On May 24, 1738, a discouraged missionary went “very unwillingly” to a religious meeting in London. There a miracle took place. “About a quarter before nine,” he wrote in his journal, “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

That missionary was John Wesley. The message he heard that evening was the preface to Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans. Just a few months before, John Wesley had written in his journal: “I went to America to convert the Indians; but Oh! who shall convert me?” That evening on Aldersgate Street, his question was answered. And the result was the great Wesleyan Revival that swept England and transformed the nation.

Last week we started a new series on the first 3 chapters of the book of Romans. The very first major truth that God explains to us in this book is the gospel – the good news of Jesus. Last week, we saw that “gospel” means “good news” – God brings GOOD NEWS to a broken world, sinful people and the hurting! In fact, if there isn’t some good news in what we think or share about our Christian faith, then it isn’t the gospel. The gospel is not some new novelty but it has been a part of God’s plan for all time. The gospel is centered on Jesus – His uniqueness as God come in human form, His sinless life, His willing death on the cross to pay the penalty of our wrongs and His physical, bodily resurrection from the dead to prove it all true! God freely extends this offer of forgiveness of sin and transformation to all. We must believe – that is repent of what God says is wrong, believe Jesus is God come down in human form to die on the cross as a penalty for our sins and then rose bodily from the dead. Finally we must surrender to God’s way as clearly stated in the Bible. This good news shows the righteousness of God. Not only does Jesus pay the penalty of our sins but the Lord also credits His righteousness to all who believe. We are righteous by faith! The gospel, this good news of Jesus, is the power of God to rescue people. It is the dynamite to break the hardest heart & most selfish attitudes. It is the power to soften hard hearts, penetrate hate and reconcile people. The gospel is the dynamite to bring down any false argument, get through any opposition and open the eyes of any person. This special gift from God is received by faith – from first to last. These truths we primarily saw in v 1-4 and 14-17 last week. Now let’s concentrate on what we see about the gospel in v 5-7 and 11-12 starting with v 5; READ. Through Jesus, Paul and others have received God’s grace. That is one of the benefits of belief in the gospel. Then later in this same verse, it talks of Paul’s responsibility to call Gentiles “to the obedience that comes from faith for Jesus’ Name sake”. The outworking of God’s good news brings both benefits and responsibilities. Let’s look at some of these starting with the benefits.

PROPOSITION: The outworking of the gospel brings both benefits and responsibilities

I. Benefits
Writing about benefits that come from the gospel and faith in Jesus, Pastor John MacArthur writes “In Christ, the believer has riches beyond any imagination. The Christian has life that will never end (John 3:16), a spring of spiritual water that will never dry up (John 4:14), a gift that will never be lost (John 6:37, 39), a love from which he can never be separated (Rom. 8:39), a calling that will never be revoked (Rom. 11:29), a foundation that will never be destroyed (2 Tim. 2:19), and an inheritance that will never diminish (1 Pet. 1:4–5).” There really is no end to the benefits believers in Jesus receive from God.

What are some benefits of the gospel that we find here specifically in v 5–7 and 11–12?

A. Grace, love and peace

The first is grace. **READ v 5a.** Here Paul means grace in the widest sense of God’s favor—that is, salvation, guidance, wisdom, illumination, and power to serve. Grace is always an amazing thing to Paul, as we see later in Romans for “where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (5:20). The grace of God is infinite and eternal. It has no beginning and no end.

Continuing on in v 7 we see the gospel benefits of love, grace and peace. **READ v 7.** Because **God** has reached out to us, sent Jesus to die for us and guaranteed eternal life for those who trust in Jesus alone, we **have objective evidence of God’s love for us.** We are “loved by God.” God chose us, God redeems us and God will bring us to heaven forever. God has adopted us as His children! If we had to search for a hidden God, do enough good things to impress God or become perfect so we would be qualified for heaven, then we would always be on a **performance basis** with God. Keep performing at the top level or God leaves us. There is not much peace in that.

Yet **grace and peace comes to us from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.** Real peace comes only as a result of the grace of God. Grace is what we receive; peace is what we experience as a result of the activity of God on our behalf.

B. Belonging

**V 6 continues READ.** We are called to belong to Jesus. Even the Gentiles are included in God’s plan. We’ll talk about “being called” and the responsibilities that brings in the second half of our time today, but let’s just take a moment to marvel at the benefit of belonging – belonging to Jesus, belonging to God’s family, belonging to Christ’s body, the church, belonging to God for eternity. It is not just the super-saints, the gifted Bible teachers, the fearless evangelists, the most sacrificial compassion people or the hardest workers that BELONG – all believers do! Whether you were brought up in a Christian family or not – whether you know lots about the Bible or just a small amount – we **ALL belong to Jesus.** We have a home, we have a family, we have a leader, and we have a protector no matter what our situation here on earth. Belonging is special – belonging to Jesus, well it doesn’t get better than that!

C. Giftedness
Now let’s skip down to v 11. READ. Another awesome benefit of the good news of Jesus is the special giftedness God gives us. There is a natural giftedness we get at conception because God is our creator. This includes the specialness in being human that is different from being an animal, a plant or a rock. It also includes the unique set of DNA instructions each of us has in every cell in our body which impacts what we can do. When we come to faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit of God gives each of us at least one of the “spiritual gifts” at the time of our spiritual re-birth.

This spiritual gift (singular) Paul wants to give them mentioned in v 11 is different than the spiritual gifts (plural) mentioned in places like I Corinthians 12. Not only do the other places use the plural instead of the singular, but the actual words & forms of words used are different – nowhere else does Paul use this combination of “spiritual” and “gift”, even though it seems like it in our English. We also know Paul is not talking about the spiritual gifts (plural and different words) listed in places like I Corinthians 12 because those gifts are given not by Paul but by God, particularly the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. In fact, those gifts are given to each Christian for the good of others, while this gift is to make the recipient stronger spiritually themselves. The final evidence that this is not speaking about the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit is because Paul doesn’t specify any specific gift like he does in the other passages.

Paul wants to share some spiritual favor or blessing through his teaching, personal interaction or understanding of God’s word that would provide those in the churches in Rome with encouragement and strength. The purpose of this gift is to make the believers stronger. READ v 11. We had just learned that the faith of those believers in Rome was already getting noticed around the world. READ v 8. Whatever particular blessings the apostle had in mind, this gift was not some superficial or self-serving one that many Americans crave today. He was not interested in tickling their ears or satisfying their religious curiosity. Finally notice everything is very indefinite, “some spiritual gift”. Because he hasn’t yet been to Rome and interacted personally with the Romans, he doesn’t know their particular needs, struggles, and challenges. He simply wishes to strengthen their spiritual lives.

D. Encouragement for self and others v 12
No sooner than he has said this, that he puts a strong qualification on it. He is NOT suggesting that the favor or blessing will just flow one way! READ v 12. This spiritual gift, this favor or blessing from God, this encouragement & strengthening of their faith is going to be mutual. Paul, the apostle, the teacher, the scholar hopes to receive as much encouragement and strengthening as he brings through God’s word. Verse 12 emphasizes this mutuality a lot in the original which is tough to translate but easy to understand the sense. More literally it is “this is to be encouraged with among you through the in one-another faith, of you both and of me”). Your faith strengthens my faith, and I am a stronger person as a result. In this aside Paul reveals a genuine appreciation for the spiritual life of others. Although he was an apostle, sent
by God to proclaim the good news & given many spiritual gifts, he valued and profited from the simple faith of other believers. The aging apostle claims that the faith of these beginners will encourage him! Let me share a testimony I received in January from one of the men who used to be in this church but now lives outside of Vermont.

Spiritually I have experienced the grace of God in a very special way and I would like to share that with you for the glory of Jesus:

I attended a Christian retreat weekend for Men. One night, already being on the edge from the long hike and fact they took away all our electronic things from the start (including watches, phones, etc) so we weren’t distracted, the leaders woke us up and made us get out of our tents in the freezing night. They said some things but I don’t remember much of it (my motivation was really at rock bottom by this time). At the end, we were told to pick up a stone that represented a burden in life we carried. We were then to carry that to the top of the mountain as our prayer for the Lord to work in that area. At first, I took a very small stone with me because many things had been going good. Then a voice remembered me, that there is a long lasting problem I struggle with: sexual temptation. I have been fighting that as long as I can remember.

So I lugged a bigger rock up to the peak in the middle of darkness and freezing wind. At the top was a cross where we laid down our burden to Jesus. Some worship songs were sung, and well, I couldn’t wait to get back to my sleeping bag (remember I wasn’t into this at all). I was probably the first one back down after getting “permission” to leave....

So weekend was over, time went on. And by the grace of our Lord I am healed. I didn’t do anything in the process except surrender, I had a lousy mood but Jesus took my request seriously anyways. So I can claim, I have been “protected” since October 17, not running into the same troubles I have ran into for over 30 years! To him be all the glory! I am overwhelmed by his grace and love.

Imagine if God does this with a bad attitude and the tiniest of faith, we don’t need some super faith for God to bless us. This was grace – totally undeserved! When I read this e-mail I was overjoyed! The encouragement was incredible – in fact it seemed to drown out all the other pain, sorrow and misery at that moment. Nothing changed in MY LIFE, but I received great encouragement and spiritual strength from the simple faith in Jesus of another time. We serve an amazing God! He is the only One who can bring good out of any situation! Very few things will strengthen an older believer’s faith more than the vibrant faith of a new believer. On the other hand, there is little that will benefit a new believer more than exposure to the mature faith of a more experienced brother or sister in Christ.
II. Responsibilities (called to ...)

Grace, love, peace, belonging, God using your giftedness to encourage others and be encouraged by others' faith—these are some wonderful benefits of belief in the gospel—the good news of Jesus. But these verses in Romans 1:1-17 also speak of the responsibilities that come when we surrender our lives to Jesus as our Savior and our Lord. The word repeated over and over in these first 17 verses is “called.” The awesome God who pours out such love and grace in our life, also calls us to some new actions & goals in this life.

A. Called to obedience v 5

Back to v 5; READ. The gospel is good news for all who will respond in faith. But real faith inevitably results in obedience. Faith is not intellectual assent; it is NOT merely agreeing to a series of statements. Faith is surrender to the One who asks us to trust Him. To surrender to God is to trust & obey. Jesus told us in the Great Commission to teach His followers to obey everything that He says. Biblical faith is not just some thoughts or opinions, but it is an active commitment of our life. In fact, obedience is the true measure of a person’s faith and their love for God. We see our faith in actions – actions of obedience. Obedience always involves faith, and faith always involves obedience. They are not the same, nor are they different stages of our Christian life. When we are called “to believe in Jesus”, it also means we are called “to obey Jesus”. But we can only obey God rightly when we humble ourselves in faith to Him. Apart from a changed life there is no real faith.

B. Called to belong to Jesus v 6

The good news of Jesus calls us to obey Jesus. The gospel also calls us to “belong to Jesus”. READ v 6. Earlier, we talked about the “privilege” of belonging. Here we are focusing on the responsibility part of belonging. Every Christian is “called to belong to Jesus Christ”. He is our Lord, our boss, our director, our leader. To accept Christ as Savior & Lord is to give up all rights to just focus on ourselves. At times just doing want we want, when we want and how we want sounds exciting, freeing & enjoyable, but that always ends up in misery, slavery & regret. As Christians, we belong to Jesus Christ. We willingly submit to Jesus because we have faith His way will turn out much better than if we go by our natural thoughts or feelings.

C. Called to holiness v 7

The gospel calls us to obey Jesus; it calls us to belong to Jesus. As we continue in v 7, it also calls us to holiness. READ v 7. When Jesus gave up His life to die on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins it was not just so we could get a ticket to heaven as wonderful as that will be. He predestined us to be conformed into the image of Christ. That is, God committed to take every true Christian and keep working in our lives as a loving Father so we can genuinely be transformed to become like Jesus – that we will actually live out the righteousness that has credited to our account. Now we won’t get to that point until heaven. But right now Jesus is constantly training, guiding, providing, encouraging, challenging and even disciplining us to become more like Himself. Becoming like Jesus is holiness, because God is holy! God calls every true
Christian to be *His holy people*. God considers us His saints – His holy people – now because of Jesus’ righteousness imputed to us. But God is also actively transforming all of us to actually become holy in our actions, attitudes, reactions and words.

D. Called to mutually encourage

Although v 11-12 does not use the word “called”, there’s a sense that we should encourage each other by our faith since it is a gift of grace. READ v 11-12. We often think of encouragement as saying nice things about another person, cheering another person on or giving a gift to cheer up. But this encouragement comes from simply standing in faith in the midst of troubles around us or in seeing God do something special in another person’s life. Like the illustration of the man I shared earlier, that faith doesn’t even have to be big – just something we do to show that faith. In a culture that can be frustrating for Bible-believing Christians, it is so great to know God can encourage me just through His work in another Christian’s life even if my outward situation doesn’t get any better. And if it is a case like the fellow I shared – they even may be discouraged with their lack of faith at that same time.

E. Called to bring gospel to all

Finally we are called in verses 1 & 14-15 to bring the gospel – the good news of Jesus – to everyone. READ v 1. Paul was called to go be a messenger of God with the gospel of God. Now that is a lasting and super-significant purpose! Just as Paul was called as an apostle, we are all called to be Christians, Christ followers. We are called to be Jesus’ witness to those who are around us even if they are totally different from us. READ v 14-15. This includes everyone as we mentioned last week. However you divide the world’s people, the good news of Jesus is for every person.

As Ravi Zacharias has said, “Outside of the cross of Jesus Christ, there is no hope in this world. That cross and resurrection at the core of the Gospel is the only hope for humanity. Wherever you go, ask God for wisdom on how to get that Gospel in, even in the toughest situations of life.” When it comes to the gospel of Jesus, we are sharing good news – really, really good news!