

9. The Book of Romans 1:16-17

Paul's Epistle to the Romans
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(3-8-23)

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We have been looking at the first 17 verses of Paul's introduction to the Book of Romans—by far the longest introduction of any of Paul's epistles.

This evening we have come to the two verses that become the theme of the Book of Romans—

Romans 1:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Paul lays out the gospel in the first few verses—and then he distills it down to its main parts in verses 16-17.

"For I am not ashamed"

Why would Paul even be tempted to be *ashamed* of the Gospel as he contemplated his trip to Rome?

One author tells us why—

"For one thing, the Gospel was identified with a poor Jewish carpenter who was crucified. The Romans had no special appreciation for the Jews, and crucifixion was the lowest form of execution given a criminal. Why put your faith in a Jew who was crucified?"

Rome was a proud city, and the Gospel came from Jerusalem, the capital city of one of the little nations that Rome had conquered. The Christians in that day were not among the elite of society; they were common people and even slaves. Rome had known many great philosophers and philosophies; why pay any attention to a fable about a Jew who arose from the dead? (1 Corinthians 1:18–25)

Christians looked on each other as brothers and sisters, all one in Christ, which went against the grain of Roman pride and dignity. To think of a little Jewish tentmaker, going to Rome to preach such a message, is almost humorous."

"For I am not ashamed"

Are you ashamed to let others know you're a Christian—are you ashamed of people knowing you love Jesus? (young people—do you want to be cool or Christian?)

He hung naked on the cross despising the shame but is not ashamed to call us His brethren.

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ"

As we have said before—the word **gospel** means "good news."

The announcement of good news was often used by a messenger of Caesar to announce the birth of one of his sons—but Paul wants to announce the good news of the birth of the Son of God!

How could Paul be ashamed of such a message, when it came from God and centered on His Son, Jesus Christ?

One author—

“I am not ashamed of the way God chose to save sinful man. I am not ashamed of the fact that God chose to save mankind thru the cross (the most despised and humiliating way to die)—thru a crucified Jewish carpenter from a poor family who was despised and rejected by men.”

1 Corinthians 1:21, 25 (NKJV)

²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe...²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

We need to pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit that we might not be ashamed of the gospel—but bold in standing up it and sharing it with those we come in contact with.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power...”

Rome loved power, they lived for power, they reveled in their power.

But whereas Rome reveled in their military power to destroy life (the lives of their enemies)—God’s power (manifested thru the gospel) is the power to save life—to redeem and change a life from sin and death to life and peace thru Jesus Christ.

Paul experienced that power firsthand on the road to Damascus—and he never forgot it—he talked about it the rest of his life—as he is doing right here to begin his letter to the Romans:

Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation...

So, why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel—because **“It is the power of God”!**

The Greek word translated **“power”** is *dynamis* from which we get our English words *dynamite* and *dynamic* from.

The gospel contains ‘divine energy’—supernatural power to literally recreate a person’s life—

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Nobody knows this more than the devil himself—who constantly attacks the foundation of the gospel in an effort to neutralize its power.

- You may ask, “What is the foundation of the gospel?”

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NLT)

⁵ But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and

we were healed! ⁶ All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.

These are some of the best known and most loved verses in the Bible for evangelicals—they need very little comment for they speak for themselves. In these verses we have a prophesy of our Saviors punishment and death on our behalf.

How He would be beaten for our transgressions and brutalized for our sins. How He would be mocked and ridiculed and nailed to a cross so that we might have peace with God and eternal life. Here we have in these verses the very foundation upon which the gospel is built—we call it the '*penal substitutionary atonement*' of Jesus Christ.

'*Penal substitution*' means that Jesus was punished in our place—He was a substitute that took *our* judgment and died on *our* behalf and in so doing He atoned for our sins so that we could be reconciled to God.

As I just said penal substitution is the foundation upon which the gospel is built—without it there is no gospel. And the instrument that God used to make penal substitution a reality was—the cross.

Is it any wonder then that Satan has been attacking it from the very day Jesus was crucified until today?

This shouldn't shock us—it's actually a fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

2 Timothy 3:1–5 (NKJV)

¹ But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power...

- *What power?*

Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.**

The power of the gospel is the shed blood of Jesus Christ which alone can atone for our sins—

Roger Oakland in his book, "Faith Undone" had this to say on the subject—

"The heart and core of the Christian faith is based upon Jesus Christ's shed blood at Calvary as the only acceptable substitutionary atonement for mankind's sins. The Gospel message requires this foundation. The Bible says the wages of sin is death—thus every person alive should receive the penalty of spiritual death because none of us is without sin, since we are born with our sin nature intact. Satan hates the Gospel message.

He understands what the Gospel means, and his agenda is to deceive mankind from understanding and believing so they can suffer eternally with him. While Scripture is very clear about the necessity of Christ's death in order for us to be saved, some believe this would make God a blood-thirsty barbarian. Embedded within the structure of the emerging church is just such a belief."

Some professing Christian leaders and churches say they 'love the cross', they 'respect the cross'—but then go on to deny the power of the Cross.

They say that "*Jesus' going to the cross was an example of sacrifice and servanthood that we should follow, but the idea that God would send His Son to a violent death for the sins of mankind—well, that is not who God is.*"

They maintain that “A loving God would never do that! Such a violent act would make Christianity a “slaughterhouse religion.”

What!?!—Isn’t that exactly what the Christian faith is?

Isaiah 53:7 (NKJV)

⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed [i.e., ‘*purchased out of the slavery to sin and Satan*’] with corruptible things, *like silver or gold*, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Sin, all sin, in whatever vile form it takes is an affront to God Who is pure, holy and absolutely righteous! He cannot bear to look upon sin and can have no fellowship with anyone defiled by sin—unless it is atoned for (O.T. ‘kophar’—‘*a covering*’). But as one pastor put it—“*You can’t cover something as vile as sin with ‘taffeta and lace’—it takes blood!”*

Which means *something*, or *Someone* has to die.

- In the Old Testament that ***something*** was the animal sacrifices that God allowed to temporarily cover the guilt of sin.
- In the New Testament ***Someone***, was the Lamb of God, our Savior Jesus Christ, whose blood alone could take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Sin is so egregious in the eyes of God that only a blood sacrifice can atone for it (all sin carries with it a death penalty—‘*the soul that sins shall surely die.*’ (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

When Adam and Eve first sinned and tried to cover the shame of their nakedness with fig leaves (the works of their hands—the beginning of religion)—God made them stand there while He slaughtered two animals in their presence (the innocent dying for the guilty) to communicate to them that sin kills.

No, blood atonement isn’t a pretty thing—it was never intended by God to be nice, neat, sophisticated and sweet! The reality is that its cruel, barbaric, gruesome, and bloody (as seeing Jesus hanging on the cross)—that’s what the gospel is all about. Yet today all that is changing in certain church circles—as many church leaders are *ashamed* of the gospel.

They’re embarrassed by the notion that we are saved by the blood of Christ because in their mind—it sounds barbaric, uncouth and repulsive!

So, they are denying the ‘penal substitutionary’ death of Jesus Christ even though the N.T. is replete with statements affirming this doctrine—

Ephesians 1:7 (NKJV)

⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

John 3:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

But it doesn't matter what the Bible has to say to those attacking the gospel while calling themselves Christians.

Author Steve Chalke (and he is by no means alone) in his book *"The Lost Message of Jesus"* makes the claim that such a doctrine (penal substitution) turns God the Father—*"Into a 'cosmic child abuser.'"*

Again, this shouldn't shock us—it's actually a fulfillment of Bible prophecy:

2 Peter 2:1 (NKJV)

¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

So, Peter is telling us that in the last days we would see those in the Church who would deny the gospel by denying that the blood of Jesus Christ atoned for our sins and purchased us out of slavery to the devil and set us free in Christ.

I don't think most Christians realize how great a work of God went into our redemption. We talk about the vastness of the universe God created with its billions of galaxies containing trillions of stars—truly a spectacular thing to behold.

But look, as spectacular as the creation is do you realize that only 31 verses in Genesis chapter 1 are devoted to the creation—and the rest of the Bible to redemption?

The Bible tells us that creation was the work of God's fingers—*"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained..."* (Psalm 8:3)

However, when it came to redemption, the Bible says He—*"bared His arms"* (rolled up His sleeves)—because this is where the real work came in.

The work of redemption—or as Paul the Apostle put it the work of the *"new creation"* was far more involved and from a human standpoint, far more difficult to accomplish than was the original creation of the physical universe.

In the creation of the physical universe all God had to do was speak and everything came into existence—but when it came to the redemption of our souls the Lord Jesus Christ, God in human form—had to die!

That was because—God couldn't just 'speak' our sins away—they had to be paid for.

Yet, Episcopal priest Alan Jones in his book *Reimagining Christianity* (which many emerging church leaders endorse) said that God never intended Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to be considered a payment for our sins:

“The Church’s fixation on the death of Jesus as the universal saving act must end, and the place of the cross must be reimagined in Christian faith. Why? Because of the cult of suffering and the vindictive God behind it...The other thread of just criticism addresses the suggestion implicit in the cross that Jesus’ sacrifice was to appease an angry God. Penal substitution [the Cross] was the name of this vile doctrine.”

Yet biblical atonement has always been based on blood sacrifice in both the Old and New Testaments—

Leviticus 17:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.'

Hebrews 9:22 (NKJV)

²² ...without shedding of blood there is **no remission** (of sin).

John 1:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "**Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**"

William Cowper in his famous hymn writes—

*“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

*The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away...”*

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Want to know more? Click [here](#).

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