



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

The Gospel of God

Romans 1:1-5

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Introduction

1. Fill in the blanks in the following:
 - a. The gospel is _____.
 - b. The gospel was first announced _____.
 - c. "The gospel of _____."
2. Paul helps answer.
 - a. In Romans 1, he said the gospel is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." No wonder he was "eager to preach the gospel" to all people (1:14-16).
 - b. Notice that he also referred to it as "the gospel of God" (1:1).¹ The logic of that phrase is evident from the declaration that the gospel is "the power of God." Should we hear this phrase more? Why/why not?
3. Just what is the "the gospel of God"? What are its origins? What lies at the heart of it? What difference should it make for how we live? Let's review from a study of Romans 1:1-5.

BODY

- I. Roots: A Bigger Story (1:2-3).
 - A. Regarding the gospel, Paul first says that "while it is good news, it is not new news."²
 1. It was "promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures" (1:2). In Galatians 3:8, he connected the preaching of the gospel to Abraham and Genesis 12:3.
 2. The gospel Paul preached kept the promise to King David concerning his descendant (literally, "seed") and fulfilled longings the Jews had for hundreds of years (see Isa 11; Jer 23:5-6; 33:14-18; Ezek 34:23-31; 37:24-28), a sense of yearning that had become palpable by the end of the first century B. C.³
 3. "The gospel represents, not a break with the past, but a consummation of it."⁴

¹ Other passages using this phrase: Mark 1:14; Rom. 15:16; 1 Thess. 2:2, 8-9; 1 Pet. 4:17. See also Acts 20:24, "the gospel of the grace of God"; and 1 Tim. 1:11, "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God."

² S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "The Jesus That Paul Preached," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128 (Apr.-June 1971): 126.

³ As seen in the intertestamental writings (e.g., *Psalms of Solomon*, 17-18), although, as Acts 2 and other passages illustrate, God did not fulfill the promises in the manner most expected.

⁴ Franz J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. by Harold Knight (London, 1961), 36, in Johnson, 126.

- B. To proclaim the gospel correctly, we must appreciate the whole story and learn it all well enough to help people understand it.
1. That Paul was “set apart for the gospel of God” (1:1) reminds us that it was his eternal plan (see Eph 3:8-11), completed despite repeated attempts to thwart it.
 2. That means that “Christianity did not originate by accident or in the fate of the stars (as many empty-headed people presume),” but “it became what it was to be by the certain counsel and premeditated ordination of God.”⁵

II. Bold: Promise Embodied and Validated (1:4).

- A. The gospel reaches its climax and is centered in Jesus, the Son of God.
1. There are three important expressions in v. 4; each is difficult to precisely interpret.
 - a) The phrase with the word the ESV translates “declared” (ὁρισθέντος, *horisthentos*) is better translated “appointed the Son-of-God-in-power” (NET).⁶
 - b) The ESV phrase, “Spirit of holiness,” standing parallel to “according to the flesh” (v. 3), is best understood as “spirit of holiness,” i.e., the attitude of holiness “which dominated all Jesus’ thoughts and actions” (Johnson, 132).
 - (1) As is generally the case, the word “spirit” is not capitalized in the Greek text. Translators legitimately engage in interpretation, but their interpretation should be compared with others and evaluated.
 - (a) The following capitalize “spirit” (πνεῦμα, *pneuma*) here: NKJV, NASB, ESV, NIV, NET.
 - (b) The following do not: KJV, ASV, NRSV.
 - (2) “Holiness” is ἁγιωσύνη (*hagiōsunē*), not ἅγιος (*hagios*) (as typical when the phrase is “Holy Spirit”).
 - (3) Working translation: attitude / disposition of holiness; Jesus’ holy obedience to God’s will fulfilled the promises / expectations.
 - (4) “It was the holy obedience, the complete consecration by which [Jesus] did the will of God. It was seen most clearly in the obedience of the cross” (Johnson, 132).⁷
 - c) Jesus’ resurrection validated him and showed him “to be the powerful son of God.”⁸
 2. Paul shows the progressive stages of Jesus’ work that completed God’s plan.
 - a) He came in the flesh as promised, and so proved to be the Messiah.

⁵ Martin Luther, *Luther: Lectures on Romans*, trans. and ed. by Wilhelm Pauck, *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. XV (Philadelphia, 1961), 12, in Johnson, 126.

⁶ An aorist passive participle form of ὁρίζω (*horizō*). See Johnson’s discussion, 128-130.

The NET translators explain their translation: “*Appointed the Son-of-God-in-power*. Most translations render the Greek participle ὁρισθέντος (*horisthentos*, from ὁρίζω, *horizō*) ‘declared’ or ‘designated’ in order to avoid the possible interpretation that Jesus was appointed the Son of God by the resurrection. However, the Greek term ὁρίζω is used eight times in the NT, and it always has the meaning ‘to determine, appoint.’ Paul is not saying that Jesus was appointed the ‘Son of God by the resurrection’ but ‘Son-of-God-in-power by the resurrection,’ as indicated by the hyphenation. He was born in weakness in human flesh (*with respect to the flesh*, v. 3) and he was raised with power. This is similar to Matt 28:18 where Jesus told his disciples after the resurrection, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” The other verses where ὁρίζω appears are Lk. 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26, 31; Heb. 4:7.

⁷ Taken this way, it perfectly parallels the progression in Philippians 2:8-9.

⁸ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 723 (in the entry on ὁρίζω).

- b) His service was validated by his resurrection, and so he reigns as Lord.
- B. The gospel is therefore the boldest of stories: Jesus came, died, and defeated death!
 1. Jesus' "resurrection is the great event which reveals the true meaning of the saving work of the cross. It is the evidence that the redeeming work has been accomplished with the full approval of the Father (cf. Rom. 4:25).⁹ Easter, then, is a thrilling testimony to a finished work and at the same time a stirring call to hope. Because He lives, all in Him shall live" (Johnson, 130).

III. Response: Obedience of Faith Aim (1:5).

- A. Notice that Paul emphasized his submission.
 1. He called himself "a servant" (v. 1), "at odds with cultured Greek thought, where the sense of the dignity of the free man made it virtually impossible for slavery to serve as an ideal or commendable type of relationship."¹⁰
 2. He was "called" (1) — passive sense — and sent out as someone else's messenger or ambassador ("apostle").
 3. He called calling Jesus "Lord" (his favorite title for him, 230x in all), in the LXX the synonym for "God"; the use of this term indicated how thoroughly Paul and his fellow-Christians saw themselves "as bound to Jesus as slave to master, their lives to be spent at the behest of the risen one" (Dunn, 16)
 4. He said that he had "received grace and apostleship."
 5. Finally, he said his aim was "to bring about the obedience of faith . . . among all the nations."
 - a) The word (ὑπακοήν, *hupakoēn*) literally means, "to hear under" and has the same sense as the Hebrew *shema'*, "to hear responsively."¹¹
 - b) Seldom used outside the NT, it is prominent in the New Testament, especially in Paul (Rom. 1:5; 5:19; 6:16; 15:18; 16:19, 26; see 2 Cor. 7:15; 10:5-6; Phm. 21).¹²
 6. Notice that Paul says this is the aim of his receipt of grace and apostleship.
- B. We appropriate the gospel's power to save when we obey the Son of God who is Lord.

Conclusion

1. Here, then, is the gospel: the story of how God-fulfilled promises were worked out through history, culminating in the hope found in the fact that Jesus conquered death, good news to which all people are called to respond in obedience.

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⁹ Romans 4:25 shows the balanced roles of Jesus' death and resurrection for securing salvation: "Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for (διὰ, *dia*) our trespasses and raised for our (*dia*) justification (δικαίωσις, *dikaïōsis*)" (see 5:17-18, the only other use of the form *dikaïōsis* in Romans).

¹⁰ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, 38A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publishers, 1988), 8.

¹¹ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 634-635.

¹² The noun is used seven times in Romans; the verb, "to obey" is used 11x in Paul (4x in Romans), and the adjective, "obedient" is used 2x in Paul (2 Cor. 2:9; Phil. 2:8).