

Romans 1:1-16

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[0 : 00] For the first time ever, news was broadcast last night by the British Broadcasting Company. That's what Daily News, the Daily Newskeeper, wrote after the first two bulletins had gone out the night before.

! That was on November the 14th, 1922, from Marconi House on the Strand. It's well over 90 years of radio broadcasts and TV broadcasts on the news.

And I wonder how much of the news has been bad news. That first bulletin included the aftermath of a rowdy meeting involving a certain Winston Churchill, a train robbery, and fog, deep fog, in London.

And so much of what we hear on the news is bad news. There's the odd bit of good news, isn't there? The cameras standing down as an MP, MPs meeting their jobs or something like that. The Paralympics, they're a great news story, aren't there?

We love hearing the stories. But most of what we hear is bad news. And that is what makes the Bible so refreshing. When we tune into God's Word, what we hear is good news.

[1 : 11] The central message of the whole Bible is the Gospel, and that's what the Gospel means. The word means good news. And Romans is a New Testament letter about the Gospel.

And it's a biblical book that has had a profound effect, probably more effect, than any other book in the Bible on the life of the Christian Church. Augustine was converted through reading the letter of Romans.

William Tyndale called it the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament. Martin Luther came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ through reading Romans.

And what he learned there sparked off the Reformation 500 years ago. John Calvin wrote that if a man understands it, he has got a sure road open to understand the whole of Scripture.

It's a first century letter to a church in Rome. Let me read you what it says in chapter 15 and verse 24. Paul says, I hope to see you, that's the church in Rome in passing, as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I've enjoyed your company for a while.

[2 : 22] So this letter, it has been sent on ahead, it's preparing for a visit to Rome, that Paul will then use as a springboard before he travels on to Spain. And in the first 11 chapters, Paul unpacks what the good news, what the Gospel is.

And our focus, you can see, is going to be on that from the outline. So firstly, he says, know the Gospel. Verses 1 to 7. And Paul makes some very key statements by way of introduction in this letter.

Firstly, the Gospel originates in God. Look at verse 1. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God. And the message of good news in the Bible is, it is God's Gospel.

It's come from Him. The Gospel originates in God and not in man. That is, God's Gospel means that you can have confidence that it's true.

So the message of Christianity, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, is not just a great idea. It's not human speculation. It's not just one more human philosophy or best guess about the universe and life and everything.

[3 : 32] No, this is God's good news. And as such, it is trustworthy and it is true. And so with every news broadcast, you listen to the news, you watch it, it's important, isn't it, to have reliable sources.

So I guess the BBC do not broadcast any old story that a reporter has told them in the pub the night before. They wouldn't do that. You check your sources.

You make sure your sources are reliable. Well, the Gospel has the most reliable source of all. It is from God Himself. That it is God's Gospel. And we need to make sure that we've rightly understood

it.

Given that this is good news from God Himself, that nothing could be more important than making sure we've correctly understood God's news, as God has revealed it to us in the Bible.

On a Saturday, we turn on 5 Live, Radio 5 Live in the morning, the Danny Paker show, I thought it like that. And then the radio pretty much stays on in our house all day. And particularly over T1, it's sports report.

[4 : 34] It's the only day we have the kind of radio on while we're having dinner. And sports report comes on while we're feeding the children. And it's on while there's whoops of excitement and wails of distress as food makes the hazardous journey from the bowls of my children's mouths.

And I often miss hearing something on the radio. I often miss the scores. But it's not a big deal, is it? It doesn't matter. It's not important. But we dare not be so casual with this broadcast from heaven.

And that it is God's gospel also means that we're not responsible for how people react to it. And that's a great relief, isn't it? As you and I pass on the message of the gospel of Christianity to other people, it's not our message.

It is God's message. And so if people have a problem with anything in the gospel, well, they need to take it up with God Himself. Our job is what? It is just to pass it on faithfully.

Secondly, the gospel fulfills the Old Testament. Can you look at verse 2? The gospel of God which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures. The gospel wasn't a first century novelty.

[5 : 49] It didn't just appear like a bolt out of the blue in the first century. It was the fulfillment of what had been promised over hundreds and thousands of years in the Old Testament. And one example is in Luke 24, isn't it?

After Jesus' resurrection, He has that conversation with the two disciples as they're walking on the road to Emmaus. And He tells them, He should have known. He should have known that the Christ would suffer.

And they should have known that He would rise from the dead. Why? Because the Old Testament prophets have spoken about it. And so in Luke 24, verse 27, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning Himself.

The whole New Testament, the whole Old Testament points forward to Jesus and the gospel. And that's another reason why we as the Norse people should have confidence that the gospel is true and reliable.

It's not just some wacky idea that appeared out of nowhere in the first century. But what is the gospel about? And thirdly, we see that the gospel centers on Jesus, verses 3 and 4.

[6 : 59] Verse 3, concerning His Son. His Son. Who was descended from David according to the flesh.

And was declared to be the Son of God in power. And according to the Spirit of holiness, by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. The good news, the gospel is about Jesus.

It's about a person, it's about a religious system. Being a Christian, it's not accepting some new set of beliefs. It's about relating in a particular way to a particular person.

Jesus. So saying to someone in the office, yes, I go to church. Or I go to the evening, lunchtime talks. It is good. But I mustn't kid myself that I'm telling them the gospel.

That isn't the gospel. The gospel is about Jesus Christ. What does the gospel tell us about Jesus? It tells us that Jesus was the God-man. Can you see verse 3 again?

[7 : 58] Concerning His 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.

So Jesus was fully man. A real human being. He was descended from King David according to the flesh. That was His family tree. God had promised to send this king to rule over His people forever. The Messiah. The Christ. He promised that He would be descended from David. Well, this is saying that Jesus was that man. The gospel is historical. It's about a real person who lived.

He was born. Who lived. And died. And rose again from the dead. And if you had been there. At the right time. In the right place. You could have met Him. You could have talked to Him.

And that means with the gospel. History really matters. It really matters. In our day, I think in London. The focus is more on experience.

[9 : 03] And people say it's the experience of Jesus that counts. As long as I have an encounter with Jesus. That is enough.

I hear that quite a lot. But the Jesus of our experience. Must be the same as the Jesus of history. And people need to learn about the real Jesus of history.

If they're ever going to become Christians. About His life. And His death. And His resurrection. But you see, Jesus wasn't just the son of David. He was the son of God.

Verse 4. He was the son of God. Verse 3 says it is the gospel concerning His son. Verse 4. And was declared to be the son of God in power.

According to the spirit of holiness. By His resurrection from the dead. It's not saying. That He became the son of God. Through His resurrection. But His resurrection is the powerful proclamation.

[10 : 05] That He was indeed the son of God. The son of God. It is in the resurrection. That God is declaring.

This is my son. Guy Browning has a column in the Guardian. On Saturday Guardian. And it's called How To. Dot dot dot. And if you go online.

You can see all the articles he's written on. Different how to's. And a number of years ago. He wrote an article called How To Be A Christian. Here's how he begins. To be a Christian. You have to believe three things.

That start with difficult. And get harder. The first thing is to believe. That Mary. The mother of Jesus. Was a virgin. The second. Is that Jesus died. And that He came back to life.

And the third thing. Is the hardest to believe. But make sense of the first two. That Jesus was the son of God. Well you have to give him credit. Don't you. Guy Browning.

[11 : 01] Has understood. That the Christian message. Is all about Jesus. But believing that Jesus. Is the son of God. Isn't so hard. Once you look at the evidence. Evidence. Of this person in history.

As you look at his life. And his miracles. His death. And his resurrection. And his impact. Jesus is fully man. And fully God. At the same time.

The second thing. That the gospel tells us. About Jesus. Is that He is Lord. At the end of verse 4. Can you see them. By His resurrection. From the dead.

Jesus Christ. Our Lord. One of the last things. That Jesus said to His disciples. His very famous words. After the resurrection. Was in Matthew 28. In verse 18.

And He says. All authority. All authority. In heaven and on earth. Has been given to me. And He returns to heaven. In the words of Philippians. Chapter 2. In verse 9.

[11 : 57] Paul tells us. That God has. Highly exalted Him. The Lord Jesus. And has given Him. The name. That is above. Every name. So Jesus. Has been appointed.

The Lord of heaven and earth. According to the Bible. He is the king. He claims that He is. The universal ruler. And now if Jesus is Lord.

That means. That to be a Christian. Involves. Accepting Jesus. As Lord. Over me and my life. So you cannot have.

Jesus as Savior. And rescuer. And not have Him. As Lord. People often ask me. If I trust in Christ. And then my sins.

Have been forgiven. My past sins. My present sins. And my future sins. But it doesn't matter. How I live. Does it? But Jesus is only. Able to save.

[12 : 53] Because He is Lord. So to have Him. As my Savior. Means. I must have Him. As my Lord. You see that. In the phrase.

In the little phrase. In verse 5. It says. Through. Through the Lord Jesus. We have received grace. And apostleship. To bring about. The obedience. Of.

Faith. The obedience. Of faith. Now that could mean. That faith. Is the obedience. God demands of us. But it could mean.

That the gospel. Calls us. To obedience. Which flows out. From faith. So faith. In Christ. Leads. Through obedience. To Christ.

Christ. And so sometimes. The way that people. Speak about becoming a Christian. I think is quite unhelpful. They talk about. Opening the door. Of my heart. To Jesus. But you see.

[13 : 49] The gospel of God. Demands far more of you. Than that. The gospel. Is not just about. Letting Jesus. Into your life. It's about. Accepting. Jesus. As Lord.

It is. Handing over. The controls. When you're flying. The plane. To Jesus. And saying. I am no longer. In control. You are in control. And if Jesus is Lord.

Then his call. To the obedience. Of faith. Well. At the end. Of verse 5. Is among all the nations. Can you see that? For the sake of his name. Among all nations.

So as Lord. Of heaven and earth. Can you follow this? Jesus. Is the rightful ruler. Of all people. Everywhere. The gospel.

Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Calls on all people. Everywhere. To submit. And that means. That Jesus. [14:46] If Jesus is Lord. It is not enough. To be an agnostic. Or an atheist. Or a Buddhist. Or a Muslim. Or a Hindu. Or a Sikh. All people.

Everywhere. Are commanded. To submit. To Jesus. As the Lord. That he is. Someone put it like this. If you paddle your canoe. Up the Amazon river.

And you get out. On the side of the river. And you ask. Is Jesus. The rightful ruler. Of these people. Well. He's the Lord. Of heaven and earth. So I need to tell them.

That. So that they can submit. To him. And be saved. For the sake of. But what about. If you paddle your canoe. Up the Thames. And you get off. On the bank. And you ask the question.

Is Jesus. The rightful ruler. Over these people. Who live. And work. In London. The answer is yes. He is the Lord. Of heaven and earth. Well we need to tell them.

[15:43] So that they can submit. To him. And be saved. And notice in verse 5. Can you see. We are to do it. For the sake. Of his name. So we don't do it.

For our own sake. We don't do it. For our own glory. We don't do it. For our own selfish ambitions. To grow our little empire. Our church. Or our organisation.

It is for the sake. Of Jesus name. For his glory. And for his honour. Because he is Lord. And so in this. Introduction to his letter. Paul is making really.

Key statements. About the gospel. But in verses 8 to 17. We need to be clear. That it is not enough. Just to know the gospel. And believe it. For ourselves. We are to tell it. To other people.

And so in our last few minutes. I want to just look at. Although Paul is. In a special way. He had a special role. As an apostle. I want you to notice. That he models for us.

[16:39] The right motivation. And the right attitude. So look at verse 15. Paul says. I am eager. To preach the gospel.

In Rome. To you. Also. Who are in Rome. You see. Paul wasn't reluctant. To share the gospel. He was eager to do it.

I get excited by. Sports events. I like to talk about my team. And tragically. There are times. When I am more excited. About that. Than God's good news.

Even if. Swansea City. Won the premiership. It's just not that important. Is it? But the good news. Of the gospel. Is of ultimate importance. As I try this. Next time a colleague. In the office. Is waxing lyrical. About some sport event. Or concept.

[17:33] You could say. Do you think that's good news? Wait for the good news. I've got from God. The other side. Of Paul's attitude. Is in verse 16. Where he says. I am not ashamed.

Of the gospel. And I find that. Very very encouraging. Let me tell you. Why I find that encouraging. The fact that he says. I am not ashamed. Understand. Shows that Paul.

Understood. The pressure. To feel ashamed. There are some Christians. That pretend. That they're never ashamed. There are some Christians. That pretend.

They've got this superpower. Where they're able to tell. Everyone and anyone. The apostle Paul. Wasn't like that. He says. I am not ashamed. And he understood.

The pressure. To feel ashamed. You don't say. I'm not scared. To do. Unless there's a reason. To be scared. And so in the culture. Of his day. The gospel. Didn't seem sophisticated. To cultural.

[18:28] Educated people. And many people. In Paul's day. Despise the gospel. As they do today. And they get defensive. And you and I. We too.

Will feel the temptation. To feel ashamed. Of the gospel. And not to tell it. To other people. In our politically correct. Relativistic society. There's plenty.

In the gospel. Of the Lord Jesus. Which is very offensive. To people. Isn't it? They will say. Well you try it. You just say. Jesus is Lord. And so you simply. Cannot believe.

What you want to believe. You tell people. There are objective standards. From God. Of right and wrong. That you and I. Don't. We don't live up to. You tell people.

That we are guilty. Before a holy God. And we need forgiveness. And there's the tendency. Is there to be ashamed. And as you'll see. As you read through Romans.

[19:21] We must not be ashamed. Why must we not be ashamed. Well look at verse 14. That is Paul's motivation. Paul says in verse 14. I am under obligation.

I am under obligation. Both. To Greeks. And to barbarians. Both to the wise. And to the foolish. Paul saw. That he had an obligation.

To share the good news. It sort of works like this. I meet a friend of yours. And this friend of yours says. Can you pass. One thousand pounds. On to my friend. At the lunchtime talks.

I am then. Indebted. To you. Aren't I. Until I pass on. One thousand pounds. From your friend. And so this is saying. If we are believers.

God has entrusted you and I. With the gospel. But in order to pass it on. To the world. And so we have an obligation. To be good stewards.

[20:19] Whatever the cost. I don't know if you read this. From Turkey. It's five years ago now. Three men were brutally murdered. For being believers. The killers apparently.

They attended a bible study. And they pretended to be interested. In the gospel. And part way through the study. They tied up the three Christians. They tortured them for hours. And then they slit their throats.

This is what one Christian in Turkey. Wrote at the time. What will we do? Are we going to leave our country? Are we going to escape? No we won't go anywhere. We'll continue to live in our country. And share the gospel with these lost people. Satan wants us to have fear. But we won't. These people showed us. The worst they can do. Our brothers were faithful unto death. And we will follow their examples.

And it seems to me. That these Turkish Christians. Have clearly understood. This obligation. That Paul was talking about. In Romans 1. That we are not just to believe the gospel.

[21:19] But we tell the gospel to others. The other motivation. Wonderfully is in verse 16. For I am not ashamed. Of the gospel. For it is the power of God.

For salvation. To everyone who believes. This message. Is the power of God. To salvation. This message. That Guy Browning. In the Guardian. Mocks.

This message. Is what God powerfully uses. To save people. Eternally. And we are reminded. Of that power. Every time. Somebody becomes a Christian. Words.

Are very. Very. Powerful. When you were little. Do you remember? Sticks and stones. May break my bones. But words will never hurt me. It's rubbish. It's never true. Words are very powerful.

And the words. Of the gospel. Of the good news. Of Jesus Christ. Are immensely powerful. Not to destroy. But to save people. And the simple message. About Jesus.

[22:17] Is what God uses. To save people. For all eternity. To forgive them. To bring them. Into a relationship. For themselves. To bring them. To bring them. To return to life. To rescue them.

From the judgment. To come. Well. If we are those. Who believe the gospel. This lunchtime. I wonder whether you can see.

Paul's three great. I am's. John's gospel. Very very famous. I am statements. Is it? I'm the bread of life. I'm the door. The apostle Paul. Has three I am statements.

Doesn't he? Romans 1. Can you see it? Verse 14. I am under obligation. Verse 15. I am eager. Verse 16. I am not ashamed. Why? Because nothing else. Can save people. No philosophy. No belief system.

[23:13] No political ideology. The only thing. That can save people. Is the gospel. The good news. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the only thing in the world. That has got the power. To do that. And that is why.

It's such good. Good news. I am under an obligation. I am eager. To preach the gospel. I am not ashamed.

Let's pray.