

**The Book of Romans**  
**The Keynote of Romans (Part 1)**

Romans 1:16-17

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We come this morning to what is really the heart of Paul's letter to the Romans. We begin to see him unfold the theme of the gospel. You would think because the gospel is good news that people everywhere, when they hear it, are eager to receive it. But that is absolutely not the case. In fact, for 2,000 years Christianity has largely borne the brunt of the world's sarcasm and ridicule.

In the late second century a man named Celsus launched the first comprehensive attack against the Christian faith. This is what Celsus wrote, now 1800 years ago, "Let no cultured person draw near, none wise, none sensible, for all that kind of thing they count evil, but if any man is ignorant, if any man is wanting in sense and culture, if any is a fool, then let him come boldly to the Christian faith." He called Christians, quote, the most uneducated and vulgar of persons. He compared Christians to a swarm of bats, to ants, to frogs holding a symposium in a swamp, to worms cowering in the mud. And that tune continues to be played to our day. If you doubt that just go online and read some of the vitriol and hatred that's poured out on Christian websites by those who hate our faith.

Now, why is it that our faith is so often the object of the world's scorn? It is primarily because of the core content of our faith, which we call the gospel. You say, why would the good news cause scorn and ridicule? Why would it be hated? Well, think about what the gospel says. The gospel accuses all men of having deceitful hearts, polluted consciences, evil and selfish motives, and being filled with pervasive pride. It argues that the very best human beings can do is defiled and unacceptable before God. In fact, man's best actions can be compared to menstrual rags. It identifies the source of all of man's problems as sin. In fact, the gospel says that every human being, without exception, is a fallen sinner living in rebellion against God and merely awaiting the, sort of, looming display of the wrath of God.

It proclaims that a peasant carpenter, who was crucified as a criminal under the Romans, who rose from the dead, is in fact the Son of God and the Savior of the world. That by turning from one's sins and putting all of one's faith and confidence in that crucified carpenter, and in Him alone, the sinner can be radically changed from the inside out in a moment of time. He can have his sins forgiven and he can be made right with God.

When the world hears that message, the way they typically respond is the same way the Athenians responded on Mars Hill. You remember the response? When they heard Paul reciting

the gospel, there were a few who believed, but by and large they said, this man is an “idle babbler,” “a proclaimer of strange deities,” and when they heard about the resurrection they “began to sneer.”

Since the gospel is so often the source of ridicule and, let’s be honest, since none of us likes to be ridiculed and scorned, it’s a constant temptation to be ashamed of it. Paul addresses that temptation in the text that we come to this morning. And Paul says, I understand the temptation, but “I am not ashamed.”

Now, let me just remind you of what we’re studying together, the book of Romans is the most magnificent and profound explanation of the gospel ever written. It was written from Corinth near the end of Paul’s third missionary journey, probably around the year 56 AD. The theme of this letter is introduced in the very first verse. At the end of the first verse Paul says, I have been appointed, “set apart for the gospel of God,” the good news that finds its source in God, God’s announcement of good news concerning His Son.

Now, having introduced that theme he develops it a little more in just an introductory way. And really the first 17 verses are sort of introduction to the letter. As we’ve noted, verses 1 to 7, his greeting to the churches there in Rome, a general statement about his calling, about his particular commission to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. Then, in verses 8 to 15 Paul describes his relationship as an apostle to the Christians in Rome and he details, as we’ve studied together, his long-time desire to come to Rome. Notice, he ends verse 15 by asserting that he is “eager to preach the gospel in Rome,” and in verses 16 and 17 he explains why, why that eagerness is there in his heart. And in fact, he explains why his life, his ministry, and this letter, are all devoted to the gospel, and in so doing, Paul provides a formal introduction to this letter’s theme.

Notice in verse 16, he introduces us to the theme of the gospel and develops that theme a little bit, and then in verse 17 you’ll notice he gives us a brief exposition of exactly what the gospel is. The gospel is simply a message about righteousness from God. In other words, it is about that righteousness that comes from God, that God gives to the sinner as a gift by grace alone, based on the life and death of Jesus Christ alone. A right standing before God, that’s what the gospel is about. It tells us how we can move from being sinners to having a righteousness, a right standing before God, outside of ourselves. We receive this gift, and he’s very clear about this in verses 16 and 17, this gift of righteousness, by faith alone.

Now, these two verses then, verses 16 and 17, establish the theme or the thesis of the book. The rest of the letter is, in some sense, an exposition of these verses. In fact, it’s not an exaggeration to say that these two verses are the essence of Biblical Christianity. They are the heart of true religion and as we will learn, they are even, in these two sentences, they are the foundation for the Protestant Reformation. Let’s read them together. Let’s get a running start and we’ll begin back up in verse 13.

I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

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, [*that is, in the gospel*] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

In these verses Paul tells us that the gospel is the power of God and it is what produces salvation in the hearts of everyone who believes. And the reason that’s true is because it reveals, the gospel reveals, or manifests, it explains, how sinners can gain a right standing before God through the work of Jesus Christ.

Now, notice Paul begins his brief powerful statement of the thesis of this letter in a very surprising way. Verse 16, he says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel.” For us to really appreciate what Paul really means here, and why he begins this way, we need to sort of transport ourselves back in time for a moment. So I want you to do that with me. We need to reorient our thinking to the culture of the first century, because the worlds of the Old and New Testament were very different from our own, especially when it comes to this issue of shame.

When we think of shame, we think of subjective feelings of shame. I feel shame because of guilt, or I feel shame because of inadequacy or inferiority or some other feeling inside. But shame and honor in the biblical setting, particularly in the Greco-Roman world of the New Testament, involved much more than that. Their culture was all about honor and shame. It was an honor shame society. In fact, one writer describing the Greek world said this, “The chief good was to be well spoken of, the chief evil to be badly spoken of, by one’s society.”

Try to imagine, you know, we live in a world where there is increasingly very little sense of shame, but try to imagine a culture where the chief good, more than wealth, more than status, more than any of that, the chief good was being well thought of, having a good reputation, and the chief evil, on the other hand, was being poorly thought of. In that context, shame was not a subjective feeling; it was the public humiliation of someone who had previously enjoyed a position of honor and respect. It was an objective loss of status and reputation.

In the Old Testament, for example, there were specific acts that were designed to undermine the status and respect of certain people, to publicly shame them. Let me give you just a couple of examples, just so you know what I’m talking about. You remember in Deuteronomy 25, there’s what’s called the Levirate marriage. If a man died without children, his unmarried brother was to marry his widow and raise up children. That was for the good of the nation, the nation of

Israel, so that the nation would grow and thrive. However, the brother could refuse to marry the widow, but if he refused there was a public ceremony he had to endure and the whole point of the public ceremony was to publicly shame him for his unwillingness to take up that responsibility. You remember how it went, Deuteronomy 25, it's detailed, everybody assembled, they assembled in the gate or in the square in the market where it was a public event, and in the middle of that public event the widow would take the shoe off of his foot and she would spit in his face. It was a way of saying, here is the man who refused to do what he was obligated to do. He is worthy of shame. He is worthy of losing his honor.

Another example is in 2 Samuel 10; the king of one of the neighboring countries, Ammon, had died and David sent ambassadors to Amman as a gesture of goodwill. However, the leaders of Amman misunderstood and they accused the men David sent of being spies, and so they wanted to shame them before they sent them back to Israel. And so they cut off half their beards and they cut off their robes from the waist down. Again, this was to publicly shame them. It was to objectively remove a sense of honor and dignity from them. And here's how they responded. The text says, "they were greatly humiliated."

Now, when you come to the New Testament era, in the Roman world there was one public act that was designed to bring the deepest and most profound stigma of shame. It was the act of public crucifixion. You see, crucifixion was not merely a torturous means of execution, although it was certainly that. It was intended to place an indelible stigma on the victim. In fact, just to show you that was true, there were times when the Romans would crucify someone who was already dead. Every step in the process of crucifixion was designed to produce greater humiliation and loss of honor.

Martin Hengel, in his book, excellent book, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, documents the process of designed humiliation in the public crucifixion of someone. Let me just give it to you, so you understand what this was about. It began with a public trial. Now again, the key element here is it's in public. So all of the bad things about this person that would bring them to need to be crucified are brought out to everyone; they know what happened in this man's life. It's intended to degrade the status of the accused and to label him as a shameful person. Once the sentence was passed it was followed by flogging, by torture, and especially the shedding of blood. And again, in that culture that was a way to degrade, to shame.

Thirdly, the victims were crucified usually completely naked, as was likely the case in the case of our Lord. And in the lengthy course of dying, the many hours and even days, they often fouled themselves with their own urine and excrement; that was adding to the shame of their death. They were forced to carry their own cross beam through the public streets of the city to the place of execution. Again, that was to mark them out as a shameful person who was so

desperately wicked that they needed to be crucified. Their personal property was confiscated, like their clothing, for example. Everything that belonged to them was taken away.

Executions were a crude form of public entertainment and so the crowds were encouraged to come and to heap their mocking, their ridicule, on the person who was dying, as we see in the case of Christ. Rome would sometimes fasten the victims to the crosses in whimsical, sort of distorted ways. It was all to make them a joke, to make them a laughing stock. In many cases the victims were denied honorable burial. In fact, their corpses would be left on display for all to see and they would be devoured by carrion birds and by wild animals. What I want you to see is that everything about the process of public execution was designed intentionally to shame that person, to remove all honor, and make them a person of public derision and shame.

Because of this, the Romans in secular writings often referred to crucifixion, and to the cross specifically, as a tree of shame. It was considered so despicable, so degrading, that Cicero argued that an honorable Roman should never even mention the word cross in polite conversation. Most followed his advice, in spite of hundreds of thousands of Roman crucifixions. The fullest accounts that we possess of crucifixion and the process is contained in the Gospels.

We can't fully understand this. As we sit here this morning there may be a Bible stitched, or excuse me, a cross stitched on the front of your Bible. There may be a cross hanging on a necklace around your neck. There's a cross in the window behind me. We have taken honor in the cross, but that was not the culture of the first century. It was shameful. You didn't talk about it. And anyone who died that way was the ultimate object of derision and shame.

That was the cultural climate in which Paul lived and preached and it was the context in which he wrote, "I am not ashamed." It was Paul's recognition that the gospel, by its very nature, is something that Christians are constantly tempted to be ashamed of. John Chrysostom, one of the most capable of the early expositors of the church, said this, "Paul was going to preach Jesus, who was thought to be a carpenter's son. He had no bodyguards. He was not encircled in wealth, but even died as a culprit with robbers, and endured many other inglorious things." You see, because of all of this, it was a temptation in the first century for Christians to be ashamed.

It was a temptation for Jesus's disciples. You remember in Mark 8:38, He says to them, "whoever is ashamed of Me and My words," my teaching, the gospel, "in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." It was a temptation even for Paul. Why would he say, "I am not ashamed"? James Stewart, a pastor in Edinburgh, wrote a commentary on this letter, said, "It makes no sense to say that you are not ashamed of something unless there is a good reason to have been tempted to be ashamed." Timothy was tempted to be ashamed. Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:8, "do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His

prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.” Timothy, don’t be ashamed, don’t be ashamed of Christ or the gospel.

It was a temptation for the people in Rome. Paul eventually makes it to Rome, twice. You remember, he makes it during his first imprisonment. He’s released. That’s the imprisonment recorded at the end of the Book of Acts. But then he’s imprisoned a second time and it’s from that second imprisonment that he writes his second letter to Timothy. And it’s in that second imprisonment that ends with his death. And what does he say when he’s in Rome about the response of the church? He says, in 2 Timothy 1:15, “all who are in Asia turned away from me,” except a man named Onesiphorus, who “was not ashamed of my chains.”

Can we just acknowledge that for every single one of us who are truly in Christ there have been times in our lives and experience when we have been ashamed? You see, our society is happy to tolerate an emasculated form of Christianity as long as it’s content to be one of a number of viable options. But the people around us are every bit as intolerant of the true gospel and the true Christ and those who embrace Him as those who lived in the first century were. Nothing’s changed.

Sometimes that intolerance breaks out in physical violence and persecution. We’re praying for our brothers and sisters right now in places on this planet where that’s exactly what they’re experiencing. But in our culture, for the most part, it appears in more subtle forms. It appears as ridicule, insults, sarcasm, negative depiction of evangelical Christians in the news and in media, television, and film. Or maybe it appears in the subtle form of, you pull up behind a car and on the bumper there is a fish growing legs, or maybe it’s a shark devouring the fish, which is the Christian symbol. Read the comments on various sites where Christian things appear. Read the hatred and the vitriol that pour out of people against the Christian faith.

And as you and I observe and experience those things, we are tempted to be ashamed of the foundation of our faith, the gospel. You say, I’ve never been tempted to be ashamed. Well, I think Lloyd Jones was correct when he wrote this, that if you’ve never been ashamed of the gospel the real reason “is not that you are such an exceptionally good Christian, but rather that your understanding of the Christian message has never been that clear.” If you really understand it, you really understand what it’s saying about everyone and what it’s saying is the solution, you can be tempted and have been tempted to be ashamed.

It’s a temptation because the gospel of Christ is nothing but the story about a publicly shamed man. Because of that, to the Greeks and Romans, it just was foolishness. Look at 1 Corinthians 1, 1 Corinthians 1:18, “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.” Verse 23, “we preach Christ crucified, to Gentiles foolishness.” It doesn’t make any sense. It’s stupid. Martin Hengel, in the book I mentioned already, writes, “To assert that God Himself accepted death, in the form of a crucified Jewish manual worker from Galilee, in order to break the power of death and bring salvation to all men, could only seem folly and madness to

men of ancient times.” And to the Jews it was a stumbling block. Notice verse 23, “we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block.” They couldn’t conceive of the Messiah being thus shamed.

In fact, there was a series of debates in the second century between the early church father Justin Martyr and the leading Jewish apologist of the time, a man named Trypho, and Trypho responded to Justin Martyr in one of those debates in this way. He said, “It is quite clear that the Scriptures announce that Messiah had to suffer, but prove to us whether He must be crucified and die so disgracefully and so dishonorably, the death accursed in the Law. For we cannot bring ourselves even to consider this.”

Because of Paul’s message, the outside world, both the Jews and the Gentiles, labeled him as a fool, as a shameful man, a man with no honor, a man deserving of ill respect, deserving a bad treatment. But in spite of all of that, Paul says, he’s unashamed. Now, how could Paul ignore the public shame that came with this message? Well, in Romans 1:16-17, as he lays out his thesis, he explains why he felt no shame. And as he explains his own lack of shame, Paul provides us with the reasons that, as Christians, we should never be ashamed of the gospel as well.

So, I want to look at the reasons that we shouldn’t be ashamed, the reasons he wasn’t ashamed. The first reason we should never be ashamed of the gospel is that it is God’s power. It is God’s power. Look at verse 16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for,” because, here’s the reason I’m not ashamed, “it is the power of God.” Now, Paul is really making two statements there about the gospel. He’s saying it’s from God. In fact, he said that back in verse 1, it’s the gospel which comes from God, He’s the source of this announcement about His Son. But also, in verse 16 he’s saying, it is powerful.

Now, this is very important because when you consider the shame attached to Paul and his message of a crucified God it’s amazing anyone ever believed, in that culture. So, Paul here explains why the church multiplied. Why in a single day 3,000 people believed this message of shame. There’s only one explanation. It’s because this message, this good news, is the power of God. John MacArthur writes, “Inherent in the gospel message is the power of an omnipotent God.” It’s through the gospel that God exercises His power in the human soul. The Romans appreciated power. In fact, they took great pride in their military power. But Paul tells the Roman Christians, listen, the gospel I preach is much more powerful, because your power destroys, the gospel rescues.

Now, the Greek word translated power here in verse 16 is used frequently in the Septuagint, in the translation of the Bible in the first century, to describe God’s power in rescuing people. In fact, it’s used in Exodus 9:16 of the Exodus, when God demonstrated magnificent power to bring His people out of their slavery. This is the kind of power we’re talking about, rescuing power.

Notice that Paul does not say the gospel is about God's power. He says the gospel itself is power. It is the means God uses to save sinners. God saves through the message of the gospel. What does James say in James 1:18? He says, "God brought us forth," God birthed us, God gave us life, "by the word of truth," by the gospel. In 1 Peter 1:23, Peter says, we were "born again," we were given new spiritual life as though we had been rebirthed, "through the living and enduring word of God." God's Word, specifically the gospel, is the instrument that God uses to bring a spiritually dead heart to life. In fact, the gospel's power lies in the fact that it is through the gospel message God calls sinners to Himself.

Turn back to 1 Corinthians 1 again. I want you to see this, 1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the word of the cross," the message about the cross, the message about what Christ did in dying for sins on the cross, "is foolishness to those who are perishing." If you're here this morning and, you know what, you can take this or leave this, this is, I don't know, that seems a little odd. It's because you're perishing. It's because you are dying. You are already dead in your sin and you are moving toward what the Bible calls eternal death.

But, to us "who are being saved it," that is, the message about the cross, "is the power of God." Verse 21, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God." In other words, what Paul's saying is, God in His wisdom decided He would not allow people to arrive at the truth through their own wisdom and so in God's wisdom He came up with a plan that throws human wisdom on its head. "God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached," or we could say, through the foolish message about the cross, through that message, "to save those who believe."

Now, how does He do that? Look at verse 23,

we preach Messiah crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ [*or Messiah*] the power of God and the wisdom of God.

You know what he's saying? He's saying, the gospel is the instrument that God uses to call people to Himself. If you're in Christ you are the called. And what that means is, He used the gospel to call you to Himself.

The gospel is an announcement to everyone proclaiming what God has done and will do for those who believe. But for those who are the called there was a moment in time when God was, in that general announcement of the gospel, deliberately, specifically, drawing them, calling them to Himself. They are the called. It's all God's doing; it's all God's power. You know, that's encouraging because it means my salvation doesn't depend on me or on my faithfulness. God's power is what saves, keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies.



Now, when we say it is the power of God, don't misunderstand. The power is not in the letters or the words of the gospel. Those, in and of themselves, don't have the power in them to save. Paul described it this way in 1 Thessalonians 1:5. He said, "my gospel came to you not in word only." You see, if you only hear the gospel, you may have grown up in a Christian home, you've heard the gospel your whole life, and you've heard it and it's done nothing to you, because you heard it in word only. But Paul says to the Thessalonians, "my gospel came to you not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Spirit." The power in the gospel is not in the letters and words, it's in the convicting and illuminating power of the Spirit, but the message of the gospel is what He uses.

When the gospel is preached, just as I have already done today, it is not so many words, it is the power of God at work. Listen folks, don't be ashamed, don't be ashamed to communicate the gospel to a family member or a neighbor or a co-worker. Because as you share the gospel message the power of God will work in and through that message. In some cases it will bring life. You will be the one who sows the seed. You'll be the one who waters the seed somebody else already sowed in the past. Or maybe you get to be the one who sees God bring that person to life. The power of God will be at work in the gospel.

Or maybe, sadly, you'll be the person who sows the gospel and it will be the power of God to further show the sin and guilt of that person. Remember, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:16 that sometimes I preach the gospel and it only brings further condemnation. It brings death to those who will not believe it. Other times it's a fragrance of life. But regardless, when you bring the gospel it is the power of God. It's doing what God wants it to do in that life, either for life or for death. So Paul argues that we should never be ashamed of the gospel because "it is the power of God."

Now, there's a second reason that he gives us for not being ashamed of the gospel, it's because it produces salvation. Look again at verse 16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation." That's the main idea here. Paul is not commenting in verse 16 about God's general power, His creative power, His sustaining power. He's talking about His rescuing power. He says that God works in the gospel to produce salvation.

Now, Paul uses this word group, salvation, you know, it comes in various forms, to be saved, etc.; he uses it in all of its forms about 50 times in his letters. And Paul uses it exclusively to refer to spiritual deliverance. This word salvation, as you know, is a general term that refers to everything that God does to bring a sinner into proper relationship with Himself. It includes, salvation includes, concepts like justification (which we'll get to, Lord willing, next week), redemption, sanctification, and even glorification. Salvation is the large concept that includes it all. And the good news, the gospel, is how that salvation becomes ours. We are saved through the gospel.

Now, what does it mean to be saved? You know, that's a good word, it's a biblical word. I grew up hearing that word, but it was never really defined for me. What do we mean when we talk about God saving someone? The word simply means "to rescue." We're talking about spiritual rescue. But then the question is, rescued from what and to what? You see, normally when we think of salvation we think of it as solely negative, what we are saved from. But did you realize we are also saved to something? Let me give you a little list of what we are saved from and what we are saved to. Let me encourage you to jot this down. Think about this, because if you're in Christ this is you; this is what God has done in your life. This is what "being saved" means.

First of all, it means that He has saved us from objective guilt to righteousness. Look at chapter 3 of Romans. In verses 19 and 20 Paul concludes his indictment of the whole human race. We're going to go through his indictment of all humanity and this is how he wraps it up. Romans 3:19, "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law," both Jews who have the written Law and Gentiles who have the Law written on the heart, Romans 2:14, and the result of that is, "that every mouth may be closed." You know what he's talking about? He's talking about the day of judgment.

When every single person stands on the day of judgment, they will have no excuse, nothing to say. You know, everybody talks about they're going to tell God this and tell God that. Listen, when a sinner stands before God, his hand will be over his mouth and his face will be in the dirt. "Every mouth will be closed and all the world may become," literally, "guilty before God." Everybody, guilty, "because through the Law," verse 20, "everybody learned about the nature of sin." So there is objective guilt.

But notice how in the next few verses we have righteousness instead. We did have objective guilt, but now, verse 22,

the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ is for all who believe; all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and everyone who believes is declared righteous as a gift by His grace and that's made possible through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

You see, we are saved from objective guilt to righteousness.

If you sit here this morning in Christ, God sees you as though you have never, in your life, had a sinful thought. He sees you as though you have never displayed one bad attitude, as though you have never said one sinful word, as though you have never committed one sinful action. You have gone from objective guilt to righteousness. That's salvation.

But that isn't it; we're also saved from moral corruption to holiness. If you want to see moral corruption look at Romans 3, beginning in verse 9, where he charges everybody is "under sin." Verse 10,

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS NOT EVEN ONE.  
THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,  
THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;  
ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;  
THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, [*in the sight of God*]  
NOT EVEN ONE.”

And then he describes how we all, in our sin, use our mouths to attack and to deceive and to hurt others. He talks about how we are destructive to all of our relationships. And he ends in verse 18 by saying, “AND THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”

Here’s the ultimate indictment. Every sinner lives as though God doesn’t exist or doesn’t care. That’s who we were. We were utterly, morally, corrupt, but God has saved us from that unto holiness, so that we get to chapter 6 and he says, we are now “slaves of righteousness.” Or you get to chapter 12 and he says, we’re now able “to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God.” We went from moral corruption to holiness.

Not only that, but God also saves us from the wrath of God to the love of God. Look at Romans 5, Romans 5:5 says that, now, as believers, “the love of God has been poured out within our hearts.” In other words, the knowledge of God’s love for us is now known to us, it’s within our hearts through the Holy Spirit. But that isn’t always how it’s been. We didn’t always live in God’s love. Notice verse 9, “Much more then, having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” That’s where we used to live. We lived with God’s anger.

This is a frightening thought. You understand, that God expects us to obey Him and when we don’t obey Him, when we take His good gifts and abuse them, it makes Him angry, and the day is coming when He will unleash His just anger against the sin of every person who refuses to bow the knee to Him? That’s where we lived, under His wrath. But now, we live in His love. He saved us from His wrath unto His love, the love of those who are His children. In fact, we are told in chapter 8 that nothing, now that we’re in Christ, can “separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We’re also saved from alienation to fellowship. Look at chapter 5 verse 10, “For if while we were enemies” to God. Have you ever thought of that? Before you were in Christ you may not have thought you were God’s enemy, but He thought of you as His enemy. And if you’re not in Christ this morning, that’s exactly how God thinks of you right now. And that’s where we were, but He saved us from being His enemies. Notice verse 9, or excuse me, verse 10, “For if while we were His enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.” We’ve been changed from His enemies to His children. We’ve gone from alienation to fellowship.

In fact, earlier in chapter 5 it talks about the fact that we live “in hope of the glory of God.” Listen, if you’re in Christ you’re going to see God, you’re going to share God’s glory. You went from being His enemy to being one who will stay in His presence forever. That’s salvation.

We’re also saved from slavery to sin to freedom. Look at chapter 6, chapter 6 verse 17,

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

We have been transferred, we have been delivered, from being slaves of sin. Listen, if you’re not in Christ, and if you’re a Christian, before you were in Christ, you thought of yourself as free. Ah, yeah, doing what I want. You’re not doing what you want, you’re a slave, you’re a slave of your sin. But God saved us from being slaves of sin into freedom, being able to live like He made us to live.

We’re saved from eternal death to eternal life. Look at chapter 6 verse 23, “For the wages of sin is death,” both physical death and eternal death, “but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Not only life that lasts forever, but a new quality of life where we can know God and interact with God, now and forever.

And finally, we’ve been saved from a fallen decaying body, or we will be saved, from a fallen decaying body, to glorification. Look at chapter 8. He talks about, in verse 20, “the whole creation has been subjected to vanity,” to futility, because of the fall. But some day God’s going to set it free from that slavery and that includes us. Verse 23, “we ourselves having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves now groan within ourselves,” because we still have the flesh, we still have our fallenness. They are part of us that’s still unredeemed, but we are “waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.” We will be rescued from fallen flesh, a fallen decaying body, into the glory of a body likened to His glorious body.

Folks, when we talk about being saved, that’s what we’re talking about. You have been saved from all of those things to all of those things. And here’s what’s interesting, when Scripture speaks of our salvation from those things to the things we just described, it does so in three tenses, past tense, present tense, future tense.

Past tense, Romans 8:24, it says, “in hope we have been saved.” That’s past. At the moment of your conversion, when you repented and believed, you were saved in this sense, Ephesians 2:5 says, “by grace you have been saved.” Already happened, in the past; this refers to our justification.

Scripture also uses the present tense to describe our salvation. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:18, we read a moment ago, “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.” This points to our sanctification. We “are being saved” from the power of sin in our lives. In the past, from the penalty of sin.

In the future, we will be saved. Scripture speaks our salvation as future. For example, in Romans 5:9, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we will be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” Or Romans 13:11, “now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” It’s future. This speaks of our glorification.

In the past, saved from the penalty of sin. In the present, being saved from the power of sin in our lives. In the future, saved from the presence of sin and the possibility of sin. And the gospel is that through which the power of God accomplishes all of that in our lives. Here’s how it works. One day, in God’s providence, you heard the gospel. Maybe you’d heard it many times before. Maybe you grew up in a Christian home. You’d heard it lots of times, but one day you really heard it, because the Spirit of God was working in the gospel that day and as you heard it God was awakening you to your own sense of sin. You saw yourself as deserving of God’s wrath. You saw the beauty of Christ and you saw the amazing offer of forgiveness and you wanted it desperately because God was calling you through the gospel to Himself on that day. At that moment the gospel was the power of God unto salvation in your life.

Paul says, I can’t be ashamed of the very instrument that God used to bring life to our dead souls and will use in that way in the lives of others. Why is it God’s power? Because it’s about His Son, Jesus Christ. In the life and death of Jesus Christ, God acted decisively to accomplish our rescue and the message of the gospel simply announces what Christ has done. “It is the power of God unto salvation.”

Now, let me just very briefly, as we conclude our study, let me encourage you to apply the truth we’ve learned today in two ways. First of all, I need to note that every person here this morning is in one of two states. Yes, I know you’re in the State of Texas, but you’re also in one of two other states. You are, as you sit here this morning, you are either in a state of already having been spiritually rescued or you are in a state that the Bible calls perishing, or being lost. You are lost to God, you don’t know Him, you will never know Him, unless things change. Luke 19:10 says, “the Son of Man has come to seek and to rescue that which was lost.” Listen, Christ seeks lost people who have no relationship with God, who are lost to God and will be for all eternity. John 3:16, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish.” If you will respond in faith to the announcement God has made about His Son, you can move today from a state of perishing and being lost to a state of salvation.

If you’re already in Christ, if you’re already in Christ this morning, let me challenge you, how do you respond? Determine to think and meditate on the gospel. In the coming weeks, as we unfold the gospel as Paul explains it here, think about it, meditate on it, live in it, because it will do for you what Paul promised it would do for the Romans. It will establish you in your faith.

And pray that God would give you both courage and opportunities to give the good news to others. Don't allow the world to humiliate you into silence. Don't be intimidated. Don't be embarrassed to communicate the gospel. Pray that God would give you the same resolve he gave the Apostle Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, because it is God's power and it produces salvation."

Next week we will examine the other reasons Paul had as to why we should never be ashamed of the gospel. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, we confess to You that we are often tempted to be ashamed. Don't let us be. Father, put steel in our souls. Help us to see how You use it, how it's filled with Your power, either to life or to death. But nevertheless, You work through the presentation of the gospel. Lord, may we have the courage to seize the opportunities that You set before us. And may we do everything we can to make reasonable opportunities to share the gospel with others. Father, give us that courage.

I also pray, Father, for those I know are here this morning who don't know You. Lord, I pray that You would open their minds and hearts. That even today You would be in the gospel they have heard, maybe many times before. But You would be in that gospel today, applying it personally, by Your Spirit, they would see themselves as You see them. And they would see the value of Jesus Christ and be willing to give up everything else to get Him. We pray in Jesus's name, amen.