

**The Gospel of God**  
**Romans 1:1c – 3a**  
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Well I do invite you to take your Bible and turn to Romans 1. This morning Paul gets to his theme. Very early in this letter he comes to the theme of the gospel. We need to begin by admitting that when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, we live in dark and dangerous times. Ask the average evangelical to define the gospel and the typical result, what you will hear, will be a hopelessly reductionistic version of the biblical gospel. And sadly, many evangelicals, or professed evangelicals are in danger of losing their grip on the biblical gospel altogether. Because scattered along the borders of what can be called evangelicalism today, you will find many popular, but potentially deadly aberrations of the gospel.

There is the prosperity gospel that has permeated the charismatic movement. At the other end of the spectrum you have the Erudite intellectual redefinition of all the terms of the gospel by N. T. Wright and the new perspective on Paul. And if you don't know what that is, you will come to know it in the coming months. There is the hopelessly dumbed down, no lordship version of the gospel that sells cheap grace; pray a prayer, walk an aisle, sign a card, and then go live like you want to live, and you'll still get to go to heaven.

All of those are deadly aberrations of the true biblical gospel. Nothing is more important in your life than understanding and embracing by faith the true biblical gospel. That's why our study of Paul's letter to the Romans is so vitally important to all of us. And in the passage that we come to today Paul introduces this crucial issue for the first time. Let me read for you again the first seven verses of this letter, Romans 1:1-7, remembering that it is one sentence in the Greek text as he introduces himself, and what he's writing about, and to whom he's writing in these words. You follow along, Romans 1:1.

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to

all who are beloved of God in Rome, called *as* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in this greeting Paul established for his first readers, and for us as well, three reasons why Romans matters, three reasons why Romans matters. We've already considered one of those reasons: it's because Paul wrote it. Notice he begins immediately in one word identifying his identity; "I am Paul." Immediately, that would have sparked the interest of the Roman Christians as they received this letter at the hand of Phoebe who delivered it from Corinth where Paul was finishing his third missionary journey. And as they saw his name, that would have elicited their immediate interest in reading this letter.

But then he gives us in addition: his credentials. He gives us three credentials as to why this letter should matter, why we should bother reading this letter, and why we should bother studying it. Notice the credentials in verse 1, "I am a bond-servant of Christ Jesus." I am a *doulos* of Jesus Christ. He's using that language, borrowing it really from the Old Testament where again and again those who spoke on God's behalf were called the servant of Yahweh, or the *doulos* of God. He's saying I'm speaking to you with the same authority that the Old Testament servants of the Lord spoke.

His second credential is: "... called as an apostle," called as an apostle. I have been hand-picked by God Himself and set apart to be the proxy for Jesus, to be His legal official representative. What I write, and what I speak is as if He Himself is speaking. I am a called apostle.

And his third credential is (there at the end of verse 1): I am, "... set apart for the gospel ..." I have, as he says in Galatians 1, been, "... set apart from my mother's womb" to this ministry, the ministry of the gospel.

So, there's the first reason that you and I should care about this letter, it's why Romans matters, it's because Paul wrote it. But there's a second reason that Romans matters, and we come to that reason today. Not only because Paul wrote it, but secondly, because it's about the gospel. It's about the gospel. Notice the end of verse 1, Paul transitions from his personal credentials to introduce the theme of this letter. He says in his third credential I was, "... set apart for the gospel of God." This shows Paul's heart. Just nine Greek words into this letter, he already gets to this great theme. In fact, in the opening section that runs down through verse 17, Paul uses the word gospel six times. He says, "this is what I'm writing to you about. This is what matters. I'm writing to you about the gospel of God."

Now this is such an important issue that we need to assume absolutely nothing. So, we'll see this unfold over time, but let me begin by asking this crucial question. What does Paul mean by the gospel? What is the gospel? Well, the English word "gospel" comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word "god-spell", which simply means a good story. And that's the idea of the original Greek word. The English word gospel really translates the Greek word "euaggelion", from which we get the English words "evangel, evangelistic, and so forth". The word "euaggelion" translated "gospel" here, literally means "a good message or good news".

It's interesting to see how this word was used in terms outside of the Scripture. Among the Greeks for example, this word "euaggelion" was used of a report about a specially important news. For example, one of the most frequent early uses of this word among the Greeks was when a messenger would come from the scene of a battle with a report, and if the army had won, if they had gained a victory in the battle they came with a "euaggelion", with a report of good news; "We've won, the victory is ours."

The Romans used this word in the emperor cult worship. They used it to describe the announcement of important events in the life of the emperor. So, when the heir to the throne was born, there was sent out an announcement of "euaggelion, good news". When the emperor came of age, when the emperor ascended to the throne, in all of these major events in the life of the emperor, there was an announcement of "euaggelion, good news".

When Scripture uses this word, translated "gospel" in our text, it's referring to the best news that fallen man could ever receive. It's the greatest announcement ever made. It's an announcement of the birth of history's greatest King, Jesus Christ God's Son. It's an announcement of all of the events surrounding that great King, from the enunciation of His birth, to His birth itself, to His life and ministry, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His expansion of His kingdom. It's an announcement of the greatest victory every accomplished on this planet at the cross and at what is now the empty tomb. The gospel is good news. It's great news. I think Lloyd-Jones was right when he said,

If you want to test yourself to see whether or not you're in the faith, ask yourself this simple question: Is it true for me? Is there any other news that means more to me, that is more at the core and center of my life than the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ? If so, then it's unlikely that you have any real sense of your sinfulness or any sense of the saving power of Jesus Christ, because when

you've experienced that, the gospel is the best news you have ever heard, and always will be.

Now sometimes this word "euaggelion" occurs as a noun as it does here. It's used that way often. In other occasions it's a verb. It means to proclaim the good news. And when the verb occurs, sometimes it occurs with no object; it simply says, "I proclaim the good news." But on occasions there is an object. Often, in fact, there is an object that follows in the New Testament. And that object, that direct object, is the content of the good news. The same thing when the noun occurs; you'll have the gospel "of" and there'll be a prepositional phrase, and that prepositional phrase will explain the content of that good news.

This week I traced down all the references in the New Testament when that Greek noun and that Greek verb is used that is translated gospel or proclaim the good news, and here's how the New Testament describes the good news the apostles preach. This is just a representative example. This is not exhaustive. But there are many that say this: It is good news that we're told, about the kingdom of God; that is, that God's spiritual kingdom can be joined by those who have been outside of it and are rebels against it. It's good news about Jesus Christ, about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, good news about the Lord Jesus, the unfathomable riches of Christ, about Jesus Christ the Son of God, Jesus and the resurrection, the glory of Christ. It's called the gospel or the good news of peace with God, peace through Jesus Christ, good news that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, good news of the grace of God. You get the idea.

The gospel, then, is the good news that through His Son, God has made a way for man to be reconciled to Him. He's made a way to pardon a man's sin, to restore him to His favor, to renovate his nature, eventually, to raise his body from death and to give to him eternal life. And all of those blessings become ours, we're told, freely, by grace alone, as a gift from God, Romans 3 will tell us. And men and women receive that gift from God through repentance of their sins and faith in Jesus Christ alone, based solely, not on their own effort, their own merit, their own work, but based solely on the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. So, the gospel, then, is the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ to reconcile sinners to Himself. That's the gospel.

Now remember, the primary purpose of this letter, as we learned a few weeks ago, was for Paul to explain the gospel he preached to the Christians in Rome. And he wanted to do that because he wanted them to understand his gospel, to affirm his gospel, and therefore to support him in his

new ministry to Western Europe. He'd exhausted the ministry there in Eastern Europe, in Asia Minor and Greece, and now he wanted to go Spain and to Western Europe, and he wanted them to be a part of that outreach.

As Paul opens his letter, he begins here by giving us just a thumbnail sketch of some of the important facts of the gospel that he'll come back to and develop at length throughout this letter, just a thumbnail of some important facts about the gospel. Let's look at those facts as he introduces them to us here. First of all, the gospel comes from God. The gospel comes from God. The end of verse 1, it is, "... the gospel of God." In Romans 15:16, Paul uses that same expression, "... the gospel of God..." What does he mean?

Well this is what linguists call a subjective genitive. They simply mean the object of the preposition, in this case God, is the subject, is the doer of the action. So, God is the One announcing this good news, accomplishing this good news. So, it is the gospel of God in the sense that God is the origin of the gospel. He created this plan we call the gospel, from all eternity. He promised this gospel in the Old Testament. He made it a reality by orchestrating the events of the life of Christ. He is the One now announcing that good news. It's God's gospel. It's His message of salvation to lost men. F. F. Bruce writes, "The gospel of God is a joyful proclamation by God of the death and resurrection of His Son, and of the consequent amnesty and liberation which men and women may enjoy through faith in Him."

But exactly how would you describe (we've learned the content of the gospel), but how would you describe God's delivery of the gospel? Well the Scripture speaks of God's delivery of the gospel to us in three ways. First of all: the gospel is an announcement to be believed. It is an announcement to be believed. Turn with me to one of the most familiar passages in all of Scripture, Luke 2. You read this passage countless times during the Christmas season, but I want you to see it this morning, and I want you to see specifically the gospel as an announcement that men are called upon to believe. Luke 2, and you're familiar of course with the scene beginning in verse 8, of the shepherds out in the fields on the day of the birth of Christ at night, and verse 9 says,

And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them...., [verse 10] ... the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news (I bring you the gospel, the "euaggelion") of great joy which ... [shall] be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

This is just an announcement to the shepherds of what God has done, and it's a call for them to believe what God has done. And, of course, you know the response of these shepherds. They did believe. They go into the village of Bethlehem looking for the Child, and there they worship Him. But understand, the gospel is God's announcement of good news that sinners can be reconciled to Him. A Rescuer has been born, someone who will rescue you from your sin; it's God's announcement that we are called upon to believe.

Secondly the gospel, in terms of its delivery to us, is an invitation to be accepted. It is an invitation to be accepted. If you were in Phil Johnson's class last Sunday when he was talking about Spurgeon, you heard him allude to how Spurgeon came to faith in Christ. It was through being in a service where a simple layman was proclaiming Isaiah 45:22. In the King James it says, "Look unto Me..." but in the Scripture that we have before us it says this, Isaiah 45:22, "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other." This is an invitation from God to all of the nations on earth, to every person on the planet, "Turn to Me and be saved...." It's an invitation. In Isaiah 55:1, we're told, "everyone who thirsts," (everyone who's hungry, let him) come; (doesn't need money, I'll give this to him free of charge.)

Our Lord, of course, often extended the gospel as an invitation. There are a lot of different places we could go; my personal favorite has to be Matthew 11:28, where Jesus says, "Come to Me, all [you] who are weary and ... [who are burdened down by the weight of your sin and guilt..." "Come to Me ... and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn ... [of] Me, for I am I am ... humble [and gentle] ... and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS." That's an invitation. Jesus extending an invitation of the gospel to those who heard Him.

But I want you to turn to my favorite example, 2 Corinthians 5. If you've been in our church any time at all you know this is if not my favorite certainly at the very top of the texts I love in Scripture. Second Corinthians 5:18, Paul says,

Now all *these* things are from God ... [all these things being the death of Christ, verse 15, for all of us who believe, the change He's brought in us, verse 17, we're a new creation.] Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the ... [message of reconciliation.]

And what is the message of reconciliation that we have? Look at verse 21, here's the message; "... [God] made Him [that is Christ] who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Here's the message of reconciliation, God has so dealt with Christ on the cross, in fact on the cross He treated Jesus as though He had lived your sinful life, Christian, so that forever He could treat you as though you had lived Jesus' perfect life. That's the message. That's the message of reconciliation. But I want you to notice how this message is presented in verse 20. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God [underline this] were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Listen, the gospel is God's invitation to every person who hears it; God says, "Come, turn to Me and be saved. Come, and find rest for your souls." The gospel is not only an announcement to be believed, it's an invitation to be accepted.

Thirdly, it's a command to be obeyed. It's a command to be obeyed. Turn to Romans again, and I want you to see Paul sort of hints at this in the first chapter. Romans 1:5, he says, "through Christ we have received grace and apostleship to bring about [now watch this] the obedience of faith..." That is, faith itself is obedience but also faith produces obedience. So, there's a hint of this reality here, but he makes it explicit over in Romans 10. Romans 10:16. He's just quoted Isaiah the prophet in verse 15, and talked about how beautiful the feet of those who bring the gospel; verse 16, "However, they did not all [literally] obey the gospel..." They did not all obey the gospel. "... for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word [or the message] about Christ." You go farther into the New Testament, and you learn a little more about this.

What exactly, (you say the gospel is a command to be obeyed) what is the command? Well Mark gives us a recollection of Jesus' preaching, the first introduction to His preaching we have in Mark's gospel, in Mark 1:14-15, and he says Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God and this is what He preached; "... repent and believe the gospel." Those are imperatives. Those are commands. So, the gospel is an announcement by God, there's no question about that. The gospel is also an invitation by God to sinners to come. But the gospel is a command to be obeyed. Repent of your sins and believe the gospel.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Paul talks about when Christ returns that He's going to deal out retribution on unbelievers, and here's how he describes unbelievers; "... those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus [Christ]." You understand honestly, it frightens me to think that when before I came to Christ all those times I heard the gospel, that it was a command from God my Creator to repent and believe, and every time I refused that gospel I wasn't simply refusing a

gracious invitation, which I was, but I was also refusing to obey God's command to me and I was simply, every time I heard the gospel, accumulating more guilt that would eventually come back to me in God's judgment. The gospel is a command to be obeyed.

So, understand then, as you look at those three expressions of the gospel, the gospel is God's announcement of the possibility of peace with God, peace with God with whom you have been at war, and He calls you to believe that announcement. The gospel is God's invitation to be reconciled with Him your Creator from whom you have been completely estranged, and He calls on you to accept that invitation to be reconciled. The gospel is God's divine command to end your rebellion against God your rightful King, and to accept His terms of surrender so that you can receive a full and complete pardon. It's the gospel of God, His announcement, His invitation, His command.

The true focus of Romans, ultimately, is God Himself. Leon Morris makes this clear when he says, "Romans is a book about God. No topic is treated with anything like the frequency of God. Everything Paul touches in this letter he relates to God. There is nothing like it anywhere else." You see this book and the gospel itself is about God. It's about how God acted to bring reconciliation and salvation. It's about God acting in such a way to preserve His justice so that He can be both at the same time just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. It's about how God worked His purposes in human history to accomplish that redemption. It's the gospel of God that must be believed. It must be accepted, it must be obeyed.

Now there are a couple of implications (before we leave this point) there are a couple of implications of the fact that the gospel comes from God that I just want to call to your attention. First of all, this reminds us of the gracious character of God. It reminds us that our God is by nature a Savior, a Rescuer. Think about this for a moment. It was the very God whom we offended, the God whose laws we disobeyed, whose good gifts we took and prostituted, it was that very God who initiated being reconciled to us. He took the initiative. I love the way it was put in that text in 2 Corinthians 5:19, "... God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..." That tells us so much about the character of our God. He is gracious by nature.

That also reminds us of the exclusivity of the gospel. Listen, if you think for a moment that there's some other way, you have missed what Paul is saying here. It is the gospel of God. Since this gospel came from God, since He has given us no other gospel, there is no other way to be reconciled to God. As Stott writes,



The Christian good news is the gospel of God. The apostles did not invent it. It was revealed and entrusted to them by God. This is still the first and most basic conviction which underlies all authentic evangelism. What we have to share with others is neither a miscellany of human speculations, nor one more religion to add to the rest, nor really a religion at all. It is rather the gospel of God, God's own good news for a lost world. Without this conviction ... [he writes,] ... evangelism is evacuated of its content, its purpose, and its motivation.

We are simply repeating God's announcement, God's invitation, God's command. There's only one way, and it's the way He's announced.

There's one other implication of this phrase "the gospel of God". It reminds us of the danger of ignoring God's announcement, His invitation, and His command. I won't take you there, but in Hebrews 2:1-4, the writer of Hebrews says, listen, how shall we escape God's justice, and His wrath, and the penalty of our sins if we disregard this gospel? Can you imagine? You imagine one day (I hope this would not happen to a single person here this morning), but can you imagine having sat in these pews and heard the gospel, having lived perhaps in a Christian home, having heard the gospel, having been exposed to it many different ways, and some day standing before God and saying, "Yeah, yeah, I heard it, but I had other things in mind, other things I wanted to do. Didn't really care about it." How will you escape, the judgment and justice of God? To disregard His announcement, His invitation, His command? It makes it a serious thing. The gospel comes from God.

But there's a second fact about the gospel that Paul mentions in this introduction: not only that the gospel comes from God, but secondly, the gospel is confirmed by the Old Testament Scripture. The gospel is confirmed by the Old Testament Scripture. Look at verse 2 of Romans 1. It's the gospel, "Which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures...." God promised that He would accomplish the events of the gospel before those events ever happened. And that's one of the primary ways we know the gospel comes from God. God promised it long before. Now how did God promise the gospel beforehand? Notice verse 2 again; it was, "... through His prophets...." By prophets in this context Paul means all of the men who wrote the Old Testament; in fact, in Hebrews 1, the word prophet is used to describe all the Old Testament writers. That's what he's talking about here. The prophets were simply those men who belonged to God, notice they were, "His prophets," and who spoke His words, who spoke direct, divine revelation from God, through their mouths to the people. When they spoke, God spoke. So, when God's men record a promise, that promise is clearly the promise of God.

By the way, Paul is showing here his extremely high view of Scripture. Because when the prophets spoke and wrote, they were speaking and writing the very words of God Himself. Hebrews 1:1, “God ... spoke long ago to the fathers ... [through] the prophets....” God promised through the prophets.

Now, where did God promise this gospel beforehand? Notice again verse 2, “... He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures.” Literally, “the holy writings.” Those writings inspired by the Holy Spirit, set apart, made sacred, by the work of the Spirit.

Now for all those living in the New Testament times, when you spoke of the holy writings, or the holy Scriptures, it was crystal clear what you were referring to; for Jesus, for the apostles, for Paul, for any Jew in the first century, the holy writings, or the holy Scriptures, referred to the exact same content, identical content, to what you call the Old Testament. They didn’t call it that of course, but it was the Hebrew Scripture, but it’s the exact same content. The Jewish canon, the books that were a part of their Scripture, that canon was settled long before the first century, and Jesus Himself affirmed that canon, quoted from it, and called it the very words of God Himself.

So, Paul here says in the Old Testament Scripture, God promised that the events contained in the gospel were coming. In fact, in the Septuagint, in the Bible that Jesus and the apostles for the most part used in the first century, it was the Greek translation from the Hebrew, been done a couple hundred years before Christ, in that Bible, this word euaggelion or gospel, occurs in the Old Testament several times, and it informs the New Testament usage. For example, Isaiah 40:9, Isaiah 52:7, Isaiah 60:6. I want you to look at this last one. Look at Isaiah 61, Isaiah 61:1. What’s unique about this one, especially, is here we’re told that the Messiah, when He comes, will proclaim the gospel. Now, Isaiah 61:1, you remember Jesus read from the Isaiah scroll in His hometown of Nazareth, handed the scroll back to the attendant and said, “That’s fulfilled today. I am that text; I am that Person that text describes.” Look at Isaiah 61:1. Here’s what the Messiah, here’s what Jesus Himself said: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news – to proclaim the euaggelion – to the afflicted; and He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners.” Jesus said, “I am what that text prophesied, I am bringing to you the good news, the gospel.”

So, there are texts in the Old Testament that were the background for the New Testament usage of this word that actually use the word in the Septuagint. But there are also many other Old Testament passages that don’t use the word gospel, but point forward to the coming of the

Messiah and what He would accomplish. Of course, the earliest one of those is what? Genesis 3:15. On the day of Adam and Eve's rebellion, the second Person of the Trinity, who would ultimately become the Messiah says to Satan: there is going to come a unique Person who will crush your head. In other words, there's going to come a Person who will ultimately and finally deal with sin, and of course He would be that Person. Isaiah 53 that we read this morning, what clearer passage could there be about the work of the Messiah who would come 700 years before He came?

But it's very interesting to see, looking back, how Jesus talks about the Old Testament and Himself. Turn to Luke 24. Luke 24, there are two passages here, the first is on the Emmaus Road, it's the afternoon of the resurrection, Jesus is walking with two disciples who don't recognize Him, and this is what He says to them in Luke 24:25,

... He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" [He's talking about the entire Old Testament.] "Was it not necessary for the ... [Messiah] to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

[Jesus says, "Listen, the Old Testament said this would happen; it promised beforehand this would come." Verse 44, this is a different time, later time to the 11;] "... He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." [Wouldn't you have loved to have been there for that lesson?] "... and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'"

This is also where the apostles went. Read the sermons in the book of Acts, and again and again they build their case on the Old Testament. Read the sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2; you will find that half of Peter's sermon consists of quotations from the Old Testament. The other half application and explanation. Turn to Acts 3. Peter preaches another sermon here, and in Acts 3:18 he says, "... the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Messiah would suffer, He has thus fulfilled." [He says, "Listen it's happened. What

God promised beforehand has happened now.”] Verse 24, “... likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, have announced these days.”

Paul makes the same point in Acts 17, in his ministry in Thessalonica. He ministered in verse 2, Acts 17, in the synagogue on the Sabbaths, “... reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is that Messiah.’”

Perhaps clearest of all is Acts 26. Acts 26, Paul before Agrippa, says in verse 22, “... I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing...” – Paul says, Listen, absolutely nothing I preach is anything except, “... what the prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Messiah was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.” When Paul recounts that core of the gospel message in 1 Corinthians 15, what does he say? He says,

... I delivered to you ... [that which] I also received, that Christ died for our sins.... [what?] ... according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day ... [again what?] ... according to the Scriptures.

He does this in Romans. Turn to Romans. Let me just give you a couple of examples. Turn to Romans 1. When he gets to the official proclamation, theme of his letter down in verses 16 and 17, he ends verse 17 by saying, “... it is written....” And he quotes from Habakkuk 2. Turn over to chapter 3. When he comes to the conclusion of his case against mankind and man’s sinfulness and depravity, notice beginning in verse 10 he strings together this series of quotes from the Old Testament to prove his point. When he comes to the gospel in 3:21, he says, “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.” He says, “Listen, the message of justification by faith alone, was witnessed by the Old Testament.” In chapter 4 he wants to prove that to us, and so he chooses two examples in verse 3, Abraham, from Genesis 15, and in verses 7 and 8, David from Psalm 32.

What’s the point? Listen carefully; the New Testament gospel is not only consistent with the Old Testament, it’s not only in continuity with the Old Testament, it is the perfect fulfillment of its promises. The Old Testament, the message of Jesus, the message of the apostles, is one unit. In fact, the gospel was simply God keeping the promise He had made through His prophets in the Old Testament. The New Testament gospel isn’t something that Paul fabricated, he invented, he created. Instead, God promised it. In the Old Testament Scriptures Jesus affirmed that. Paul

and the apostles affirmed that. Listen very carefully; Christianity is not a crude appendage badly tacked on to Jewish monotheism. It's the fulfillment of what God promised was coming in the Jewish Scriptures. As the Reformers and Puritans used to put it, "The New is in the Old concealed. The Old is by the New revealed."

It's one book. God has announced His good news in this book. In the Old Testament: He promised the Messiah was coming to deal with sin; in the gospels: He's here, and this is what He did and said; the epistles, here's what it means, His coming. This is what it meant when He did and said, all that He did and accomplished. And then Revelation, He's coming again.

It's one message. God has announced His good news in His book. It's why John Wesley, in that famous introduction to his written sermons said this: listen carefully:

I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God and returning to God, just hovering over the great gulf 'til a few moments hence I am no more seen. I drop into an unchangeable eternity. I want to know one thing, the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach me the way, He has written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book at any price, give me the book of God. Let me be a man of one book. Here then I am. Far away from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone, only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book for this end, to find the way to heaven.

One last question of verse 2; why did God promise the gospel beforehand? We know He did, we know how and where. But why? And the answer is to show to us that this part of His great eternal plan. The gospel is not an after-thought. It's what He had planned from the very beginning. Ephesians 1:11 says, God, "...works all things after the counsel of own His will." But I love the way Paul puts it in Ephesians 3:11. After describing the gospel, he says, "*This was in accordance with [literally] the purpose of the ages which He carried out in Jesus Christ our Lord.*" You see God had a plan of the ages, and He told us beforehand what He was going to do in the gospel so that when He did it, we would not only know that He is the One living and true God who announces things long before they come as Isaiah says, but also so that we would know that there was this great eternal plan of redemption that's announced in the gospel.

So, the gospel comes from God. The gospel is consistent with, and is confirmed by, the Old Testament Scripture. Thirdly, and very briefly I just want to mention this: the gospel is about

Jesus Christ. The gospel is about Jesus Christ. Notice, the gospel that was promised beforehand in the Scripture, verse 3, “concerns His Son...” God’s good news is the good news concerning His Son. It’s what God has done for us in His Son. This is what makes the gospel good news. You understand that? All of the world’s religions are not good news, they’re bad news, because they tell us what we must do, in order to gain God’s favor, or to achieve heaven, or to arrive at Nirvana, or to arrive at happiness, or whatever it is they promise. The religions of the world are a declaration of what you must do. The gospel is God’s announcement of what He has already done. God really is there. He really exists. He’s not fabricated out of men’s imaginations and that God who is really there loves us and has reached out to rescue us through the life and death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. The gospel is God’s good news.

I want you to personalize this. The gospel is God’s good news to you. It’s God’s announcement to you, that you can be reconciled with Him. It’s an announcement you must believe. It’s God’s invitation to you to be reconciled, and it’s an invitation you must accept. And the gospel is God’s command to you, to lay down your rebellion, accept His terms of surrender and receive a full and complete pardon. And it’s a command you must obey. It’s the gospel of God.

Let’s pray together.

Father, seal these truths to our hearts. Lord, may those of us who know You through Your Son, may we find the gospel as we work our way through this letter ever more precious, ever more real to us, understandable, may we grasp it in ways we have not before, in life changing ways.

And Father I pray for those who have never believed Your announcement, have never accepted Your invitation, have never obeyed Your command in the gospel. May this be the day when they are reconciled to You because You were in Christ reconciling the world to Yourself, and giving this message of reconciliation.

We pray it in Jesus’ name, Amen.