

What We Value: Gospel First and Always

October 10, 2021



Vision'22

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Romans 1:16-17

Session Outline

1. The Power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17)
2. The Authority of the Gospel (Matthew 28:16-20)
3. The Responsibility of the Gospel (Acts 13:47; 20:24)

Theological Theme

We value the gospel first and always. Any time we say the word *gospel*, we simply mean the good news of Jesus Christ. We believe the gospel has the power to save and to bring purpose, hope, and meaning to any person's life.



Leader Guide

What We Value: Gospel First and Always

Introduction

- ❓ What is your favorite topic when you're having small talk with friends? Is it a TV show, movies, sports, recipes, or something else?
- ❓ Describe a time recently when you heard a bit of news and felt you needed to share it with someone else. Why was sharing this news better than keeping it to yourself?

No one has to tell us to talk about the things we love most or good news we've received. We all love good news. We have joy in a good health report, at the news of a newborn baby, or maybe the good news of a job promotion. The first thing we want to do upon receiving such happy news is to share that news with others. We call our family and friends to share the news, and we often share it on social media. The joy of good news only grows when we can share it with others.

Today, we will see in Scripture that our greatest privilege in life is sharing the good news about Jesus Christ. Because the gospel has set us free from sin and death, we should naturally want to share this life-changing news with everyone we know.

Session Summary

We are continuing to talk through the vision and mission of Brentwood Baptist. Today we will look at our highest value: the gospel. Any time we say the word *gospel*, we simply mean the good news of Jesus Christ. We believe the gospel has the power to save and to bring purpose, hope, and meaning to any person's life. That's why we will always prioritize Jesus and His gospel. It affects everything that we do, whether we are gathered on Sunday morning or scattered throughout the city and communities throughout the other six days of the week. We will value the gospel first, primarily, and always in everything we do as a church. In our session today, we will see why Paul and others emphasized the gospel above everything in the Christian life.

1. The Power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17)

Paul felt an obligation to preach the gospel to all people. He wasn't ashamed of the gospel because he knew the power and truth of God's message to the world.

- ❓ In Romans 1:16, the apostle Paul described how he was not ashamed of the gospel message. What are some things that might cause us to be ashamed of the gospel?
- ❓ When you think of God's power, what comes to mind? How does the power of the gospel help us not be ashamed of sharing its message?

The gospel is the good news that God sent His Son into our broken world to save us from our sins and offer us eternal life with Him. Paul boldly proclaimed the gospel because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes. The gospel is the only message that contains this type of power. It is the only message that tells the true story of atonement. It is the only message in which God's righteousness is revealed. And it is the only message that delivers to us fallen and wicked humans the ability to enjoy everlasting life. Clearly this is a very powerful message!

Often, we neglect to share the gospel with our friends or family because we are afraid that they will reject us. We worry too much about what people will think of us instead of worrying about what is happening to our friends and family since they do not embrace Jesus Christ as Lord. Paul reminds us that we do not need to be ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God. This is not about us, it is about Jesus and our love for our neighbor. The same power that created all the universe, the power of God, is also found in the gospel. The gospel message of Jesus's death and resurrection is too wonderful and glorious to keep to ourselves out of fear for our reputations.

Christians have no reason to be ashamed of the gospel. Every person we meet is in need of the gospel. Without the gospel, there can be no salvation. Everything God wants for us is found in His Word. The gospel brings us the power of life and discloses that our salvation is "from faith to faith," based on faith from beginning to end. Believers should feel unashamed of the gospel and obligated to share it. We should learn to speak up, boldly sharing Christ. We know ourselves better than anyone else, including the worst parts of ourselves. We should be reminded that if the gospel was powerful to save us at our worst, it is powerful enough to save anyone we might share the gospel with. No one is ever too far gone.

Confidence in the Spirit

Paul had no confidence in his rhetorical skills to overcome the human objections to the message, but he knew the power of the Spirit to change people's lives as they heard the good news about Jesus's death and resurrection.

- Application: Believers often view having gospel conversations as a daunting and forced task for which we are under-prepared and unqualified. How can this become a natural part of everyday life?

2. The Authority of the Gospel (Matthew 28:16-20)

- How does Jesus's authority relate to our sharing the gospel?
- What is our part in telling the good news to the nations? What does it mean to make disciples of the nations? What is different about making disciples from simply sharing the gospel?

The text uses the Greek word, *proselthōn*, which means He came close to them. Perhaps there was a larger crowd there and Jesus wanted to speak directly to the disciples. Or maybe He leaned in to them to emphasize the importance of what He was about to say. Whatever the case, His words were astounding. He spoke as one already seated at the right hand of the Father, with a global outlook on the present and future and with all the resources of heaven at His command. Jesus had authority and power before His death and resurrection, but now He would no longer empty Himself of any authority or power (Philippians 2:7). His authority is boundless and includes heaven and earth.

Jesus reminds us of His authority for the same reason Paul tells us that the gospel is the power of God for salvation. We are commanded by the Lord Jesus to go into all the world to make disciples. Often, those nations and individuals are hostile to the gospel. Jesus reminds us that He has the authority to send us there. We do not need any government's permission to preach and share the gospel because Jesus, the ruler of the universe, has given us a command to do it. The good news is that Jesus will be with us and that God's power goes with us in the gospel. We have the authority and power to tell others about Jesus.

By His authority, Jesus commissioned the eleven disciples to make more disciples in "all nations." The Greek here is *ethne*, which is better understood as "all the people groups of the world." In the first century, this certainly would have required traveling to many places, but the primary emphasis of Jesus's command here is "make disciples."

Jesus's command for us to make disciples of all nations is the reason we send missionaries, it is the reason we give money for missions, and it is why some of us go and become missionaries ourselves. We have a part in

telling the nations about Jesus. We should give our money, give our time, and participate in telling others about Jesus if we want to be obedient to all His commands.

Jesus gave the disciples a promise at the end of the commission. He assured them of His presence. How significant this must have been. The disciples were looking at the one with whom they had walked, talked, and followed for three years. They had given up everything to follow Him. They loved Him. So, Jesus's promise of presence was doubly comforting for those disciples. This isn't to diminish the profound comfort that it is for all believers, but we should acknowledge how those men must have felt in that moment.

Jesus's promise wasn't intended to allow the disciples or us to complacently rest in our own wellbeing and security. Rather, it ought to be an incentive to pour ourselves out on the altar of service to our Lord for the completion of the Great Commission.



Application: How should the presence of Jesus influence the priority we give the gospel in our lives?

3. The Responsibility of the Gospel (Acts 13:47; 20:24)

Before this verse in Acts 13, Paul gave a sermon to an audience of Jews and Jewish converts. Paul presents a fourfold Christian confession of the gospel not unlike that which appears in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5: Jesus was crucified. He was buried in a tomb. God raised Him from the dead. He was seen by many witnesses.

God kept His promise; the gospel has come, and the signature of that promise rests in the resurrection. What did that have to do with the listening crowd? It meant the forgiveness of sins was being offered to them. Forgiveness of sins comes only through Jesus. Most of the Jews rejected this message, so the missionaries turned their attention elsewhere.

Since the Jews rejected the gospel, the missionaries turned to the Gentiles because they were receptive. This answer defined a pattern Paul would follow throughout his missionary work—preaching first to the Jews and, when they rejected his message, preaching to the Gentiles. Unfortunately, those who reject the gospel are rejecting eternal life, for that life is found only in Jesus Christ. Paul and Barnabas had followed the Spirit's leadership into missionary work. Because of their obedience, people who had come to Christ rejoiced in their salvation and a new church was planted. From the Old Testament to the New, God is the God of all people and the gospel is good news for all people.

- ❓ Whose responsibility is it to tell the gospel to others? Is this a responsibility you take seriously? Explain.
- ❓ What does it mean to count one's life as no value to oneself?

We, as the church, are responsible for telling others about Jesus. No one gets a pass. We should all be sharing our faith with others, not just because Jesus tells us to, but because the life-changing news is so good we want to share the gospel with others.

When Paul said his life was of no value to himself, he simply meant that his life was not his own. His life belonged to Jesus, and every bit of his energy was spent exalting Jesus and telling others about the salvation found in Jesus Christ. We, too, should be using all of our resources to glorify God and to advance the kingdom of heaven.

- ❓ Application: How can we make certain that telling the gospel to others is our life's ambition?

There are several ways we can test to see if sharing the gospel is a personal priority. We can evaluate our giving to see how much of it goes toward gospel ministries and missionary efforts. We can meditate on how often we have shared the gospel with our family and friends and how often we speak to them about the things of the Lord. Finally, we can see how large a priority we put on praying for others and for gospel ministries.

Conclusion

If you really stop and think about it, the gospel is the most incredible, wonderful, transformational message that has ever come to planet Earth. It has the power to change lives more powerfully than a winning lottery ticket or a cure for cancer ever could. As Christians, we have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to share the gospel with all people. And if we're convinced of the gospel's power and concerned about the lost, nothing should stop us.

Living the gospel and engaging the world with the story of Christ is the most effective way to spread this good news. God has put us all in different places with different levels of influence. When the "righteous live by faith," the gospel message is shared. To share the gospel, you must first prioritize it above all else.

- ① Consider the person or people who first shared Christ with you. What about your relationship or conversation with them persuaded you to trust and listen to them?
- ① Why would you be ashamed of something or Someone who has delivered you from death to life? How would your life be different if you were unashamed of the gospel?
- ① Who is God calling you to have a gospel conversation with this week? How will you respond?

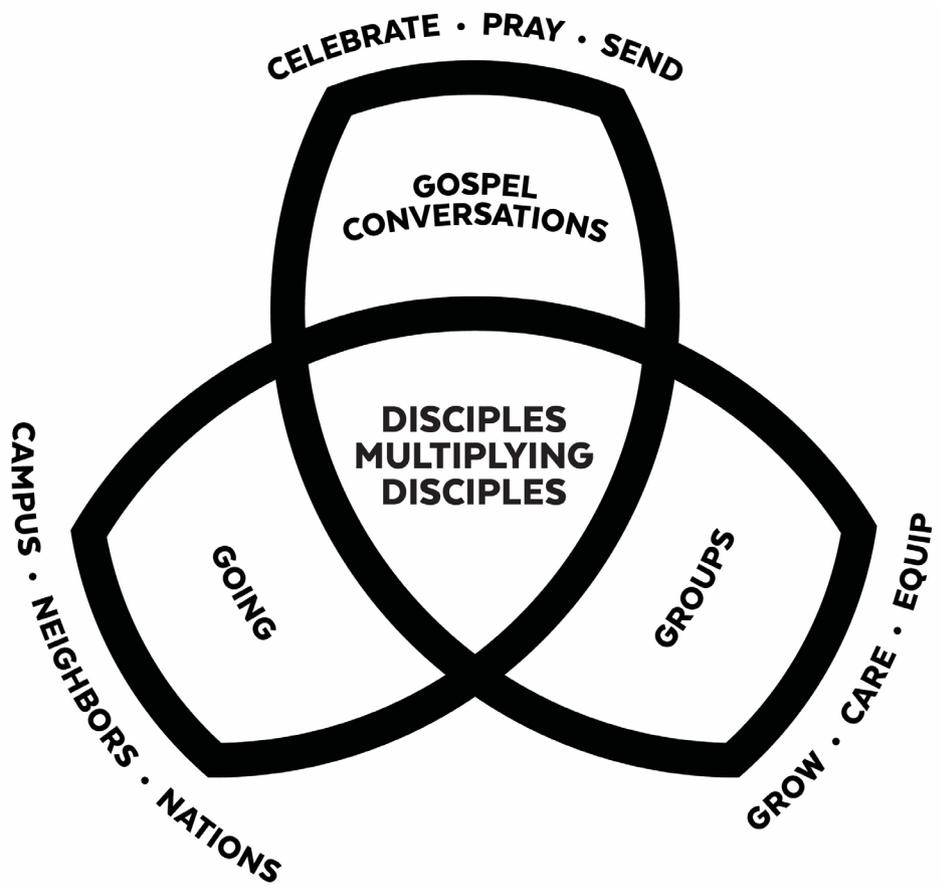
Prayer of Response

Thank the Father for giving His Son Jesus to us, and through Him, eternal life. Pray that we will be so overjoyed at His kindness toward the world that we will happily share the good news with others. Ask for the Lord to help us be engaged in telling the gospel in our community and around the world.

Additional Resources

- *Gospel* by J.D. Greear
- *What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert
- *The Explicit Gospel* by Matt Chandler

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



For Next Week

Session Title

- What We Value: Uniquely Called

Main Passages

- Ephesians 4:7-16

Session Outline

1. The Distribution of Our Gifts (Ephesians 4:7-12)
2. The Purpose of Our Gifts (Ephesians 4:13-16)
3. The Diversity of Our Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

Memorize

For I am not ashamed of the gospel,, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.

- Romans 1:16

Historical Context of Romans

Purpose

Paul's purpose in writing Romans can be identified from his direct statements in the text and inferred from the content. He expressly wrote that he wanted to impart spiritual strength to the believers at Rome (1:11–12; 16:25–26). He asked for prayer for the difficult task he was undertaking (15:30) and that he might be able to come and see them (15:32). He hoped to enlist the Roman churches to support a mission to the west (15:23–29). The content of the letter shows that the churches experienced tensions between believers from different backgrounds. Paul wanted them to be united and to avoid dissension and false teaching (16:17–18). The content also reveals his exposition of what is essential Christianity and what are matters of indifference.

Author

Paul the apostle is the stated and indisputable author of the book of Romans. From the book of Acts and statements in Romans, we learn that Paul wrote this letter while he was in Corinth and on his way to Jerusalem in the spring of AD 57, to deliver an offering from the Gentile churches to poor Jewish Christians (Ac 20:3; Rm 15:25–29).

Setting

All of Paul's writings grew out of his missionary/pastoral work and were about the problems and needs of local churches. The book of Romans is also of this genre, but it is the least "local" in the sense that Paul had not yet been to Rome. This letter was his opportunity to expound the good news message (the gospel). He could discuss the essence of sin, the salvation accomplished on the cross, the union of the believer with Christ, how the Spirit works in the Christian to promote holiness, the place of the Jewish people in God's plan, future things, and Christian living or ethics. Though Paul did not write Romans as a systematic theology, his somewhat orderly exposition has been the fountain for the development of that discipline.

Special Features

Paul's letter to the Roman house churches has been preeminent among the New Testament writings for its theological and pastoral influence. It focuses on the doctrine of salvation, including the practical implications for believers as they live out the salvation given to them through Jesus Christ.

Extended Commentary

Romans 1:16-17

1:16-17. John Stott recounts a comment made by Scottish theologian James Stewart concerning this passage: “There’s no sense in declaring that you’re not ashamed of something unless you’ve been tempted to feel ashamed of it” (Stott, John. *Romans, God’s Good News for the World*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994, p. 60). We think of Paul as invincible, yet he was human. Jesus anticipated that his followers might one day be ashamed to identify with him (Mark 8:38), and Peter soon confirmed that prediction by denying him three times in one night (Matt. 26:75). Even Paul himself confessed to arriving in Corinth in “weakness and fear, and with much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3) so plainspoken did he see himself as compared to the eloquent and sophisticated Greeks. And yet Paul, in truth, was never ashamed of his Savior. He spoke before royalty, rabbis, rulers, and rabble—to him, it made no difference. As he is about to demonstrate to the Romans in subsequent chapters, all are in need of the gospel.

Paul’s confidence turns on three occurrences of *gar* (“for” or “because”) in these two verses. The first is untranslated in the NIV, but should be, as it provides the transition from his earlier statement of eagerness: “I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome [for] I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God . . . for in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed (vv. 15–17; emphasis added).

Paul is giving the Roman believers a paradigm for life that the contemporary church desperately needs to understand: nothing will display the righteousness of God (and thereby his person and glory) to a needy world like the message of the gospel. Not surprisingly, it is a paradigm that Paul drew from the Old Testament and applied to the believers in Rome. We can draw on both instances and apply it to our benefit today.

So much has been written by commentators and theologians on these verses that “it is not easy to summarize, let alone to systematize, the debate” (Stott, p. 61). What is the meaning of the righteousness from God—attribute, action, or advantage? And what does it mean that righteousness is by faith from first to last? And does *ho de dikaios ek pisteos zusetai* mean the righteous will live by faith or “the one who is righteous by faith will live”? Good questions all, and best answered with a look at the context from which Paul draws his final phrase (the righteous will live by faith), and the context to which he is applying and addressing it (the believing community of Christians in Rome).

In verse 17, Paul quotes something God said to the prophet Habakkuk (Hab. 2:4; also quoted in Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38–39). God’s statement was one of comfort to Habakkuk, who was at his wits’ end with God. First, wickedness was rampant in Israel and God seemed oblivious to it, moving Habakkuk to rail against God in a series of complaints (Hab. 1:2–4). Second, when God said he was going to use a nation more wicked than Israel (the Babylonians) to punish Israel, this produced cries and complaints of injustice from the prophet (Hab. 1:12–2:1). It might be said that Habakkuk was embarrassed, ashamed of God’s inaction and his choices.

Paraphrased, God’s answer to Habakkuk was this: “I am about to reveal something to you, Habakkuk, that I want you to record so that a herald may go and proclaim it (Hab. 2:2). It is a revelation of my righteousness, and will put to rest your fears of inaction and injustice. In the meantime—until my righteousness is revealed—you who are righteous are to trust me, to live by faith. There is nothing you can do to ‘fix’ the situation. You will have to live by faith, not by sight, until what I have written is accomplished” (Hab. 2:4).

Now, fast forward to a.d. 57. Paul is writing to a community of Christian believers living in the most powerful city in the world. Just three years prior to his letter, the reign of the Roman Emperor Claudius (ruled a.d. 41–54) had ended. Claudius had banished all Jews from Rome around a.d. 49–50 because of the continuing disruptions “instigated by Chrestus” (a misspelling of “Christ,” scholars agree; recorded by the historian Suetonius in *Claudius*, 25). Obviously, the disruptions were not led by Christ in person, but were perhaps instigated by debates over his person. Claudius ended the disruptions by driving all Jews (including those who had come to believe in Christ; see Acts 2:10) out of Rome. Paul met Aquila and Priscilla for the first time in Corinth, where they settled as expatriates from Rome (Acts 18:1–2). Supposedly, when Claudius’s reign ended, Jews were allowed to return to Rome. But the banishment no doubt had an unsettling, disruptive, and persecutorial effect on the young body of believers in Rome.

Unfortunately, this was just a foretaste of what Rome would give to the church in years ahead. Paul himself would suffer a martyr’s death at the hands of Nero along with multitudes of believers during Nero’s reign. Could the believers in Rome have wondered where God was in the midst of their suffering under Claudius? Could they have been embarrassed, even ashamed, as Habakkuk had been, that God was seemingly doing nothing to rescue them? Could they have felt powerless to act, wanting to do something but not knowing what to do?

Paul had read Habakkuk, and he knew that the Roman believers needed a revelation from God—some good news in the midst of their confusion. And so he writes verses 16 and 17 to them: the gospel is God’s good news and Paul is the herald who is not ashamed of the circumstances or of God. Why? Because God’s righteousness is revealed in the gospel! The pagan power of Rome (like the pagan nation of Babylon in Habakkuk’s day) is no match for the power of God which is the gospel, Paul says. Do not think that God’s power is absent—it is here in the gospel! And God’s righteousness will be revealed against all manner of sin everywhere. In the meantime, the righteous must live by faith. Rather than thinking you are powerless to change Rome, the gospel gives you the power of God to change lives.

Now fast forward to the end of the second millennium a.d. In a day when Western civilization is said to be in its “post-Christian” phase, believers can feel powerless to effect the cultural trends and tides that bring constant pressure to bear. What the church needs today is what Habakkuk needed in 600 b.c. and oppressed believers needed in a.d. 50—a herald with a revelation of good news from God! The gospel is that revelation, and Paul’s letter to the Romans is the tablet upon which it is written. But where are the heralds? They are meant to be every believer who knows that the righteous will live by faith regardless of the circumstances.

As Paul will soon explain, every person whom you pass on the street today is in need of the good news of the gospel. Whether an unbeliever oppressed by sin who is trying to create his or her own salvation, or a believer oppressed by the world who feels powerless living amidst unrighteousness. For both, the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, and for now, those who would be righteous will find life by faith.

The bottom line to history is that God will judge all human affairs: the Babylonians, Habakkuk, the Romans, Paul, the church, you, me—all will be judged. His righteousness will balance human actions. The message of the gospel—the message of Romans—is that we do not have to wait for the end of history to discover the effects of God’s righteous judgment. His righteousness (his judgment) is revealed in the gospel. Paul will show convincingly in Romans that all have sinned and stand under the condemnation of God, and that the gospel reveals that fact now. Therefore, since man can know today of his sin and impending judgment, he can accept today God’s righteousness in place of his own unrighteousness and be saved (therefore, the righteousness from God is an attribute, an action, and an advantage).

In addition, the gospel vindicates God’s name today (see Rom. 1:5). As God heralded his righteousness to Habakkuk (Hab. 2:2) but did not execute it upon the Babylonians until years after Habakkuk’s death, so the gospel heralds the righteousness of God today. For his name’s sake (1:5), Paul says, he was given grace to proclaim the gospel among the Gentiles. Let the Romans laugh at “Chrestus,” the common carpenter from Galilee. We will not be ashamed because the gospel of Christ reveals the true righteousness of God which transforms the “righteousness” of the Romans from laughter to lament. God’s name may be mocked, but it is also vindicated—through the gospel.

Finally, Paul is proclaiming in Romans 1:16–17 a fresh insight into the truth of Isaiah 55:11: “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” This gospel does not contain the power of God. It is the power of God to everyone who believes it and lives in it (ek pisteos eis pistin; by faith from first to last), first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. Starting with Israel, the gospel is flowing to the nations, and Paul is inviting the Romans to partner with him in that proclamation of power.¹

References

1. Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Romans*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), <https://app.wordsearchbible.lifeway.com/>.

Author Bio

Max Anders (Holman New Testament Commentary: Romans)

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume *Holman Bible Commentary* series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at www.maxanders.com to help people grow spiritually.

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