

The Gospel of the Only Wise God

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[0 : 0 0] We are this morning finishing up the book of Romans where we have been for quite a while.

In fact, had we extended this series for only a few more weeks into June, we would have been able to say that we spent three years in the book of Romans.! Now, of course, that's not three years.

It's not three years worth of Sundays, right? But roughly around 100 sermons through the book of Romans over the course of almost three years, so that those of you who've been here throughout this series have become well acquainted with the book of Romans.

In fact, I'm curious to know because I know that we have a lot of new people who've only begun to come in the last few months or in the last year. So I'm curious how many of you were here.

Raise your hand if you were here when we started the book of Romans, when we began. All right? Okay. So a few of you were here for the whole series. Others of you are sort of playing catch-up.

[1 : 0 8] Well, you can always go onto the website and listen to the old sermons. You can catch up and go all the way through the book of Romans. But this morning we're finishing. This morning we're in chapter 16. At the very end of this chapter, looking at the last three verses, Paul's final words to the believers in Rome.

And I'd like you to open up your Bibles to Romans 16. If you're using one of the few Bibles that are scattered around in the chairs, you only need to turn to page 951. Otherwise, you need to find Romans in your own copy of the Scriptures.

And I'd like you guys to stand as we read the Word together. Beginning in verse 25 of Romans 16, Paul writes, Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ.

Amen. Father, we give you thanks, not only for these words, but for all of the book of Romans. Inspired by your Spirit, through the Apostle Paul.

And I pray that these words would come to us, not merely as the words of a man who lived 2,000 years ago, but they would come to us this morning as the very Word of God, transforming us and changing us.

[2 : 4 0] We ask these things in Christ's name. Amen. You guys take a seat. In the year 397 A.D., a man by the name of Augustine, that many of you have probably heard of, who had dabbled in and had pursued a number of different philosophies and religious outlooks upon life that were popular in the Greco-Roman world, he sat in a garden, and according to his own testimony, he heard what to him sounded like the voice of a child singing a song with the refrain, take up and read, take up and read.

The only thing nearby him in this garden was a portion of the Scriptures that contained the book of Romans. Probably was not an accident. Augustine's mother was a believer and had been praying for him for most of his life that God would convert him, that God would do some sort of powerful work within his heart and change him, because Augustine was a man who was beset with all sorts of sins.

That's why he sought refuge in the various philosophies and religions of his day, to find some rest for his soul. He was a restless man, looking and searching all over the place, but with a faithful mother, praying for him, praying that God might do a work in his heart.

And so on this day, he heard a child's voice take up and read. He had near him this copy of the Scriptures, and he opened up to the book of Romans and began to read from chapter 13 of the book of Romans.

And in that moment, his eyes were opened, his heart began to beat for the first time, and he came to trust in Christ. Years later, when he reflected back upon that moment, he described it by saying, our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.

[4 : 31] He expressed this reality that up until this point in his life, up until his encounter with the book of Romans, he had been restless, looking here and there for answers.

And now finally, through this great book written by the Apostle Paul, the Spirit worked a miracle in his heart. He came to life. A little over a thousand years later, a man named Martin Luther, who also was restless, who also had been searching.

He had been searching within the Roman Catholic Church. He had gone so far as to become a monk. He was looking for some sort of reprieve for the guilt that he felt and for the sense of shame that he carried with him for his own sin all the time.

He became a monk. He became a teacher of theology. And yet, in all of this, he did not find the rest that he longed for until he came as he was studying and preparing to teach through the book of Romans.

He came in chapter 1 to Romans, chapter 1, verses 16 and 17, where he read that the righteous shall live by faith. And he says that in that moment, it was as if he had been born again, that his eyes had been opened and now his heart had been changed.

[5 : 45] In that moment, through the powerful work of the Spirit of God, through the book of Romans, Martin Luther was converted. A couple hundred years after that, a man named John Wesley, who himself had been searching, who was already an ordained minister in the Anglican church, and yet he sensed that something was missing.

As he sat reading the book of Romans, he described it and said that his heart felt strangely warmed. And he knew in that moment, not before then, but he knew in that moment that he had trusted in Christ alone for his salvation.

And God had granted to him in that moment a sense of assurance, of knowing that he was secure in Christ and that Christ's righteousness alone had rescued him and saved him. There are stories after story after story of men and women who through encountering the book of Romans have had their lives and their hearts changed forever.

And that's why we have spent such a great deal of time walking through this fantastic book, through this letter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Rome.

In fact, we titled this series, Romans, The Gospel of Jesus Christ, because more than anywhere else in the New Testament, the gospel is systematically laid out and explained for us through the book of Romans.

[7 : 10] So that Paul begins, for the first few chapters of this book, he begins by defining the gospel, by helping us to understand what the gospel is and telling us that though the wrath of God goes out against the ungodly, and though we are all ungodly, he says there is none righteous, none who does good.

Though that characterizes all of us, Paul also tells us in defining the gospel that God sent His Son into the world to be an atoning sacrifice or a propitiation, a sacrifice that absorbs and removes wrath.

With the wrath of God hanging over us for our sin, Christ came into the world so that He Himself might bear God's wrath in our place. And the good news, the gospel tells us that if we trust in Him, and if we trust in His work for us and on our behalf on the cross, then through faith, His obedience counts as ours, and our disobedience is punished on the cross as He suffers there.

We are declared righteous. We are justified, Paul tells us in this book, by faith alone in Christ alone. That is the gospel. And Paul labors to define that gospel for us for five chapters before he turns his attention in chapter 6 to defending the gospel against various charges brought against it.

And so he mounts this vigorous defense of the gospel for chapter 6 and 7 and 8 and 9 all the way through chapter 11. He mounts a robust defense of the gospel against all sorts of objections to the gospel that you might imagine.

[8 : 47] And then finally, in the last few chapters of this book, we have seen as He has instructed us and He has shown us the implications of the gospel for our lives.

Various ways in which the gospel ought to be applied in our own lives so that it's not just information that we hear. It's not just something that we say that we believe.

That is, we agree with it and then we move on. It is transforming. It changes us. And now as we come to the very end of this letter, Paul has not left the gospel behind.

He has not abandoned his primary purpose in this letter to define and defend and apply the gospel to our lives. He will do all of that in these final three verses.

And I want you to look this morning and see how he goes about that. The first thing that you need to notice though about these verses is that they are praise. That's what this is. That's what we find here at the book of Romans which is appropriate because if you've seen the gospel, if you've understood what Christ has done for you, if you've understood the things that Paul has told us in this book, the natural result for a heart that has been transformed by those truths is praise.

[10 : 00] It is worship. And so Paul comes to the conclusion of this book and he explodes in worship at the end. Now to him who is able to strengthen you. Praise. Praise he begins to offer.

And then he comes back to praise in verse 27. To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ. This is praise. This is worship that Paul ends this letter with.

But in the middle of that, he tells us very quickly and very succinctly why we ought to join him in this worship. Why it is that the good news, that the gospel of Jesus Christ moves us to worship and we begin to see it in the description of God that he offers at the very beginning of verse 25.

He describes God as him who is able to strengthen you. Because at the end of the day, that's what we need. We need to be strengthened.

We need to be made to be able to stand. Because let's face it, on our own, we do not possess within us the ability to weather the storms of life. We do not have within us the ability to deal with all the hardships that will come against us.

[11 : 16] And that's true even if you are a follower of Jesus. You do not possess in your own power the ability to endure all the things that will happen to you. Whether it's troubles in your family, whether it's troubles in your marriage, whether it is sickness, or whether it is things that have happened to you in the past, or things that are happening to you right now.

You and I, left to our own devices, will not be able to stand firmly and securely after all these things have come upon us. Not on our own.

Which is why Paul draws near to the end of this letter and he praises God for being a God who is able to strengthen us, able to make us stand.

But what's fascinating is the means that God uses to strengthen us. How does He do this? What is this great work that He's going to do?

How is He going to go about in the middle of all of these things that we face in the world around us? How is God going to strengthen us? In the same way that He saves us.

[12 : 19] Notice. Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel. How does God provide strength to His people so that they might remain strong and endure?

How does He do it? He does it through the gospel. It's not as if we are saved, we are justified, we are declared righteous, and we receive the promise and the reward of eternal life by believing in the gospel.

And then there's a stage two. There's something else that we need to believe in or something else that we need to be given in order for us to be strengthened and be able to continue in faith.

No. It's the same gospel that delivers us and rescues us continues to strengthen us. The same gospel. God is able to strengthen you according to the gospel, Paul tells us.

And what follows is a description of the gospel. But it's a description of the gospel that reflects everything that Paul has been telling us about the gospel for the last 16 chapters of this letter.

[13 : 33] In fact, the language of these verses echoes the language of the first chapter of Romans. And the first chapter of Romans sets forth the main themes that will play out throughout the book of Romans.

So here at the end, he's drawing our attention to the beginning so that we will remember everything in the middle so that we will be strengthened by all that he's told us.

In fact, I want you to see some of these connections as we walk through these couple of verses here. So we will flip back especially to chapter 1 but to some of the other chapters throughout Romans as we see and try to grapple with and understand Paul's description of the gospel.

But the first thing I want you to see about his description of the gospel is that it comes to us in three main parts. There are three ways in which Paul describes the gospel in these verses that are going to help us to wrap our heads around how the gospel strengthens us.

So here they are. Let me lay them out for you. First of all, he refers to the gospel as the preaching of Jesus Christ. That's another term for the gospel. God can strengthen you according to my gospel and, or we might say, He can strengthen you according to my gospel.

[14 : 48] That is, let me clarify what I mean by gospel, the preaching of Jesus Christ. So that's the first description. And then secondly, he says that this gospel is according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed.

So he wants us to see and understand that the gospel is tied in to a mystery that was once hidden but now is made known. So the gospel is the preaching of Christ.

It is the making known of this great mystery. And then thirdly, it is, in verse 26, according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith.

So the gospel message summed up in these verses consists of the preaching of Christ, the revelation of a mystery, and the command of God. Let's think about those and what they mean in the context of this entire book.

First of all, to say that the gospel consists of the preaching of Jesus Christ is not really to say anything new. It's not to add any sort of content to the gospel.

[15 : 51] Because apart from Jesus Christ, we don't have a gospel. We don't have good news if Jesus is not bound up in the news that we are hearing or proclaiming.

Which is why so often we will hear people who talk about their belief in God. Or we will hear people say that they are religious. Or, better yet, in today's world, the word spiritual is often preferred.

That they are a spiritual person. That they believe in God. And yet, we will hear rarely, if ever at all, a mention of Jesus Christ. And if you have faith in God that is not faith in Jesus Christ, you need to know and understand that that faith will not benefit you.

That faith will not rescue you. It will not save you. It will not give you hope for the future. The gospel is a message about Jesus Christ. And Paul makes that very, very clear at the very beginning of this letter.

Turn back to chapter 1. I want you to see how central Jesus is to the gospel. Back in chapter 1, verse 1, Paul opens this letter by identifying himself.

[17 : 02] Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle. And now notice how he thinks of himself. Set apart for the gospel of God.

You find it strange that at the end of this letter, Paul refers to the gospel as my gospel. But at the beginning of it, he acknowledges that it is in fact the gospel of God. Why the switch?

Why does he make that transition? I think that he makes that transition because he sees himself as someone who is fully captive to this gospel. The gospel is Paul's gospel in the sense that a slave master's master might be said to be their master.

They are owned by the master. Paul is owned by the gospel. The gospel defines all of his thinking and feeling in his entire life. But notice what he says about the gospel.

He says that the gospel in verse 3 is a message concerning God's Son who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead.

[18 : 06] Jesus Christ our Lord. The gospel is a message about the Son. It is a message about the Son of God descended from David but shown and proven to be the true Son of God by the power of His resurrection from the dead.

This is who Jesus is. Yes, the rightful heir to the throne of David. Yes, the rightful king of the nation of Israel. But more than that, more than just a son of David, son of God and proven to be by His resurrection from the dead.

He is the descendant of David but He is the divine Son of God and the gospel is not good news unless it is news centered upon Jesus because He's the one who does it all.

You don't do anything to contribute to your salvation. He does it all. When Paul says in chapter 3 that God sent His Son into the world to be a propitiation, he means to communicate to us that we don't come to God and offer Him something that might make us acceptable in His sight.

No, Christ comes from God so that He might offer up Himself to God and bear the wrath of God for our sakes. And we come to God with nothing but clinging to Jesus and claiming that our faith in Him gives us a rightful claim on all that He has done for us.

[19 : 35] The gospel is good news because it is a message about Jesus and His work in our place and for us on the cross. If you have a message that does not center upon Jesus or if you have a heart that is not obsessed with Jesus and you have a message and you have a faith that are not saving and they will not help you in the end, you must trust in Jesus.

The gospel is all about Him. But notice secondly what He tells us about the gospel. This mystery. This seems like strange language. It makes sense to refer to the gospel as the preaching of Jesus Christ but what is this revelation of a mystery?

What is it? Well, He describes the mystery. He says that it was kept secret for long ages but now He says it has been disclosed.

It has been made known but in a very specific way through the prophetic writings. Well, now that sounds strange because the prophetic writings to which Paul refers here are not his own writings though they could be called prophetic writings but that's not what Paul is referencing.

Paul is speaking of what we call the Old Testament what they simply at this time called the Scriptures. Paul is saying that these prophetic writings these prophetic scriptures that they disclose they make known the mystery that has been kept secret for so long.

[21 : 08] But the scriptures have been around for all of that time. The scriptures have been around. They have been they've been there for the people of Israel to peruse for them to study for them to look at and try to understand and yet mysteriously something was hidden.

that has now been made known. This is not the first time that Paul has told us something like this. Turn back in Romans again. This time though turn back to chapter 3.

I want you to see something that is astounding. Chapter 3 verse 21. Paul has been up to this point in this chapter or in chapters 1, 2 in the first half of chapter 3.

he has been laying out for us a brutal description of our own sinfulness. He's not pulled any punches. He has told us just how unrighteous and ungodly and sinful we all are.

And now he comes with good news. But now, verse 21, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law although the law and the prophets bear witness to it.

[22 : 24] The law and the prophets that is the Old Testament they bear witness to the righteousness of God that comes through Christ apart from the law.

All along the law was pointing ahead to Jesus. All along the law was showing the way to Christ. And yet the vast majority of people could not see it.

could not understand. Could not wrap their minds around it. Not that no one understood. Not that no one came to a saving faith during the Old Testament period.

Paul gives us examples in chapter 4. He cites the example of Abraham. He says that Abraham is a prime example of someone who was looking ahead. Someone who understood. Someone who knew that it was by faith alone in the promises of God concerning a coming Redeemer.

It was by faith alone that Abraham could be made righteous by God. Abraham understood that, Paul says. David understood that, Paul says. So it's not that no one understood.

[23 : 28] No one had any insight into the mystery. But no one had complete insight into the mystery. And the vast majority of people, even among the Jews, the vast majority of them throughout the history of Israel, they could not see.

They did not understand. Read through your Old Testament. Read through it and it will surprise you. Because the Old Testament does not contain for us this glorious story of a people faithfully serving God generation after generation.

That's not what we see. That's not what we see at all. What we see is failure of generation after generation after generation. And even the leaders of Israel, the kings of Israel, they fail over and over again.

They can't see. They don't understand the mystery. They don't see. They don't get it. But it's not just an issue for Old Testament Israel. In fact, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3 that for the vast majority of people, when they read the law, that is, the Old Testament, when they read it, Paul says, there's a veil that covers them.

Their eyes are blinded. They can't see. They can't see the glory that it's pointing toward. And then he says, but in Christ, the veil is taken away and gone.

[24 : 52] But prior to the work of the Spirit to bring people to Jesus, they couldn't see. And they still can't see. There are people who read this book and devote their lives to studying this book and trying to understand this book.

And at the end of the day, they remain blinded to the truth and they cannot see. They can't comprehend. They cannot understand the great mystery that is bound up with the gospel message.

They can't see it. Paul says, that was the case for a long, long time for almost everybody. But now, he says, through the writings that were there all along, now this mystery has been disclosed.

It has been made known. And what's so glorious about this mystery? What's so great? What is it that Israel failed to see in particular?

I think there are two aspects of the gospel that they failed to see. I think they knew the Redeemer was coming. They knew that because we can see from the writings of Jews around the time of Christ and even after that that there was a hoping, a looking forward to a Savior.

[26 : 03] Somebody who would come and rescue them. So they knew that the Scriptures pointed toward a Redeemer and a Rescuer. What they were missing was how He would go about saving them and what would be the scope of the salvation that He would bring into the world.

Notice how Paul describes this. In verse 26, the ESV has it written this way, that this mystery has been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations.

Now I want you to mark down that word all nations because in the original, in the Greek, it actually occurs at the end of verse 26 and not there. Translating from one language to another is never an easy thing to do.

It's never easy. Those of you who speak more than one language, if you say, for instance, you speak Spanish and English, you are well aware that you have to move words around. You have to change things sometimes and it's difficult to go from one language to another.

So a very simple example would be, for instance, if you wanted to say the word, you wanted to say the phrase the red car in Spanish, you would need to change the word order. You would need to say the car red because that's how the language functions and that's how it works.

[27 : 08] And it wouldn't make any sense to say the car red in English as you're translating, so you have to move the words around. Well, that happens even more so when you're going from a language like Greek in which the New Testament was originally written to a language like English.

So sometimes it's not all automatically clear where a word or a phrase should go in English word order. But I think it's safe to keep this phrase, all the nations where it is in the original.

That is at the end of verse 26. And I say that for a reason. What is it that the eyes of those who read the Bible and who have read the Bible in the past, what is it that they couldn't see?

What was it about the mystery? What is it about the coming of this Redeemer that they didn't get? Two things. Two things. Paul describes the Gospel as bringing about the obedience of faith.

It is a command to bring about the obedience of faith. That's what it is. And then, among or for all the nations.

[28 : 10] So the two aspects, I think, of the mystery that were not understood were that righteousness, that salvation, that deliverance would come by faith and by faith alone.

We know that they missed out on that. Paul tells us in Romans chapter 10, speaking of his fellow Jewish kinsmen, that though they have a zeal for God, it's not in accordance with the truth.

And then he goes on to say, because not understanding the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own righteousness. You see, what they fail to do is they fail to understand that righteousness is a gift that comes from God through faith.

It's not an achievement that we bring before him. The perfect obedience and righteousness of Jesus is counted as ours when we trust in him. That's the entire opposite of seeking to establish your own righteousness.

You can either come before God and say, God, here's all the stuff that I've done in my life and I feel like the good outweighs the bad. and that will never work because the bad contains an infinite weight that you cannot bear and all of your good works will sink to the bottom of the ocean of God's wrath when tied to your sin.

[29 : 29] It will not work. Or, you can come before him and say, I'm nothing of my own, but I trust in Jesus and here's his righteousness to count as mine in my place.

And in that moment, you are seen and declared to be fully and perfectly righteous in the eyes of a just and holy God.

That reality that the gospel was always aiming at the obedience of faith, that the gospel was always aiming at faith alone in Christ alone, was and continues to be missed by many people who claim to have faith and trust in God.

And yet, Paul would have us know right here at the close of this letter that not only is the gospel a message about Jesus, but it is a message that calls not for obeying all of the commands of God, but for one single act of obedience, faith in Jesus.

Jesus. That's so often missed. You can even sit in church week in and week out and yet you can think at the end of it all that your church attendance will have some sort of sway on judgment day and it will not.

[30 : 58] Faith in Jesus will have all the sway in that day. And then lastly, what did they miss? They missed in addition to justification by faith alone.

They missed also that this would not only be available to the people who are physical descendants of Abraham, but it would be available to all those who trust. It would be available to all the nations.

Let's read this with the correct word order. Alright? But now, this mystery has been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations.

That's what it's for. The gospel was always, always aiming to rescue people not merely from the tribe of Abraham, but from every tribe, from every language, from every people, and from every nation.

Always, at all times, God had His sights set on this particular plan. He was going to save people from every nation.

[32 : 01] And that truth was simply unbelievable to many of Paul's kinsmen. Many of his Jewish brothers and sisters just could not grasp that reality.

And yet, it is something that Paul labors in this letter to explain. It is the truth that Paul labors to defend. Let me show you one place. Go to chapter 11 where we see the only other occurrence of the word mystery in the book of Romans.

Paul says in chapter 11 verse 25, Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers. A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

God always intended to save a people for Himself from every nation upon the face of the earth. And Paul says, now that it's happening, the fullness of the Gentiles are in process of coming into the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus.

That was always the plan. Why did God call Abraham? Why did He call him? Well, He told Abraham so that you might be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

[33 : 21] And that plan and that purpose for Abraham and for his descendants never changed until the ultimate descendant of Abraham came into the world and laid down his life for all who would trust in Him.

This is the gospel. This is the good news. It is a good news centered upon Jesus. It is a good news that is revealed throughout the Scriptures beginning in Genesis and working its way all the way through.

And it is the good news that God saves all people from all tribes in the way that He pleases and that is through faith in Jesus alone. No one gets saved in any other way.

And because of that, because of that great truth, Paul comes to verse 27, his final explosion of praise, and he sings praise to the only wise God.

Why would he do that? Why would he come to the wisdom of God? Because when he looks at the gospel, when he considers the plan of God through all the centuries and the ages, and he sees that plan coming to its fulfillment in Jesus, and now he sees through his own work and his own ministry the promise of a blessing to all the nations coming as people from all over the Greco-Roman world trust in Jesus and are saved, as he sees all of that, he sees it all not as happenstance.

[34 : 54] It's not random. It's not happening as some sort of plan B that God put in place. This is happening because the only wise God decided in eternity past that this would be his plan and this is the way that he would execute it.

And it's all happening according to the plans of the only wise God. And so Paul, on reflecting upon the gospel and in pointing us back toward the gospel, explodes and says, finally, to the only wise God through Jesus Christ be glory forever.

And that's where we should land. That's where we should land. Not only as we come to the end of the book of Romans, but anytime we think about the good news of Jesus Christ, anytime we come to ponder the great mysteries of God revealed in this book, we should arrive at praise to the only wise God.

if we find ourselves landing in any other place, if we find ourselves having read the Bible and suddenly feeling good about ourselves and a sense of self-righteousness welling up in us because we feel like the rich young ruler when we hear the commands, yeah, I've done all of those things.

What else do you have for me? What else do you want me to do? When we feel that rise up within us, we have found ourselves far afield from the gospel. And with no reason to praise God, but only reason to praise ourselves.

[36 : 26] If your faith, if your spirituality, if your religion does not lead you to boasting in God to His glory through Jesus, it is a defective faith and I urge you, trust in Christ and Christ alone now.

This book has one great aim in mind. To make sure, to make certain that we have understood what the good news is and that we have understood how God can take this good news and use it to transform us and in the end to strengthen us and to make us to stand, to make us to endure.

let me close by suggesting to you, just by reading a few verses, some ways in which the gospel can make you stand. I want you to take this to heart and I want you to remember it and I want you to take these verses home and I want you to use them and recite them to yourselves when you need them, in the moment when you most need these.

I want you to remember them. So, so just let me suggest to you four ways in closing that the gospel, through the gospel, God strengthens us. Number one, it reminds us that through Christ and through the work of Jesus, God has dealt a death blow to our guilt.

Through the cross, God has destroyed the accusing power power of sin itself. Romans chapter 5, verse 6, while we were still weak at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

[38 : 11] Romans chapter 5, verse 8, God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And then what does He say next?

Since we've been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. You fear, you have any moments where you think, I'm not good enough and I'm not going to make it.

In that moment, the gospel comes with great power and says He has done it all. And if you trust in Him, know that He has died for you, the ungodly. Know that He has taken your place, a sinner, and because of that, you will be saved from the wrath of God.

Not only that, but the cross of Christ and the work of Christ, the good news of all that He has done sets us free, not just from the guilt of our sin, but it sets us free from the enslaving power of our sin.

It's not just that sin makes us guilty before God, it's that we, on our own, are slaves of sin. We find ourselves returning to the same thing over and over as the writer of Proverbs says, like a dog returning to its vomit.

[39 : 20] We go to the same thing over and over, but it can't satisfy us. And yet, the gospel comes to set us free from that enslavement. Take a look at verse 6 of chapter 6.

We know, Paul says, that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

We are free from the enslaving power of sin. You do not have to go back to those old ways. None of us will live perfect lives until we're fully glorified by God in the presence of Jesus.

But in this life, we can have victory over sin. We can know that the cross has set us free from the power of sin. And in that, we can be strengthened and made to stand.

And then thirdly, not only does the cross set us free from our guilt and from the enslaving power of sin, but it also sets us free from the law and the burden that it places upon us.

[40 : 21] Take a look here in chapter 7. In chapter 7, Paul lays out for us all the ways in which we have been set free from the law, but I want you to focus on this one word.

In chapter 7, verse 6, Paul says, Now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive.

We don't often think of the law of God holding us captive, but if you've ever had those days where you're just striving to do what the Bible says to do, then you know what it's like to fail to live up to that standard and feel as if you're going to spend all your life trying to climb a ladder and every time you take a step on a rung, the ladder slides down and you never make it to the top.

It just keeps moving like one of those old silly cartoons and they never get to the top. And Paul says, do not worry. Now in Christ, you have been set free from the law, no longer weighed down by the great burdens of all those commands that we could never live up to.

Which leads me to a fourth thing that should strengthen us, a fourth reality that Paul lays out in this book and that is that though we are set free from the law, that does not mean that we are lawless people.

[41 : 45] It does not mean that Christians are those with no moral compass or that we just live any way that we want. There are some who preach a message like that. Oh, trust in Jesus, you're saved by faith alone and you go out and it doesn't matter what you do because you're free from the law.

But that's not the picture that Paul paints for us. We are set free from the law so that we might render to God the kind of obedience that the law was calling for all along.

Flip over to chapter 13. I want you to see this quickly. Verse 8. Oh, no one anything except to love each other for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Fulfilled the law. For the commandments you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet and any other commandment are summed up in this word. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

And he says, love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Set free from the enslaving power of sin, that's good news.

[42 : 50] Set free from the burden of the law, that's good news. But also now set free and empowered to love others and there through that love fulfill the true purpose of the law.

You want to be strengthened in the day of temptation? Do not turn to the law by itself. No. You look to Jesus as the perfect example of the one who loved.

And you imitate that love and through love you fulfill the law. Set free in every conceivable way from the guilt of sin and the power of sin and from the burden of the law and now set free unto the obedience of love.

Now, this is the way that God uses the gospel to strengthen us. He does not say believe the gospel, get saved, and then good luck working the rest of it out.

He says believe the gospel, be saved and rescued from your sins, and then keep believing in the gospel and it'll make you strong, it'll make you stand, and no matter what comes at you in life, temptation or failure or loss or pain or distress, whatever comes at you, the gospel will come to you in that moment as the very power of God to make you strong.

[44 : 22] But only, only if you belong to the one to whom the gospel was pointing all along.

He strengthens you according to the gospel and according to the preaching of Jesus Christ. And my prayer for you is that you would so trust in and depend upon the preaching of Jesus Christ that at the end of the day you would praise the only wise God through Jesus.

Let's pray. Let's pray.