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**The Gospel of God**

**Romans 1.1-4**

**Series: The Pure Gospel**

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**The Village Church**

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I. **A Book About the Gospel**

- A. Music has a way of taking our imaginations on a journey
  - 1. Its associations have a way of transporting us back into a particular time and place
  - 2. Jean and I originally met through music
    - a. High school choirs and musicals and so forth
  - 3. And so music has always played a significant role in our relationship
    - a. And certain musical compositions evoke memories and take us back to times and places which have marked our personal histories
- B. One of the composers whose music we listened through our dating and young adult years recently died
  - 1. He was 94
    - a. Which means we must be getting old!
  - 2. His name was Burt Bacharach
- C. Bacharach as a composer collaborated a great deal with the lyricist Hal David
  - 1. Together they composed a great deal of popular music
    - a. As well as film scores
    - b. Primarily in the 1960's
  - 2. Dionne Warwick was their greatest interpreter
  - 3. It's hard to imagine that this generation will not immediately recognize and remember some of their music
- D. Now having admitted that we liked to listen to Burt Bacharach will evoke different reactions from different people
  - 1. Some of you will be immediately resonate with our experiences
    - a. Having lived through the 60's and 70's, hearing the recordings on the radios, having seen the movies
  - 2. Others will say, "Oh my! They really listened to that sentimental stuff! I would have thought they had better taste than that?"
  - 3. And maybe others will say, "Who was Burt Bacharach?"
  - 4. That's kind of the way music is, isn't it?
  - 5. But we own it; we admit; we listened to Burt Bacharach
- E. One of the songs Bacharach and Hal David composed was for a movie called "Alfie"
  - 1. It starred Michael Caine as a handsome, self-centered, narcissistic Cockney chauffeur in London

2. The movie itself was no paragon of virtue
  - a. You won't find it on the Hallmark channel in reruns
  - b. I understand there are redemptive dimensions of the movie, but they are dominated by a plethora of destructive moral choices
  - c. When I say, "I understand" I mean that we never actually saw the movie; I've only read the reviews
- F. But the song, "Alfie" became a hit
  1. And it was all over the radio
    - a. And on many Bacharach recordings
- G. It begins with the memorable phrase, "What's it all about, Alfie?"
  1. And then it says, "What's it all about when you sort it all out, Alfie?"
- H. It turns out that when Bacharach and David were asked to write the title song for the film, they hardly knew where to begin
  1. So they took the script
    - a. And they found a place where the Michael Caine character – Alfie – says, "What's it all about?"
  2. So they used that phrase against him in the song – "What's it all about, Alfie?"
  3. And in doing so, they captured the character's moral confusion
    - a. As well as the essence of the movie's theme
- I. We are embarking on a study of the book of Romans
  1. This is the fourth message in the series
    - a. And up to this point we have concentrated on the author, on Paul
  2. He calls himself a bondservant of Jesus Christ
    - a. In spite of his extraordinary qualifications
    - b. He viewed himself as slave
- J. In the last message we examined his apostleship
  1. Nature of various calls God gives to His people
  2. Nature of apostolic call
    - a. Distinguished between official and unofficial apostles
  3. Nature of Paul's call on the Road to Damascus
  4. Apostolic authority of his message
- K. Briefly introduced gospel
  1. **Euaggelion (Gk) = good news**
  2. Compared to other religions which bear bad news
  3. MacArthur's dichotomy – only two religions
    - a. Religion of human achievement
      - (1) Always bad news – we humans always fail
    - b. Religion of divine accomplishment
      - (1) Only Christianity, the religion of grace
      - (2) Religion in which God acts on our behalf
- L. Boice: The gospel is good for two reasons. First, it tells us that God is actually there – that he is not merely the figment of human imagination but really exists, that he has made us for fellowship with himself and does hold us accountable for what we do. This give meaning to life.

1. Boice: Second, it tells us that God loves us and has reached out to save us through the work of Jesus Christ. We could not reach God, because our sins separated us from him. But God removed our sins through Christ and so bridged the gap over these very troubled waters. Before, we were groaning after God but could not find him. Now we sing praises to the One who has found us.
- M. Great irony – being the bearer of good news got Paul into trouble continually
1. As it will us
  2. Find out why as we study the gospel through Romans
- N. So “What’s it all about, Alfie?” What is Romans about?
1. Book is not about Paul
  2. It’s about **The Gospel**
  3. And we find out what it’s all about the same way Bacharach and David did in composing their song
    - a. They read the script
  4. In our script, it doesn’t take Paul long to introduce the topic
  5. Key thematic verses
    - a. **Romans 1:16–17** (ESV) — 16 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. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”
  6. Paul’s service is in the gospel
    - a. **Romans 1:9** (ESV) — 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son...
  7. Eager to preach the gospel
    - a. **Romans 1:15** (ESV) — 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.
- O. Even before we get there we get some information about the gospel which is foundational
1. **Romans 1:1–4** (ESV) — 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...
- II. **The Gospel of God**
- A. **Promised... in the holy Scriptures**
1. Verse 2 says that this gospel was promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures
  2. While the gospel is truly good news, it is not new news
    - a. It was promised in the OT
  3. We have a tendency as Christians to view the OT as Law and the NT as gospel
    - a. Nothing could be further from the truth

- b. Paul: OT is about the gospel in promised form; NT is about the gospel in its fulfilled form
        - c. But it's all about the gospel
      - 4. Now the OT does include Law, but so does the NT
        - a. Jesus never sets aside the Law – He fulfills it
        - b. Law reaches its rightful and complete understanding in the NT
        - c. It reveals our sin, it leads us to Christ
        - d. It still binds our consciences
        - e. NT is full of ethical teachings
        - f. Law is summarized frequently in the NT: Love the Lord your God – first table of the 10 Commandments – and love your neighbor as yourself – second table of the 10 Commandments
      - 5. NT is about the gospel, but so is the OT
        - a. Sacrificial system was the gracious means that God provided by which sinful Israel would be able to maintain a relationship with God
        - b. Until the true sacrifice would be offered in Christ
        - c. OT sacrificial system looked ahead to Christ and the gospel
- B. **The Evangelists' Use of the Old Testament**
- 1. The gospel is promised in the OT and used by all the evangelists
    - a. Remember, the OT was the only scripture they had
    - b. They argued from the OT that Jesus was the Christ
  - 2. **Paul** – preached a wonderful sermon in Pisidian Antioch (**Acts 13**)
    - a. Quoted repeatedly from the OT
    - b. **Psalm 2.7**: “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” – confirmed Christ's deity
    - c. He confirms the resurrection using the OT
    - d. **Isaiah 55.3**: “I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.”
    - e. **Psalm 16.10**: “You will not let your Holy One see corruption.”
    - f. He warns them of the consequences of their unbelief from Habbakuk
    - g. **Habbakuk 1.5**: “Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.”
    - h. Then, using Isaiah 49.6 he tells them the gospel is for both Jews and Gentiles
    - i. **Isaiah 49.6**: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”
  - 3. In Acts 17, Paul went into the synagogue in Thessalonica
    - a. **Acts 17:2-3** (ESV) — 2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

4. Then in **Romans 4** Paul takes the theology of the gospel in Romans 3 and illustrates it with OT texts about Abraham and David
  - a. So Paul – the apostle to the Gentiles – rides the horse of the OT into the sunset in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ
5. Then there's **Philip** – he preached to the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the OT, **Isaiah 53** to be exact
  - a. **Acts 8:32–33** (ESV) — 32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”
  - b. **Acts 8:35** (ESV) — 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.
6. Then, what about **Peter**
  - a. Perhaps Peter's greatest sermon – **Acts 2** on the day of Pentecost
  - b. Half of the sermon is OT quotations!
  - c. 11 verses of OT quotations
  - d. 12 verses of explanation and application
  - e. **Joel 2.28-32** – prophesying the day of Pentecost itself
  - f. **Acts 2:17–18** (ESV) — 17 “ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.
  - g. **Psalm 16.8-11** on the resurrection, just as Paul would do in Acts 13
  - h. **Acts 2:27–28** (ESV) — 27 For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’
  - i. **Psalm 110** – the most frequently quoted OT passage in the NT
  - j. **Acts 2:34–35** (ESV) — 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, 35 until I make your enemies your footstool.” ’
7. Then there's Peter's sermon in **Acts 4.8-12** – which he preached courageously in the presence of Jewish rulers, elders, scribes and priests
  - a. Alludes to **Psalm 118.22**: This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.
  - b. Psalm 118.22 is a favorite of Peter's which he also uses in 1 Peter along with Isaiah 8.14 and Isaiah 28.16
  - c. **Isaiah 8:14** (ESV) — 14 And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

- d. **Isaiah 28:16** (ESV) — 16 therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’”
  8. So there you have Paul and Philip and Peter
    - a. Haven’t even gotten into John – which is filled with OT quotations and allusions
    - b. But since we spent six years in John...
  9. But then, what about **Jesus**? What about His preaching?
    - a. He based His own ministry on the OT promises
    - b. Makes sense – where else did we think the apostles and evangelists got that approach?
    - c. Remember **Luke 4.16-21** – Jesus walking with the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus
    - d. **Luke 24:25–27** (ESV) — 25 And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.
  10. What scriptures did Jesus use?
    - a. We don’t know – but the whole OT is about the gospel
    - b. Probably began all the way back in Genesis
    - c. **Genesis 3:15** (ESV) — 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”
    - d. Called the **protoeuaggelion** – the first gospel
    - e. The offspring of the woman will defeat the serpent – Satan!
    - f. That text begins the scarlet thread of redemption found through the whole of scripture
    - g. So much of the OT is about God’s provision and preservation of the offspring of the woman – leading to Christ
    - h. So Jesus probably started at the beginning, and probably didn’t stop until Malachi, the last book of the Hebrew Bible
    - i. **Malachi 4:5** (ESV) — 5 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.”
    - j. The forerunner of Messiah – the embodiment of Elijah – identified with John the Baptist
    - k. Had to be the greatest sermon you’ve never heard!
  11. The key to understanding the whole OT, the whole NT, the whole Bible
    - a. Is to recognize that it’s all about the Gospel
    - b. What’s it all about, Alfie?
    - c. It’s about the Gospel!
- C. **The Centrality of the Scriptures in Gospel Preaching**
1. You see, the Scriptures are central to proclaiming the Gospel

- a. The Gospel is unintelligible apart from the Bible
2. The Gospel, you see, is in written form
  - a. God chose to reveal the Gospel to anyone who could read
  - b. In objective documents with clear, discernible content
  - c. Not through mystical visions to only a few of the “enlightened” ones
3. Documents are said, in our text, to be holy
  - a. Not merely of human origin; they are the very words of God
  - b. **2 Peter 1:20–21** (ESV) — 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
  - c. These are the “holy Scriptures”
4. Need to have an appreciation for the Scriptures as the source of the Gospel
  - a. Live in an age where people don’t tolerate the public reading of Scripture
  - b. You might wonder, how do we come up with the OT and NT readings each week
  - c. They are taken from the lectionary so that in three years time you will hear the primary texts from every portion of the word of God through your participation in worship at TVC
  - d. In other words, you will hear the gospel proclaimed through the holy Scriptures
5. We also live in an age where people don’t much like expository preaching
  - a. CT did a study some years ago in which they analyzed the published sermons of notable evangelical pastors
  - b. Discovered that the majority of sermons were not exegetical sermons; they were discernibly Christian, with Christian themes
  - c. They were based on a Bible text
  - d. But the sermons themselves bore no clear relationship to the biblical text
6. Compare that to the reformers
  - a. Wesley: 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, till, 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. For this very end he came from heaven. He has written it down in a book.
  - b. Wesley: O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri* (“a man of one book”). Here then I am, far 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.

7. The holy Scriptures hold the riches of the Gospel

III. Concerning His Son

- A. The next thing our text says is that the Gospel is “concerning His Son” (Romans 1.3)
1. “... set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son...”
  2. The central person in the Gospel is Jesus Christ
    - a. Without Christ, there is no gospel
    - b. Without the gospel, there is no Christianity; we would all be wasting our time
    - c. John Stott: The person and work of Christ are the rock upon which the Christian religion is built. If he is not who he said he was, and if he did not do what he said he had come to do, the foundation is undermined and the whole superstructure will collapse. Take Christ from Christianity and you disembowel it; there is practically nothing left. Christ is the center of Christianity: all else is circumference.
  3. We then begin to see who Jesus is – the Son of God
    - a. Matthew 16:15–17 (ESV) — 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”
    - b. Jesus is thus distinguished from the rest of humankind
    - c. Only possible to make that distinction if God the Father revealed it!
  4. Jesus explicitly taught His identification with the Father
    - a. John 10:30 (ESV) — 30 “I and the Father are one.”
  5. This is the gospel of God
    - a. And it concerns His Son
    - b. To begin anywhere else would be to misplace our priorities
  6. And the description of Jesus is remarkable
    - a. Paul has carefully selected every word
    - b. One of the clearest statements in Scripture of Jesus’ nature – or His natures – His dual nature
    - c. Description of Jesus as the God-man
  7. Two contrasts highlight this description
    - a. “... who was descended from David...” and “... declared to be the Son of God...”
    - b. “... according to the flesh...” and “... according to the Spirit of holiness...”
    - c. Contrast is between His human and divine natures
  8. Note the contrasting verbs
    - a. “Was a descendant” – ginomai (Gk) – to become, to be born



- b. Something happened that was not previously the case
  - c. Jesus, at a point in history, became a descendant of David
  - d. "Was declared"
  - e. Indicates a continuing state – His Sonship
  - f. Now that state has become known, has been declared
  - g. Declaration took place in the resurrection
9. So that's exactly what happened
- a. The eternal Son of God, at a point in history became flesh in the incarnation
  - b. Vv 3 and 4 – and entire Christology in two verses

B. **Only Jesus!**

1. The identity of this Messiah, this God-man, who alone can provide the redemption so critically essential, is remarkable enough the way Paul has described it
  - a. But the story becomes even more interesting when we see how the prophetic word of this descendant of David, this Son of God, was fulfilled
  - b. It was fulfilled in a way that not only does Jesus qualify to be the Messiah, the God-man
  - c. But that Jesus Christ is the only possible person who could qualify
  - d. Ever wonder why there are two different genealogies for Jesus in the gospels – one in Matthew and one in Luke?
2. Throne was passed from David through Solomon; reigning kings from David's line came from Solomon
  - a. Implication is that the Messiah would come from the line of Solomon
  - b. Problem: **Jeremiah 22:30** (ESV) — 30 Thus says the LORD: "Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days, for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah."
  - c. Curse on Jehoiachin, the last remaining king in the line of Solomon to have David's throne
  - d. There would be no more Davidic kings from Solomon's line!
  - e. Where then would the Messiah come from?
3. Must be another line of descent from David
  - a. Solomon's older brother Nathan
  - b. Nathan would have become king if God had not given the throne to Solomon
  - c. Nathan produced many descendants, but none became king
4. Problem
  - a. Curse on one line of descent – the line of Solomon
  - b. No reigning kings in the other – the line of Nathan
5. God's solution
  - a. Line of Solomon ran all the way to Joseph (Matthew's genealogy), the one betrothed to Mary

- b. Jesus was not born of Joseph, not a descendant – didn't inherit the curse on the line of Solomon
  - c. But Jesus was Joseph's adoptive son by virtue of Joseph's marriage to Mary (Luke genealogy) – was able to pass on the right of royalty to Jesus
  - d. Line of Nathan (Luke) ran all the way to Mary – Jesus was born of Mary
  - e. Jesus then combined the two lines of descent – eliminated the possibility of there being any other legitimate heir to the throne
  - f. Boice: In other words, if Jesus is not the Messiah who has descended from David according to the Old Testament prophecies, there will never be a Messiah. For Jesus had no human children, and each of his brothers (who are the only other possibilities through whom another Messiah might descend) had the curse on him and would have passed it on to his children.
6. Jesus is the Son of God through the resurrection
- a. Jesus is the descendant of David, through Nathan and Mary
  - b. And there is no other Messiah possible
  - c. According to the holy Scriptures

C. **Jesus Christ our Lord**

1. Finally, the last identifier for Messiah Jesus is this:
  - a. **Romans 1:3–4** (ESV) — 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...
2. **Jesus is Lord** – earliest confession of faith
  - a. **1 Corinthians 12:3** (ESV) — 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.
  - b. **Romans 10:9** (ESV) — 9 ... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
3. There is no distinction in the NT between Jesus being at one time your savior and at another time your Lord
  - a. If Jesus is not your Lord, He is not your Savior
4. OT background – Psalm 110.1
  - a. **Psalm 110:1** (ESV) — 1 **The LORD says to my Lord:** “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”
5. Strange! Two forms of Lord
  - a. LORD and Lord
  - b. LORD = Yahweh – name given to Moses at burning bush (**Exodus 3.14**)
  - c. Lord = Adonai – Sovereign One (king or ruler)
  - d. The LORD says to my Lord

- e. Yahweh speaks to Adonai
  - f. David's adonai
  - g. David's the king; but no! He has his own king, his own adonai
  - h. Psalm 110 is Trinitarian – the Father speaks to the Son
6. **Greek = kurios – Lord**
- a. The early church applied kurios in two ways
7. Jewish use
- a. Kurios used to translate Yahweh, the sacred name of God
  - b. Way of calling Jesus God
  - c. Jesus did this Himself
  - d. **John 8:58** Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”
  - e. “I am” – allusion to the Hebrew Yahweh
8. Greek use
- a. Conflict between sovereignty of Jesus and sovereignty of Caesar
  - b. Hellenistic usage – applied the supreme form to Caesar – Kaisar Kurios.
  - c. Christians were forced to make that statement or face death
  - d. Roman emperors thought to receive divinity from Roman Gods
  - e. Roman emperors, first dead, then living, became objects of worship
  - f. Scandalous that the church would call Jesus Kurios!
9. Kurios calls our attention to the fact that the ultimate allegiance must be to the one who has ultimate authority
- a. At the same time, it establishes the divinity of Jesus and His identification with the Father
10. Lord – the name that is above every name
- a. The title of supremacy
11. **Philippians 2:5–11** (ESV) —
- a. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,
  - b. 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,
  - c. 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
  - d. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
  - e. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
  - f. 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
  - g. 11 and every tongue confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

IV. **Is Jesus Christ Your Lord?**

- A. Is this Jesus your Lord?

1. This One who is miraculously divine and human?
  2. This One in whom is vested every aspect of divine authority?
  3. Do you recognize His authority?
- B. Do you belong to Jesus?
1. As a slave to a master?
- C. If He's not your Lord, you're no Christian
1. That's how important this title was to the early church
  2. That's how important it ought to be to us
- D. If Jesus is not Lord
1. There is no gospel
  2. And if no gospel, no good news
    - a. We're still in our sins
    - b. Unable to save ourselves
  3. With no possibility of a Messiah yet to come