

V. Romans in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of God
“Gospel Saturated Leadership”
Romans 1:1–15
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February 14, 2021 • Sunday Morning Sermon

This is our fifth study in the book of Romans and we will focus on Romans 1:8–15 in this study. Romans 1:1–7 says *[1] Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, [2] which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, [3] concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh [4] and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, [5] through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations, [6] including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, [7] To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I want to give you an anticipation of the subject matter that we’re covering with two thoughts to start with. One there is an amazing word that seemingly that all of our children learn at about age 3. It’s a three letter word – “why.” ‘Clean up your room.’ ‘Why?’ ‘Wash your face and hands.’ ‘Why?’ Perhaps you’re thinking ‘why do they ask why?’ When my kids asked why, there were four other words that became a part of my vocabulary which were ‘because I said so’ or sometimes it was six words, ‘because I said so, that’s why.’ The question ‘why’ should not amaze us. We didn’t stop asking it at age 4 or 5 for as soon as there was a cataclysmic event or something overwhelming in the culture or when something happened that didn’t line up with the way you thought it would happen, we start asking why.

The reason we ask why is because we’re made in the image of God. God does everything on purpose. God establishes cause and effect. When we see an effect, we ask why. What’s the cause? When you see that something happens, you being made in the image of God know that there is purpose, because you live that way. You might think you don’t live on purpose but you live serendipitously, but that’s a purpose. You decided you’re not going to have a purpose so therefore you’re now free to serve all the purposes of everybody else, but you purposed to do that.

So as we started this series there were a number of questions I want to ask, like who is writing this epistle? We know that it is Paul who was called to be an Apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God and a slave of Christ Jesus. Secondly, we asked, who is Paul writing to in Romans? He is writing to the Christians at Rome, this burgeoning church right in the center of a pagan empire that is now 20 plus years old, born at Pentecost by the grace of God. Where was he when he wrote it? He was in Cenchrea and Corinth when he wrote this epistle. When did he write it? We know it was in March of either 57 A.D. or 58 A.D. What is he writing? Paul is writing an exposition of the Gospel of God, but yet why?

We know why because Paul tells us why before he tells us what – the Gospel of God. He gives us the why basically in Romans 1:8–15. Before we get to this I told you I wanted to give

you two thoughts – spoiler alert. When I preach I ask God to help me with two things. One is to be faithful to the Word, valiant, courageous and compassionate, persuasive, pleasing, precise as I prepare for my study to exalt Christ, share the Gospel with the lost and encourage and equip His people. I know if God answers that prayer there will be some things that will happen. People will get encouraged and convicted. One person I know who will be convicted will be me. I welcome you to join me but this one is aimed at me. I think you will see this as we see why Paul writes a letter expounding the Gospel of God and His grace to save sinners to those at Rome.

I do want you to know I'm not going to let you off the hook for I do want to share something with you as the conviction points to me. As Paul is laying the foundation of the exposition of the Gospel of God in the following verses to tell you why he is writing this, he gives you a window into his soul and heart. Normally he doesn't do this. Paul is bold and courageous but here he is self-abasing for he doesn't bring attention to himself, but in this epistle we're about to read something where he is front and center as an Apostle, a preacher, an evangelist, an elder, in Christ's church and in all these roles he embraces. By the sovereign calling of God he is front and center. He peels things back so you can look at his heart and soul that ends up with conviction to me and I have lived with it now for weeks. I hope to live with it for the rest of my life. He will use the word 'I' twelve times in the following verses and he just doesn't do that in his other epistles.

Romans 1:8-15 says [8] *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. [9] For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I mention you [10] always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. [11] For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—[12] that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. [13] I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.[14] I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.[15] So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.*

The word 'first' in verse 8 really means foundationally because everything Paul will say after that is built on what he is about to say. He will use another 'I' in Romans 1:16 as well when he says 'For I am not ashamed of the Gospel...' Paul is communicating something to his audience about who he is, why he is writing this epistle and why he is giving this glorious exposition of the Gospel of God and the saving grace of Christ for sinners who delivers us from the penalty of our sin, the power of our sin, is delivering us from the practice of sin and one day will deliver us from the presence of sin. He unfolds it by letting you hear his heart in these words. I have gathered Paul's "I's" up into five observations of this Gospel saturated leader. This is what I call Gospel saturated leadership. Paul is a leader who bleeds the Gospel. It comes out of every pore of his existence.

The first way to see it is, he is a Great Commission fixation. The Great Commission is given to us in five books of the Bible – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts. It is to go with the Gospel (the Message) and preach the Gospel to all the nations. The mission is Matthew 28:19–20 which says [19] *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* Jesus has given this Message and mission with ministries and mandates – evangelism, discipleship, worship,

fellowship, etc. to carry it out. The Bible is held together by the contours of the Gospel and the Gospel leads you into all the doctrines of the Scriptures. The Scriptures bear witness of Christ who gives us eternal life when you come to Him who came for you. Paul has a fixation on the Gospel and his heart is motivated by it.

How does this church exist? This church exists as a testimony of the Gospel through the Great Commission. How do I get this? Paul says he thanks God for ‘all of you’ and these are Christians. Some of them we already know are Christians some 20 years earlier when they went on a Pentecost pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the outbreak of the Spirit of God with the Gospel as Peter was preaching took hold (were converted) of those Jews who came from Rome and then went back to Rome. You exist because of the Great Commission that began in Jerusalem then went to Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the world. That is why there is a Gospel outpost and colony in Rome, a Gospel saturated church in Rome – because of the Great Commission that started in Jerusalem. Then Paul will mention 28 more people (in Romans 16) that he knows that came to Christ in other places because the Great Commission went from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria where others are converted. These people also migrate to the center which is now in Rome. Paul at this point has never been to Rome but God had moved these Christians to Rome that Paul knows and this church exists as a testimony of the Great Commission and the unstoppable movement – of I’ll be with you until the end of the age.

A man by the name of Claudius in 40 A.D. tried to destroy this church for he sent away all the Christian Jews. Claudius is dead and now in 57 A.D. the church continues. The existence of this church proclaims the power of the Gospel as it advances through the Great Commission. This church is not only a trophy and consequence of the Great Commission but this church is now a player, for they are a participant in the Great Commission and we know this by Paul’s statement in Romans 1:8b when he says ‘because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.’ They are sending the Gospel from Rome to all the world. They are a part of what they have been blessed by but that’s not all. More than that I’m going to take this to another level. Let’s look at Romans 15.

Romans 15:22–24 says [22] *This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. [23] But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, [24] I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.*

I want to translate what he means here. He is basically telling them he is coming to see them as they have a mission’s conference and they will send him to Spain. So he is going to let them be a supporting church for him as he goes to Spain to send the Great Commission. This shouldn’t surprise us because when Paul fulfills the Great Commission he does evangelism, discipleship, plants and strengthens churches in key cities. In the book of Acts I have counted that Paul goes to 28 cities and 22 of them were power centers. He doesn’t just go for low hanging fruit, so to speak. He goes where the people are gathered and right into the power centers. When he goes to Ephesus he goes right to the center of the pagan culture there. He goes to the power center of sexual immorality and anarchy when he goes to Corinth. He goes to the intellectual power center of Athens and Mars Hill. He goes to the power center of legalism in Jerusalem. Paul is ready to go.

I remember a young man I had the privilege to mentor who was a church planter. He went to Chicago and planted a church right beside the loop which is quite a place. He wrote to

me and said ‘You told that Jesus would build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it, and I’m not saying Chicago and the loop are the gates of hell but I’m sure smelling a lot of smoke here.’ That is the heart of Paul for he goes right into the teeth of the citadels of this world to rescue the perishing as he proclaims the Gospel to be on mission. Paul loves to go and plant churches from Gospel saturated churches.

How does Paul go out on his first two missionary journeys? He goes to Antioch where they were first called Christians. What becomes his center point on his third missionary journey? His flagship, home sending church – Ephesus – where he is there for three years. Now he is ready to go to Spain and he needs another sending church but it can’t be just any church, it needs to be a Gospel saturated church and since he can’t get there to teach the next best thing is to write this Holy Spirit inspired letter on the Gospel of God. He wants them to drink of this Gospel and then they send him out with it. He is a Great Commission fixation – on mission and on message, the Gospel foundational message of grace and peace in Christ. Then he is ready to go and do the ministry.

Secondly, Paul has a pastor’s heart of anticipation. Paul knew what was happening at the seat of the Emperor and the senate in Rome for he knows God’s grace is greater than sin. Paul knows the key to this world is found in the colony of the Kingdom which is the church of Jesus Christ and the power of the Gospel. He certainly cares what is happening where he goes and when he does finally get there Caesar’s household is going to get evangelized and saved by the Apostle Paul. Paul knows that every single Christian is a walking miracle, born in the boneyard of sin and Christ raised them up and they have been born again. They were under the wrath of God and now they are the children of God. God’s people are the statement that God’s grace is greater than all of our sin. This grace is far beyond anything in our comprehension. It is an irresistible, unstoppable grace of the Lord Jesus. Paul gives gratitude to God because God’s grace is greater than persecution or our inadequacies or any person and it’s not dependent on any person. Paul hasn’t even gotten there yet but he knows what God has done in the lives of these people already. There is Paul’s heart of anticipation of the power of the Gospel, the power of the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. This church in Rome is in the center of military, political and economic power. Paul has 28 friends there that he knows are trophies of grace.

I feel that as a pastor because as I look at you. I know you’re saved because God’s grace is greater than your sin. I know what God is doing in some of your lives. I know some of the triumphs of grace and right now where you have the battles. You are in a world that is broken. Some of you are reading this today and don’t know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This broken world only offers idols of death for that’s all it will give to you so don’t buy it. Leave it, leave yourself and come to Jesus Christ for He will not take you out of the world but He will take the world out of you and He will fill you with Himself. Come today to Him.

Today if you are believer and with all this news of division, death, and destruction, don’t go die in a pile or take a bath of self-pity but get a Gospel heart of anticipation. God, I don’t know what You’re going to do yet but will You just go ahead and start with me and my family. I know Your grace is greater than sin, and all of my sin.

Thirdly, Paul has a Gospel fed vital prayer life of supplication. We see this in Romans 1:9–10 which says [9] *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that **without ceasing I mention you** [10] **always in my prayers**, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.* Paul doesn’t stop praying for them and he wants to see them face to face, belly to belly, eyeball to eyeball, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual psalms. He knows that we are the called together ones and he asks

God continually to get him there with them. Yet he is ready to surrender to God's will because God has said 'no.'

Typically, when people say to me 'God, answered my prayer' they mean that God did what they asked Him and I do like to remind people that God's answer is not always 'yes' and yet when God answers 'no' that is answered prayer. Sometimes when God answers 'no' it is not 'no' forever but just for right now because it's not the right time. I can almost image in the heavens the angels saying 'here comes Paul again wanting to get to Rome, how many times is he going to ask?' Paul keeps asking because the burden for them has not left his heart. He doesn't want to impose his will but make his will known and then he surrenders, not my will be done but Thy will be done. Sometimes God will say 'no' so that I'll keep praying so Paul has persistent prayer of intercession for the people, persistent prayer for guidance and persistent prayer for the Gospel in the life of this church. So, Paul is constantly praying in that direction for them.

This is around 57 A.D. and in a few years, God will say 'yes' to that prayer of Paul's to go to Rome. First Paul will go to Jerusalem and bring a gift. Then they will try to kill him but God will deliver him. Then he will get arrested in Jerusalem. He will go to prison in Caesarea Philippi and he will be there a few years to fulfill God's calling where he preaches to kings, governors and those in authority. Then by Paul's appeal he will get to go to Rome and he will arrive there with a prison ministry from which he'll lead people from Caesar's household from the imperial guard to Christ as well as minister to the church at Rome. God had another plan. God didn't send him to Rome with an itinerate ministry but He sent him there with a prison ministry. By the way, it will be all expenses paid by the Roman government. After a couple of years he will be set free. He will write some letters and in a couple of years he will get set free again. Then they will re-arrest him again and then God will take him home. Don't miss the fact that Paul has every commitment to bathe the mission and the message with intercessory prayer that surrenders to the Lord and prays for people.

Number four, Paul has a supreme calling and vocation. Romans 1:11-12 says *[11] For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—[12] that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.* He wants to come and pastor them. He wants to be an asset to their spiritual life and growth in Christ. He wants to impart to them a spiritual gift for their maturation in Christ. He wants them to know that their life in Christ is not dependent on him but he wants to come and be a part of what Christ is doing in their life and this is reciprocal. They have gifts they share with each other. Paul wants to come and join what they are already doing there in each other's lives. It's what they can do together in the Lord.

Let's look at Romans 1:14 which says *[14] I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.* Why is he under obligation to the Jews and Gentiles? It was because he was under obligation to Christ who calls him to go to them with evangelism and discipleship. That's his supreme calling. I want to go back to verse 13.

Romans 1:13 says *[13] I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.* He had a calling in the Great Commission and his message to evangelize because he wanted a harvest. You can't convert anyone but you can evangelize. Sometimes you're planting, sometimes you're watering and sometimes you're cultivating.

My wife and I were away last week doing a mission's conference and I appreciated your prayers. The night before Sunday we took some time in the lobby of the place where we were

staying. A couple approached us, clearly extroverted and wanted a conversation and that was not something I usually did in moments like that. I usually would sit in a corner and read a book. The Lord opened a door and in about two or three questions I was able to get the conversation turned around to Jesus. Somehow we went from construction to Jesus and we began to share Jesus. One of them said 'you know it's time to eat and I think it's time to move on.' I could tell I wasn't making a lot of headway and that was okay. I may not be reaping the harvest but I'm planting the seed. God has called us to evangelize, make disciples and be disciples. That's our vocation.

I had a wonderful conversation just the other day with a young man in this church. We were talking about what he was going to do with the rest of his life. Then he mentioned as he had been coming and growing he realized his satisfaction was not in his job. He said 'that's a means to an end for my satisfaction is serving Jesus as a husband, a father and to evangelize.' That is what Paul is telling us here. Paul didn't live to be a tentmaker but he made tents to do his vocation and calling – on the mission, on the message, evangelism and discipleship in ministry. That is what filled his heart. He was under obligation to that but he did not do that to be saved. He did it because of the One who loved him and set him free. He was a servant/slave for Christ set apart for the Gospel. This is what fills my heart.

Fifthly, Paul was Gospel saturated in his Gospel passion and saturation. We see this in Romans 1:15 when Paul says *[15] So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.* Paul goes on to say in the very next verse, Romans 1:16, *[16] I am not ashamed of the Gospel...* The Gospel just poured into his life because it was with that Gospel message that he was brought to Jesus who is now his life and therefore everything else serves that. It doesn't compete with it or diminish it or displace it. It is this Gospel that gives me a heart for my calling, vocation and confidence in my intercession and with a heart of anticipation to stay on mission, on message with a Great Commission fixation. This is what God has filled me to overflowing to do.

Next week we start our missions conference with the theme of being found faithful. I'm convinced after reading this text in Romans 1 that if the Apostle Paul somehow found out about our conference he would applaud it whether it was for national missions or world missions, he would probably pray about how we could engage personally and be involved financially and all. But also think he'd say this to us; don't make this a conference of your church for this is your church and you're on mission, with all of you being missionaries – you're on message and stay in the ministry. Don't make this just a week but make it your life and it will be your life if Jesus is your life and the Gospel of grace is your passion and saturation.

There is something inescapable that I also need to say. I'm in a nation as a citizen that is in desperate need of a Gospel awakening movement. I'm not a prophet or son of a prophet and I don't think it's long for this world without it. I don't think this is a political cosmetic issue. I think it's a heart issue of a culture that is embracing paganism and being destroyed with a culture of death and it's only hope is the Gospel – a Gospel awakening. As I look at Paul, the Bible and history Gospel awakenings to a nation and nations, in God's economy come through Gospel saturated and Gospel driven churches. It doesn't happen because a senate or congress votes for it or a president gives an executive order for it. It comes through the colony of the Kingdom, the embassy of the Kingdom, the Kingdom where its stewards are to be found faithful with the Gospel.

Gospel awakenings don't come without Gospel saturated driven churches. Gospel saturated and driven churches do not exist unless there is Gospel saturated and Gospel driven

leaders for those churches – elders, deacons, pastors. Every time God does something glorious He raises up leaders. Just go check the Bible and church history to see this. Now let me let you off the hook before I put you on it. I don't think you get Gospel saturated and Gospel driven leaders who by God's grace lead churches that are on mission, on message and in ministry because those churches are Gospel driven and Gospel saturated. I don't think you get those churches without a Gospel driven Gospel saturated person like Paul and that's why he wanted to get to that church. The best thing he could do was send a letter but that's not enough. I want to get there.

Gospel saturated pastors who are Great Commission fixed, who have a heart of anticipation because of their confidence in the power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit, who have a vital prayer life of intercession, who surrender to the Holy Spirit and the leading of God, who give attention to their supreme calling to preach the Gospel, evangelize and disciple, who embrace the Gospel so that if you cut them they bleed it and who breathe the Gospel out of the pores of their skin, their mouth and their lives are the ones who lead Gospel driven and Gospel saturated churches. The reason I believe this is because of what we just read from Romans 1:8–15.

Now here's my takeaway. The "why" Paul wrote the letter to expound the Gospel of God to the church in Rome is simply answered in the "who" God was to Paul, the Gospel of God by the grace of God to the glory of God – it was his life. Paul wanted it to be in the life of the church that would send him to Spain. Therefore, he couldn't get there so he sends them what this Gospel is and then he'll get there.

Now I'm going to put you back on the hook. If what I'm saying is true, do you think Satan knows this? You better believe he knows it. If you don't want a Gospel awakening in this nation then that means you don't want Gospel driven Gospel saturated churches or Gospel driven, Gospel saturated and passionate leaders and that means you want to make sure we don't have Gospel driven Gospel saturated pastors. So Satan will go into seminaries before they even get started. Satan goes where they are in ministry and discouraged and tells them it's the program not the Gospel or it's your innovation and not your persistence in the Gospel. Satan is an absolute master of striking down the shepherd so the sheep will scatter.

One of the greatest moments I believe in the life of this church was in 2003 when the membership of this church by families made a commitment to pray for the leadership of this church at least at one meal a day and regularly and the pastor in particular that God would keep faithful, focused and overflowing with the love of Christ. I am asking you to so pray again and the reason is because Satan prays against people like me and he preys on us. Go read the reports of what is happening to Christian leaders. Satan prays against us and preys on us. I am not a victim but I desperately need the intercessory prayers of God's people that I would be fixed on Jesus and the Great Commission, anticipating the power of the Gospel on mission, on message and in ministry.

I know he does pray against us for you can see it in the book of Job. Satan went before God in the book of Job and that's a prayer. Satan say 'I want Job' and that is preying on him. He is targeting Job. Look at Luke 22. Here before Jesus goes to the cross He says in Luke 22:31–32, [31] *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, [32] but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."* Satan has demanded to have you is a prayer request. Satan prays on leadership. So I'm asking you for intercessory prayer.

Secondly, I'm asking you to join me to prioritize the training of the next generation of pastors. I thank God for our Birmingham Theological Seminary, our engagement at Westminster Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary and for what they are doing on mission, on message and in ministry. I thank God for the 14 men I meet with every month moving into ministry. I pray God would do a great work through them. Pray I stay the course and prioritize this next generation.

Thirdly, put your confidence, not in the preacher, but in the power of the Word, the power of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. I love the moment in the movie *Glory* about the Massachusetts 54th Colored Infantry – the first African American combat unit that made the assault at Fort Wagner in 1863. I love the moment in the revival that took place before the charge where these men knew that at least 70 percent of them were going to die. Denzel Washington represented one of those men and says to these men 'Men, let's go, we're men ain't we?' Pastors, elders, deacons, we're leaders, ain't we? Let's take Christ's church on mission, on message and in ministry and watch what He does.

When I finished preaching on the street in Macon, Georgia last week a sergeant came up to me and said 'God, had me here because of you and what you said.' This week that sergeant met with the pastor and the sergeant and his wife committed their life to Christ. We need to be on mission, on message and in ministry. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Please minister to us in these moments. Holy Spirit, speak. Praise Your Name Jesus for You are the Savior of sinners and I pray in Your Name, Amen.

Power Point

Gospel Saturated Leadership

- I. A Great Commission Fixation
- II. A Pastor's Heart of Anticipation
- III. A Vital Prayer Life of Supplication
- IV. A Supreme Calling and Vocation
- V. A Gospel Passion and Saturation

Life Takeaway

The "Why" Paul wrote a letter to expound "The Gospel of God" to the Church in Rome is simply answered in the "Who" Paul was because of the Gospel of God by the Grace of God to the Glory of God.