

Curse Reversed

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Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0:00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. And it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

A special welcome if you are new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good. They don't need God's grace and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

We're continuing this morning our series in the book of Romans that we started just last week. And you'll remember that the book of Romans is a letter. It's a letter written by the Apostle Paul in the 50s AD.

And the book of Romans is called Romans for a very simple reason, which is that it is written to the churches that exist in the city of Rome. It is about fundamentally the gospel, the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

[1:06] And Paul's hope is that those who receive this letter, the original recipients primarily and us secondarily, would be established in the gospel. In fact, he makes this explicit in verse 11, which we will get to before too long.

Now, there are many applications that we'll see throughout this book, and all of them ultimately are going to come back to the gospel. There will be many spokes that will center over and over back to the hub, which is the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

In those applications, Paul has this special focus on the mission and the unity of the church. As I told you last week, as you see that we are moving very slowly, fear not.

We will, in fact, speed up. But as we're here at the introduction, it is, in fact, hard to go fast because Paul lays out so many different things in these first seven verses.

He gives us some of the primary themes of the book. Last week, we looked at verse 1, and we saw primarily two things. First, that Christians live for the Lord, that it is our first and our only safe commitment.

[2:19] And that's because the Lord is the only one who loves us more than we love ourselves. He's the only one who fully knows what's best for us. We also saw that all of us are called to be set apart for the work that God has given for us, that there are things He's chosen for us from before the foundation of the world, and He's prepared us for those things.

And we're going to move forward this morning in verses 2 through 4, and we're going to see outlined for us part of the hope of the gospel. And so it's with that that I invite you to turn with me to God's Word, and you can turn in your Bible, you can turn on your phone, you can turn in your worship guide.

No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word. God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so that's why we read now Romans 1, starting at verse 1. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be 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 descended from David according to the flesh, 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.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in heaven, we do thank you and praise you that we don't live in a world where we're at the mercy of the latest man or

woman with money or power or influence, but instead your Son and our Savior, our Lord Jesus, is the King of this world.

[4 : 17] We ask that you would show us him and his glory again this morning, and that you would grow our love, our affection, our joy, our reverence and awe for him, our obedience to him.

And we ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. And we're picking up this week in verse 2 of chapter 1, and I read verse 1 for you simply for context.

As we begin verse 2, we're told something right away, which he promised beforehand. So there is something that we're meant to be looking for here, a promise that was made a long time ago.

And to find out what that promise is, we simply have to look back to what we saw last week in verse 1. The promise that was made beforehand is the gospel of God.

So we see that as we look back to verse 1. As we look forward to verse 3, we then understand more what the gospel is about. It is concerning his Son.

[5 : 23] Jumping back to verse 2, where did he promise this? Well, he promised it through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. And so as we return to Paul's introduction in this letter, one of his longest introductions in all of the letters that he writes to the churches, he begins here with this very simple point.

Jesus fulfills the promises of the Old Testament. Jesus comes and makes true everything that we were told would happen in the 39 books that come before the New Testament.

Now, you might think to yourself, man, that's pretty neat. Also, why in the world should I care? Jesus is here, right? He has come.

Why does it matter whether he has or has not fulfilled some sort of promise that has come beforehand? In fact, many people think just that.

They think the Old Testament, that's irrelevant. There are pastors and teachers around today who will tell you that very thing. You know, we just mostly need to focus, maybe we exclusively need to focus on the New Testament.

[6 : 37] We don't need to worry about what's come before. Paul here seems to have a very different opinion. For him, it appears to be extremely important.

And the answer to that question, why does it matter, is something we've already read. Now, Britt read for us Genesis chapter 3, which sets out the tension and the problem that the rest of the scriptures seek to answer.

Remember what we read in Genesis chapter 3? There's this curse that comes on the world because of Adam and Eve's disobedience to what God has commanded them. And we see a variety of curses.

Verse 16 of Genesis 3, the woman is going to experience pain in childbirth and disunity in marriage. Verse 17, the man is going to experience futility in his work.

Of course, there's a sense in which, right, these cross over. Women also experience futility in their work. Fathers will also experience pain in raising children. And so this is the point at which paradise is broken.

[7 : 45] The perfect fellowship that humanity experienced with God has come to an end. There's disunity rather than unity. There's disconnection rather than connection.

Thankfully, though, that's not the only thing we saw in Genesis chapter 3. If you go back before the curse is given to the woman and the man, there's a curse put on the snake in verse 15.

God addresses the serpent and says this, 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.

In other words, evil has been introduced into the experience of humanity, but, and that's not the end of the story.

There is one coming who will crush the head of the serpent. There will come a time when the curse will be reversed.

[8 : 51] A moment will arrive when Adam and Eve and their sons and daughters no longer suffer the consequences of sin.

So why does it matter that Jesus fulfills the promises of the Old Testament? It matters because he is the one who fulfills the promise of Genesis chapter 3, that the serpent's head will be crushed.

that we will finally be able to return to Eden. Whether you're familiar with the Old Testament or not, whether you care about the prophets who wrote it or not, if you are a human and you live in this world and you are honest with yourself, you long to return to Eden.

You long for the curse to be undone. You long for the serpent's head to be crushed. And you feel it not just in moments when we read passages from the Bible together.

You feel it when you have that longing to experience only connection and never disunity with others.

[10 : 24] You feel it when you look for healing spiritually or emotionally or physically. you feel that longing when you look in the mirror.

And you wish that you could only feel good about yourself and your body. You feel it as you experience the grief and loss that comes as your body ages and your powers fade and wane.

And you feel it as you long for the evil in your own heart to be wiped out once and for all.

And that longing that you feel is a longing that's been felt ever since Genesis chapter 3. And Paul here comes to say, Jesus is the one that makes the promise come true.

Jesus is the one who makes it possible to return to Eden. In his book, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis says this, If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

[11 : 53] And if you're honest, you can feel that you were made for another world. You may try to hide it with consumption and busyness and pleasure.

And at the end of the day, it's still there. And so here again, remember I told you, when it comes to the book of Romans, we're going to have many spokes and those spokes will always come back to the hub of the gospel.

And here, right at the very beginning, verse 2, we're back to the hub again. Jesus is the one who resolves the tension of humanity. Jesus is the one who allows God's people to return to Eden.

Jesus is the one who makes that longing not simply a longing, but something real and full and complete. There's a theologian named Bill Wilder who describes the story of the Old Testament this way.

He says, it is a story in which God's people have to leave God's presence in God's land. They're cast out of Eden, right? And so the question that is attempted to be answered throughout the rest of the Bible is simply this, how will God's people return to God's land in God's presence?

[13 : 13] How is it that God's people, his family, will experience Eden once again? The answer is Jesus.

because he is the one who fulfills what was promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

He is the one who makes all things right. He's the one who comes to crush the head of the serpent. He's the one who brings God's people back to God's land in God's presence.

You'll remember last week I told you that as we look at these first seven verses we're going to see some of the major themes of the book of Romans outlined for us and we're going to do that once again. One of the major themes that Paul has already hit on for us here is this, that God is a God who keeps his promises.

You'll want to remember that when we get to Romans chapter 9 and 11, you know, in 20 or 30 years. Because Paul's hope there is to remind us, look, no matter what you see, no matter what's happened, God has kept his promise.

[14 : 26] What he said in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 will and has come to pass. Now the other theme that we're going to see throughout the book that's highlighted here is this, that there is one story from beginning to end.

The Old Testament and the New Testament are two halves of the same book. We'll see that even more when we get to Romans chapter 4.

I also told you last week that Romans is referred to as the fifth gospel. That is what Paul teaches here, Jesus taught first. And we don't have to go to just one place, we can go to two places.

We have the famous passage in Luke chapter 24 when Jesus, after his resurrection, is walking with two men who are walking on this road to Emmaus and he explains to them that the Old Testament is about him.

In John chapter 5, Jesus is arguing with the Jews and he reminds them of this, if you believed Moses, you would believe me for he wrote of me.

[15 : 38] Who wrote the book of Genesis? Moses. What was Moses writing of in Genesis chapter 3, 15?

He was writing of Jesus, the one who would crush the head of the serpent. C.S. Lewis in that same section of Mere Christianity goes on to tell us this, I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country which I shall not find till after death.

I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside. I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same.

Christian, you must make it the main object of your life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same.

Jesus is the one who fulfills what is promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures. Paul goes on to tell us even more in verse 3.

[17:01] We find out that Jesus is not simply the one who's promised. This is concerning his son who is descended from David according to the flesh.

Now the word flesh in the New Testament can mean a variety of things. We want to be clear about what it means in this context. Here, flesh is simply saying Jesus was actually a human.

So going back to our confession of faith earlier in this service, remember we said Jesus is 100% God and 100% man. And that's what Paul is saying here. According to his humanity, Jesus was descended from David.

Of course, he's not descended from David according to his divine nature because he preexisted David. No, it's according to his human nature. This gives us another piece of Old Testament fulfillment.

It's not just the promises and the prophets beforehand when it comes to Genesis chapter 3. It's the promises we see throughout the Old Testament. And one of the most important promises comes in 2 Samuel 7.

[18:08] God comes to David and he says to him, look, you're the king now and guess what? An even greater king will come from your line. The ultimate and final king is going to come from the line of David.

Now, you might be wondering how exactly this is going to happen. We'll get to that in a minute. But remember just that quote from Gregory of Nazianzus, what was not assumed cannot be healed. Jesus assumed full humanity so he could save us as humans. We're going to get to even more of that in Romans chapter 5. So in verse 3, we're told that he's descended from David according to the flesh.

And then in verse 4, we find out he's 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.

Some people have misunderstood or twisted this verse to say that Jesus was at some point actually not divine. He was only a man. And then later, you know, God looked on him and said, you know what?

[19:25] I think Jesus is such a great guy. And so I'm going to declare him to be the son of God. And so it's important that we understand clearly what's being said here.

The word is declared. The word is not to make or to become. Okay? It is not that Jesus was not the son of God at some point and then was declared to be at another point.

No, what he's telling us is that the resurrection clarifies and certifies for us what was already true.

That if there was any doubt about Jesus' identity, there should be no doubt no more as we look and see him as the resurrected son of man sitting at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.

That he was the son of God and is now declared by his resurrection with greater clarity than ever before. A man named John T. Rhodes does a fantastic job illustrating this with this quote on page seven of your worship guide.

as Elizabeth II became queen on the death of her father in February 1952, but wasn't crowned until June the following year, Christ was king from his incarnation, but took his throne at the resurrection.

[20:50] Okay? He was declared to be the son of God with power. The resurrection is the coronation, it's the announcement, it's the certification of what was already true about Christ.

Now, you might be wondering, okay, wait, if Christ was king from his incarnation, what about before his incarnation? Well, he's king from his incarnation according to his human nature in the sense that he fulfills the promise of 2 Samuel 7, but of course he's the son of God for all eternity.

Eternity past, eternity future. And so it's not that Jesus becomes God, he was always God, it's that there is now a new phase in the history of redemption.

There's a new chapter in the story of God's redemption of his people. There is something different, it's not something different in Jesus' nature or his character, there is, however, something different in his glory.

And you'll see this on page eight of your worship guide. Didn't Jesus always have supreme authority? As God, yes. But considered as a man, the resurrection ushers in a new degree of glory even for Jesus.

[22 : 14] Jesus rises from the grave, changed, glorified, with a more majestic body than before. And I'll bring this down to earth for you.

Before Jesus' resurrection, it was possible for Jesus to get a cold. Before Jesus' resurrection, there might have been times when in his human nature, he would have done really well to get some antibiotics.

After Jesus' resurrection, there were no more colds. Jesus has a perfected and resurrection body. Jesus has a glory according to his human body that he never had before.

And he is now, we're told, in verse four, the Son of God in power. There's a new expression of Jesus' power.

There's something true about the way he expresses his power. There's something of its intensity that was not realized before that.

[23 : 27] We're told in verse four, this new power is according to the spirit of holiness, which is a reference here to the Holy Spirit. And so we can remember Jesus' teaching in John chapter 14.

He says this, I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever. Jesus is telling his disciples, look, there's going to be something in the future that I'm going to ask for and give to you.

You don't have the Holy Spirit in the way that you will have it. You will receive it after my resurrection and my ascension. And then what do we see in the history of the church?

Acts chapter two, Peter is preaching this sermon. Pentecost happens where there's this great pouring out of the Holy Spirit, a pouring out such as has never been seen in the history of God's people.

And Peter says this, speaking about Jesus, being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

[24 : 35] Jesus, in his resurrection and his ascension, pours out on his people even greater gifts and power than ever before.

It is better for you to be a Christian now after Jesus' resurrection and ascension than it was to be Abraham.

It is more and greater, you experience a greater presence of the Holy Spirit than Moses and the people who were with him.

Why? Because he was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

Paul is telling us, teaching us, reminding us that Jesus' resurrection and his ascension to the right hand of God the Father means more blessings and power for his people than ever before.

[25 : 51] In other words, the resurrection proved something and the resurrection did something. Pentecost would not and could not happen until Jesus was sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty fulfilling his promise to his disciples to send the Holy Spirit in full measure upon his people and on the church.

It is good news for us that he has been raised from the dead in power according to the Spirit of holiness.

Now I'll ask you the same question I asked you about prophecies from the Old Testament being fulfilled. Why do you care? We cared about Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled because it means the return to Eden the resolving of what was broken in the garden and we care that Jesus was raised from the dead in power according to the Spirit of holiness because it means his gifts to his people are greater than the past.

John D. Rhodes goes on to tell us this Jesus has won every blessing for us now he will make sure those blessings are poured out from on high.

It is as if at the atonement Christ won the right to a treasure chest of jewels kept by the Father.

