

SERMON: "SHAPED BY THE GOSPEL: *The Need for The Gospel.*"

Rev. Geoff Ross, Sunday, November 21, 2021, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith." With these words Paul opens his Letter to the Romans, identifying himself humbly/boldly/proclaiming – not himself/but the Gospel, making the case for the need for the Gospel. This is because – as we've heard – at the very heart of the word "Gospel," [Good/News-lifechanging proclamation] is the essence of the Christian message/faith: the good/joyful news of God's unilateral gift of grace to save/reckon/reconcile us! This is why the gospel is not good advice/about what you/I/we must do; but is the Good News about what's already been done for you/me/us; something that's already happened/done **by** God/'outside'/beyond/without you/us, **for** you/us, all according to God's saving plan for/to save us.*

[LtotheRs: P's most important Letter! Written to Jewish Romans/explains God's saving grace in/through JC. To do this, he re-interprets Abraham: spiritual forefather of all believers/example of faith/righteousness. God honors faith; and great faith honors God. Abraham's faith was imputed/attributed/credited to him for righteousness. Done before the law/law dictates punishment – all creation/fallen exposed to God's wrath. But God chose faith – over the law – to justify/give salvation.]

Our Romans text answers any doubts that we might have about the fulfillment of God's promise: in Abraham, God was able to take those "as good as dead" (reproductively speaking) and brought them back to life (resurrection) so that a 'son' could fulfill God's promise of salvation. From the opening lines of his Letter, Paul proclaims God's resurrecting/restorative/re-creating power saved Abraham – a wretch like Paul – and that God's grace/reckoned him/them/us/you/me as righteousness. Paul goes on to call on his listeners to have hope/hold fast to God's promised Gospel/Good News/to repent/confess your need of God's saving grace/forgiveness/and to have faith/believe in Him who raised Jesus – our Lord – from the dead, who was handed over to death for our sins/trespasses, and was raised for our justification. (Rom 4:23-25) Friends, this is why there's a need for the Gospel: Our help comes from God alone. It is only when we place our faith/life/lives in God, that our faith/life/lives will be reckoned to us/by God as righteousness/saved to enjoy eternity in God's presence.

["Righteousness"/Legal term: Quality/state of being morally correct/justifiable; acting in accord with divine/moral law: free from guilt/sin. Synonymous with "rightness"/being "upright"/"Justified." Righteousness is an attribute/quality that belongs to God/not us! We cannot be justified by our works/only by God's order/act/forgiveness. "Righteousness:" gift from God imputed/credited/attributed/given to us/you/me through faith in JC/Son of God.]

To be clear; Paul's talk about being "righteous"/"justified" isn't about us – it's about God/God's relationship with us. In this exchange/transaction the change takes place in God/God's heart/relationship toward/with us. We know this because we didn't change/still fallen/sinners – all of us; but God's heart/relationship did. Friends, this is the wonder of the Gospel! This change changed our 'standing' before God. Describing a law court/trial/royal court, in which only those with 'standing' can stand before the judge/king, Paul tells us that Jesus' life/death/resurrection changed how God, looking at us/despite who/what we are/have done, accepts/forgives/loves/delights us/in us.

And this happened because Jesus was “*handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification*”(Rom 4:25)/“*so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*”(2Cor 5:21) – meaning; Jesus was treated according to what our sins deserved – and we/you/me received Jesus’ reward:clothed in Jesus’ righteousness, we became righteous/just/redeemed/restored before God. Because of this/Gospel/our faith we are saved/given standing/access to God’s eternal presence/glory – we have been given hope/doesn’t disappoint us.

[“Hope”:OE/GRMN – to trust/desire with anticipation;expectation/desire for a person/thing to happen/that may help/save/believing that something good may happen. Hope:turns/focuses our thoughts/hearts outward/toward source of our faith/life. Greek word “elpis,” is stronger:mean “a conviction.” Christian hope is a certainty!/“hope of glory”: freed from the past/present/anticipate a future – renewed/restored/redeemed/returned to our glory in God’s presence.]

In our reading, Paul speaks of hope – a hope one wants to ‘boast’ about/share because it’s founded on God’s glory/hope in the future. And, unlike any earthly hope, this hope is sure/certain/focused on God/God’s fulfilled promises. This hope points to/toward God’s goodness/grace/to what God has done in/through Jesus Christ. It is a hope that by believing in God our/your/my suffering/[*whatever you’re/you’ve suffering/suffered*] will be transformed/removed. And this brings about another change within us:being justified by faith makes us at “peace”/right with God:Jesus’ role as mediator satisfies our inability to save ourselves. By God’s grace alone are we able to stand, free/redeemed/restored, before God. And, as we end our Shaped by the Gospel series, this should convict us: Jesus’ death was the price of our pardon – we are unable to achieve it ourselves. Friends, this is the truth of our need for the Gospel. Amen.