

## Romans: A Solid Foundation for Christian Living

### Message 2: The Truth on Which We Stand

#### Text: Romans 1:2-6

By what principles do you live your life? That's an important question to ask, for everyone lives their lives according to a certain worldview, whether they can put it into words or not. For example, some people believe that life is all about them. They live to please themselves, to indulge their passions. This is the person who requests at his funeral that someone sing, "I did it My Way." Others believe that life is about giving, about sharing. You hear about philanthropists who leave their fortunes to some great cause, as opposed to their cats or something. The testimony of their lives is one of helping others. Still others live for a cause, their lives revolving around a significant social, political, or personal issue. All they talk about and most of their energy is directed toward its accomplishment.

Well in our text for today we see the principle by which the apostle Paul lived. In his letter to the Romans, Paul says in ch. 1 vs. 1 that he was "*set apart for the gospel of God.*" In other words, he believed that from the very moment of his conception God designed his life to be lived according to the principles set forth in the gospel. The word gospel literally means "good news." It was used to describe the good news that a messenger would deliver that the king had won in battle, that the enemy was defeated and freedom restored to the populace. In the New Testament it speaks of Jesus' victory over sin and death and the freedom available to all through faith in Jesus Christ. And it speaks of the facts behind this victory, the core principles that one comes to accept as a result of it. So by the time Paul writes Romans, the single most important principle guiding his life was the gospel of Jesus Christ. Everything that happened in his life was evaluated in light of its message. His feelings were influenced by his faith in it. His decisions were determined by his knowledge of it. Nothing less than the gospel of God was the truth by which Paul lived his life.

How I wish we could say the same thing as Christians today. As most of you know, we had a funeral service here at Bethel this week. The place was packed with a cross-section of people, some of whom have been Christians longer than I have been alive. Others likely had not given the gospel a second thought. Most were at some point between these extremes. But I can remember looking out at that congregation and seeing how some who had professed a faith in the Lord years ago just could not get a handle on what that faith meant for this situation. There was no sense of the reality of God's presence, no understanding of the comfort our Lord promises. It's like their faith was fine for a Sunday "pick-me-up", but it had no impact on life from Monday through Saturday.

How do we change this? We must understand that the gospel is more than a Sunday sermon. It is the truth on which we stand. It is the basic principle that

God has given to direct our lives. In Deut. 30:20, Moses told the people that the Lord is not merely part of their lives, he said, "*For the LORD is your life.*" For your faith to support you during life's greatest trials, you must make sure that – as Paul did – the gospel of God is the defining truth for your life.

But why? In vs. 2-6 Paul explains by giving two reasons why the gospel is so special – why it is worthy of reorienting our lives so that its message is central:

#### 1. The gospel affirms God's sovereignty by fulfilling the scriptures.

Vs. 2: "*the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.*" Paul said, God promised this gospel. Long before Jesus came into the world, the prophets foretold of it. Perhaps Paul had in mind the words of Isaiah 9:6, where the prophet said, "*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders, and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*" Or perhaps Isa. 53:11, "*After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many and he will bear their iniquities.*" More likely it was the sum total of all the Old Testament.

The point is: God promised that there would come a means for restoring the relationship with Him that sin destroys. And he promised it before it happened, proving once for all that God is God, that He is sovereign, that He controls events and holds the world in His hands, and that He warrants our trust.

See, the gospel affirms God's godness. And for us today what this means is that we can trust Him. We can really trust Him when things in our lives go awry. I know how hard it is to rely on things we cannot see or hold, especially when we are pushed to the limit. During the family crisis we're facing right now, I've had moments when it seems as if all hope were lost. I wondered if I wasn't going to lose my ministry and ability to care for my family on top of the relationship with my daughter. And so I've had to go back to the gospel, to God's promises. When they don't come naturally to mind, I have to bring them up. I have to direct my thoughts to what God says, and to the reality that He is in control. It hasn't been easy, but now, five months after it all began, my family can see what God is doing and why. The crisis isn't over, but we see God's hand all around it. Because we understand the truth of God's sovereignty.

#### 2. The gospel proclaims God's salvation by exalting the Son.

Vs. 3: "*concerning his son...*" That's interesting! Do you notice that the gospel isn't first and foremost about us? It's about God's son. Jesus is the focal point of the gospel message. Jesus was the king in the line of David,

as promised in the Old Testament. More than that, He was the one who died on the cross for our sin, defeating sin and death through the resurrection, so that *“through Him and for his name’s sake, we received grace.”*

Catch this: according to the gospel, we are saved through Christ, not anything in and of ourselves. And we were saved for His name’s sake. In other words, God doesn’t save us for us. He saves us to honor His Son.

Now this is one of those subtle points of the gospel that is often missed. Too often we make the gospel about us. It’s about God’s provision for our needs and wants. That’s why so much evangelism is directed at felt needs. And there is some truth in this. But here Paul says that the gospel is about Jesus. So what happens is not that people’s needs are elevated and Jesus fills them. Rather Jesus is elevated, and then in the light of His glory we see our need and how He is the remedy. Jesus is elevated, then sinners are saved. In John 8:28 Jesus said, *“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be...”*

Now, what does this mean in a practical sense. It means that the gospel becomes more real to us as we focus on Jesus. The gospel highlights Christ. And so the more we see Jesus, the more we love Him; the more we love Him, the more we trust Him.

One of the first “contemporary” praise choruses goes like this: “Jesus is the answer for the world today. Above Him is no other. Jesus is the way.” That’s more than a song. It’s the truth. It’s why Paul lived. Do you want the gospel to make a difference in your life? Would you like its message to bring hope and healing during life’s hardest moments? Elevate Jesus. Reflect on who He is and what He has done. It’s all about Him. Focus on Him and see how your own experience serves to glorify Him. Live for His glory, and see more of the meaning in whatever it is you face.

**Conclusion:** This is why the gospel is so special, why it is the truth on which you can build your life: it affirms God’s sovereignty and it proclaims God’s salvation. Paul goes on in Romans to describe this gospel in detail, and we’ll look at this as we continue our study. But this morning we’ll close with this question: what role does the gospel play in your life? Is it the truth on which you stand, merely an object of curiosity, or something in between? How you answer this question will determine its impact on your life.