

Romans 1-16

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Date: 13 September 2020

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

- [0 : 00] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning. Good to have you tuning in or listening in. Once more it's good for us to worship God as we come together in this way.
- One or two intimations. First to remind you that this afternoon the Faith Mission Drive-In service will be at 4pm at the Distillery Car Park so be encouraged to come to or to pray for that.
- This evening the service will be online just before 6 and we have Stuart and Joyce King sharing their testimonies this evening so be encouraged to tune in for that also. YF at half past seven and the prayer meeting on Wednesday at half past seven both on Zoom so be encouraged to come to these services as well.
- And next Sunday would have been our communion Sunday weekend and so the minister who was scheduled to come has agreed to preach in the morning and to give a short word and share testimony in the evening.
- And the minister is the Reverend Andrew Longway from Cumbernauld Free Church and we're very much looking forward to hearing God's word through him. So that's the schedule for next Sunday.
- [1 : 35] So these I think are all the intimations and we'll begin this time of worship by singing to God's praise from Psalm 23. We'll sing the whole of this psalm and after we've sung this psalm, Jim Simm, a good friend of the congregation that we're happy to see back for a period is going to lead us in prayer.
- The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me down to lie. In pastures green he leadeth me. The quiet waters by.
- My soul he doth restore again and me to walk doth make within the paths of righteousness in for his own name's sake.
- Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, yet will I fear none ill.
- For thou art with me and thy rod and staff me comfort still.
- [3 : 24] My table thou hast furnished in presence of my foes.
- My head thou dost with oil anoint and my cup overflows.
- Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me.
- And in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be.
- Let's all pray together. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Gracious and loving Heavenly Father, we bow in your holy presence today, thankful for this opportunity to come around your word and to hear the words of eternal life that we gain from yourself.
- [4 : 37] We bow in your presence, Lord, mindful of our sinful ways and the ways that have beset us even through this week. And we ask you, Lord, to cleanse us as we worship you, to make us clean creatures, that we might become servants of yours and that we might come close to you this morning, that nothing will intervene.

We thank you, Lord, for these lovely words that we've just sung. The Lord is my shepherd. And what a wonderful assurance these words have given us from the time we first read them through all our lives.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. Our Heavenly Father, when we go our own way, we will drink at broken cisterns. But the shepherd will give us good, clean water.

When we go our own way, Lord, we will have stale bread, but you will feed us. When we go our own way, we will have uncertainty. We will have doubt. We will have fears.

And even in this time of pandemic, Lord, we fear and we worry and we care. But the good shepherd, even in a pandemic, will lead us in quiet pastures.

[5 : 48] And you will find good places for us, Lord, to lie down and to rest. And we thank you for your bountiful mercy in these days and the way that you have kept your church and your people.

And we ask you, Father, that even in these days, that you will reach out and bring others to find this wonderful saviour that we know. That you will bring others to Calvary to see the man wounded for us.

He who knew no sin, who became sin for such as we are. Oh, our Heavenly Father, we pray for our society. We pray for our nation at this time. And, Lord, we have to confess that we have forgotten you in so many ways.

But, Lord, have mercy upon us. Come again and revive us. Give us leaders, Lord, who will point to the book and read the book and know the book. And know the saviour too.

Our Heavenly Father, we ask you to bless the preaching of your word today here in Tarbert as it goes forth. We ask you, Lord, that you will bless it through the length and breadth of this land.

[6 : 57] As your servants rise to preach Christ and him crucified. Grant our Father that there might be a renewing, a reviving, a refreshing in these days.

Because we need you, Lord, more than ever. We realise, Father, that we live in these latter days. And we know there is a time appointed by you that you will come again.

And so, Heavenly Father, we look forward to the day when we can say, Goodness and mercy has followed me all the days of my life. And that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Bless this place, Lord. Bless those who are here, who are gathered, listening to this service. We pray, Lord, for those who are sick and those who are troubled in these days.

And we ask that they will turn to you in healing, no healing and no peace in their minds and in their hearts. The peace of God that passeth all understanding.

[7 : 59] Father, go before us now. Grant that the name of Jesus might be uplifted. And as your servants have come preaching from the east in the early hours of the day for us.

And as your voice, as your ministry will go through the whole day from east to west. As the west awakens and new voices are heard.

Praising you, Lord. We thank you for this opportunity today. To stand aside for a little while. And praise the King of Kings. So, Father, go before us.

Bless the word. And all this we ask in the precious name of Jesus. Amen. Boys and girls, I hope you are well today. I think we're all sniffing over the last week.

We've all got a bit of this bad cold. But I hope you're doing okay and you're getting better. I've got a few things to show you today. And I want you, when you see them, to pretend you're here.

[9 : 00] And shout out what the things are. And tell me what you think they're for. So the first thing is... Is this. So what's that? Now you can see it's not difficult to figure out what that is.

We see the toy version here. We see lots of real live versions going through Tarbert. All hours of the day and night just now. It's a lorry. Isn't it? So what's a lorry for?

Well, it's for... It's for carrying stuff like stones to and from the harbour. That's what we see happening just now. This one is for carrying cement to building sites.

Lories can be for deliveries. The lorry drivers would say, well, it's for giving me a job. The companies that own the lorries would say, lorries are for making money. But in a second, you're going to see a photograph on the screen.

So hopefully you can see that now. So what's that lorry for? Well, that's the Faith Mission lorry. And in the past, that was a lorry that brought the tent that we saw up at Urugah.

[10 : 14] It brought that tent and the tent was put up because it was stored in the lorry and then taken out. And now, when we can't have meetings and we can't have open air meetings and we can't meet in churches like we used to, Donnie's made that lorry into the kind of form that...

It kind of... It looks like a travelling church. There's like a wee platform, a wee pulpit. And Donnie stands there or Gordon stood there last week. And Lewis stands there and they preach the Bible.

They tell us about Jesus. They sing praises. So you could say that that lorry, that special lorry, it's actually for praising God.

It's being used for telling people about Jesus. Next thing. Watch this. Well, that's a football, isn't it? You all know what a football is.

And what's a football for? Well, it's for playing games. Football. You could do probably volleyball or a bit of basketball with a ball like this too. It's for having fun.

[11 : 20] That's what a football is for, you would say. But if you think back to last Sunday evening, if you watched Hugh's testimony, then you heard that it was at a football camp that Hugh heard the gospel, the news about Jesus, in a way that made him believe.

And so the people who were organising that, they were playing football. But whilst they were playing football, they were telling people about Jesus. And so you could say that a football could be used to glorify God and to tell people about Jesus.

The way you play football even on a field, if you're a Christian, can be used to tell people about Jesus to show that you're different, to glorify God. A lorry can be used for lots of things, but it can be used for glorifying God and telling people about Jesus.

Another thing I can show you. A phone. What's a phone for? Well, it's for making phone calls. You would say it's for maybe doing some games, playing games.

It could be for writing emails. It could be for listening to music. But on my phone, I can go on to an app here and you can see that it's got the Bible on it.

[12 : 43] We can send messages to each other with Bible verses. We can actually, we can use phones for lots of bad things, but we can even use phones for good things. We can use phones to hear what God's saying to us through the Bible.

We can use phones to send messages to each other, to encourage each other with Bible verses. We can use phones to tell people about Jesus, to glorify God. Last thing to show you.

It's a mirror, isn't it? So I want you to, in your house, go and get a mirror and hit pause for a second.

Go and get a mirror. Not Gordon, but you. Hit pause for a second. Then go and get a mirror. And then once you've got the mirror, come back. And then you hit play again. So now that you've got the mirror, I want you to take the mirror and I want you to look at it and tell me who you see.

I see a very ugly face here. I'm going to put the mirror down. But you see your own face, don't you? So what are you for?

[13 : 52] And what am I for? Well, you might say, well, my life is for having fun. And yeah, God wants us to have fun.

My life is for working hard and it's good to work hard. Try hard at school. Try hard in our jobs. You could say, well, my life's for being part of a family and being with my friends and God puts us in family and he gives us friends and that's a big part of our lives.

But you know the most important thing that you and I are for? The most important thing that our lives are to be used for is knowing Jesus.

Being able to say, as we sang in the psalm, the Lord is my shepherd. God made us and he made us for himself. He made us to be close to him. And when we're close to him, our lives can be used to glorify him, to make Jesus look as great as he really is and tell other people about Jesus too.

So what are you for? You're for knowing Jesus, staying close to Jesus and telling other people about Jesus.

[15 : 14] And all the things that we have in our lives, we can use them for glorifying Jesus and telling other people about Jesus. And there are things in our lives that we can't use to glorify Jesus.

We shouldn't have them in our lives. Because God wants our whole lives, everything we are, everything we have, to be enjoyed, yes, but to be used to glorify him and to tell other people about Jesus through them and through us.

So let's pray about that. Lord God, we thank you that you made us. We thank you for the things that you've given us. And we ask that you would help us in our lives to trust you.

We pray that we wouldn't just sing, but that we would be able to say from our hearts, the Lord Jesus is my shepherd. I am trusting him. I am staying close to him. And we pray, Lord, that as we stay close to you, that you would use us and that you would use all the things that you give us to bring glory to your name.

And we ask that you would help us to, with our lives and with our stuff, share the good news about Jesus. And we pray this in Jesus' name.

[16 : 30] Amen. Let's turn now to God's word. And we read from Romans chapter 16. Short reading this morning. Romans chapter 16.

And we read from verses 25 to 27. We've spent the last 16 weeks going through Romans at a chapter at a time. And I want to look just one last time at the book today.

And we'll read this last section. Now, to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God so that all nations might believe and obey him to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ.

Amen. We'll pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word and we pray now that as we look for one last time at this letter that Paul wrote to the Romans, a letter that we recognise was inspired by the Holy Spirit and preserved and passed on so that we would have it open before us today.

We thank you for your word. We thank you for the freedom that we have and for the desire that you've given us to open and to study your word. We pray now that you would speak to us, that you would open our hearts and give us faith that we might be able to respond.

[18 : 02] And we ask, Lord, that we may see Jesus and that we may each one put our faith in Jesus as our saviour. We pray, Lord, not only for ourselves but for every congregation who meet physically and virtually wherever the gospel is preached.

We pray that you would add your blessing and build your church. We pray especially for the faith mission and for those who will preach this afternoon in the drive-out service in Tarbird.

We ask, Lord, that you would speak powerfully through your word and the power of your spirit and that we may hear your voice, Lord, and be blessed. So hear our prayers.

Help us, Lord, we ask now for we ask all this in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, if you could have your Bibles open before you in the letter, Paul's letter to the Romans, that would be helpful.

Sometimes we talk about a signature style. We could say that of a painting or a painter. We see Margarita's painting on the wall here.

[19 : 17] And Margarita's paintings, like many other painters, they have a particular style about them. And we can recognise a signature style, the kind of colours they use, the way the brush is used on the canvas.

It makes the paintings recognisable as theirs, as their own work. Or sometimes we might say of a singer or a musician, the way they hit the keys on the piano, the way they gently pluck the strings of a guitar.

It's their own signature style. It's their unique, recognisable style. style. It's theirs. Now Paul, in his letter to the Romans, he talks on a number of occasions about my gospel.

In the last paragraph, the paragraph that we read there, Paul, he speaks there about my gospel. Now, to him who is able to establish you by my gospel.

Now, the gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ. We know that. We've said that often. It's the message about Jesus.

[20 : 31] It's the message that Jesus, he lived and he died and he rose for sinners so that sinners like us could be saved. That's the gospel.

You know, as we often sing, there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He, Jesus, only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. That's the gospel.

Now, Paul says that's true. That is the good news. It's the gospel of Jesus Christ. But he says in this letter, it's not just the gospel, this is my gospel.

And we sang in Psalm 23, not just the Lord is the shepherd, but he's my shepherd. And Paul is saying in this letter on various occasions, this is my gospel.

Jesus lived the perfect life that I couldn't live, says Paul. Jesus died the death that I deserve to die, says Paul. Jesus rose so that I could have everlasting life, says Paul.

[21 : 40] this is my gospel. And I want each of us to be able to say that as we close this letter.

I want us to be able to see and to recognise and to know that this good news about Jesus, it's not just good news for someone, somewhere, far from us.

but this is good news for me and for you. This is my gospel. This is your gospel. It's the good news about the forgiveness of my sins if we're believers.

It's the good news about the eternal life that I have received in Christ if I'm trusting him. So let's take a look today at Paul's gospel one last time.

And I want to just scoot through the whole letter just glancingly and look at the main points of Paul's gospel. And the first point that Paul underlines and you can flick back to the very beginning of the letter verse chapter 1 is it's sin.

[22 : 58] That's the first point. It's sin. You know, sometimes we we can be feeling a bit a bit off a bit poorly physically. And so we go to the doctor for a for a diagnosis and we can be told in the course of the diagnosis well there's good news and there's bad news.

And Paul as God speaks through him he has he has a heart diagnosis for us. There's there's good news and there's bad news and Paul he begins in this letter with the bad news about about sin.

And if you you look in chapter 1 and especially from verses 18 through to to verse 32 Paul he really drives in that message that the bad news about about sin he looks around at the world of his day he looks around on the streets of Rome and it was a place of godlessness it was a place of wickedness.

Man was determined to reject God and go his own way and as a consequence of that things were dark and things were depraved in Rome at that time.

And Paul he he speaks to the Romans and he explains to the Romans very clearly that the the reason for that darkness the reason for the the grimness of what they were seeing around them in that culture was sin.

[24 : 35] Paul goes to the root of the problem and he says the the world that you are part of the world that you see around you all these dark headlines that are hitting the papers in Rome that the the problem that the cause of these things is sin.

Now very often religious people when they hear something like that they're very much in agreement with that diagnosis about the world at large. Now we're very quick to say as religious people well the world is an awful place in fact I think it's getting worse by the day I think it's worse than it's ever been.

And Paul although he doesn't contest that Paul in Romans 2 he turns to the religious people he goes from looking at the world the culture the way things were in the city and then he focuses the camera on the religious people those who are gathered to listen to this letter and he says the problem of sin it's not just a problem that is around you in the world this is a problem that's within you it's in your heart and it's in mine sin is not just something that we see in the news headlines it's not something just that we spot in other people but sin is something that you and I see in the mirror it's in with the children that as we hold up the mirror we see someone that God has created to glorify him to walk close with him but we know the reality of that is that sometimes we don't walk close with God sometimes we don't glorify God we please ourselves and that's the heart of sin and so we see sin in the mirror we see sin in our own hearts and Paul makes that clear in chapter 2 and then in chapter 3 he presses it in firmly and he underlines that sin is absolutely everyone's problem it's a virus that has infected those who are not religious and those who are very religious

Romans 3 23 God says to the apostle Paul for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God so the first point of Paul's gospel is to highlight the fact that we are all sinners point number one is sin that's Paul's gospel he begins with the bad news about our sin and I hope we can all agree on that fact that God tells us about us that we are sinners you know when we meet the consultant and she says I'm sorry it's bad news the scan shows a tumour you know that is a painful diagnosis but we accept it and then we ask the question well you know what comes next is there a course of treatment is there hope for me and we can ask the same question of

Paul we've received the diagnosis about our sin but we want to say to Paul is there any hope is there any good news that you've got to give to us and with great enthusiasm the apostle Paul says yes there is salvation and that's point number two point number one is sin point number two of Paul's gospel is salvation and if you've got Romans 3 open in front of you you can see that in Romans 3 verses 23 going into verse 24 it's a point of high drama and it's a point of stark contrast it's the tipping point in Paul's gospel verse 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God that's the bad news about sin point number one and then verse 24 kicks in and are justified freely by his grace and that takes us to point number two the good news about salvation all have sinned fall short of the glory of

[29 : 04] God that's sin and are justified freely by his grace that's salvation and Paul is saying here sinners like us we are justified we can be justified if we have faith in Christ we can be made just as if we had never sinned and the means to which we can be made just as if we had never sinned is through the free grace of Jesus says Paul it's not by works it's by what Christ has done it's by grace and he says that Paul says that repeatedly through Romans chapter 3 and Romans chapter 4 he points to Abraham and he says Abraham was saved by grace by faith not by works he points to David the psalmist and he says David was saved not by works but by faith and Paul is very quick to say of himself

I am saved not by works but by faith by grace and trusting in Jesus so what is grace well I've said it many times before let me say it again grace is God's riches at Christ's expense G-R-A-C-E God's riches at Christ's expense and where was Christ expended so that we could receive the riches of salvation well he was expended at the cross and so Paul in his gospel he takes them he takes us to the cross he points us to Jesus Romans 3:25 God presented him Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood it was on the cross that Jesus the Lamb of God was the sacrifice for our sin it was on the cross that his blood was shed for our salvation so

Paul he points us to that place Romans 4:25 Paul says he Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification Romans 5:8 but God demonstrates his own love for us in this while we were still sinners Christ died for us Romans 6:25 for the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord Paul is pointing them he's pointing us repeatedly to the cross and Paul is saying to us salvation it's not about what we do it's not about our works it's about what Jesus has already done salvation is not a reward that can be earned by the very religious rather it's a free gift that can be received by those who know that they that we are very sinful there's a story told about Dr

Bernardo Bernardo who set up so many of these homes for poor children one day he was walking along the street in London and he was approached by a wee lost looking boy and the boy was homeless he was penniless he was very vulnerable and he wanted a place in one of Dr Bernardo's homes and so he asked for that Dr Bernardo said well I don't know you little boy what do you have to recommend you for a place in my home and the boy was very quick to respond he held up dirty hands and he showed him the ragged threadbare coat that he was using to cover himself and he said to Dr Bernardo I thought these would be all I needed to recommend me and Dr

Bernardo smiled and said yes that's enough and he took him in readily and I think that's a picture that fits with Paul's gospel Paul teaches us in this letter that we are saved when we come before the holy God not pretending to be religious and righteous in and of ourselves but by coming honestly before this holy God as that little boy did before Bernardo we come with our dirty hands we come with our threadbare filthy rags of good works we don't we don't use them to try and win us some favour with God we show God the reality of the fact that we are sinners who are needy and who are asking for God's grace nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross

[34 : 36] I cling naked come to thee for dress helpless look to thee for grace foul I to the fountain fly wash me saviour or I die that's how we come to God we are sinners you are asking God for his grace for his salvation just as I am without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee O Lamb of God I come just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot O Lamb of God I come can I ask you have you done that yet have you come to Jesus are you saved are you justified made just as if you had never sinned

Paul's gospel the gospel about Jesus Christ says you can be but for this gospel to become your gospel you and I need to accept the bad news about our sin we need to believe the good news about about Jesus and his salvation we need to receive his grace we need to come in faith to him so Paul's gospel it's about sin the reality of the fact that we are sinners it's about salvation the salvation that is offered freely through the grace of Jesus the third point the third aspect of the gospel that Paul preaches is sanctification he moves on to this issue of sanctification I could also call it the struggle sanctification salvation it was interesting and it was encouraging to hear

Hugh's testimony last week he spoke about coming to realise that he was a sinner he spoke about asking Christ to come into his life at age 13 I think he said but that's not what he ended his testimony that's where it began and Paul having written about sin and salvation he doesn't end the letter there he doesn't say then Jesus and I lived happily ever after he moves on the gospel Paul's gospel continues he moves from the justification the salvation that he received to the sanctification to the work of God that happens within him Robert Murray McShane said if Christ justifies you he will sanctify you he will not save you and then leave you in your sins so what does it mean to be sanctified well it means to be set apart quite literally set apart from sin from sin's penalty

Jesus takes that for us on the cross but we're not only set apart from sin in the negative sense we're set apart for Christ for a relationship with Jesus a relationship where he comes to live in us by the power of the Holy Spirit Martin Luther said we in Christ equals justification Christ in us equals sanctification you know that's an awesome thing for us to to just stop and think about for a moment that if we are Christians Christ lives in us if we're Christians we're not simply people who've signed up to some religious code we're not simply people who've just decided that we're going to have a different world view if we are Christians the God who made all things that

Jesus whom we read of in scripture the moment we believe in him we're promised that he comes to live in us the moment we trust him the moment we love him he promises that he will come to live in us John 14 23 if anyone loves me he will obey my teaching my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him Paul says in Romans 8 and verse 11 if the spirit of him who raised Christ raised Jesus from the dead is living in you he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who lives in you Christ in us equals sanctification so what does this sanctified life look like now what does it look like to have to have

[40 : 06] God living in us is it all peace and joy and tranquility and steady upward progress all all the way to heaven well no it's it's not any Christian will be quick to tell you that because not only does Christ live in us when we believe when we become Christians but sin still lives in us yes we're saved from the penalty of sin and the power of sin Christ has done that for us on the cross but we're not saved from the presence of sin so there's a struggle in our lives and Paul in Romans 7 and Romans 8 he opens up his diary to us he invites the reality TV crew to come in and to film every aspect of his life he gives us a snapshot of what the sanctified life looks like and he tells us in

Romans 8 sometimes there are highs there are huge highs in the sanctified life so much so that we are caused with Paul in Romans 8 to shout out we are more than conquerors through him who loved us for I am convinced that neither death nor life neither angels nor demons neither the present nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord that is a high point in Paul's Christian experience in the sanctified life but sometimes there are lows like Romans 7 where we shake our head with the apostle Paul and we say I know that nothing good lives in me that is in my sinful nature for I have the desire to do what is good but I cannot carry it out for what

I want to do is not the good I want to do no the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing and you get that sense of almost despair that low place where Paul opens his diary to us and he says the good I want to do I have done it again there's a battle there's a struggle in the sanctified life there's highs as in Romans 8 there are lows as in Romans 7 and these highs and lows can occur within the same hour and Paul is saying to us here this is reality this is what the sanctified life looks like and in the sanctified life we're always living somewhere between Romans 7 and Romans 8 it's not that we start at Romans 7 and we progress to Romans 8 never to go back to Romans 7 it's not like Romans 7 and

Romans 8 are bus stops on the steady journey to heaven we don't move in this world from struggle to a state of serenity as Sinclair Ferguson says it's a struggle all the way home and I for one love the honesty of Paul's gospel isn't it encouraging to know that God the Holy Spirit didn't inspire the Apostle Paul to tell us that everything is always fine in the Christian life isn't it encouraging to know that Paul the Apostle as God directs his pen doesn't say to us life will always be steady progress no the Spirit of God inspired Paul to share his struggles with us and if you and

I can identify with this we should be encouraged sometimes we may even doubt our salvation when we begin to struggle we wonder if we're really Christians when we're wrestling intensely with sin but the very fact that we are struggling the very fact that we experience that wrestle between sin and the Spirit of God living within us is evidence of the fact that we are Christians it's part of the life long process of sanctification and so the prayer that Paul gives us at the end of Romans 7 is a prayer I think that we should be praying often Romans 7 24 what a wretched man I am says the apostle Paul who will rescue me from this body of death then he says thanks be to God through

[45 : 21] Jesus Christ our Lord sanctification or the struggle sin is where he begins he moves to salvation offered to us in Christ and then he gives us this picture of sanctification the sanctified life as he was living it out the fourth point in Paul's gospel is we see here sorrow for the lost and that's the note that Paul begins Romans 9 on he knows that he himself is saved through the grace of Jesus he writes to many in Rome that he knows equally are saved by the grace of Jesus but Paul is aware of many more many of his own people who are still lost who are outside of Christ who are on the road to a lost eternity and it breaks his heart it fills him with sorrow he says in Romans 9 1 I speak the truth in

Christ I'm not lying my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart and that God God Godly sorrow is part of the package of Paul's gospel he has tears for the lost he has tears that drive him to his knees he has tears that cause him to write letters like this one he has tears that drove him out of the study out of the church building out into the open spaces where he could share the gospel he has tears that drove him from these places into prison and yet he did it all for Christ's sake he travelled over land and sea with this message of salvation for Christ's sake and because he had that deep sorrow that unceasing anguish in his heart because he knew that there were so many who were outside of

Christ and if we are Christians we should know something of these tears yes there's joy if we are in Christ there's joy that we experience that we should have with the assurance of knowing that we are saved that we have a place in heaven that should give us joy that should steady us that should encourage us but as we look around us there are people in our families there are people on our island there are people in our community that are friends the people that we are close to they don't yet know Jesus they are headed to a lost eternity and so we should be able to understand and enter into something of this sorrow for the lost that Paul felt and that burden that came with it to preach the gospel so that's the fourth point there's the sorrow for the lost that

Paul writes this of next point is the sovereignty of God Paul he writes in chapters 9 to 11 about the sovereignty of God and Paul in these chapters 9 to 11 he's dealing with the question why are some saved and some lost why do some receive the grace of Jesus readily why are some so willing to ask for and to receive the mercy and the compassion of God and yet others are so resistant why is that says Paul why are some hearts opened and other hearts hardened why will Israel God's chosen people why will they not believe in Jesus and be saved Paul enters into all these questions in chapters 9 to 11 and the answer to many of these questions is quite simply we don't know and

Paul is not ashamed to say I don't have all the answers you know and the reality is we don't know what God is doing in the lives of other people at present I always remember being in the shop in Loch Caron one day and I was picking up a can of sweet corn or whatever and a man came alongside me a hard brute of a man he was the man who was charged to toughen up the shinty team in Trayna and he came alongside me and he said to me in hushed tones I'm reading a book about the Bible I was a bit startled and I looked at him and I said are you yes he says I said well have you read the Bible he said not yet I said well why don't you start reading the Bible he said maybe I will and he did and a few weeks later he appeared at

[50 : 54] Christianity Explored and unbeknown to me and to everyone else God was working in his life he was nowhere near a church there's no signs of God's working but God was working powerfully in that man's life see we don't always get to see what God is doing we don't understand often why he doesn't seem to be working in the lives of some of the people that we love and are close to and yet sometimes works powerfully in the last people that we would ever expect we don't know we don't understand God's ways but we do know that God is sovereign and he is wise and he is good says Paul and if he has come near to us if as you watch today you can say I think God is coming near to me if he's opening your eyes to see Jesus and you're need of

Christ because of your sin if he's opening your ears to hear the call of the gospel to be saved then you have the opportunity to be saved Romans 10 verse 8 the word is near you it is in your mouth and in your heart that is the word of faith we are proclaiming that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved for it's with your heart that you believe and are justified and it's with your mouth that you confess and are saved the scripture says anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved so can I say to you if you're hearing that call today you don't know what

God is doing in the life of other people neither do I but if you are hearing the call to be saved today don't harden your heart trust him believe in Jesus call upon the name of the Lord you know the best response to the mysterious sovereign ways of God is not to try and second guess what he's doing it's not to try and demand answers that we cannot cope with in our finite minds the best response to God's sovereign mysterious ways is simply to bow down and worship and sing with the hymn writer I know not why God's wondrous grace to me he hath made known nor why unworthy as I am he claimed me for his own I know not how the spirit moves convincing men of sin revealing Jesus through the word creating faith in him but I know whom I have believed and

I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day respond in worship as you think about what God is doing in your life and in the lives of the people that we may see him at work around it you know I sing with Paul the hymn that he pens at the end of Romans 11 he says in Romans 11 33 oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God how unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor who has ever given to God that God should repay him for from him and through him and to him are all things to him be the glory forever amen sovereign the sovereignty of God is point number five and our final point very briefly is a call to sacrificial living and that takes us from Romans 12 right through to the end of the chapter from Romans 1 to 11

Paul actually says virtually nothing about what we have to do the focus is all on Jesus and what Jesus has done on the cross to make us righteous and how important it is for us to believe in him the focus is all on Christ and what he has done and believing in him but from Romans 12 through to the end Paul changes gear and he moves on from what we are to believe about Jesus to how we are to behave how we are to live for Jesus Romans 12 verse 1 and 2 therefore I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God this is your spiritual act of worship do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so in that final point within Paul's gospel he exhorts us to live these sacrificial not self-centered selfish lives he exhorts us to be people who are not squeezed into this world's mould but who are transformed more and more into the image of

[56 : 52] Jesus and Paul makes clear that these sacrificial transformed lives are to be seen everywhere in our lives in all our relationships in our relationship with God in our relationship with other Christians in our relationship with the world in our relationship even with the state Paul is saying here these are the places that your sacrificial transformed lives should be seen you know as Christians we're never off duty we don't get to compartmentalize our lives into who we are at work and who we are at church we are always ambassadors for Christ we are always called to show Jesus through our sacrificial living people should be able to see that we're different says Paul people should be able to see if we've been redeemed that we are redeemed in the way that we act and react Friedrich Nietzsche who was not a Christian said show me that you're redeemed and I will believe in your redeemer see the gospel is not just something that we take in by faith it's something that's to be lived out in every moment of our lives

Luther said we are saved by faith alone but the faith that saves is never alone shown out in our works James 2 26 says for as the body without the spirit is dead so faith without works is dead also and so Paul he brings this letter to a close with that challenge he says to us that the gospel of Jesus comes with with no credibility with no persuasive power if we don't practice what we preach if we don't walk the way we talk you know we can't expect people to believe the truth about Jesus from us if we are known to be people who don't tell the truth in the office we can't expect people to believe that God is sovereign and in control if we are those who stress and fret our way through life and try to control every detail of our lives and the lives of the people around us we shouldn't expect anyone to join the church fellowship if we don't care for each other and take seriously the debt that we owe to

God to love one another we shouldn't expect anyone to listen to us about the forgiveness and the grace of God if we don't forgive and show grace to each other and that's what Paul is saying here he signs that challenge in his gospel to sacrificial living the transformation of life that comes from knowing Jesus and believing in Jesus should be heard and seen and felt by the people that Jesus puts around us watched a short video the other day it was headlined what are wasps for I have no great love for wasps I was stung hundreds of times in a sad episode where I crushed two wasps nests with my backside on the way down the hill so I've often wondered what the purpose of these evil creatures were and this guy he gave an explanation of what wasps were for and as he finished he said I love wasps they're fascinating he says I get very annoyed with people who ask the question what are wasps for in fact he says what

I say in response to them is what are you for and Paul closes this letter by responding to that man's question Paul says as Romans 16 concludes you are for bringing glory to God and you do that through sacrificial living through lives that show out the transformative power of Jesus so may God enable us to live such lives and may Paul's gospel not just be Paul's gospel but be our gospel may Paul's saviour be our saviour as we sing that final hymn that we come to now blessed assurance Jesus is mine oh what a foretaste of glory divine heir of salvation purchase of God none of his spirit washed in his blood this is my story this is my song praising my saviour all the day long this is my story this is my song praising my saviour love all the day love perfect submission perfect delight visions of rapture burst on my sight angels descending ring from above echoes of mercy whistles of love this is my story this is my song praising my saviour all the day long this is my story this is my song praising my saviour all the day long perfect submission perfect submission all is at rest i in my saviour am happy and blessed watching and waiting looking above filled with his goodness lost in his love love this is my story this is my song praising my saviour all the day long this is my story this is my song praising my saviour all the day long song this is my song this is my song this is my song this is my song this is my song we'll finish with paul's benediction now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of jesus christ according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by

the command of the eternal god so that all nations might believe and obey him to the only wise god be glory forever through jesus christ amen