

NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

Romans 1:16-17

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTON

1. Today we are going to look at Romans 1:16-17.
2. This has been called the theme of the entire book of Romans.
3. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said these two verses are the most important verses in the entire Bible, and that understanding these two verses is essential for understanding the book of Romans.
4. These two verses are what ignited the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther was an Augustinian Monk, a Roman Catholic Priest. And his prime objective was to be right with God. So he followed the Roman Catholic formula as close as anyone. In fact, that's the reason he became a monk. He thought it would give him a better chance of going to heaven. He would go to confession and sometimes spend up to six hours at a time confessing his sins. The problem was that for a sin to be forgiven it has to be confessed; but to confess your sins, you have to remember them. But how good is our memory? He was terrified of dying without having confessed every sin and going to hell. But then he read Romans 1:17 and realized that the way to be right with God was not by works, but by faith, and it changed everything.
5. Martyn Lloyd-Jones went so far to say that if you don't understand Romans 1:16-17, then you are unworthy of the name of Protestant, and it is doubtful whether you are a Christian at all.

II. TEXT

1. **Romans 1:16-17** 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.
17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.
2. These two verses are about the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. The Greek word for gospel (*euangelion*) literally means "good news." The gospel is the best news in the history of the world.
4. The word gospel is used four times in this chapter.
 - i. In verse 1 Paul calls it the gospel of God.
 1. It is called many things in the New Testament: The gospel of Jesus Christ (Mk 1:1); the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:24); the gospel of your salvation (Eph 1:13); the gospel of peace (Eph 6:15); the eternal gospel (Rev 14:6). In Romans 1:1 Paul calls it the gospel of God.
 2. Why? It was God's idea. It is accomplished by God. It brings us to God. And it glorifies God.
 - ii. In Romans 1:2 Paul says the gospel was promised beforehand.

1. The gospel is not a new message proclaimed by Jesus and the apostles. It was proclaimed by the Old Testament prophets, fulfilled by Jesus, and then explained by the apostles.
 2. One of the most beautiful gospel passages in the Bible is found in the Old Testament, in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. We'll just read one verse.
 3. **Isaiah 53:5** "But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds."
 4. The Old Testament prophets knew the gospel. They didn't know it as well as we do. Jesus hadn't come yet; the New Testament hadn't been written yet. But they knew the gospel, and they promised it.
- iii. Romans 1:3 says the gospel is about Jesus (see also Rm 1:9).
1. The gospel is all about Jesus. I like to explain the gospel with four words.
 2. The Gospel in Four Words
 - a. Creation: God created you to have a relationship with Him.
 - b. Corruption: You sinned against God, and the punishment for sin is eternal separation from God in hell.
 - c. Cross/Crucifixion: God loves you so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for your sins. He was punished in your place for your sins, and then He rose again.
 - d. Choice: If you will repent and believe in Jesus, God will forgive your sins and give you eternal life.
- iv. Verse 9 says the way to serve God is by sharing gospel.
1. **Romans 1:9** God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in telling the good news about his Son
 2. Paul saw himself as God's servant, and the way he served God was by sharing the gospel.
 3. Romans 12:11 is a direct command to all Christians to serve the Lord.
 4. How do you serve the Lord? In Romans 1:9 Paul says that one way you can serve the Lord is by sharing the gospel. God has called all Christians to be His witnesses, sharing the gospel with everyone we know (Acts 1:8).
 5. Sharing the gospel is called evangelism. Where did that word come from? The Greek word for gospel is euangelion, and the Greek word for sharing, telling, proclaiming, announcing, or preaching the gospel is euangelizo (Rm 1:15). The English transliteration of the euangelizo is evangelism.
 6. If you want to serve the Lord, then devote your life to evangelism – to sharing the gospel with everyone you know.

7. **Romans 1:15** So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.
 8. Paul was eager to share the gospel with people. He was eager to evangelize. The word eager means “marked by enthusiasm or impatient desire or interest (Merriam-Webster).” He couldn’t wait to share the gospel. He was excited to share the gospel. And you should be too, because it is good news; the best news in the history of the world.
- v. When we get to verses 16-17, Paul gets to the heart of the gospel. He gives us six facts about the gospel.

III. SIX FACTS ABOUT THE GOSPEL

1. You should not be ashamed of the gospel.

- i. Now we’ve made it to verses 16-17.
- ii. **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.
- iii. The first thing to say is that it will be tempting to be ashamed or embarrassed by the gospel. Why? Because the world hates and ridicules the gospel. Nonbelievers hate the gospel. It offends them. Paul said that the gospel is a stumbling to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (1 Cor 1:23). Nobody likes to be ridiculed and hated; nobody wants to be associated with something that is hated and ridiculed.
- iv. Why does the world hate the gospel? For several reasons.
 1. Because of the One we preach. Our message is all about Jesus, Jewish a man who was born in poverty, in a stable, and who was raised as a carpenter. We claim He is the Son of God and the Savior of the world.
 2. Because of the cross. Our messiah, our Savior, was arrested and crucified and mocked while He was on the cross. “He saved others; let Him save Himself (Mt 27:42).” The Romans respected power; the Jews were expecting a conqueror; but Jesus was put to death without a fight in the most humiliating way.
 3. Because of the exclusivity of the gospel. The Bible says there is only one gospel (Gal 1:6-9). There is only one way to be saved (Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5-6).
 4. Because of man’s need for the gospel. The gospel message says that man is sinful; so sinful that he deserves to go to hell. It says that man cannot save himself; he cannot work his way to heaven. It says that man it totally hopeless and needs a Savior. People hate that message.
 5. Because the gospel demands that people repent. Jesus preached that people needed to repent and believe the gospel (Mk 1:15). People

love their sin; they worship their sin; and they hate anything or anyone who would condemn or threaten their beloved sin.

- v. Martyn Lloyd-Jones made a couple of interesting points. First, he said that one way to test if you are preaching the true gospel is if it is offensive; if it is hated and ridiculed by some. Because the true gospel is offensive and hated.
- vi. Second, he said that your reason for not being ashamed of the gospel should be the same as Paul's. It is the power of God for salvation. It is the only way to be saved from sin. The gospel does many things: It delivers from addiction; it lifts you out of depression; it heals and restores marriages. But all those things can be counterfeited. Only the gospel saves from sin. Psychology can deliver from addiction, and lift you out of depression, and save your marriage; but it can't save from sin. Only the gospel is the power of God for salvation. And that's why we shouldn't be ashamed of it.

2. It is the power of God for salvation.

- i. **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.
- ii. What does Paul mean that the gospel is the power of God for salvation? It means that the way God saves a person is when they hear and believe the gospel. The gospel message is the essential method that God uses to save people.
- iii. This has important implications for evangelism. The goal of evangelism is to lead people to Christ. But pure evangelism must include the gospel, because that's what people need to hear and believe in order to be saved. In other words, evangelism can't just be your testimony of how Jesus changed your life. That can be part of evangelism. But your testimony is not the gospel. The gospel is about God's provision for man's sin through the death and resurrection of Christ, and that's the power of God for salvation.
- iv. What does it mean that the gospel is the power of God for salvation? The word salvation is one of the most important words in the Bible. The Greek word for salvation (soteria) means deliverance or rescue. So, it is through the gospel message that God saves, delivers, and rescues people.
- v. From what? What does the gospel save you from? To understand salvation you have to understand mankind. When God made the first people, they lived in a state of innocence (without sin) and in direct, unbroken fellowship and communion with God. But then Adam and Eve fell; they sinned against God, and sin led to many problems. So, the gospel saves people from the consequences of the fall.

- vi. In other words, the gospel saves you from sin, and it does so in three ways.
 - 1. The gospel saves you from the penalty of sin.
 - a. The Bible says that you are a sinner, and you deserve eternal punishment. But when you believe the gospel, God forgives your sins.
 - b. **Ephesians 1:7** “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.”
 - c. When you stand before the judgment seat of Christ, instead of punishing you for your sins, God will let you into heaven.
 - 2. The gospel saves you from the power of sin.
 - a. Not only are you guilty and headed for eternal punishment. But you are a slave to sin. When Adam sinned, you inherited a sin nature. Your natural inclination is to sin. In fact, you can’t not sin.
 - b. But when you believe the gospel, God gives you a new heart with the power and desire to please Him. Now you have the ability to overcome sin and live for God. It’s not the ability to be perfect; you will struggle with sin until you die. It is the ability to gradually grow in obedience and Christlike character.
 - c. **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!
 - 3. The gospel saves you from the presence of sin.
 - a. If you believe the gospel, God promises that when Jesus comes back He will give you a new glorified body, completely free from sin. It will be a perfect body, an immortal body, and a body without sin.
 - b. **Philippians 3:21** He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body, by the power that enables him to subject everything to himself.
- vii. So, the gospel saves you from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. The first is called justification – God saving you from the penalty of sin. The second is called sanctification – God saving you from the power of sin and helping you to grow more like Christ. The third is called glorification – God saving you from the presence of sin by giving you a new glorified body at the return of Christ.
- viii. Another way to understand salvation is in terms of time. For the believer, salvation applies to your past, present, and future.
 - 1. In the past, you have been saved. God saved you the moment you believed. It is permanent and can’t be revoked. In that moment, He

- justified you, began the process of sanctification, and guaranteed your future glorification.
2. In the present, you are being saved. This is where sanctification comes in. Currently and for the rest of your life on earth the Holy Spirit will be growing you more like Jesus.
 3. In the future, you will be saved. When Jesus comes back, He will give you a glorified body completely free from sin.
- ix. But salvation doesn't just save from sin. Salvation also reconciles you to God.
1. God created you to have a relationship with Him, and in that relationship you find true peace, joy, meaning, satisfaction, fulfillment, peace, etc. But sin has broken that relationship. You are estranged from God. But when you believe the gospel, God reconciles you to Himself. He restores you to a right relationship with Him.
 2. **2 Corinthians 5:19** That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us.
 3. Part of this reconciliation is adoption. Before Christ you were God's enemy. But when you believe the gospel and get saved, God adopts you as His child.
 4. **John 1:12** But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name.
- x. As well, salvation gives the hope of glory. It gives the promise the guarantee of heaven when you die.
1. **John 3:16** For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

3. It is for everyone.

- i. **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.
- ii. Notice that the gospel is for "everyone."
- iii. Everyone is invited to believe the gospel and be saved.
- iv. This is not what Calvinism teaches. Calvinism teaches that God doesn't want everyone to be saved. He has only chosen or elected to save some people.
- v. But Rm 1:16 clearly says that it is for everyone.
- vi. Jn 3:16 says that everyone/whoever believes in him will be saved.
- vii. Acts 17:30 says that God commands all people everywhere to repent.
- viii. **Luke 16:16** "the good news of the kingdom of God has been proclaimed, and everyone is urgently invited to enter it."

- ix. 2 Pt 3:9 says that God doesn't want any perish but all to come to repentance.
- x. 1 Tim 2:4 says God wants everyone to be saved.
- xi. In fact, Calvinism teaches limited atonement. Not only does God not want to save everyone, Jesus didn't die for everyone; He only died for the elect.
- xii. But 1 Tim 2:6 says that Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all. 1 Tim 4:19 says that God is the Savior of all people. Titus 2:11 says that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. 1 Jn 2:2 says that Christ is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.
- xiii. The gospel is for everyone. It doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile. It doesn't matter how sinful you are. In fact, Jesus came specifically for sinners (1 Tim 1:15; Mk 2:17).
- xiv. If the gospel is for everyone – if God wants to save everyone – then does everyone get saved and go to heaven?

4. It must be believed.

- i. **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.
- ii. Notice that there is a condition to salvation. Belief. It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. God wants to save everyone, but to receive salvation you must believe the gospel.
- iii. In a recent sermon on hell we learned about universalism, which is the belief that everyone is ultimately saved and goes to heaven. Nobody goes to hell. But the Bible clearly teaches that everyone isn't saved. Some go into eternal punishment, and some go into eternal life (Mt 25:46). Jesus said that not everyone will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does God's will (Mt 7:21).
- iv. If everyone doesn't go to heaven, then who does? Those who believe. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rm 1:16). In the most popular verse in the Bible, Jesus said that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16).
- v. **John 6:40** "For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."
- vi. But what does it mean to believe in the gospel for salvation?
- vii. Faith is the instrument, the channel by which we receive salvation. But what is it? The Greek word means to trust, to rely on, to have faith in.
- viii. Saving faith has three elements:
 1. Noticia – Knowledge. Saving faith must have knowledge of the gospel. You must understand what the Bible says about your need for salvation, God's provision for salvation, and how to receive it.

2. Assensus – Assent. You must agree that the gospel is true; that what the Bible says about your need and God’s provision are true.
3. Fiducia – Trust. This is where personal trust and surrender come into play. Even the demons have knowledge and assent, but they don’t have trust. Trust has to do with totally relying on Jesus. To put it negatively, trust involves self-denial in two ways (Lk 9:23).
 - a. Denying self-righteousness. Stop trying to earn your way to heaven. You must believe that you are a sinner and that you can’t do anything to earn or add to your salvation. You don’t deserve it; you can’t earn it. Salvation is not about what you need to do, but about what Jesus has done.
 - b. Denying self-rule. Stop trying to be in charge of your life, and relinquish all control to Jesus. Repent of your sins and hand the steering wheel of your life over to Jesus. True faith is trusting Jesus to get you to heaven, but to lead you on earth.

5. In it the righteousness of God is revealed.

- i. **Romans 1:17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.
- ii. Paul is still talking about the gospel. “In it the righteousness of God is revealed.”
- iii. What is the righteousness of God? In one sense, the righteousness of God refers to God’s nature. God is right and never wrong. He never sins. He is morally upright. But that is not what it means in this verse. This verse is talking about the righteousness that God gives to man, or God’s way of making man righteous.
- iv. For man to be reconciled to God go to heaven, he has to be righteous. He has to be perfectly holy, without any sin. But people are sinful (3:23). So how can man possibly be righteous enough to be reconciled to God and go to heaven with God? That’s what the gospel is about. That’s what the gospel reveals; it reveals how God makes people righteous. How does God do that?
- v. When Jesus came to earth, He perfectly fulfilled God’s law. He was perfectly obedient. And then, He died on the cross for your sins, perfectly satisfying the law’s penalty that you deserved. When you believe in Jesus for salvation, God imputes or counts all your sin against Jesus, and He takes all of Christ’s righteousness and imputes it to you – He counts you as righteous. Theologians call this the great exchange. Our sins are laid on Christ, and His righteousness is laid on us.
- vi. **2 Corinthians 5:21** He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- vii. Another word for this is justification. When you believe the gospel, God declares you legally righteous in His sight. You are not experientially righteous; but God has declared you legally righteous. This ultimately means that when you die and stand before the judgement seat of Christ, instead of condemning you for your sins, God will reward you for the righteousness of Christ and send you to heaven (Rm 5:9).

6. It is received by faith.

- i. **Romans 1:17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.
- ii. Paul already mentioned in verse 16 that faith in the gospel is the condition necessary to receive salvation. It is the instrument or the channel through which we receive salvation. In this verse Paul uses the word “faith” three times. He is not reiterating what he said in verse 16; instead his point here is to contrast faith with works. In verse 16 the point was that not everyone is saved, but only those who believe the gospel. In verse 17 his point is that way to be saved, the way to be made right with God, is not by works, but by faith alone.
- iii. This is the specific verse that sparked the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther thought that the righteousness of God referred to God’s character quality of righteousness that man had to live up to get to heaven. He thought that the Old Testament revealed God’s righteousness in part through the Ten Commandments, but that Jesus, through His life and teaching, revealed the righteousness of God in full. The way to get to heaven was to be as righteous as Jesus. So at first, Luther hated the concept of God’s righteousness because it is an impossible standard to reach. But then he saw the end of verse 17, “The righteous (the just) will live by faith.” He realized that the way to be made right with God is not by being as righteous as God, but through faith. When you believe in the gospel, God imputes the righteous of Christ to you.
- iv. **Ephesians 2:8-9** For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—9 not from works, so that no one can boast.
- v. In other words, God is not going to let you into heaven because you are a good person; because you tried really hard to keep the Ten Commandments; because you never missed church unless you absolutely had to; because you tried to do a lot of good deeds. All that matters is did you put your faith in Jesus.
- vi. If you died and God asked you, “Why should I let you into heaven?” your answer can’t be, “Because I’m good person; I’ve tried really hard.” Salvation is not about works. It’s not about your performance. It’s not

about what you deserve, because you deserve hell. It's about putting your faith in the gospel – in what Jesus has done for you.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. These two verses are the central theme of Romans. If you want to understand Romans, you have to understand Rm 1:16-17. And they are all about the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. What is the gospel: Creation; Corruption; Cross; Choice.
3. What is your choice? Have you made the decision to believe in Jesus, to put your faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ?