

## Ezekiel 34:1-16

### The LORD Will Be Israel's Shepherd

<sup>1</sup> The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup> "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?' <sup>3</sup> You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. <sup>4</sup> You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. <sup>5</sup> So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered, they became food for all the wild animals. <sup>6</sup> My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

<sup>7</sup> "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: <sup>8</sup> As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, <sup>9</sup> therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: <sup>10</sup> This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

<sup>11</sup> "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. <sup>13</sup> I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all

the settlements in the land. <sup>14</sup> I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup> I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. <sup>16</sup> I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

### **Romans 1:1-17**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— <sup>2</sup> the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures <sup>3</sup> regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, <sup>4</sup> and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>5</sup> Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. <sup>6</sup> And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup> To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Paul's Longing to Visit Rome**

<sup>8</sup> First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. <sup>9</sup> God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you <sup>10</sup> in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

<sup>11</sup> I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— <sup>12</sup> that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. <sup>13</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order

that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

<sup>14</sup> I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. <sup>15</sup> That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

### Sermon: Introducing the Gospel

Please have your Bibles opened at **Romans Chapter 1** – we’re looking at **verses 1 to 17** – and we’ll briefly mention Ezekiel chapter 34.

There’s an **outline** – if you’d like to take some notes.

Let me **pray** first...

### Intro

#### **[Slide 1 – Intro]**

We’re **beginning a series** this morning – on the **Apostle Paul’s letter** to the **Church in Rome** – aka – the New Testament (NT) **Book of Romans** (written AD57-58)

This letter/book has been instrumental in **changing the world** – by - **changing people.**

Let me tell you about **Martin**

Martin was a **German monk** in the Roman Catholic Church in the early **1500s**

Martin had been taught by the Church – that **God required him to live a righteous life** (*righteous means living a life that morally obeys God's rules*) – so - **Martin was taught if he lived by God's rules** – he could “work” his way to Heaven and be saved.

And so, **Martin had grown to resent God** – for first – **requiring him to do something he couldn't do - he couldn't possibly live a completely righteous life.** And second – **for leaving Martin to fail in his attempt to live a righteous life.**

Then **Martin read the book of Romans** and he began to grasp that what he had been taught – was wrong. No one **was meant to “work and earn” their way to Heaven.** God had a much better plan than that – **God had a rescue plan through the Gospel.**

**Gospel** - in **Greek** - is the word – *eu-angelion* – which means literally “**Good Message**” or “**Good News**” – we'll come to this “**good news**” in a moment.

This Martin of course – was **Martin Luther** – and his breakthrough would lead to the true Gospel – the Good News – spreading throughout Germany and across Europe – and **start the Protestant Reformation** – from around **1517AD.**

The **book of Romans** had also affected a **4<sup>th</sup> century Bishop called Augustine** – as well as other protestant reformers – such as **John Calvin.**

Any many more people throughout history have **found the book of Romans** has **changed their lives forever!**

I became a Christian through one verse in **Romans 8:31** – “*if God is for us, who can be against us*”

So – we will look at each chapter of Romans over the coming months – and finish the book - by the end of July.

[Please turn to chapter 1 – verse 1]

### Paul and the Gospel (1:1-6)

In v1 - Paul describes himself as three things:

#### [Slide 2 – Paul and the Gospel]

1. 1<sup>st</sup> – Paul describes himself as - a **servant** (literally a **slave**) – totally committed to - **Jesus his master**

2. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Paul describes himself as an **Apostle** – which means “*one who is called and sent out*” directly by Jesus. Paul was called when his name was still Saul and he was a **Jewish Pharisee and religious leader** – who was persecuting Christians – and **Jesus miraculously spoke to Saul** – and **Jesus called Saul to be an apostle** – and sent him out as - **Paul** – **to bring the Gospel to Gentiles** (non-Jews) (Acts 9:1-9)

3. 3<sup>rd</sup> – Paul is **set apart for Gospel** – it literally means **Paul has been separated for one purpose only** – to proclaim the Gospel

As we've said – **Gospel** means **Good News**

**[Slide 3 – Paul and the Gospel - Continued]**

Which implies there must have been **some bad news**

And the **bad news** is that when **Adam and Eve** – broke God's rule in the Garden of Eden – sin and death came into the world

But the **Gospel Good News** – fixes this **bad news**

**God sent His Son Jesus** to die on a cruel cross to take the punishment for sin off us and onto Him – and offered all who believe in Him – **forgiveness of their sins.**

And Jesus rose from the dead 3 days later – to defeat death – and offered all who believe in Him – **eternal life in Heaven**

Paul goes on to say in v2

This Gospel good news was even **promised beforehand** by **prophets** in the **Old Testament** (OT)

Even in the very first book of the Bible – **God promises that one of Eve's descendants will crush Satan's head** (Gen 3:15) – that descendant is Jesus!

And - God promises **one of Abraham's descendants** will be a blessing to all nations (Gen 22:18) - that descendant is Jesus!

From the OT – centuries before Jesus was born – we learn where Jesus will be born (Micah 5:2) – how He will be born – born from a **virgin** (Isaiah 7:14) – what He will be like (Isaiah 9:6-7) – and how He will suffer and die (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

In our OT reading this morning from Ezekiel 34:1-16

**God has a go at the spiritual leaders** (shepherds) **of Israel** - for not taking care of **their flock** (the people of Israel).

God says the spiritual leaders are looking after themselves but not the people – and so the **people have been allowed to drift away from God** – like - lost sheep.

So, in v11 – God says “*I myself will search for my sheep and look after them*”

This of course, points to God sending His Son – Jesus – the Good Shepherd – who will come and look for people (sheep) lost from God and find them and save them (Luke 19:10) – that’s the Gospel – the **Good News**.

And Paul goes onto say in Romans 1 - v3 – Jesus – God’s son – was an earthly descendant of King David – and that’s important - because - **God promised in the OT – in 2 Samuel 7** – that a **descendant of David’s would reign forever on His throne** – pointing to Jesus – the King of Heaven and Earth!

Application: As we read the OT – we will see it all points to Jesus – even characters like - **Noah, Moses and Joshua** – are “types of Jesus” – who save their people – pointing to Jesus being the ultimate Saviour.

### [Slide 4 – Paul and the Gospel - Continued]

And Paul says v4 – Jesus’ unique identity and power as the Son of God was shown by the Spirit when Jesus was raised from the dead.

**The power of Jesus’ resurrection is paramount to Christianity!**

Without the resurrection – we have no eternal life – and no hope!

And it’s the resurrected Jesus – that Paul encountered on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19) - an event - that changed Paul’s life forever

At that encounter - v5 – **Paul received two things**

1<sup>st</sup> – Paul received - grace – God’s undeserved favour. Paul was a persecutor of Christians – but he was given a second undeserved chance.

2<sup>nd</sup> – Paul received - apostleship – Paul was called – directly by Jesus - and sent to Gentiles (non-Jews) – which includes us!

And Paul’s message is for the Gentiles to have faith in Jesus – and follow Jesus – and for them to want to obey Jesus – for the sake of Jesus’ name.

Application: For us it means – when we have faith in Jesus and follow Him – we should want to obey Him – out of sincere heartfelt gratitude – and out of our respect and love for Jesus.



## Paul's Desire for the Church (1:7-13)

Having introduced himself in verses 1 to 6

At last, in v7 – we find out who Paul is writing to

*“To all in Rome – who are loved by God – and called to be His holy ones”* (“holy ones” literally means “saints”) – Paul’s saying any Christian is seen as a “holy one” or “saint” because of their connection in faith - to Jesus.

### [Slide 5 – Paul’s desire for the Church]

So, in verses 8 to 13 – we learn *what Paul’s desire is for the Church* – and we learn a bit about what any Christian Church should be like...

V8 – Any Christian Church - should have a good reputation for their faith in Jesus – In Rome’s case – **their faith has been reported throughout the Roman Empire which occupied a lot of the known world.** I wonder if Toukley Presbyterian Church has a good reputation for their faith in Jesus?

V9 – Any Christian Church - should hear the faithful preaching of the Gospel of Jesus

V10 - Any Christian Church – should constantly be remembered in prayer – Paul constantly prays for the Roman Church and prays that he will be able to come to them. Are we praying for each other? Are we praying for our Minister and the leadership of our church?

V11 – Any Christian Church – should be **imparting spiritual gifts** to make the church family stronger – whether that’s **preaching; Bible Study, praying or pastoral care and visiting.**

V12 – Any Christian Church – should be **mutually encouraged by each other’s faith.** It’s not just the minister encouraging the church family – it’s the church family encouraging each other by a demonstration of their faith – and even the minister being encouraged.

Personally – I’ve been so **encouraged** and **blown away** - by the way - some of our church family - who are facing huge health challenges – have been so faithful – and lived out our verse from last week they have been “***strong and courageous – they haven’t been afraid or discouraged – they have trusted that God is with them wherever they go***” (Joshua 1:9) – people like - Pat Abel and Jan Dhu for example – even dear Adam who passed away before Christmas!

V13 – Any Christian Church – should **have a desire for a harvest of new believers.** Paul’s desire was for the Church in Rome to have a harvest of new believers like the other Gentile Churches Paul had established. For us – as David said last week – we have our own “garden” of people – our own harvest field – where we can sow the message of Jesus. Do we have a desire for our church family to grow in faith and grow in new believers? Remember Jesus said “***the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few; Ask the Lord of the Harvest, therefore, to send out more workers into His harvest field***” (Matthew 9:37-38)

## What the Gospel really is... (1:14-17)

### [Slide 6-Heading]

Having introduced himself - and - having described his desire for the Church

Paul goes on to explore ***what the Gospel really is*** – in verses 14 to 17

### [Slide 6a-Debt owed]

1<sup>st</sup> – **The Gospel – *is a debt owed to the world*** – vv14-15

Look at v14 – Paul says he is **obligated** both to **Greeks and Non- Greeks** – **both to the wise and foolish** – that's another way of saying - **he's obligated to everyone** – no matter what ethnic background or intellectual capability – **the Gospel is for everyone in this world!**

Obligated in the original Greek can also mean **in debt to someone**.

Now Paul hasn't met the Romans yet – so how can he be in debt to them?

Well – if someone lent me \$100 – **I'm in debt to them until I pay them back.**

But what if – **someone gave me \$100 to pass on to another person** – I would be in debt to the person until I passed on that \$100.

And it's in this sense – that **Paul is in debt to the Romans.**

Jesus gave Paul the specific job of passing on the Gospel to the Gentiles – and Paul is obligated to pass it on to them – and so - **Paul owes people the Gospel** – in whatever Gentile city they live.

And that's why **Paul** can say in v15 – that he is **so eager to preach the Gospel to those in Rome!**

Application: What about us? **Do we owe people the Gospel?** Well – we’re not apostles – we haven’t been called and sent “directly” by Jesus – but we have been called and sent “indirectly” as His disciples – by Jesus’ Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 – where Jesus says - to go and make disciples of all nations and tell people about Jesus. That’s where our “garden” – our context comes in! And so yes, we do owe people the Gospel – and we are obligated to pass on the Gospel good news to others – and not selfishly keep it to ourselves!

(pause)

2<sup>nd</sup> – **The Gospel – is God’s power for salvation** – v16

**[Slide 6b – power for salvation]**

Paul says in v16 – ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.***

It might seem strange that **Paul has to say he’s not ashamed of the Gospel?**

Paul mentions this idea of not being ashamed of the Gospel – because -

**sometimes we might be ashamed to tell people we believe and follow Jesus – in case we get – rejected or ridiculed or disliked – or even persecuted!**

Or we might be ashamed of the Gospel - because - we don’t always have the right words to explain why we believe or we can’t quite come up with all the answers to people’s questions – or we can’t quote the bible – chapter and verse

**[CE workshop]**

But Paul says to overcome this – remember – **the Gospel has God's power behind it** – as God's Word promises – in Isaiah 55:11 – *God's word will not return to Him empty but will accomplish what God desires and achieve God's purpose.*

And God's purpose is that **the Gospel has God's power to bring salvation to everyone who believes** in Jesus' death and resurrection.

We should define what salvation is: *salvation means we are saved from the punishment of our sins because of Jesus – and we are saved from Hell and have eternal life in Heaven because of Jesus.*

That's **some power**, isn't it?

But notice: Paul says salvation is for “***everyone who believes***” – it's our **belief** in Jesus – our **faith** in Jesus that gets us saved – **NOT** – **anything WE DO!**

That was the **massive light globe moment** for Martin Luther. Martin realized we are **saved by faith in Jesus alone!** Martin puts it this way: “***we are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone***” – it is accompanied by grateful, joyful, trusting obedience.

Application: For us – **it's important to take on board** – **we can't work or earn our way to Heaven** – it's purely our **faith** in what Jesus has done for us – that gets us there!

(pause)

**[Slide 6c-revealed righteousness]**

3<sup>rd</sup> – **The Gospel** – ***Reveals God's righteousness*** – that's v17

Paul says: ***For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed***

Many pages have been written about what **God's righteousness is.**

Christian writer and preacher **John Stott** (who was also greatly affected by the book of Romans) summarizes God's righteousness like this:

**God's righteousness is:**

- a) **God's divine character** – He is holy, perfect and sinless
- b) **God's divine action** – In grace and love - **God comes to our rescue by sending Jesus** (as He promised in our OT reading – He Himself would intervene)
- c) **God's divine achievement** – He makes us right with Him – and - approves of us – because of Jesus

So what Paul is saying is that the Gospel Good News of Jesus – means God takes the initiative - to put us as sinners – right with Him and approved by Him – by bestowing a righteousness on us – which is NOT our own but His!

It means God declares us not guilty of our sins – even though we are guilty! He declares us righteous (right with Him and approved by Him) even though we are unrighteousness.

This is only possible **by the Gospel of Jesus** – by God allowing His righteous Son to come and die for us – the unrighteous sinners.

That righteousness comes to us – only by us having FAITH in what Jesus has done for us! That's what Paul means in the rest of v17 – when he says - *a righteousness that is by faith from first to last*

This faith begins with God's faithfulness; then our response in faith – and that faith spreads as we tell others about Jesus – and that faith grows as we mature in our Christian faith – hence it's "*by faith from first to last*".

If you're someone here today – who realizes like Martin Luther did – just how impossible it is to stop sinning – today is the day – to come to your knees and say sorry to Jesus – and ask Jesus to come into your life – and allow Him to take that burden off you – and swap it for the gracious gifts of forgiveness and eternal life.

(pause)

And in case we were to think that the idea of “living by faith” is a new concept; Paul concludes at the end of v17 – by quoting from the OT prophet Habakkuk 2:4 -

***The righteous will live by faith***

Paul's point is simply this – having received God's righteousness from believing in the Gospel of Jesus – our only response - is to live a life of faith – trusting in Him in all things – never worrying about what lies ahead – only living our lives in thankfulness to Jesus – and wanting to please Him - in all we think, say and do.

Let's pray

*Father God,*

*Thank you for the Gospel Good News of Jesus – our Lord and Saviour – who is the only one who can fix sin and death.*

*Help us to see we can't work or earn our way to Heaven.*

*Help us to realize we are obligated to share this Gospel Good News of Jesus.*

*Help us to see God's power in the Gospel – a power that saves people for Heaven.*

*And help us to respond to receiving your righteousness through Jesus – by living out our lives in faith – fully trusting you in all things! In Jesus name. Amen.*