

10. The Book of Romans 1:16-17-Part 2

Paul's Epistle to the Romans
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(3-15-23)

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By way of review—Paul has just finished his opening salutation (verses 1-7); and his personal introduction (verses 8-16a).

The *salutation* has to do with the 'gospel' of God'; and the *introduction* focuses on the 'servant of God.'

The first deals with the '*message*' and the second with the '*messenger*.'

Verses 16 and 17 are what is known in homiletics (the science of teaching and preaching the Bible) as the '*proposition statement*.' These 2 verses form the theme and thesis of the book which the rest of the epistle is merely an expansion of.

The beginning of verse 16 is really the final statement in Paul's personal introduction of himself and his ministry—**"I am not ashamed."**

The rest of that statement—**"of the gospel of Christ"**—becomes the theme.

Before we go on, let me say this about Paul's statement, **"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."**

You need to understand that up to this point—Paul has been:

- *Imprisoned and beaten in Philippi.*
- *Chased out of Thessalonica.*
- *Smuggled out of Berea.*
- *Laughed at in Athens.*
- *Considered a fool in Corinth and*
- *Stoned in Galatia.*

Yet, he remained unashamed and eager to preach the gospel in Rome! Understand, we're talking about ROME—the home of Ceasar Nero, the madman who was determined to exterminate Christianity by killing every Christian he could get his hands on.

Nero—the one who dressed thousands of Christians in the skins of lambs and threw them to wolves and lions as cried out—*"Where is your Good Shepherd now little flock!?"*

Nero—who dipped Christians in hot pitch and lit them on fire to be torches in his garden while he screamed—
“How does it feel to be the ‘light of the world’ now Christians!?”

This was Rome—a city so decadent and immoral it would make Hollywood blush.

Rome—the imperial city itself which was not only the capital of the empire, but the very center of all paganism and idolatry—a place where the accepted greeting of the day was—“*Ceasar is lord!*”

One author said it well—

“It would certainly take a lot of guts for this bald-headed, bow-legged, poor-sighted, hook-nosed little Jewish Christian tentmaker, who claimed no other Lord than the One Who commanded no army, made His ‘triumphal’ entry on the back of a donkey and was nailed to a cross by Roman soldiers—to preach the good news (gospel) of God in Rome.”

I think that this kind of courage and boldness amazes most of us who are Christians today in America—primarily because we have never seen this kind of persecution in our lives against the gospel.

And because of it, you would think that we would be *more* bold having to face *less* persecution than those early Christians had to face—but of course you’d be wrong.

Instead, we’re often not as bold and they were—because sometimes we *are* ashamed or embarrassed of the gospel because of what people will think of us or say about us—to which I must say—‘shame on us!’

The Scriptures say, “*The fear of man beings a snare.*” (Proverbs 29:25)—for American Christians it means the fear of being laughed at or ridiculed by strangers and/or rejected by friends.

This causes us to either keep quiet or to water-down the gospel so as to make it less offensive so that people won’t think so badly of us.

Why was Paul so bold when it came to the gospel—why was he not ashamed of it?

Well, he goes on to tell us in verse 16—

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...

Now we go from the *heart* of the apostle—to the *heart* of the epistle!

**The reason Paul was so bold in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ
was because he knew it was the power of God to save and transform lives!**

He believed in the power of the gospel because he had experienced the power of God in his own life when he embraced it—and had seen its power in the lives of countless others who had believed and embraced the gospel in their own lives.

To preach the gospel with boldness you must first believe in its power to transform lives with all your heart. Secondly, you must love God and the lost more than you love yourself, your reputation and even your life itself!

I was looking over my notes on Romans from the last time I taught through it on Sunday mornings back in 1999.

On April 20th of that year, most of us remember the shooting that took place at Columbine High School.

We remember that at approximately 11:21am, two students, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, walked into the school cafeteria and opened fire. They then moved upstairs into the school library which was crowded with students studying and opened fire again.

One of the students, Cassie Bernall, had been reading her Bible which lay open on the table, and when one the shooters saw her Bible laying there, he pointed his gun at her head and asked, *“Do you believe in God?”*

Cassie paused for a second knowing what was about to happen and then she said, *“I believe in Jesus and you should too”*—to which the gunman responded, *“There is no God!”* and shot her dead.

At her funeral, her friends and classmates remembered what a committed Christian Cassie had been. But you see, two years prior to her death—she was totally against Christianity.

She was involved in witchcraft and was very suicidal—but six-months later she turned her life over to Jesus and became a radical evangelist on her school campus.

Most of us who are Christians marvel at how a 17-year-old, who had only been a Christian for 18 months, could look down the barrel of a gun and give such a powerful witness—knowing it was probably going to cost her life.

Where did she get her boldness—where did she get such amazing courage?

Well, it came out 48 hours before she died, that Cassie was reflecting on her relationship with Jesus, and she wrote these words in her journal just 2 days before she was killed for her faith:

“Now I have given up on everything else. I have found it to be the only way to really know Christ and to experience the mighty power that brought Him to life again and to find out what it means to suffer and to die with Him. So, whatever it takes I will be one who lives in the fresh newness of life of those who are alive from the dead.”

Where did Cassie get her courage?—she got it from the Holy Spirit working thru her commitment to Jesus Christ.

Satan never seems to learn the lesson, as Tertullian (one of the early Church fathers) said, *“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”*—and yet the devil just can’t seem to help himself.

What Satan intended for evil (killing a beautiful young Christian woman) was used by God to bring many to faith in Jesus—as Jesus Himself said,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” (John 12:24–25)

You can’t serve 2 masters—you can’t love the world and the Lord Jesus simultaneously—you must choose who or what you will love and serve.

The only way you will not be ashamed of the gospel is if you commit yourself fully and completely to Jesus Christ (as Cassie had done).

But before you can commit your life to something you first have to *believe* in it—and before you can believe in it, you first need to *understand* it.

Understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ hinges on knowing 4 key words—all of which comes out of Romans 1:16-17:

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.*”

1. *Power—verse 16*
2. *Salvation— verse 16*
3. *Believes— verse 16*
4. *Righteousness—verse 17*

1. Power—verse 16

Romans 1:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for 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 is God’s offer of omnipotent power to an impotent (powerless, weak, helpless) world.

➤ You might be thinking—“*Power for what?*”

The answer is: ‘*Power to be saved; power to be set-free and transformed—power to be a completely different person than what you were before you gave your life to Jesus—power to change your world for Christ!*’

I believe that a lot of people are painfully aware of their shortcomings, bad habits, addictions and would love to change—but they have no power to change.

Many people who are in bondage would love to be set free from the sinful lives they are living—but how?

Jeremiah 13:23 (NKJV)

²³ Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? *Then* may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.

People make resolutions and may experience partial or temporary victory in their lives—only to slip back under the control of whatever they are in bondage to. But only the power of God can make a person a new creation where ‘*old things pass away, and all things become new.*’

The power of God working thru the gospel of Jesus Christ can do for us what we can’t do for ourselves—set us free and not just temporarily change us, but permanently transform us.

➤ (Listen: “Harvest” by Chuck Smith).

2. Salvation—verse 16

Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

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

The Greek word for ‘salvation’ is *sōtēria*—which carries with it the idea of ‘deliverance’ or ‘rescue.’ Once we have repented for our sins and have put our faith in Jesus as our Savior, the result is we are saved—but that begs the question—“*What exactly are we saved from?*”

Many Christian radio and TV preachers are teaching that God has saved them from: ‘*unhappiness*’, ‘*sickness*’, and/or ‘*poverty*’—all they need to do is claim it!—but that is untrue.

The Bible actually teaches that our salvation takes place on three different levels—past, present, and future.

1. We have been saved (past tense) from the penalty of sin—we’re no longer going to hell

Romans 8:1 (NKJV)

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation (hell) to those who are in Christ Jesus...

Paul is using the word *sōtēria* here in Romans 1:16 to speak of the power of God to save (deliver, rescue) us from coming judgment in hell. Nobody goes to hell by *chance*; they go to hell by *choice*.

Romans 2:5-8

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ God "will give to each person according to what he has done." ⁷ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸ But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

Hell was not made for man but for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

People must stop seeing God as some cruel, Medieval torturer Who enjoys sending people to hell for the smallest transgression—and start seeing Him as a loving God Who is trying to rescue them from the consequences of their own rebellion and short-sightedness.

Luke 19:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

John 3:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

2. We are being saved (present tense) from the power of sin—we’re no longer the slaves of sin

1 Corinthians 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. [Being saved from the ongoing power of sin—i.e., ‘sanctification’]

Romans 6:6 (NKJV)

⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

I was listening to one of the old-time preachers who was preaching on this subject, and he challenged his audience by saying—

“If you say you’re saved—what are you saved from? Are you saved from bitterness? Are you saved from lust? Are you saved from cheating, lying, stealing, alcohol or tobacco? What are you saved from?”

His point was valid—if you’re not being saved from the power of sin (sanctification and personal holiness) what makes you think you have been saved from the penalty of sin (not going to hell) by being born-again as a new creation of God where old things have passed away and everything is brand new?

1. *We have been saved* from the penalty of sin—we’re no longer going to hell
2. *We are being saved* from the power of sin—we’re no longer the slaves of sin
3. **We will be saved (future tense) from the presence of sin—we’re no longer going to live among sin**

In Revelation 21 John is talking about the sinless city where no defilement will ever enter—the New Jerusalem where all the *redeemed* will live forever.

Revelation 21:22–23, 27 (NKJV)

²² But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light...²⁷ But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

This is in contrast to where all *unbelievers* will live for all eternity—the Lake of Fire (hell).

Revelation 21:6–8 (NKJV)

⁶ And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and *the* End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

1. **Power—verse 16**
2. **Salvation—verse 16**
3. **Believes (Faith)—verse 16**

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...**

The Greek word for ‘believes’ is ‘*pisteuō*’ which carries with it the idea of “*trusting in*” and “*relying on*.” When missionary John Payton went to the New Hebrides (a group of islands out in the Pacific Ocean) to preach the gospel to the indigenous people there—at one point he started to translate the New Testament into their language—but quickly hit a snag.

You see, their language didn’t contain a word for ‘*faith*’—no small problem when you’re trying to translate the Bible into their language—a book built on the concept of faith!

One day a tribal messenger who had run a long way to deliver a message to John, entered his hut and dropped into a chair and said, “*It feels so good to put my whole weight on this chair.*”

Payton said, “*What did you say?!*” The runner repeated what he has just said.

To which Payton responded—“*That’s the word for faith! —to put your whole weight on Jesus Christ—to rest on Him!*”

Well, the Greeks *did* have a word for **faith** (*pisteuō*)—and when it is used in the N.T. to speak of salvation—it is usually used in the present tense (as it is used here in Romans 1:16) and therefore could be translated “*is believing*” or “*continues to believe.*”

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 [continues to] believe...**

This is an important statement by Paul—a crucial point that he is making almost in passing.

You see, Paul knew (just as every evangelical pastor including myself knows) that just because a person claims to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation—doesn’t prove they are *really* saved.

Their so-called faith may simply be ‘head-knowledge’ that will change over time—when they decide that ‘Buddhism’ is true or some other ‘faith-system.’

If their faith is genuine, they will continue to believe in the true gospel—to the point of commitment for the rest of their lives.

Their continuance in the faith doesn’t *make* them a Christian or *keep* them saved—it is simply the evidence (the ‘fruit’) that they are a genuine Christian and saved—even as Jesus said, “*You’ll know them by their fruit.*”

As a young Christian, I allowed Colossians 1:21-23 to terrify me into thinking that I could lose my salvation:

Colossians 1:21–23 (NKJV)

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard...

In the Greek this isn't a *conditional* statement making our salvation contingent upon our faithfulness in continuing in the faith.

The word **"if"** carries with it the idea of—*"assuming that you continue in the faith."*

That is to say that continuing in the faith isn't a condition for staying saved—it is a characteristic of those who are genuinely saved—they continue in their faith no matter how many times they fall or fail: *"For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again..."* (Proverbs 24:16)

The word "continue" in v.23 is *menō* (μενω), which means—*"to persist in, adhere to, stay at or with, to abide..."*

And again, the idea is that those who have genuine saving faith continue in their walk with Christ proving that they truly are His disciples—

John 8:31 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide ('meno'—continue; remain) in My word, you are My disciples indeed ['truly]..."

1 John 2:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

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.

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