

Why Never to Be Ashamed of the Gospel – Part 1

Romans 1:16-17

We return, once again, to our study of the Word of God and Paul's epistle to the Romans. So if you will, take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter one.

I have entitled my discourse to you this morning, "Why Never to Be Ashamed of the Gospel." And this will be part one of what may be a two, maybe a three part series. We will see, "Why Never to Be Ashamed of the Gospel."

This flows from verse 16 and verse 17. Let me read this to you.

He says:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."¹

I trust you have prepared your heart for the preaching of the Word of God this morning. Let me bring you back with a bit of review so that we can understand the context here of what is happening in this incredible passage.

In the first seven verses the apostle Paul has introduced himself to the saints at Rome and he has offered to them an exciting synopsis of the gospel of God that has united all of them and all of us together in Christ, together in salvation, truths that the Lord Jesus Christ had given to him personally through divine revelation. And there he describes the preacher, the promise, the person and the purpose of the gospel.

And then in verses eight through 15, as you will recall, he offers some very important personal words to the saints in Rome, a glimpse into his heart. And there we discovered five marks of a godly shepherd. They would be a Christ centered gratitude for gospel proclamation, a disciplined prayer life, a selfless longing to strengthen the brethren, a humble desire to learn from others and, finally, a zeal for the lost without partiality.

That was the heart of the apostle Paul.

And now in verses 16 and 17 he states the theme, the thesis of all that will follow.

During this last week in particular as I have meditated upon this text, I found myself in a constant state of awe as though I was standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon. Perhaps you have been in a place like that. Perhaps you have been there. I found myself speechless at times and motionless even as I conversed with the Lord. It was as though I am standing before something that is so vast that I felt as though I had been reduced to an insignificant speck of sand.

If, in fact, you truly acknowledge that this book is the Word of the living God, then

¹ Romans 1:16-17.

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whenever you stand in the presence of this truth, you will also have a sense of being instantly overwhelmed by a terrifying sense of the utter transcendence of God and, frankly, a diminished sense of yourself.

Only the most entrenched narcissist could possibly examine Scripture and come away with an exalted sense of self.

Dear Christian, the immense grandeur of the truths before us, when understood, are frighteningly transcendent. And I hope that somehow I can help you grasp this as I unpack the text for you this morning, because here we are able to gaze across this vast canyon of saving grace. We are able to behold what we deserve versus what we have received. Here we are confronted with our abject helplessness, our weakness, our insignificance. Indeed, here we find ourselves reduced to mere worms before a sovereign, omnipotent and holy God while at the same time being elevated to undeserved heights of glory.

Only when we behold the massive depths of our own sin will we be able to behold the majestic heights of salvation. And when we do, we will never be ashamed of the gospel.

Beloved, the text before us is, perhaps, the most powerful in all of Scripture in succinctly summarizing why we should never be ashamed of the gospel. And in an economy of words, it reveals why the apostle Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. And here we have an opportunity, frankly, to stand on the precipice of life and gaze into the infinite reaches of eternity. Here we get yet another glimpse of the majesty of our risen Savior and our King the Lord Jesus, because here we are going to behold three amazing truths about the gospel in salvation.

First we are going to see the power of God for salvation; secondly, the plan of God to receive salvation; and, finally, the product of God in salvation. We are only going to have time for the first one this morning, the power of God for salvation.

And my prayer has been for you that today in particular you will rediscover what God has done when he has saved you by his grace. And when this happens you will never be ashamed of the gospel. Yes, there will be times when you will be afraid. And that is, frankly, a product of our unredeemed flesh. But there will never be a desire for you to somehow reinvent or redefine or compromise the gospel, for to do so would instantly rob it of its glory and its power to save.

Paul says in verse 16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel.”²

You know, there is perhaps no greater evidence of sin in my life than that chilling fear that sweeps over me when I have an opportunity proclaim the gospel to a hostile audience. Have you been there? I am sure you have. You know, even the apostle Paul struggled with fear and he asked the saints to pray for him, to pray for boldness.

² Romans 1:16.

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But when you think about it, what are we afraid of? We are afraid of embarrassment. We are afraid of ridicule and conflict. We are so committed to ourselves, aren't we? We can lose perspective.

In Proverbs chapter 29 verse 25 we read that, “The fear of man brings a snare.”³

In other words, when we fear man it lures us into a trap of even more fear, of even more fear, of even more weakness, of spiritual ineffectiveness. And yet, as we read in Proverbs one and verse seven, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.”⁴

And in chapter eight verse 13, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil.”⁵

Think about it. The fear of man is fearing what man may do to me. And I like to think of the fear of God is the fear of what I might do to him, that I might grieve him, that I might quench the Spirit, that I might live in such a way as to bring divine chastening upon my life. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, Paul tells us in Philippians two.

I might ask you. Do you tremble when you realize that you might be grieving God with your life, that somehow in living out the gospel you might really be demonstrating to the world that you are ashamed?

Often we fear man more than God. And I have heard it before.

“Yes, yes, but, pastor, the gospel is so incredibly offensive.”

Well, yes. And for that reason it is also exceedingly magnificent in its power to save. You see, you can't have good news unless you begin with the bad, right? You have got to begin with the bad. And to somehow in a winsome way be able to communicate to people and many times what I like to do is talk about what I understood.

My friend, I understood when... even when I was young boy and even now in more so as a grown man that when I was apart from Christ I was a wretched sinner that was so absolutely vile that I could have never entered into the presence of the holy God. I recognized that I was inherently unable to save myself. I recognized that God had to provide a substitute and he did that in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, frankly, unless you acknowledge your sin, unless you repent, unless you trusted him as your Savior, you will perish in your sin.

And then to be able to look a person in the eye and say with all love, “Please understand that right now you are so abominable in the eyes of God that his wrath now abides on you and you stand condemned before his holy bar of justice.”

³ Proverbs 29:25.

⁴ Proverbs 1:7.

⁵ Proverbs 8:13.

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My friend, you are in need of grace. You see, once again, there is the bad news with the good. And it is staggering, isn't it? When by divine enlightenment a sinner embraces these truths he is instantly forgiven. He is born again unto eternal life, absolutely staggering.

Most people find this both ludicrous as well as offensive. Although I might add that down deep every person knows that it is true. We are going to learn in verses 18 and 19 that sinners suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them. He did that through reason, through conscience as we will learn.

But because the gospel is so offensive, many times we end up redesigning it. We end up subtly giving it a makeover. And, boy, that is so prevalent in our society today. Relevance today has become more important than truth in many evangelical circles. There is this passion for some perceived unity so therefore you have to jettison Bible doctrine and just kind of everybody hold hands and, I guess, sing kumbya and let's just all get along here. There is the sense in which people preach more about the love of God, but do everything they can to avoid the concept of the wrath of God.

Sin today is defined, basically as making mistakes, making bad choices that can mess up our lives rather than a violation of God's law that not only brings misery into our life, but condemns us before a holy God.

Today we see Jesus as kind of this smiley face type of God, a smiley face Jesus that exists to help us become healthy and wealthy, successful versus the Creator and the Sustainer and the Consummator of all things.

It is ok to see Jesus as a sentimental Lamb, but, oh my, not as a sacrificial one. And it is religiously incorrect to see him coming again some day as the Lion of the tribe of Judah who will one day open the scroll and unleash its seven seals. We even have new Bible translations that are designed to bring God down to man rather than man up to God, all kinds of subtle ways to compromise the gospel as if we are ashamed of it.

Many worship services are nothing more than entertainment. Take away the music and nobody would come. Pulpits are filled today with entrepreneurs committed to a gospel of self fulfillment rather than preachers committed to the gospel of self denial. The wide gate gospel attracts the many, Jesus tells us. But the narrow gate only a few. One leads to destruction, the other leads to life.

Dear friends, whenever we marginalize the gospel and try to remove the offense of the cross, we utterly eviscerate its power to save.

There are many other ways in which the gospel has been distorted. In the first century Paul dealt with the issue of the Judaizers, false teachers that insisted upon some system of works in addition to grace. Paul talked about it being a different gospel in Galatians 1:6.

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By the way, that error is at the heart of Roman Catholicism and, frankly, every other false religion system that believes that somehow the righteousness of man can contribute to grace and somehow earn reconciliation to God and eternal life. There is the Marxist social gospel of black liberation theology which is so powerful today, affirmed by our president and taught by his mentor Jeremiah Wright. It is nothing more than a spin off of liberation theology from Latin America developed in the 1960s by some Catholic priests, later on moved into Nicaragua. We used to call them Sandinistas, you may recall.

One commentator described it as, quote, “Marxist political philosophy emblazoned with a cross and a pulpit and pretending to rely on the Bible for its glory.”

Of course, in this gospel the—this distorted gospel—they see Jesus as the great liberator of oppressed people, especially blacks and so on. It is tragic, isn't it? So many examples. Satan is the father of lies as he has demonstrated in the garden. And one of his most ingenious methods of deception is to take the truth and suddenly twist it so that ultimately it becomes a lie. And, like a Chinese buffet there is a distortion available to satisfy everyone's personal taste. Just pick the one you want, because for most the pure gospel is simply too bitter. Only the Holy Spirit can change us and make it sweeter than honey.

You know, we need to remember that and not try to somehow sweeten it up because are ashamed of the way its flavor might be to sinners in need of salvation. Let the Holy Spirit sweeten it up on his own. He will do that.

Now, notice verse 15.

Paul says, “I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”⁶

And then he adds, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel.”⁷

Now, why? Why is he not ashamed of the gospel?

Well, because he understood three astounding aspects of salvation and he is going to elaborate on that throughout the remainder of this epistle. But today we are going to look at the issue, number one. He is not ashamed because of “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”⁸

Now think about it. Sinful man is always trying to save himself from all of the plagues of life, all of the things that he struggles with in this life and even save himself for whatever might be in the hereafter, whatever he has concocted in his own mind.

⁶ Romans 1:15.

⁷ Romans 1:16.

⁸ Ibid.

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From the lady that refuses to be seen in public without her makeup, to the man who is absolutely consumed with making another buck so that he can buy more stuff, nobody is satisfied with himself. No one is satisfied with life as it is. Something always needs to be different. There needs to be a change. We wish things were different at every area of our life.

And ever since sin entered the world, man has been trying to save himself from the curse. He is constantly trying to survive. He is constantly trying to make sense out of this thing called life and death.

Think of all the competing philosophical and political and religious systems that are out there today, all of these things that man has developed to somehow give him the answers to life, to somehow give him a world view that helps him interpret why he is here, what he is supposed to be doing, how to survive and what about life after death? Think of all the systems that are out there.

Have any of them brought any lasting change? Have any of them brought any unassailable joy? Have any of them brought genuine hope? None.

Change we can believe in. Do you remember the slogan that our current president used to convince the American public that he had the answers?

Many saw him as kind of the new Messiah. What happened two years later? The citizens rejected that change. They were so disillusioned by it. There was a resounding repudiation of that change in the midterm elections, the likes of which have not been seen since the 1930s.

However, may I remind you that regardless of who the leader is, regardless of the philosophical system, regardless of the religion, no human being has the answers we need. Man needs salvation and man knows it, but he just doesn't know from what he needs to be saved and to what he needs to be saved. He hasn't a clue.

Now this was precisely the issue that Paul was addressing here with respect to God being the power in salvation. And he addressed this, as well, in 1 Corinthians one. I am going to ask you to turn there with me, turn to 1 Corinthians chapter one.

We want to look at this text for a moment because it helps us understand more of what Paul meant when he said here in Romans chapter one that he wasn't ashamed of the gospel because it was the power of God for salvation to everyone who believed, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Notice in verse 20 of 1 Corinthians chapter one he says, "Where is the wise man?"⁹

Now this refers to the Greek philosophers who tried to explain the meaning of life.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:20.

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Then he says, “Where is the scribe?”¹⁰

It is a reference to the Greek speaking Jewish experts in the law of God who claimed that they had all of the answers with respect to a proper worldview.

Then he says, “Where is the debater of this age?”¹¹

This would have been a reference to the Greek orator that was skilled in philosophy and rhetoric and could sway the masses with their explanations of life and death.

And he says, “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”¹²

And then he goes on to say that he has done this, really, in two ways.

Notice verse 21.

“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”¹³

The verse 23 tells us what the message preached was. It is the message of Christ crucified.

Now think about this. How has God made foolish the wisdom of the world? Two ways. First of all by his all wise providence that deliberately made sinful man ignorant of the very key that explains all of life, that explains all of eternity, namely the cross, the gospel.

Notice verse 21, first section. He says, “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God.”¹⁴

So there we see that God deliberately concealed these truths from man. But then he has also made foolish the wisdom of the world by his sovereign choice to save some through a message that the wisdom of the world could have never conceived, that the world considers to be utter folly, namely the preaching of Christ crucified.

At the end of verse 21.

“God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”¹⁵

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 1:21.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:21.

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You see, beloved, for this reason Paul began this very section declaring in verse 18, “For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”¹⁶

Here the apostle Paul divides the human race into two categories of people, those who are perishing and those who are being saved. The message of the cross to those who are perishing is foolishness. To those who are being saved it is the power of God.

You could also divide it with the word “called” versus those who are not called.

In verse 23 he says:

But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.¹⁷

Now you must understand the context of the culture. To the Greeks crucifixion was so horrifying as a means of death that they would never even discuss it in private company, certainly not in public. That was something reserved for the most vile of all criminals.

Now to the Jews a crucified Messiah was pure blasphemy because, you see, every Jew understood that God himself declared that anyone who hangs upon a tree is accursed by God, Deuteronomy 21:23.

So to come along and to preach the gospel of God that exalts the atoning work of Jesus Christ, calling him the Son of God, the long awaited Messiah, one who would voluntarily die upon a cross for the sins of the so-called called who were being saved, my goodness, this was so exceedingly reprehensible. It was so offensive. It was so ridiculously implausible that it was a stumbling block to the Jews and utter foolishness, literally madness to the Gentiles.

But Paul says to the called and also to those who are being saved, it, referring to the gospel, the message of the cross, is the what? The power of God.

Verse 25.

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”¹⁸

Now, beloved, this is utterly astonishing. I ask you. What philosophy, what religion of man has ever conceived of such a thing, that of an incarnate God coming to die upon a cross, to pay the penalty for sinners?

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 1:18.

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:23-24.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:25.

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The answer is: none. It has never been conceived because God prevented it. God prevented it. And for this reason Paul said in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”¹⁹

D A Carson said this, quote, “What the world dismisses as sheer foolishness, the foolishness of God proves wiser than man’s wisdom. What the world writes off as hopeless weakness, the weakness of God proves stronger than man’s strength.”

This is much more radical than saying that God has more wisdom than human beings or that he is stronger than human beings as if he were dealing with mere degrees of wisdom and power. No, no. We are dealing with polar opposites. Human, quote, wisdom and, quote, strength are, from God’s perspective, rebellious folly and moral weakness.

He goes on to say, “The moment when God most dramatically discloses his own wisdom and strength, the moment when his own dear Son is crucified, although it is laughed out of court by the tawdry wisdom of this rebellious world, by the pathetic strength of the self deceived, is nevertheless the moment of divine wisdom and divine power. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength,” end quote.

Dear Christian, let this sink deep into the very core of your being. Think about it. The gospel, the message of the cross is the God ordained, God revealed, God empowered means by which he saves man from all that plagues him including the wrath of a holy God.

You see, by the power of God, the gospel is good news to man both collectively as well as individually. Think about it. Collectively our world is disintegrating.

Look at the economic systems in our world today, governments, all of the terrorism, violence escalating at an alarming pace, tensions on the Korean peninsula as I speak, nations controlled by madmen threatening other nations with nuclear weapons.

We look around and we see the cultures of the world in decline, sinking into an abyss of immorality and entitlement and greedy materialism and so forth. And all of this is a result of sin, a result of the curse upon the earth and all that dwell in it.

But because of the cross we know that the Messiah King will one day return. And much of the curse is going to be lifted when he returns. And he is going to establish his glorious kingdom and all of this will be radically changed. In fact the prophet Habakkuk tells us that one day the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

So, collectively, the gospel is good news to us. But also individually think about it. The

¹⁹ Romans 1:16.

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gospel is good news because by the power of God we are saved from three things, if you want to think of it this way, from the penalty, the power and the pollution of sin.

There is a penalty for sin. Because man has violated God's holy law, only God by his power can save us and we stand condemned because of that violation. And yet the power of God in salvation comes along and delivers us from that just wrath and gives us eternal life. Inconceivable power.

He also saves us from the power of sin. We know that man is a slave to sin. Man is drawn to sin like a fly is drawn to manure. And we all understand that. We see it in our own lives. We are also under the dominion of Satan. Sinful man is the unwitting slave of Satan.

Paul called him the god of this world. He is called the prince and the power of the air, that spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience.

You see, man cannot extricate himself from this tyranny. He is totally dependant upon God to do something and therein comes the power of God to save. The gospel is also good news because it saves us not just from the penalty and the power of sin, but from the pollution of it.

Sin is a metastasizing corruption, is it not? It is an evil that just keeps growing. It never gets dormant. It never stops. It certainly never reverses. It results in degradation and disease and misery and hopelessness and death. In fact, as Peter put it in 2 Peter 1:4 there is a corruption that is in the world by lust.

You see sin's pollution is not manifested just in the world, but in our very nature. And sin is so powerful that it can be so subtle and so seductive that we can't even see it in our own life. It is in our very nature.

Paul said in Romans seven verse 20, "Sin dwells in me."

Verse 21 he says that he sees the principle that is evil or that evil is present in me.

Verse 23 he says that he sees, "a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members."²⁰

But think about it. By the power of God in salvation we will one day, as Jude says, "stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy."²¹

That is inconceivable power. As Paul said in Ephesians five, we are going to have no spot. We are going to have no wrinkle or any such thing, but we are going to be holy and blameless. Only God could pull that off.

²⁰ Romans 7:23.

²¹ Jude 24.

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Yes, this is why Paul is not ashamed of the gospel. And, indeed, it is going to be foolishness to the perishing. We know that, but to the called, to the elect of God, to those who are being saved it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

When we consider the power of God for salvation we would all do well to remember some of the most basic principles in understanding the biblical doctrine of salvation. Think about it. As we study Scripture we know—and this is so fundamental—man is totally unable to save himself. There are several reasons why.

First of all, by reason of depravity. As we study Scripture we see that all that man is and all that man does is fundamentally offensive to God.

The prophet Isaiah tells us in chapter 64 verse six that all our righteous deeds are like filthy garments.

Paul says in Romans 3:23 that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

But we are also unable to save ourselves not only because of depravity but also by reason of condemnation. You see, man enters this life already under the sentence of divine wrath because of sin committed in Adam, Romans 5:12.

We come into this world already condemned.

Ephesians two verse two sinful man is described as the sons of disobedience.

Verse three, by nature children of wrath.

Man also cannot save himself by reason of alienation. You see, man is in rebellion against God. He is set in rebellion against God.

Romans 8:7.

“The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.”²²

Talk about helpless.

Ephesians 4:18. Sinners are described as being darkened in their understanding. They are excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart.

Indeed, dear friends, man is totally unable to save himself by reason of depravity, by reason of condemnation, by reason of alienation and, finally, by reason of a corrupted will.

²² Romans 8:7.

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You see, apart from God's convicting power the will of man is fully set in him to do evil. His every choice is self centered, not God centered.

Romans three and verse 11. There is none who seeks after God.

John makes this clear in chapter one verse 13. He says we are born again, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."²³

You see, the point here is we can't save ourselves. So we are, as we would say here in Tennessee, in a world of hurt. If God doesn't do something, we are doomed. We are utterly dependent upon him to save us. And so we can rejoice and we can echo what Paul says that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. That is what he uses.

Oh, there is a key text as I thought about this in Philippians two verse 13. Paul says, "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."²⁴

Think about that. It is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Oh, child of God, don't you see this? This is the power of God in salvation. It is God who is at work in you. You see, the indwelling of God in the believer is a very common theme that we read in the Pauline epistles. And it helps us understand why he would say that he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation, because he knows that it is God who is at work in him, in you, in me. He understands that.

Think about the Old Testament background, the Jewish exodus from Egypt is the grand prototype of redemption, isn't it? In Exodus 29 verses 45 and 46 God describes his powerful work in those he redeems.

He says:

And I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.²⁵

Now the principle, dear friends, is that the God who redeems is the God who inhabits. The reason why God redeems is that he might inhabit, that he might transform and live within us. When we see how he inhabits in the great pictures of, for example, the tabernacle where God dwelt in the midst of his nomadic people in the holy of holies and

²³ 1 John 1:13.

²⁴ Philippians 2:13.

²⁵ Exodus 29:45-46.

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then later in the temple in Jerusalem. There was a permanent dwelling. And there God designed for himself a place to inhabit there in the holy of holies.

Now, beloved, I ask you. Where is the temple now? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, a Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and that you are not your own? Do you not know that, Paul says.

1 Corinthians six, “For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”²⁶

Beloved, this is the power of God for salvation.

You see, by his power he called you. By his power although you were depraved and you were condemned and although you were alienated, although you were corrupted, he still called you. And when you heard the message of the cross, it was not foolishness to you. It was eternal life. God did something in you and in me to cause us to hear the truth and to respond in faith and obedience. And by his grace we responded in faith and God redeemed you and when he redeemed you, what did he do? He indwelt you and he started working in you.

God not only indwells. The text tells us that he works today this very minute he is at work in you, both, the text says, to will and to work for his good pleasure. Isn't that great? The idea here in the original language is that he is constantly at work in us based upon his initiative.

I am so glad that he does that because I so seldom cooperate with that. Aren't you glad that God is at work? That is the power of God.

My goodness, if it was left up to me, where would I be?

Notice it doesn't say that we have to wait until we pray. We don't have to wait until we obey. No, what a blessing to know that he is at work. And the text says he does his work for his good pleasure, not mine.

Boy, mine is so hopelessly warped. You see, dear friends, God purposes not to keep you and me happy, but to conform us into the image of Christ. That is the power of the cross.

Imagine the Sistine Chapel between 1508 and 1512. Michelangelo was painting those astounding images of theology on the ceiling of that chapel and history tells us that Michelangelo designed his own scaffolding from which to work. It was an ugly wooden, flat platform attached by brackets on the wall and from holes in the wall near the top up by the windows. And rather than building the scaffolding from the floor up and this would have involved some massive structure had he done that, but by building it up that way it would allow worshippers to come in and continue to use the chapel.

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:20.

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We are told that a light weight screen was developed and was suspended below the scaffolding so that it could catch all of the plaster and paint and dust and all of the things that he was using.

And for four years people would smell that obnoxious odor. They would look up and see that unsightly, disgusting mess. But one day the artist's work was done. And that ugly old scaffolding was pulled away and what once was concealed in an ugly shroud was suddenly revealed in breathtaking beauty arguably the most incredible piece of artwork in the history of the world.

Beloved, this is a perfect picture of the Church, isn't it, of us, of you and me? By the power of God he saves us and then he indwells us and then he goes to work on us. And what the world sees isn't very pretty. It is often an ugly mess. It even smells. But one day, one day the scaffolding of our sanctification is going to be removed. One day the master artist will reveal to the world his masterpiece, his Church.

Why? Because it is his power that has saved us.

In Romans 8:19 we read that, “the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.”²⁷

That is when all the scaffolding is off, when the Lord returns and says, “Here is my Church. Here is my bride.”

In Ephesians 5:25 he says

[He] gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.²⁸

Beloved, this is the power of God to save.

Ephesians two verse eight.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are [what?] His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.²⁹

²⁷ Romans 8:19.

²⁸ Ephesians 5:25-27.

²⁹ Ephesians 2:8-10.

Why Never to Be Ashamed of the Gospel – Part 1

Romans 1:16-17

You see, it was the sovereignty of God that ordained our salvation and it is the power of God that accomplishes it. That is the key.

So, beloved, why be ashamed of the gospel? It seems rather ridiculous, doesn't it?

The power of God. Apart from it we would have no hope. That is why Paul said in Philippians 1:6, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."³⁰

Dear Christian, remember that salvation is accomplished, from beginning to end and in all of its parts, by the power of God alone. Salvation originates by the plan of God. As we study Scripture we see that salvation is made possible by the grace of God. It is brought to completion by the power of God. Indeed, every aspect of any man's salvation from regeneration all the way to glorification is ultimately a work of God. And the supreme and ruling motivation of God in the salvation of any man is his own glory. Indeed we have been rescued by the grace and by the power of God.

So for this reason the apostle Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."³¹

Let me leave you this morning with a challenge. I would encourage you to take an inventory of your life. Be brutally honest. Go before the Lord. Ask the Spirit of God to help you see these things. And just take an inventory and list the ways that your life demonstrates that somehow you are ashamed of the gospel. I am confident that by the power of the Spirit that list will be long.

And then I want you to take that list and compare it to what you have heard today regarding the power of God for salvation and then humble yourself in deep contrition and repent and find those ways that you have been ashamed. Cry out to the Spirit of God and say, "Oh, by your power may I never conduct myself in that way again."

Let us pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. They are so overwhelming to us. We confess that our salvation is all of your grace and we rejoice in your power to bring it to fruition. Oh, God, what a day that will be. Thank you for the power of the gospel. Thank you for the power of the cross. And for those that do not know you as Savior, oh God, would that you overwhelm them with such a sense of horror that they will instantly cry out for the mercy that you will so immediately give. We pray this in the precious name of Jesus and for his sake. Amen.

³⁰ Philippians 1:6.

³¹ Romans 1:16.

Why Never to Be Ashamed of the Gospel – Part 1

Romans 1:16-17

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