

“The Power of God for Salvation”
(Romans 1:16-17)

We’ve seen over the past two Lord’s Day mornings that Paul wrote this letter to the church at Rome in order to help them better understand what the Gospel is – to help them understand what their situation was – what their condition was like apart from His Son – and what it is that God had done through His Son to save those who believe. If there’s one thing in this world that we can’t afford to be wrong about, it’s this: God has made only *one* way of salvation, only *one* way to be saved from the consequences of our sins, only *one* way to escape hell, and that is *through* the Gospel, and not just *any* gospel, but the *biblical* Gospel. If we get this wrong, we miss out on our *only* opportunity to be saved from God’s wrath for our sins, and so it is *very* important that we hear and understand this message. Paul realized how important this was, which is why he wrote to these believers in Rome to give them a better understanding of the Gospel. What I would like to do this morning is to give you a summary of that message – of that good news – from this letter to the Romans. What you need to see is that the only way that you or I or anyone else will ever be saved from God’s wrath is through faith in Jesus Christ. We can’t save ourselves. Our good works will never be good enough. There is no one else who can save us. Only Jesus Christ *can*, and He will, if we will only trust in Him to do so.

Paul says, “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Paul wasn’t ashamed of the Gospel because he knew it was the only message that could give life to those who were on their way to eternal death. He knew it was the only way of escape. But let’s begin at the beginning. Why did we and all men come into this world on our way to everlasting death, to the eternal fire? Why do we find ourselves in a situation where we need a way of escape? Paul tells us in his letter. He says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). Notice, he says not just some, but *all*. *All* have sinned. *You and I* have sinned. Every one of us has broken God’s Commandments. We broke them first in Adam. God put him in the Garden of Eden to represent *all* of us, and when he failed to obey God – when he sinned – we all sinned in him. Paul writes, “By the transgression of the *one*, death reigned through the one . . . Through *one* transgression there resulted condemnation to *all* men . . . Through the *one* man’s disobedience *the many were made sinners*” (5:17-19). We all sinned when Adam sinned, and when we sinned, we were all immediately sentenced to death. Now not only was *his* sin charged to us, but also all of our own sins, the sins *we* have committed since our birth, the sins *we* commit everyday – the things *we* have done that are wrong and the right things we should have done, but haven’t. “All have *sinned* and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). Because we are sinners, we can’t save ourselves. We can’t make it heaven. God won’t accept us. He can only judge and condemn us. Paul writes, “Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up *wrath* for yourself in the day of *wrath* and revelation of the righteous *judgment* of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds” (2:5-6). Apart from the Gospel, apart from God’s mercy in Jesus Christ, all we have to look forward to is judgment – God’s wrath, an eternity in hell – because of our sins. Now does this mean that God is *too* harsh because He sends people to hell for disobeying Him, and not just for a short time, but for all eternity? Is God too severe? *No, God is just*. He

gives to every man exactly what he deserves, and what he deserves for his sins is eternal damnation. The reason he does is that every sin is committed against a God who is infinitely holy, a God who is infinitely righteous and pure, who perfectly loves everything that's good and perfectly hates everything that's evil. The only just punishment for crimes committed against someone like this is infinite punishment. But since we can't suffer like this, we must suffer forever. Paul writes, "All have sinned and *fallen short* of the glory of God" (3:23). "The wages of sin is death" (6:23), and what Paul means here by death is eternal death.

This is our problem. We come into the world as sinners, and because we are sinners, we are completely unable to do anything good. Paul writes, "There is *none* righteous, not even one . . . there is *none* who does good, not even one" (3:10, 12). We can do nothing but sin after we come into the world, which is why we can't do anything to please God. We can't even receive the mercy He offers us in Christ. Paul says, "Those who are in the flesh *cannot please God*" (8:7). There's also nothing we can do to get rid of our guilt – the guilt of breaking His commandments – which means that by ourselves, there's no way we can escape the sentence of eternal fire. Without God's mercy, there's no way out. *But, God has shown mercy.* He has revealed His mercy in Jesus Christ. Paul writes, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is *the power of God for salvation* to everyone who believes" (1:16). Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel, because it has the power to save us from this death, *if* we will trust in the One it tells us about to save us. The Gospel is simply this: Jesus lived and He died to satisfy God's justice, so that those who would believe in Him would be saved from His wrath.

Now who is this Jesus and what did He do? Paul tells us first of all, He was a man. He "was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh" (1:3). He was a direct descendant of King David in fulfillment of the promise God made to him that one of his descendants would sit on his throne forever. But Jesus was more than this – He was also God. Paul continues, He "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (1:4). Jesus is both God – the Son of God, the second person of the biblical God who is three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and He is man. He has two natures – one divine and one human. He needed to be a man so that He could save men. And He had to be God, so that His work would be valuable enough to save *all* His people who had sinned against an infinitely holy God. An angel couldn't have saved us. A perfect man couldn't have saved us. Any sacrifice they made wouldn't have been enough. Only one who was infinitely worthy could have saved us, and that is who God has given us as a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who is both God and man.

This is who Jesus is, but what did He do? How did He save those who would believe in Him? Well, He did what we didn't do and couldn't do – He obeyed God – He obeyed His Father's commandments perfectly. He did everything that God requires, everything that's good and right. And He died – He took the punishment on Himself that was meant for His people. He suffered hell on the cross, so that those who believe in Him wouldn't have to suffer it. Jesus satisfied His Father's justice. The Bible sometimes represents His death as that one act of righteousness by which He saved His people. Paul writes, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (5:18-19). In the same way that Adam represented all mankind in the garden when he sinned and all were sentenced to

death because of his sin, even so the Lord Jesus represented all who would believe in Him and brought life to them through His obedience. Jesus did it all – everything that a person needs to be saved. And having done this, He now offers it to everyone who believes as a free gift. Paul writes, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23). Eternal life is not just life that never ends. It is a quality of life. In the same way that eternal death is eternal suffering, so also eternal life is eternal blessing. Heaven is a world full of love and joy. Those who are there are as happy as they can possibly be. This is what Jesus lived and died to give all who would believe in Him. This is why Paul writes, “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (1:16).

Adam brought death to all men, but Jesus brought life to those who would believe. The last thing we need to ask is what does it mean to believe? Does it mean simply to know and believe the facts about Jesus? There are many people who think it does. But the Bible says there is more to faith than this. James tells us that the demons believe, and they tremble (James 2:19), but that doesn’t save them. What does it mean to believe in Jesus? It means not only to know the facts and to accept them as true, it also means to love and accept the One these facts tell you about. It means to trust Jesus to save you, to depend on Him and His work to bring you through the judgment. Now you’ll never do this, unless you first see that you need Him. I hope by now that every one of you here this morning sees that you need Jesus. You can’t be saved any other way. But to receive Him, to actually trust your life to Him, requires something else. It requires that you no longer hate Him, but love Him. Paul tells us, “There is none who seeks for God” (3:11). The reason why there are none is that everyone, apart from God’s grace, hates God. They are at war with Him (Cf. 5:1). Jesus tells us that everyone who is born into this world is fleshly. He said to Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). Paul tells us that “the mind set on the flesh is death . . . because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the Law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (8:6-8). A man’s heart must be changed before he will ever want to receive Jesus as His Lord and Savior. But this is what God also does through the Gospel. He not only sends the message of the Gospel into the world, “Repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” He also sends His Spirit to make that message powerful, to make His people able and willing to believe, to trust in His Son, to love Him, and to turn from their sins and obey Him. This is again why Paul writes, “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (1:16).

Jesus lived and died to save those who would believe in Him. The question I would leave you with this morning is, has He saved you? Do *you* believe in Jesus? Do you see that apart from His mercy and grace that *you* are a condemned sinner? Do you realize that Jesus is the *only* way of salvation that God has made? Have you turned from your sins and from your own ways of trying to make yourself good enough for God to accept you, and are *you* trusting in Jesus and His perfect work to save you? If you are, and if you are because you really love Him, then you are saved. The Gospel has become the power of God for your salvation. But if you haven’t, then you need to repent and trust in Jesus to save you, or you will be lost forever. Don’t let this opportunity pass you by. If the Lord has shown you your need for Christ this morning, reach out to Him now; take hold of Him now; trust in Him now to save you. He is the only One who can save *you* from God’s wrath. Amen.