

- ***READ Romans 1:13-17*** In these well known verses, we come to know well Paul's mindset in regards to how he approached the work that he was doing as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. His greatest desire was simply to be with others with whom he could share the Gospel. Notice that twice in these verses, we find Paul mentioning the Gospel. He first says that he was *"eager to preach the Gospel"*, and then he states that he was *"not ashamed of the Gospel."* (**Romans 1:15,16**)
- But why? Why was Paul so excited to share the Gospel with others? What about the Gospel made it so special that he would never be ashamed of such a thing? What even is a "Gospel?" This is probably a word that we ought to be familiar with. After all, Paul was eager to preach it and very unashamed of it. It is also important to know what the Gospel is because it appears 99 times in the New American Standard Bible, 92 times in the New English Translation, 101 times in the New King James Version, and 93 times in the English Standard Version.
- This word must be of some importance, right? Of course it is important, and it is so because it literally is good news. This word comes from two words meaning "good news" and "to bring or announce good news." Interestingly enough, both of those Greek words are related to the word that we get angel or messenger from. From the meaning of this word we come to understand that the Gospel is good news that has been brought to someone, but what is this good news that Paul was unashamedly eager to preach to those in Rome? This morning, we are going to take an in-depth look at the Gospel of God. We want to consider the need for it, what it is in a nutshell, and what it means for us in regards to our growth. I'll go ahead and skip to the end to say that it is vital to our growth because it is the foundation for our faiths. Without a solid grasp and understanding of the Gospel, we will not be able to really dig in our roots and grow as we ought to. So let's begin by going back to the very beginning and establish what necessitated this good news being brought forth.

I. God created us in His image to be in fellowship with Him.

A. This is the picture painted for us in the Garden of Eden.

1. As God looks over His creation in the first chapter of Genesis, He continually states that what He had made was "good." (**Genesis 1:10,12,18,21,25**) Then we get to the end of the chapter (**Genesis 1:31**) and we see God stating that His creation of man was not just good but it was "very good."
2. Every thing else that God had made was fantastic in every sense of the word. It was awesome and amazing, but compared to His creation that He had made "in His own image" it was only good as opposed to very good. Yes, there was beauty and complexity in nature, but there were eternal and spiritual aspects of man that allowed for God to have this special relationship with him. The Scripture tells God walked in the very presence of man in the garden.
3. This was fellowship that we can only imagine in our minds at this point, but this was exactly what God wanted. This was His greatest desire. He didn't need man's worship or dedication. He doesn't need anything in reality, but He wanted us to exist so we could have this fellowship with Him. That should mean something to us.

B. Adam and Eve made a decision that caused for this picture of perfect fellowship to be broken.

1. Life for man in the Garden of Eden was about as cushy as could be. The Garden was completely under their rule from plant to animal. Man's food was well supplied, and they were in need of next to nothing. All that God asked in way of limitation was that they not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (**Genesis 2:16,17**) God even went so far as to warn them that their eating of it would lead to their death.
2. However, we see in **Genesis 3** that Adam and Eve fell prey to the temptation of the serpent and they ate of that which God had forbidden. The consequences of their disobedience led to their expulsion from the Garden, and man's relationship with God has not been the same since. But why is this the case? Why has that relationship been changed?

II. Our sin doesn't allow for that fellowship to exist.

A. God wants to be in fellowship with us, but our sin can't be tolerated by a holy God.

1. David said in **Psalm 5:4**, *"For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You."* Late in the Psalter we read, *"To declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."* (**Psalm 92:15**)
2. If we want to walk with God then we must walk in the light as John states in **I John 1:3-7**, but if we walk outside of the light then we will not have the ability to walk with a holy and righteous God who Himself is the epitome of light.

B. We have no power within ourselves to rectify the sins that we have committed against God.

1. This is really the crux of the situation we find ourselves in. Normally, if we mess up then all it takes is the offering of any apology if no real harm is done, but that won't suffice when it comes to our offenses and sins against God. Our sins incur the ultimate anger of God and the penalty of death (**Romans 6:23**) which is something that we don't have the means to appease within ourselves.
2. So what hope is there for us? We learn from **Leviticus 17:11** that *"The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I (God) have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement."* God, in His gracious nature, allowed for men to give the lives of animals to make atonement, but we understand that these sacrifices still allowed for the reminder of sin to remain. *"For the law.....can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.....But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."* (**Hebrews 10:1-4**) The truth is that we are left in an hopeless state because of our sin.

III. God sent His Son to be the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of man.

A. This whole story of good news only happens because of the love of God.

1. Remember, God wants for us to be in fellowship with Him! He doesn't want for any of us to perish, but He wants for all of us to repent of our sins and be in fellowship with Him. (**II Peter 3:9**) Yes, we have turned our backs on Him, but He continually offers a way for us to come back through His love and grace.
2. Even in the darkest periods of Israel when their sins were at their peak and they were being punished for such rebellion, God still offered that glimmer of hope that things would one day be remedied through His love, might, and grace. The prophets continually rebuked sin and pronounced judgement, but they also offered a future hope. That time of refreshing spoken of by the Apostles in **Acts 4** was a fulfillment of God's love being showered upon mankind by the giving of His only begotten Son being lifted up on the tree. (**John 3:14-16**)

B. The sacrifice of Jesus serves as the the ultimate satisfaction for the wrath of God because of our sins and the punishment that would rightly be due us.

1. The sacrifice of Jesus and the shedding of His guiltless blood serves as that atoning element that allows for our sins to be fully forgiven. Jesus is the true propitiation that allows us to once again be found favorable in the sight of God. (**I John 2:2 & 4:10**)
2. His blood is able to do so because it is simply worth more, it is more valuable than that of simple animals. Once Jesus lived a perfect life, the ultimate innocent blood was able to be shed and given for all mankind that allowed for our consciences to truly be cleansed from dead works so that we could truly serve the living God. (**Hebrews 9:11-14**) Yet, Jesus's giving of His life and blood is only part of this good news equation.

IV. His Son was resurrected from the dead to show His power over death.

A. Jesus prophesied that He wouldn't be held down by death.

1. Following His asking of the Apostles concerning who men thought He was and Peter's proclamation that He was the Son of God, Jesus states that even the gates of Hades would not

overpower what Jesus was coming to do. **(Matthew 16:18-21)** Just following this, we see Jesus showing and explaining to these closest disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and be killed, yet He would rise on the third day.

2. We also see Jesus publicly alluding to His resurrection when He told the Jews, following His clearing out of the temple, that if they destroyed the temple He would raise it up in three days. **(John 2:18,19)** Jesus knew He had to suffer, but He also knew the power of God in that He would be raised and raised for a purpose.

B. His resurrection served a mighty purpose in the good news of salvation.

1. Firstly, Jesus's resurrection showed God's approval and power being behind Him in what He had been doing on earth. Jesus made the claim he would be raised, and if that never happened then He would be proven as a liar and fraud.
2. Secondly, His resurrection would give rise to the church which He purchased with His blood. **(Acts 20:28)** Without the resurrection the church wouldn't have been founded upon the Son of God but upon a fraud. **(Matthew 16:18)**
3. Most importantly, Jesus's resurrection gives us hope that we, too, can be raised from the dead in the last day and can overcome death. **(I Corinthians 15:20-22;52-57)** In His death and resurrection, the good news of God's love is made plain and obvious to mankind. In it we find out that we can have our sins fully forgiven and we can have hope of our own resurrection.

V. He has ascended to His throne in heaven where He is waiting to receive those who are faithful & obedient.

A. Jesus has in no way exited the scene and become absent, but He continues to reign on high.

1. This was Peter's message to the crowds on Pentecost. Those people thought they had simply silenced an insurrectionist, but the reality is that Jesus was resurrected and had been exalted to the right hand of God. **(Acts 2:33-36)**
2. At that place, He reigns as King over His church that He died for. He continues to love, care, and cherish His church, and He provides for her every need. He wants for all of those who make up His church to be reunited with Him in the air on the last day. He wants for that perfect fellowship of Eden to be restored.

B. We will be able to meet Him in the air if we live faithfully and obediently to Him.

1. Paul's confidence was in the fact that he and all of the faithful would be with Jesus when He returned to call His church home. **(I Thessalonians 4:13-18)** His hope was that the disciples would gain comfort from this knowledge.
2. However, they could only have that confidence and comfort if they lived in a godly and righteous manner. Only those who would be able to be raised to glory would be those who followed the instructions of Paul. **(I Thessalonians 5:21-24)**

So what does this good news have to do with our efforts to grow and prevail? This good news is the foundation of why it is that we must give such great effort to grow. We ought to seek to grow because of the great love that has been shown to us. We must seek to grow to because one day we will be raised, and we have been given the opportunity to be raised to eternal life. If we want for this to be our reality, if we want to truly experience the good news of God, then we must grow in all respects to become mature men and women of faith. Anything less will only result in our ruin and demise, but how thankful we ought to be that this doesn't have to be our end! The good news is that something much better has been made available to use through the love, grace, and mercy of our great God. Praise be to His name!

PRAYER *Our great and loving Father...we praise Your name continually for the good news that has been given to us through Your foreknowledge. You knew that we fail on our own, but You extended Your perfect grace to those who are so unworthy. May You ever help us to grow in that grace. May You ever help us to give ourselves fully to You so that we might be with You for all eternity. Help our hearts to always be focused on you, and may it all be done to Your glory alone for You are worthy for everything that has been done for us. We thank You and we love You, and we pray that every soul here will submit to Your will and embrace the good news of salvation through Your Son. In His name we pray...amen.*