

December 29/30, 2018

## The Gospel for Everyone, Every Day

Romans 1:1-17

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For the last three or four years, six days a week, at 6:00 am in the morning another pastor here, Brad Brestel and I meet and we work out. Three days a week we lift weights; three days we do cardio. Yes, I know, the cardio bit's not working out quite as I hoped, but perhaps this next year. We've discovered that our favorite lift on the days we lift weights is the bench press and so we spend a lot of time working on that, and maybe it's because we can lie down when we're lifting—I don't know. But none the less we enjoy that particular lift, and besides making sure that we're lifting safely, I never really gave much thought to bench press technique—in fact I ignored it. I thought bench press technique was just for the elite, the competitive lifter who is trying to lift a massive amount of weight. What use could it be for a couple of old guys who are just trying to stay in shape? So again, I just ignored it; it didn't seem relevant to me at all. That was for other people.

Well, after a little over a year of hard work on the bench press I was seeing very minimal gains, and I decided at that point that I was going to look more closely at the bench press technique of the female bench press world record holder, Jen Thompson. So I watched some of her instructional videos and I discovered that bench press technique wasn't just for the elite lifter, not just for the competitive lifter, but for the average lifter like me. So I went about studying the techniques some more and putting it into practice and incorporating it into my lifting routine. What I found was, in about three months' time, I had progressed three times more than I had in the previous twelve months all together, and so I saw the relevance of this and it's just become part of my bench press routine. So whether I'm warming up, I'm training, or I'm trying to lift my max amount of weight, that technique has become relevant all the time.

I think my experience with bench press technique is a lot like many Christians' understanding of the gospel. I don't think that they understand it very well and that misunderstanding leads them to not see that it's relevant to their daily lives. Most Christians equate the gospel with merely the plan of salvation which we've all heard: "I'm a sinner; Jesus died for my sins; I believe and accept that; I get to go to heaven when I die." But, if I'm already saved, what use is that to me the rest of my life other than I'm thankful for it and I need to tell other people about it? But that's for other people. That's for non-Christians. The gospel is for non-Christians.

Well, this morning I would like to try to convince you that the gospel is for everyone—every day—and that you and I, no matter where we're at in our spiritual journey, our maturity in Jesus, we all need to hear the gospel. We all need to be proclaiming the gospel to each other every day, on every occasion!

If you have a copy of the Scriptures, turn with me this morning to Romans, Chapter 1. In the New Testament you have the four gospels and then the book of Acts and then the next book after that is Romans. So Romans 1, and I'd like us to consider verses 1 through 17. Let me read those for us. I'll be reading from the New International Version.

**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 regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we received**

**grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.**

**To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:**

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

**First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve in my spirit 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 opened 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 be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, 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 the other Gentiles.**

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

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”**

In the first several verses we are going to encounter what Paul believes the gospel is. Too often when we read a New Testament letter, we kind of rush through the opening part so that we can kind of get to the meat of the letter. Well let me suggest that we get to the meat of the letter in the first few verses, because here is where Paul lays out what exactly the gospel is. And if we don't understand what the gospel is, we're not going to understand it's relevance for my life day to day.

So what is this gospel? What I want us to note first of all in verse 2, that this gospel or this good news was something that was promised back in the Old Testament through the prophets. So we must understand what was it that the Old Testament prophets were promising to God's people back then? Well the promise was that there was going to come a day when God would send a deliverer, namely a king in the line of David. Remember God's promise to David—that there would be a descendant of his who would sit on his throne forever. And that was the promise that one day God would send this king who would come and not only deliver the people, but also bring peace and bring justice, bring God's blessing, and in fact restore God's very presence among them. This was the promise that a king would come. That leads Paul then to go on and tell us what this gospel is. What is the good news? What we find is that the good news is simply that this Jesus is this promised king. Jesus is King! It's interesting to note some of the terminology that we're going to see in these first few verses, that the people in Rome would have understood right away.

They lived under the Roman emperor, Caesar, and Caesar became known by several titles. Caesar was known as “lord”; he was known as “savior”, and he was known as “son of God”. In fact that term “son of God” was inscribed on coins that people used with Caesar's image on it.

So notice what Paul is saying, that this good news that was promised in the Old Testament times is regarding God's Son. Okay, so the gospel is not about us; the gospel is about Jesus! So if we're going to proclaim the gospel, it has to be centered on Jesus...but what specifically about Jesus? Well, Paul says it's that, "Jesus is King!"

Notice he says that as to His earthly life, "He was a descendant of David." In other words, He's in the royal line. This is the Messiah. If you back up to verse 1, you see that Paul says, "**I'm a servant of Christ Jesus.**" At several other points—again at the end of verse 4—**Jesus Christ our Lord**, that term **Christ** is not Jesus' last name. Mary and Joseph Christ didn't have a son named Jesus, right? Christ is the title. It's the Greek word "Christos" which is the equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah". In other words, this is the descendant of David. This is the Messiah. This is the one who was promised. The King has arrived.

In verse 4, this descendant of David, this Messiah, again which people would have thought, "Okay, King of the Jews. We get that." But in verse 4, **...who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power...**through the resurrection! But the son of God that was the Roman emperor, that was Caesar—that was the title that he had. But Paul is saying, "No, the world's true King is not Caesar; rather it's Jesus! Jesus is the Son of God, and what makes Him so is the resurrection!" Well, why does the resurrection make Jesus the Son of God, the King, or show that He's the King? Well, again, people in the Roman world would have thought, "How can you think that this Jesus is King of the world? After all, the Roman government, under Caesar, put Jesus to death...killed Him...did away with Him." But because of the resurrection, Jesus conquers the grave and conquers death and conquers evil. He's shown to be the world's true Lord, the world's true King. It's Jesus who is King!

Then at the end of verse 4, Paul says, "**Jesus Christ (Jesus Messiah) our Lord**" (or our King)! Again, it's not Caesar who is Lord; it's Jesus! So the very content of the gospel that brings hope to people is that Jesus is King! This king that God has promised is here! That is the gospel. That is the good news that the world needs to hear. As we go on, this is the gospel that shaped Paul's vocation. In fact if you go back to verse 1, Paul says, "I, Paul, a **servant** of Messiah Jesus, or of King Jesus." Really it's a *slave* of King Jesus. So Paul considers his, again, his vocation as being a slave of Jesus, but to do what? **Called to be an apostle, but set apart for this good news**, Paul's calling is to go and proclaim this good news that Jesus is King, and particularly to the Gentile world.

In verse 5, we see that, "**Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that (my translation reads) comes from faith.**" I don't think that that's the best translation. I think that it's *the obedience that is faith or that consists in faith*. What Paul is getting at here is, "Why is He calling people to obedience?" People knew in the ancient world that how you responded to a king was in one of two ways. You gave your allegiance to that king, or you stood in rebellion. What Paul is saying is that he's calling people to faith, or we might say allegiance, to this King. That's his vocation. He's calling Gentiles to give their allegiance to this King that he's announcing.

He's doing something that would have been familiar to people again in the Roman world. When a new emperor came to the throne, or even sometimes on the emperor's birthday, government people would go around and proclaim the gospel or the good news that Caesar was king. Well here Paul says, "That's my mission: to go around and proclaim who the true King is, and to call people to give their allegiance to this true King through their trust in that King, and through their obedience to that King!" So this is Paul's vocation. It's centered on the gospel and he hopes to do this to the people in Rome.

In verses 8 through the end of the chapter, he lays out his purpose for writing. He wants to come to them; he wants to come and visit them. And he says he's tried and at times he's been prevented, but that's his goal. Notice in verse 11, he says, "**I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.**" Well what's the spiritual gift? I think we're told in verse 12 "...**that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith,**" or think, *by each other's allegiance or faithfulness*, to the King. Paul is anticipating that the allegiance that they gave to Jesus at their conversion is not something that was only for that moment, but that it continues and he'll be encouraged to see their allegiance, their obedience, their trust in Jesus, and they'll be encouraged to see his.

Then I find it very intriguing in verse 15, that Paul says, "**That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome.**" Now a number of leading New Testament scholars believe, and I agree with them, that the **you** here, **preach... also to you who are in Rome**" includes these Roman Christians who have already responded to the gospel by giving their allegiance to Jesus. Now you see, if the gospel was merely, "You're a sinner; Jesus died for your sins; you need to say this prayer to go to heaven when you die," it would be confusing why Paul would want to come and preach the gospel to people who had already accepted that. But if the gospel is, as Paul believes and as he's laid out in the first few verses here of Chapter 1, if that gospel is, "Jesus is King," then Paul sees it's important that he comes and preaches this good news to the people in Rome because they need it every day.

They're confronted with, again, pressured to give their allegiance to the emperor, to Caesar, to other things and they need to trust Jesus and obey Him over anything and everything else. And so he's eager to come and preach this good news that Jesus is King, even to people who have already accepted that message. Of course, Paul wants to preach it to those who haven't as well, but this good news is for all people at all times.

Paul continues in verse 16, and says: "**I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.**" You notice Paul isn't equating the gospel with the plan of salvation. He says that salvation flows out of the gospel, and those who do give their allegiance to Jesus will experience salvation; they will experience the forgiveness of sins, and they will be able to live in God's presence for eternity. He's not ashamed of this gospel even in Rome, even in Caesar's own city. He's not afraid or ashamed to come and proclaim the good news that it's Jesus who's King and in fact it's Jesus who is Savior and not Caesar! It is Jesus who delivers. It is Jesus who saves.

Verse 17: He says, "**For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed.**" And I think we should think of that term **righteousness** in terms of God's faithfulness to His covenant promises. And this takes us back to verse 2. Remember the prophets had promised this good news and with the gospel and the announcement that the King is here, it shows that God has been faithful to His covenant promises to send this King to deliver His people. And it's "...**a righteousness,**" Paul says, "**by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'**"

So Paul is eager to go to Rome and preach the good news, preach the gospel again to people who have never heard it, who have never responded to it, and to people who already have, because they, too, need the gospel every day. They, too, need to be reminded that Jesus is King, and that they need to continue to trust their King, give obedience to their King, and give their allegiance to that King!

And so what I think we see here is that the gospel is for everyone, every day. If the gospel is, as Paul says it is, that Jesus is King, that is relevant to me not just at conversion, not just at the time I became a Christian, but it's relevant to me every day of my life. No matter what stage of my

Christian life that I'm at, my response to the gospel should be just as it was on that first occasion when I responded positively to it. I should trust; I should obey, and that's a continuous thing. It shouldn't be something that just happened once in the past, "Okay, I said the prayer; I said that I trust Jesus as Lord and Savior," and then that's it.

That reminds me of an old Montana rancher that I worked for—kind of a gruff person. He was asked once why he never told his wife that he loved her. He said, "The day we were married I told her I loved her, and if I ever changed my mind, I'd let her know." (*laughter*) Well, that's not quite how the gospel works. We don't just make a commitment and then we don't think about it ever again. It's something that is a continual commitment to giving my allegiance to the King—to trusting Him and obeying Him, in no matter what circumstance I find myself.

So I think, "What implications does this have for us this year?" I've been privileged, as you know the last four or five or so years, being able to preach on this last Sunday of the year. I always try to think, "Okay, what would be useful for people heading into a new year?" And I think that this is very useful to us because it doesn't matter what we face this coming year—and none of us know what we're going to face—we are going to need the gospel every day.

This year you might encounter new life in your family, a birth of a child or grandchild. Or unfortunately some of us are going to experience the death of a loved one this coming year. But whether it's in the experience of new life or the experience of one that leaves, we need the gospel. We need to know and understand that Jesus is King. In those good moments and those bad moments, we need to trust Him and be obedient to Him.

This year ahead some of us might experience sickness, injury; for others it might be a year where we experience great health. But again, whether in sickness or health, you and I need the gospel. We need to understand that Jesus is King, and to give our allegiance to Him in the good or the bad times.

This year you might experience the breakup of family—maybe a divorce, maybe the estrangement of family member or child—or you might experience a wedding and a new family being formed, or the reconciliation of a family member. In any of those situations, you need the gospel. You need to know that Jesus is King; you need to trust Him in both the good and the bad times and be obedient to Him.

This year you perhaps might find yourself with a new job or getting a promotion or raise, or maybe you'll lose a job. Maybe you'll retire this year. In any of those situations you need the gospel; you need to know and understand that Jesus is King, and that you can trust Him and that we need to obey Him. Even in those good days at work or the bad days at work or just your normal day at work, you need the gospel. Whether you fail a test or pass a test at school, you need the gospel.

The economy might tank this year; it might be great this year. Through all its ups and downs, you and I need the gospel. Whoever is elected, whatever legislation passes or doesn't pass, we need the gospel. Of course the times of stress, the times of busyness in our lives, the times of vacation and relaxation...in fact I cannot think of a situation, a circumstance or a life event where you and I do not need to be reminded of the gospel. We need to know that Jesus is King, that He's in charge, that we can trust Him, and that we also are obedient to Him in the good and the bad times.

Yes, those who have never given their allegiance to Jesus need the gospel too so, in giving their allegiance to Jesus, they'll experience the salvation that God has planned from ages past. If we

have a proper understanding of the gospel, the fact that Jesus is King, then I think we'll understand that it's relevant, not just at my conversion, but it's relevant every day of my life. I need to hear it and I need to proclaim it to others, not just to non-Christians, but also to my fellow Christians. I would love nothing more in this year ahead, as we walk through the halls on a weekend, than to hear people proclaiming the gospel to one another, reminding us of the fact that Jesus is King. If we do that, we would be very much like the early Christians. It's fairly well established that one of the earliest Christian creeds—maybe the earliest Christian creed—was a three-word saying, “Jesus is Lord”...in other words, “Jesus is King!”

Those early Christians needed to hear that over and over. We do too. So no matter what life throws at us this year—good or bad—we need the gospel and we need to be there ready to proclaim the gospel to each other...that Jesus is King! The gospel is for everyone...every day!

Let's pray:

*Almighty God, whose faithfulness is everlasting, according to Your covenant promises You sent us the gospel in Jesus, the Son of David, Israel's Messiah and the world's true King! Grant us the grace to understand the good news and its daily relevance so that we may be people who live fully in it and who proclaim it to everyone, saved and unsaved...every day. Through Messiah Jesus, Your Son and our King, who is alive and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.*

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