

# The only gospel for everyone

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, do open your Bibles, if you would, at Romans chapter 1, page 939, I think, in the church Bibles. My working title for this series is certainly not original, it's simply this, the Gospel of God.

That's the words we find in verse 1 of chapter 1 that Paul uses to describe his Gospel. In fact, that's what he calls it at the end of the letter, in verse 25 of chapter 16, My Gospel, the extraordinarily full and deeply personal exposition of these 16 chapters.

And that is very important, by the way. Paul's Gospel is God's Gospel, and God's Gospel is Paul's Gospel. He is the divinely appointed Apostle of Christ who reveals with God's authority and all his authority, God's Word to the world.

That is Paul's claim, no less than that. And what that means is that if we are sitting in judgment on the Apostle Paul, we need to realize we are sitting in judgment on Almighty God.

And therefore, I think, to say the least, some reverence is surely called for. But the Gospel of God is what this whole letter is all about.

[ 1 : 2 1 ] What the Gospel is, what the Gospel does, and therefore what the Gospel demands, both from the world and from the Church. And as we saw last time, the great concern that Paul has, driven by his Gospel, is global mission.

As verse 5 of chapter 1 puts it, if you see, his goal is to bring all the nations to the obedience of faith. And therefore, to fulfill the great commission of Jesus, the Apostles need from the start, back then, and all the way afterwards, right to the very end of the age, the Apostles need the partnership of all true Gospel churches.

All Gospel churches must be committed with the Apostles to this great cause of world mission. And therefore, Paul knows that he needs to preach the Gospel, the full Gospel, with all its implications, and all its demands, and all its life-changing power, he needs to preach it inside the Church as well as outside the Church.

So, verse 15 of chapter 1, I am eager, he says, to preach the Gospel to you also who are in Rome. Because it's this Gospel, and it's this Gospel alone, that has the power to build a truly united missionary church.

A church humbled by the grace of God to live together in harmony. Because it's cherishing the privilege of God's grace. And therefore, a church that is emboldened and strengthened to serve together fruitfully, because they're therefore confident in the power of God's grace to transform people.

[ 3 : 0 4 ] All who believe. Whatever their background, whatever their status, whatever their previous antagonism and opposition to the Gospel of Christ. And these great Gospel concerns which fill this whole letter, they're evident right from the very start here in chapter 1.

If you read through carefully these verses that we read together, these three opening sections, you'll see that there are two things that clearly stand out. It's the word Gospel and the word everyone.

Go through it with a marker pen and you'll see that those two things are abundantly clear. That the Gospel of God is the only Gospel for everyone.

So that's our title this morning. And I want to look then at this very personal introduction to the letter, part of, as it were, Paul's writing on the envelope that we spoke of last week, that leads into the letter proper, which begins really at verse 16.

And verse 16 and 17 are often called the manifesto, or the text that Paul goes on to open up and expand in the rest of the next eight chapters or so. Now these three sections in our Bibles are very tightly connected to one another.

[ 4 : 18 ] They flow directly from one another. And each one is focused on the nature of the Gospel. What it means and what it is and what it does. And in a very personal way then, Paul tells us that his Gospel, which is God's Gospel, is a Gospel in which he proclaims a sovereign.

A Gospel in which he himself is passionate in service. And a Gospel in which he knows the power for salvation. First look at verses 1 to 7 then, where Paul makes it clear that in his Gospel he is proclaiming a sovereign, a universal King and Lord in the risen Jesus Christ.

And he tells us that the Gospel that has possessed him as a willing slave claims ownership of all people likewise for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul, a slave, verse 1, set apart for the Gospel of God, verse 5, to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.

Now there's a huge amount packed into verses 1 to 7, but I want to get a grip just of the main thrust of his message. Now it begins, of course, with a greeting.

[ 5 : 40 ] But between the first line and verses 7 and 8, there's a very long section that you don't normally find in Paul's greetings. Turn over to the letters to the Corinthians, for example, you'll see they're much shorter.

But here we do, and it's all about the Gospel. Now sometimes when you write a business letter, you say, Dear Sir, and then underneath it you put in bold block capital as the subject of what it's about.

And that's what it is here. Dear Romans, the Gospel of God. Big block letters. And so you know the subject immediately.

And that's what he's saying here. Right from the start, the focus is not on the church in Rome. It's on God and his Gospel, and his calling, and his plan, and his purpose.

That's just an important detail for us to notice, isn't it? The Bible is not primarily about us. The Bible is primarily, and first of all, not a place that we look to find words about our life, or our decisions, or our future, or things like that.

[ 6 : 49 ] No, says God, the Bible is about me. I want to tell you about myself in this book. And that's what Paul says right at the start here. I'm devoted, he says, to the Gospel of God.

And from the start, that's what I want you to focus on. And that's what he does here in verses 2 to 6. He tells us straight away where this Gospel comes from, and what it's all about, and what it demands from the whole world.

First note in verse 2, the unequivocal source of Paul's Gospel. Its origin, he says, is from God alone, and from the Scriptures alone.

It is a Gospel that God promised beforehand. Revealed in Scripture alone. It comes from God himself, he says, but it's revealed, notice, through his prophets, in the Holy Scriptures.

Not all sorts of prophets, not all kinds of different writings, and religious holy books, and so on, but his prophets, and the, that is, the unique and only Scriptures.

[ 7 : 54 ] He's referring, of course, to the Old Testament. That's very important also, isn't it, in today's pluralist world. But it is a fact of the Christian Gospel that it claims to be exclusive.

It claims to come from one source alone. Now, it causes great offence to many people today, but it is central to Paul's whole message in this letter that there is one Gospel from one unequivocal source.

And that there is only one salvation, precisely because there is only one God, and therefore one Gospel. In chapter 3, verse 30, he says, God is the God, both of Jews and Gentiles, because God is one.

But he stresses the unequivocal source of this revelation here, right at the start, precisely because it makes a very important point, both to Jews and to Gentiles. And Paul is writing to both Jew and Gentile Christians.

He's telling the Jews that their scriptures are very, very important. He's telling them that his Gospel comes unequivocally from their Old Testament, exactly in line with the words of the prophets.

[ 9 : 08 ] In other words, what he is preaching is not something new. It's the law on the prophets, he says, that bear witness to this righteousness that he's proclaiming, that comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

That's what he says in chapter 3, verse 22. The Gospel, he says, is the fulfillment of God's first promises to Abraham. That's what chapter 4 of Romans is all about.

At the very heart of the Gospel, he says, is the faith of Israel. That is the very faith that Israel, for the most part, are now extraordinarily rejecting. That's his argument in chapters 9 to 11.

You see what he's saying to the Jews. He's saying that for you as Jews to reject the Gospel is to reject your own scriptures, your own law and prophets.

But to believe and to follow Jesus Christ is to fulfill the law and the prophets. So he says at the end of chapter 3, we, we Christians that is, we are the ones who uphold the law.

[ 10 : 11 ] See, the Gospel is not new. Certainly not new to faithful Israelites. The whole Old Testament speaks about me.

That's what Jesus said. From the very beginning of the scriptures, as somebody's put it, the prophetic writings rustle with the eager whisper of hope that deliverance at last would come.

And all true Israelites will recognize that, says Paul, and will welcome the Messiah, the Christ, at last come, as promised in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now, if you've read Luke's Gospel, you'll know that that's what Luke is telling us right at the beginning. He tells us of faithful Israelites, Elizabeth and Simeon and Anna. They're walking blamelessly in the law of Moses, we're told.

They're righteous and devout. And they're waiting for the consolation of Israel. And therefore, they welcome with joy the one promised beforehand by God's prophets in the Holy Scripture.

[ 11 : 18 ] They recognize the Christ, when he is born, as the goal and the purpose of all the law, as the fulfillment of God's righteousness for all who believe. And so, to refuse the Gospel, to stumble over Christ as a rock of offense, is to reject and to disobey God himself.

It's to disobey God's Word from the very, very beginning. So, Jewish pride says Paul must submit to the Christ Jesus.

And so, right from the start here, of his letter, Paul has a very firm warning for the Jew. But also, equally for the Gentile. What he's saying is, there can be absolutely no superiority among Gentile Christians in Rome, or anywhere else for that matter, because as Jesus said himself, salvation is of the Jews.

In a very real sense, it is their Gospel first. Verse 17, verse 16, it's to the Jew first. And then the Gentile. Gentile believers, says Paul, are blessed with salvation only by being grafted in to this privilege of the hope of Israel.

And so, there's absolutely no place either for pride among the Gentile Christians. Don't become proud, says Paul to them in chapter 11, verse 20, but stand in awe.

[ 12 : 47 ] Now, everybody, says Paul, must see that the true Gospel is not a New Testament Gospel, but it's a Gospel that's revealed in all the Scriptures, about a God who is revealed in all the Scriptures.

Now, that, friends, is very important for us also today as evangelical Christians, because there are many Christians who virtually ignore the Old Testament. But it's these very Scriptures that are the source of our faith.

That's why Paul says in 2 Timothy 3, verse 15, it's these Scriptures of the Old Testament that are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The unequivocal source of the Gospel.

Then, verse 3 and 4, notice the unique subject of this Gospel. It's from God alone, he says. It's from the Scriptures alone, but it is concerning His Son alone, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And that is the very heart of Paul's Gospel. God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the source of all the salvation that he writes about here. Through Him, verse 5, and Him alone, we have received grace and apostleship.

[ 14 : 04 ] Through Him, verse 7, grace and peace come from God to all who are called of Jesus Christ. That is, called by Jesus Christ and for Him.

This Jesus, he says, was the Son of David, according to the flesh. That is, He was born in the promised line. He was truly human in the likeness of sinful flesh, as Paul says in Romans chapter 8.

And He was humiliated in order to make atonement for His people, but having accomplished His great, great victory for them as man and for man, He was declared, or He was appointed, says verse 4, to be the Son of God in power when He was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit.

In other words, what Adam so tragically failed to be as God's king, God's ruler over all the creation that He had made, what Adam failed to be, Jesus Christ has become.

He is crowned king and lord over all. If you read Psalm 2, for example, or Psalm 110, you'll understand what it means.

[ 15 : 19 ] That's what Paul's referring to. These psalms speak of the coronation of God's king, of His Son as the Lord, as the ruler, as the judge over the whole cosmos.

You see how Paul in his gospel is proclaiming a sovereign. The unique kingship and lordship of one, Jesus Christ, the risen one.

He's telling us who He is and what He has done and what He's become through His resurrection of the dead. He is the Lord of glory. He is the one who will judge and rule all the nations and all peoples.

And therefore, Paul's gospel, with its unequivocal source in the Jewish scriptures and with its unique subject, Jesus Christ, the Lord, has a universal summons. It demands obedience and loyalty to Jesus alone.

just as Paul himself was possessed, he says, as a servant, a slave, that word really is, of Christ. So he says in verse 5, look, the gospel also summons all peoples, all nations, to the obedience of faith.

[ 16 : 29 ] The gospel is a command to submit to the ownership of a sovereign. Now notice that phrase very carefully, the obedience of faith.

We saw last time how that's repeated in the very last verses of the letter and it is crucial for us to help us to understand what the Bible means by faith.

Faith is not, as somebody I was speaking to just this week said to me, faith is not trying to conjure up belief in something out there. Faith is not in the Bible a vague hope or notion.

Faith is not a leap into the dark about something that cannot be fully known, something that is unprovable. No. Faith in the Bible is obedient submission to Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Faith in Jesus is obedience to Jesus. That's two ways of saying the same thing in the Bible. It's very, very important to grasp that. When we talk about obedience, obedience, that is not legalism.

[ 17 : 42 ] As though somehow that was in opposition to faith. Not at all. Obedience is simply that which expresses ownership. And the question for every one of us and the question Paul is dealing with in Romans is to whom do you belong?

Do you belong to God in Christ or do you belong to the power of sin? We're all owned by somebody, says Paul. Some power has ownership of us and masters us.

And the question is to whom and to what is our allegiance? Is our obedience to the obedience of faith? That is, are we willing to surrender to Jesus Christ our Lord?

Or is it, as Paul talks about in Romans 2 verse 8, disobedience to the truth and obeying unrighteousness? Jesus Christ. Look over to chapter 6 verse 6 because you see it very clearly there.

Chapter 6 verse 16. You are slaves, says Paul, of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, that is, to the gospel, to the obedience of faith in Jesus Christ, which leads to righteousness.

[ 18 : 56 ] righteousness. Now he says the same thing again several times in chapter 10 and in chapter 11 when he's talking about Israel. Israel, Paul says, did not pursue the Old Testament witness by faith.

They did not submit to God's righteousness in Christ. They did not, he says, obey the gospel. Because Isaiah said, Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?

They are a disobedient and contrary people. chapter 11 verse 23, he says, they continue in unbelief. And you see what Paul is saying.

Unbelief is not a neutral, forgivable aspect of your makeup or your character. Oh, I wish I could have faith like you do, but I can't.

No, faith is not like that at all, says Paul. Faith is culpable, disobedient, sorry, unbelief. is culpable disobedience and rejection of the rule of Jesus Christ as King and Lord, as the sovereign ruler of the cosmos.

[ 20 : 04 ] It's disobedience and rejection of the one who demands your loyalty and your love. That's why John Calvin says, faith is properly that by which we obey the gospel.

gospel. And so you see, the gospel is not just an offer of grace and peace through God in Jesus Christ. It's a summons.

It's a command to all the nations, including you, says Paul, a call to belong to Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. And the only rational response to that command of a sovereign is therefore to bow the knee to Christ as Lord of all.

to bow the knee to the one who has been declared with power by his resurrection from the dead, which has happened to no one else on earth.

Now, if you're not a Christian, you're not somebody who believes, then you need to take that very, very seriously. Because what that means is faith is not just a lifestyle choice that some people might want to make and others don't need to bother with.

[ 21 : 16 ] faith is a summons from the sovereign Lord of creation that you should bow the knee and submit to obedience to him.

Chapter 16, verse 26, Paul says, it is the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith. And that command comes to you today, to every one of us today.

To belong, that is, to bow the knee to Jesus Christ, to submit to reality and to flee from the fantasy that we wave around in our minds and our hearts to protect us, to think that our life is our own, to do with as we please.

Yes, the gospel is a great offer. It is a marvelous offer of peace and of grace and of mercy because it offers peace with the one who is going to be our judge on the last day.

but it can't be an offer that's trifled with because it's a summon. It is a sovereign command to bring all nations to obedience.

[ 22 : 24 ] And I think you better take that very seriously if you have not bided the need to obedience to Jesus Christ. But you know, equally for those of us who have, who belong to the church of Jesus Christ, is a word for us as well because what it tells us is that with this gospel we are never on the back foot.

Our gospel is the gospel of a sovereign God and what he has purposed in his eternal counsels and what he has promised from the beginning in his holy scriptures he will accomplish through his risen son.

And that means, friends, that our message is never, ever, ever a message to apologize for, a message of defeat, a message of defeatism.

Never mind that stupid, ignorant program that the BBC put on this week about the church in Scotland. Have you ever seen such rubbish? Well, it's what you expect from the BBC these days.

But nonsense! Our task is to be heralds proclaiming reality to this world. Our mission is not to be feeble, pleading with people. No, our task is the storming of the citadels of people's souls to bring them into submission to the will and to the mind of Jesus Christ who is King and who is Lord.

[ 23 : 48 ] And for that, you see, there is a call also on our lives now, just as there was on Paul's. The church too, like the apostles, are called, says verse 6, to belong to Jesus Christ.

Called, verse 7, to be saints. And that means that we are called to be partners in this mission of proclaiming the sovereign Lord to the world. Now look at Paul's example in verses 8 to 15.

He makes it clear that this is a gospel in which he, at least, is passionate in service. And when the true gospel calls somebody, it provokes that real gospel passion and eagerness to serve all God's people.

Look at verse 9. I serve God, he says, with my spirit in the gospel of his Son. Verse 15, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also. See what he's saying?

To serve God is to serve his gospel. And to serve his gospel is to love and serve his people. To be passionate for God's purposes to be fulfilled in all his people.

[ 24 : 53 ] All those who are already found in Christ and those who are still to be brought home to the Father's house through the gospel. To grasp the gospel that Paul has outlined here in verses 1 to 7 cannot ever lead just to indifference.

It can't lead to a mere intellectual assent to the faith. It always must lead to a passionate desire for mission. And genuine people passion is always there when people understand the gospel.

It's a mark of the life of God's Spirit within our hearts. And that is abundantly evident here in Paul, isn't it? Look at his passion, look at his feeling, his desire for this church in Rome that he's never even met.

Verse 10, he's always praying for them. Verse 11, he's desperate to see them. He's filled with longing, he says, to impart to them some spiritual gift. And what's the goal of it all?

Well, verse 13, that they with him might bear fruit for Christ and for his kingdom, a real harvest, a real fruitfulness in and around Rome and among the rest of the Gentiles, including, of course, all those unreached peoples of the West that Paul longs to go to in Spain and beyond, and which he desires that the church in Rome should help him with and be a hub for his mission.

[ 26 : 17 ] And you see, because Paul knows the cost and the hardship and the persecution that is an inevitable part of the experience of any church that will truly be involved in that global mission, then he wants to prepare them.

And that's why he wants to go to them. That's why he's writing to them. Verse 12, he wants to strengthen them and encourage them, he says, by sharing in each other's faith. We are encouraged.

Courage is put into us. And we are strengthened only through feeding on this great faith, the gospel, when it's opened and shared among God's people.

And that's why Paul's writing this letter to the Romans. Chapter 16, he says it again at the end. God is able to strengthen you, he says, according to my gospel and the preaching of Christ Jesus.

He's saying it's the gospel expounded from the scriptures that will strengthen and will encourage God's people and will equip them for mission. A mission that gathers more of God's people.

[ 27 : 34 ] So Paul is passionate in service of the gospel. He's eager to preach to them in Rome. He's eager to expand the Bible to the church in Rome to strengthen them so that they will be fruitful in the harvest fields of the world.

It's interesting. We'll see when we come to chapter 15 that he makes the very same point in chapter 15, verse 4. He says it's the encouragement of the scriptures that give us hope.

Hope in the midst of the present trials and persecutions that we face from without that we need endurance for. And it's the encouragement of the scriptures, says Paul, that gives us power to live in harmony with one another, to overcome strife within the church so that we will glorify God in Christ with one voice and be united in his service.

It's the ministry of the gospel, says Paul, that gives real hope to the church, confidence in the power of the gospel of grace that we preach. And it's the ministry of the biblical gospel that brings harmony in the church, consciousness of the privilege of that gospel of grace.

And only that kind of strong and encouraged Christian church can be a fruitful missionary church. So do you see Paul's logic here in these verses?

[ 28 : 58 ] He tells us in verses 1 to 7 that he himself has experienced this wonderful grace of God. He has received grace and apostleship. He belongs to Jesus Christ.

And so does the Roman church. But as somebody has said, the gospel that lifts the burden of sin from our hearts lays upon us always another burden.

The burden for a lost world. And so Paul says, look in verse 14, so because of that I am obligated to bring this great message of salvation to all, to the wise and the foolish, to the Greeks and the barbarians, to those who think themselves very wise and to those that they think are very foolish, to the great ones of the world and to those who are in the gutter.

I am obligated to bring the gospel to all. And so, verse 15, therefore, I am eager to preach the gospel also to you, to the church, so that this mutual mission that we all share, the task to bring the gospel to the whole world might truly bear fruit and there will be a real harvest in and around Rome and beyond.

Paul is passionate, says verse 12, about sharing the faith in the church among God's people, sharing the wonders of Christ and his salvation because that is what brings mutual encouragement and strength and fruitfulness from the church to the world.

[ 30 : 35 ] What he's saying is, you show me a missionary church and I will show you a church with this kind of mutual gospel ministry one to another, that kind of real pastoral care care and concern for one another.

Where the focus is on sharing faith and sharing Christ. Where the focus among all those in the church is to strengthen one another in grace and therefore in gospel mission and service.

Not with a focus on what we so often today call fellowship or pastoral care, which isn't fellowship or pastoral care at all. Which is just needs oriented and self-focused and inward looking and is all about us and our needs and our concerns and as often as not in the church is trying to keep people happy and stem their grudges and their grumbles and their moans.

Isn't that true? It's good to ask ourselves the question, isn't it? Has my experience of this great gospel of Christ engendered any of the eagerness for the gospel that is exhibited here by Paul?

Has Christ's possession of me engendered any of Christ's passion within me and from me? What are the things that always fill your prayers?

[ 32 : 04 ] Is it what fulfills Paul's prayers here in verse 10? What is it that fills your longings? Your reasons for travelling?

Your sense of obligation and mine? Is it? I'll be honest now. Is it passionate desire for the strengthening and the encouragement of Christ's people in his church and the fruitfulness of the church's mission so that together we may really see a harvest of God among us?

Is it that? Do you think your children would get any sense of the fact that you are really interested in these things in the mission and evangelism of the church?

Would they guess that from your prayers? Would they guess that from what they see you spend your time doing or what you spend your money on? what is the focus of our so-called times of fellowship together when we meet up together or even just chat to one another after church?

Is it the evangelical gospel that's always at the top of the list or is it just the latest evangelical gossip? It's a question isn't it? I think it's quite a probing one when I ask it of myself well Paul was passionate in the service of this gospel obligated to the world hearing about Jesus Christ and therefore committed to the church to share the faith that strengthens and encourages and bears fruit eager to proclaim the gospel in the world and therefore in the church because he says verse 16 for it is this gospel and this gospel alone that Paul knows is power for salvation I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes the gospel and the gospel alone has power to change people's future forever and to change their hearts and their lives now because the gospel of Christ is the only power of God in this world for salvation now what does that mean what it doesn't mean is merely psychological or emotional wholeness although the gospel will bring great healing in that sense to many it doesn't mean just well-being and fulfillment and a sense of identity in life although yes that is of course a fruit of Christian discipleship nor does it even mean a present relationship with Jesus Christ by faith that will give us daily strength to live our lives here and now although of course that is the joy of knowing Christ what does salvation mean well in the Bible in the New Testament and especially all the way through this letter to the Romans salvation in its fullest sense always belongs not to the present but to the future salvation salvation is rescue in the day of God's final judgment the day when as Paul says in chapter 2 according to my gospel



[ 35 : 27 ] God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus salvation is rescue for human beings from their greatest and most terrible predicament and that is the predicament that is staring us in the face in verse 18 and that we'll see next week the wrath of almighty God the wrath of God which is already being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men even now he's saying the penalty of God's anger against sin is evident in the world it's presaged in our experience we see it in the inevitable fact of our own mortality every one of us that is created for life every one of us will nevertheless die why?

because of God's anger his wrath at human sin at the anti-God rebelliousness of our human hearts the Bible is very plain about that Psalm 90 is explicit we are brought to an end says the psalmist by your anger all our days pass away under your wrath see death death is not natural for mankind it's not just part of the good cycle of nature like trees which eventually die and go back into the ground to give birth to other trees that's why we don't grieve for trees but we grieve painfully for human beings for our loved ones we grieve because it should not be it's the tragic penalty of sin that we see before us in our mortality but the Bible makes clear that even physical death is as nothing when we consider the full penalty of God's wrath against sin death as eternal death as eternal separation from God and from life and that says Paul is what the gospel rescues us from it will save us from the wrath that is to come on the great day when God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ bring salvation that begins now yes it does because God's declaration passed on us in Jesus Christ is made now justified righteous for those who trust in Jesus

Christ but full salvation remains in the future it's still to come chapter 5 verse 9 since we have therefore been justified by his blood much more we shall be saved from the wrath of God and Paul friends is unashamed of this gospel because the gospel alone is the power of God to save us not only from physical death but from the horror of eternal death as separation from God forever it's the answer he says in verse 17 because in it God's righteousness is revealed we'll come back to that phrase next time but in essence it's God's wonderful plan to make all things right a plan fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Lord his righteousness is what rescues us from the wrath of God not our righteousness but his that's what salvation is from says Paul from God's wrath his anger against sin but notice what his salvation is for the end of verse 17 it is for life the just he says shall live by faith the wages of sin is death he says in chapter 6 but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ

Jesus our Lord the just shall live he says by faith it's all about faith from first to last it's a sovereign salvation says Paul it's a gift of God bestowed by a sovereign Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ bestowed on whom verse 16 everyone who believes there's only one gospel says Paul for everyone first to the Jew and then to the Greek the pagan gentiles of the world to all who will surrender in trusting submission to the Lord Jesus Christ all who obediently trust Jesus Christ as their rescuer and faithfully obey Jesus Christ as their King and Lord the gospel is the power of God for salvation to bring life from the dead to bring eternal life in a recreated world with our saviour with our creator forever free from the curse of sin free from the penalty of our rebellion and the gospel is that big says Paul that's why he's absolutely unashamed to preach it now to be unashamed means much more than not merely to be embarrassed of the message it means an objective thing it means to be disgraced to be shamed to be proven to be wrong

Paul uses a very similar phrase twice in chapter 9 chapter 10 whoever believes in him he says will not be put to shame that is they will be shown not to have been wrong not to have been foolish in their trust however much the world might think they're wrong and foolish they will be shown to be right they will be vindicated Paul he says has seen this power at work calling people from every background and tradition and customs and nation calling them to belong to Jesus Christ he's experienced that power of God in his own life also giving him new life in the Holy Spirit he knows God's power to save now in the present and therefore he knows that this gospel will be vindicated on the last day on the great day of salvation and so he's unashamed he's proud he's eager to preach this gospel to all because it's the power of salvation for all not for all without exception but for all he says who believe but it must be offered he says to all all without distinction

[ 42 : 13 ] Jew and Greek Greek and barbarian wise and foolish everybody and he wants the church in Rome and the church everywhere including us to be similarly confident and unashamed in this gospel because it is the power of God for salvation he wants them to be confident enough to proclaim it and also to suffer for it it's very striking that in another place when writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1 verse 8 Paul explicitly links being unashamed of the gospel and suffering for the gospel do not be ashamed he says to testify about our Lord but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God so let me ask you this morning and me are we ashamed of this gospel do we really believe that the greatest issue facing our planet and its people is the wrath of God the coming wrath on his day of judgment do we really believe that all the mess and the calamity and the disaster that we see in our human world today is the harbinger of that utter calamity that awaits us on the day of that coming judgment do we believe that many Christians don't believe that today because they listen to the voice of the world that the world's greatest problem is global warming or HIV

AIDS or overpopulation or economic fragility or whatever it is that people's greatest need is physical wholeness or mental healing or social improvement or education and a hundred million other things and because the church to a large extent today believes that as the world believes it the church is not eager to preach the gospel to all it's often not eager to preach the gospel at all and people therefore have no sense of obligation of the burden of God upon their life as Paul felt it for a world mission to be set apart for the gospel of God and they have no confidence that they have a message of truth that will not shame them on the last day and which is the power of God for salvation to bring life to bring eternal life the church today in the west at least largely does not believe these things and that is why friends we need this letter that explains to us the true gospel of God which is the only gospel for everyone so that we really do grasp what we need to be saved from in this world our lack of righteousness before a just judge and so that we grasp what the great answer to the world's greatest problem is that for everyone the answer is to hear the gospel of the lord Jesus Christ and to bow the knee to him as lord and as king let me finish with some words from Dick Lucas spoken at a minister's conference if you don't believe he says that the gospel is the only solution to sin and wrath and death if you think there is another way of going to heaven you will never put up with all the trials and tribulations that preaching the gospel entails this is why people cease to be evangelical ministers it's very often such a hard road that's why people go into other ministries such as healing people's memories and psychological therapies not saying there aren't problems along that line but if you think healing people's memories is the real problem you will never put up with suffering involved in real gospel ministry but if you think sin and wrath and eternal death are the real problem and that the gospel is the only solution you will be prepared to give your life for it and to put up with all the antagonism that it provokes so Paul is saying to the Romans join hands with me he wants them to become a new

Antioch a missionary center to be willing despite the suffering to stand by the great apostle who is marked by suffering friends the spirit of God through Paul's words is saying exactly the same to us in the church in Scotland today join hands with me be set apart truly for the gospel of God the only gospel for everyone join me in proclaiming the sovereign Jesus Christ our Lord join me in being passionate in the service of this gospel eager to share each other's faith eager to proclaim to the world a gospel which is the power of God for salvation the power of God for everyone who believes that is God's message to us this morning may he help us to respond with obedient hearts let's pray

Lord forgive us when because we do not look at you and seek the truth about you and your greatness and your glory and your righteousness and holiness forgive us that we forget what the great issues of this world and of eternity really are fill our hearts we pray with the glorious gospel of God that there may be even among us great harvest of fruitfulness even as among the rest of the Gentiles for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord Amen