous, busy city. Also regarding sport and recreation.

They had given themselves too much involvement with sport and recreation. In the year AD 135, there were two and a half days per week allocated to sport and recreation in Rome.

[3 : 09] You think that it was something like our own day with the emphasis so many people have now on sport and recreation in our country.

But there's something else to be said about Rome. That is, it was a place where there were many gods worshipped.

It was a polytheistic religion. Twelve different gods were worshipped by the people in Rome.

You may remember some of the names of these gods. Jupiter was looked on as the king of the gods. Neptune was the god of the sea. Mars was the god of war.

And over and above these, the citizens were required to make a sacrifice for the health of the emperor. So there was this kind of divided allegiance, spiritually speaking, all towards gods who didn't really exist.

[4 : 25] And the one and only god was turned away from and despised. And one of the writers, he writes of Roman societies, gross immorality.

And if we were to read the second part of this first chapter in Romans, we'd find out something about the way these people were living. Much immorality.

But why was Paul wanting to come there? I mean, he was a minister of the gospel. Why come into that gross immorality? Why come into that polytheistic, religious place?

Where people bowed their knee to anything and everything, but the true God in heaven. Why? Well, it says here that there were some in Rome, in verse 7, who are loved by God and called to be saints.

In this mass of people who care nothing for Christ or the Bible or the gospel, there are a few. And Paul says, they are loved by God and they are called to be saints.

[5 : 53] And Paul says, I want to come and encourage you. And in encouraging you, I know that you will encourage me in the midst of this terrible society where you live.

The question is, how did these people become Christians? Well, it's possible that some of them had attended Jerusalem to observe the day of Pentecost.

And you remember the way the Spirit of God had been poured out on the day of Pentecost. And people from Rome were there among people from many other parts of the Roman Empire who were Jewish in their allegiance.

Nevertheless, when they came there and the Spirit was poured out, the Spirit changed their lives and reoriented their lives and filled them with blessing.

And they went back to Rome and they were like little lamps shining in this dark place surrounded by one million people who couldn't care anything about God.

[7 : 00] And Paul says, I want to come there. So if we were to ask Paul, why are you going there? Well, he says, I'm going to preach the gospel to them.

Why preach the gospel? I mean, if you were to read some of the responses that people had to the gospel in other places, it says, for example, in 1 Corinthians 1.18, the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing.

They don't want to hear it. They think it's rubbish. The gospel is rubbish. And then it says, 1 Corinthians 1.23, we preach Christ crucified, who is a stumbling block to the Jews and to the Greeks.

It is foolishness. And in Acts 17, verse 18, when Paul is at Corinth, the people who heard him said, what is this babbling saying?

He seems to be a preacher of foreign gods because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they thought he was a babbling.

[8 : 30] And the word babbling is illustrative of the Greek word that says something like he goes around picking little seeds from the ground, little bits of information and putting them together and throwing them at us.

It's as if he's not cultured in his address and he's not cultured in what he's saying at all. He's just a babbling, a picker of ideas and throwing them away to people.

But you see, Jesus and the resurrection is the heart of the gospel. And that's what he wants to do when he comes to Rome. And that's why he says, I am not ashamed of the gospel.

Other people might find it embarrassing. Other people might think it crazy of me with all my education to be preaching the gospel. But I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

I'd like just to say two or three words under three headings about these marvelous verses. First of all, that the gospel is a message that brings good news of God's power.

[9 : 51] I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for salvation. Secondly, it's a message that reveals God's righteousness.

And thirdly, a message that requires a response of faith on our part for us to gain by it.

It requires that we exercise faith on the gospel and in the Christ of the gospel in order to benefit spiritually for ourselves.

firstly, one or two words that the Bible speaks of God's creative power here. It is the power of God. That's the gospel. That's this ordinary looking book and this very ordinary presentation of it.

[10 : 54] Nevertheless, when the Holy Spirit accompanies the word preached, it is a creative power. I suppose first and foremost it can be said to be a destructive power.

What does it do? When the gospel is applied to my soul and to your own soul and to the souls of these people in Rome long ago, it begins by breaking down the very framework of their lives.

The gods before whom they bowed. The kind of lifestyle that they had. It's broken down because the Lord comes in with saving power.

And you know the first thing he breaks? He breaks our heart. It says in the prophecy of Jeremiah that my word is as a fire and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

And that's the kind of fire and the kind of power we need for ourselves and for our society. And that's what Paul wanted for the Roman society.

[12 : 21] that the power of the gospel be said loose among them. Breaks the heart in sorrow for sin.

Men and brethren, what shall we do? They said on the day of Pentecost when they heard the apostle Peter describing to them about Jesus and what they had done to him.

You have crucified the prince of life. And it's as if the whole message hit them so hard and broke their hearts. What have we done?

What have we done in crucifying Jesus? What have I done? What have you done in rejecting and turning away from the gospel all of these years?

It's a great sin. But of course, besides breaking down, he creates.

[13 : 21] He creates a spiritual appetite. He creates a new desire in the heart. Creates a desire to come in obedience to the Lord.

He creates spiritual eyesight. You see things in a different way. You see things you never seen before. Even when you're reading the scriptures, there are things that you come across. Is that really there? I never saw that before. The scriptures, as it were, radiate the light of the gospel into your very soul.

And all that is there because he has created spiritual eyesight in your soul. also, he creates new hearing.

I remember when I was quite young, and the minister we had at back, you could hear him very well, Mr. Macaulay, even without microphones or anything.

[14 : 33] Nobody could sleep under his preaching. But at the very beginning, it was just like a sound to me that didn't mean much. But as time went on, it's as if I was tuned into the station.

And I thought to myself, well, he's talking about the Bible, and he's talking about me. The whole thing became so real. And this is what the power of the Spirit of God does.

It creates hearing. a hearing ear. And it becomes a personal message to yourself and for yourself.

And you know what is happening to you when these things are happening.

You are being raised from your spiritual death. Remember the way when Jesus went to the grave of Lazarus. And he just spoke a few words, Lazarus, come forth.

And Martha had said to Jesus before that, well, this is the fourth day, and by now he's beginning to decay in that hot climate. But two words from Jesus, Lazarus, come forth.

[15 : 50] And he who was dead came forth. What power Jesus still has. He's able to raise you from spiritual death. and this whole community and this whole island from its spiritual death and lethargy with a word of his power.

Think of the way the Lord dealt with Saul of Tarshish, who became Paul, who is now writing this letter. On the road to Damascus, he was intent on laying hold upon all the Christians he could get, bring them bound to Jerusalem and deal with them.

He had been approving the death of Stephen. But on the way to Damascus, the Lord intervened. Saul, Saul, he said, why are you persecuting me?

Who are you, Lord? I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. How was it possible for him to be persecuting Jesus, who is in heaven? Well, it was when he was persecuting his people.

And his people are so bound up with Jesus. It's as if those who damage and injure them, it's as if they are spitting in the face of God himself.

[17 : 20] And you know what Saul of Tarshish said when he went down to the ground on the way there to Damascus and Jesus revealed himself to him. Lord, what do you want me to do?

You see, he had broken him down. He had made him submit. He was submissive to the voice of Christ. And that's what the gospel still does.

Because it is the power of God. Nothing and no one else could have made Saul of Tarshish bend the knee. in obedience to Jesus, but Jesus himself.

And no one, no minister or elder or anybody else can enable you to bend the knee to Jesus in submission and in faith.

Jesus, by the power of his Holy Spirit, is the only one who is able to do so. And that's why the gospel is so precious.

[18 : 23] always come and hear it. Because when God is pleased to accompany the word preached with his Holy Spirit saving influence, things change for eternity.

And then, of course, another example of the way things have changed in the church in Thessalonica. It says in 1 Thessalonians 1, verses 5 and 9, that they turned to God from idols. to serve the living and through God and to wait for his Son from heaven. They turned to God from idols. God had come in in a powerful saving way and they turned away from their idols because they had found something better.

The Lord had revealed his glory to them and the idols were left aside. I wonder what idols you may have.

There are some people who have a lot of different idols that are just the things of this world. But when Jesus comes, like he came to the church of the Thessalonians, you will turn unto God from your idols to serve the living and through God.

[19 : 49] And one more thing before I go on. It says of this gospel that the apostle Paul wants to preach in Rome. It says in Acts chapter 17 verse 6 that the gospel had turned the world upside down.

What an amazing statement that is. That it turned the world upside down. People living for themselves up until then.

Then they're living for God. Living for the flesh, now they're living for the spirit. Living for the things of time and sense, and now they're living for eternity.

And that's the gospel that we still have, and we should be so thankful that we have the gospel here, and that we have ministers of the gospel called by God and equipped by God to preach this glorious gospel to us.

Little wonder the apostle saying, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. People can say what they want to say. He's a babbler, he's a fool, whatever he is.

[21 : 02] And you know, I came across this the other day, that they reckon that the apostle Paul in the first century AD traveled 10,000 miles preaching the gospel.

Mostly on foot. I know that there are accounts of him taking boats and so on. But 10,000 miles preaching the gospel. That's some commitment.

Because he knew he was carrying something so precious that could be so effective for the changing of the lives of men and women. And of course, this gospel unites us to Christ in our effectual calling.

We are invited by our loving Savior to come to him. Come unto me and I will give you rest.

And when the gospel becomes personal and saving to us through the Holy Spirit, we come to him and we find rest in him. We find his love satisfies every aspect of our soul and of our lives.

[22 : 23] God's righteousness. The next point I wanted to highlight was that this message, this gospel reveals God's righteousness.

In it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. God is a righteous God.

He is just. He is holy. But the point being made here is that the righteousness of God as it is worked out and made over to us through faith.

When Jesus came into the world, he came as a man who lived according to the law.

God man who was Jesus and who is Jesus, when he came into the world, he came and he lived a perfectly holy life, fulfilling every aspect and requirement of God's law.

[23 : 41] He lived a holy life, a perfect life. God and when he came to do that, he was doing it so that those who trust him can have that righteousness given over to them.

When he died upon the cross, he died in the room and instead of those who believe in him. And the sufferings that he suffered, they don't have to go through them because of what he has done.

Now, the apostle Paul says that the righteousness of God is revealed in this gospel. In other words, the Bible speaks of what Christ has done for his people.

It speaks of how God's law was magnified and honored by Christ in everything he said, in everything he did, in every thought that he had, in every action, he was honoring and magnifying God.

And also when he came to die, that the justice of God was fully satisfied in pouring eternal wrath upon him in the room and in the place of his people.

[25 : 28] And you remember what Jesus said towards the very end of his sufferings on the cross, it is finished. God's saved.

In other words, he had prepared a way of salvation for all who would believe in him.

He lived a perfect life. We cannot live a perfect life. We all sin day by day, moment by moment.

God's died. And he suffered an atoning death.

He made reconciliation, he made atonement for the sins of his people. God's love. And now when we believe in Jesus and receive him for ourselves as our saviour, everything that he has done for us is made over to us.

So that when God looks on us who believe in Jesus, he sees us as righteous. He sees us blameless because we are standing in Jesus.

[26 : 42] We are in him by faith, united to him by faith. And when the apostle is writing to the Romans, he says, I'm not ashamed to be telling people this marvellous news, that all that Jesus Christ has done can be made over to you so that you can stand uncondemned and blameless in the presence of a holy God.

You see, well, every morning I rise. One of the first things I do is confess my sin. And every night I go to bed before I close my eyes, one of the last things I do is I confess my sin. I see that my life is so imperfect as I am in myself. But when I trust in Jesus, I know that my sins are forgiven, that my iniquity is cleansed, that I am found in Christ, and his righteousness imputed or made over to me.

And this is what it says here. In the gospel, the righteousness of God is made known. it's revealed. God's way of salvation, God's way of reconciling sinners to himself, is made known in the gospel. And who wouldn't want to hear such a message? And the apostles, I am not ashamed to go into that place called Rome with all its sinfulness and practices that are so abhorrent.

[28 : 31] Nevertheless, this is what they need. this marvelous gospel, to be directed to Christ, who is able to be a saviour to them.

And that brings us to the final point, and that is what is required for us to enjoy this wonderful blessing from the gospel.

It says here that it is revealed from faith for faith. In other words, we have to have faith in Jesus for us to experience and enjoy the blessings of the gospel.

There are many people who hear the gospel and walk away as if they didn't hear it at all. But what the Bible says, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

I know that there is a kind of belief, a historical faith that believes that Jesus came into the world and so on. But what's the real meaning of faith?

[29 : 47] faith? I came across this yesterday and it's very interesting. As an answer to that question, what is faith? It is taking God at his word and acting upon it.

Taking God at his word. Whatever he says, take it as true and then act upon it. Think of Noah in the Old Testament.

think what the Lord said to Noah. I'm going to send a flood upon the earth and you have to start building an ark in order to save yourself and your family and all these animals I'm going to bring to you.

And he started building that ark. And you know that he took 120 years building that ark. And the Bible says of him that he was a preacher of righteousness.

In other words, while he was building the ark, it's as if he was telling people, there is a flood coming, I'm preparing for it.

[30 : 59] But the comments we often hear about Noah and the people who looked at him building his ark, they thought he was mad. But he wasn't mad.

God took God at his word and he acted on it. God said, build an ark, a flood is coming.

And however unlikely it may have seemed at the time, no clouds in the sky, no bad forecast for the next 10, 20 years, nevertheless God had said so. And he started building.

And he and his family were the only survivors of the great flood in Genesis. And think also of Abraham. God called him to go out of Ur of the Chaldees.

God of glory revealed himself to him in Ur of the Chaldees and go out, he said, to a place I will show you. Didn't tell him where.

[32 : 06] And the Bible says he obeyed God. not knowing where he was going. But he obeyed. He didn't know what the destination would be, but he knew that God had spoken.

And he acted on it. And that's what we have here. It is those who hear this message and act on it in receiving this Christ as Savior.

you. They are the ones who will be saved. And what's amazing is this.

The apostle says, I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians. Verse 14, both to the wise and to the foolish.

I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. Greeks, the wise in their own eyes, and great orators and so on, and also the barbarians, people who had no, little or no education at all, who were reckoned to be not sophisticated intellectually or anything like that.

[33 : 31] But the apostle says, I am under obligation. I want to preach. I need to preach to the educated and the uneducated, to the wise and to the foolish, because the same gospel fits the needs of every single one, Jews and Gentiles, young and old.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God for salvation. To everyone who believes. Everyone who believes.

Do you have this saving faith? Well, if you don't have it, ask the Lord for it.

Lord, give me this saving faith, because I see my need as a sinner, and I see that Christ is the most suitable Savior, and the word spoken by God the Father on the Mount of Transfiguration that we mentioned earlier on.

Hear him. Hear him. Hear Jesus. Ask that you may be able to tune in to his voice as you read the scriptures, as you listen to the scriptures being expounded and explained, that you might open your heart to receive him, and open your life, that he might come in and rule as your king, as your Lord, and as your very best friend, who will never leave you or forsake you.

[35 : 16] Amen. May God bless to us these thoughts. Let us again pray. Lord, our God, we ask that you would seal upon our hearts and souls the words of our text today.

May we hear for eternity and may our lives be filled with the blessings of the gospel and may we have the privilege and the blessing of being justified and sanctified and at last glorified and forgive every sin we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Our second recorded singing is from Sing Psalms and Psalm 25 and the recording says it's from 4 to 13 I think there are one or two verses that are missed out on the actual recording but Psalm 25 at verse 4 to 13 is B Psalm

The Sing Psalms version and verses 4 to 13 to God's praise. O Lord, reveal to me your ways And all your paths Help me to know Direct and guide me In your truth Instruct me in The way to go You are my Savior And my God

All day I hope In you alone Remember Lord Your love and grace Which from us ages You have shown Because the Lord is just and good He shows His path to all who stray He guides the people In all the disciples

[39 : 04] And teaches them His holy way He teaches them His holy way Who led our souls Who fear the Lord He'll teach them He'll teach them The chosen way That they may prosper All their life Their children In the land The land Will stay Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Rest upon and abide with you all Now and forevermore Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen ■■■■■ World Amen Am