

Romans 1:16-17

The Power of the Gospel

Romans chapter 1. We are finishing out the introductory sections this morning. We have been in verses 1 through 17 for some time now. We are in verses 16 and 17 of Romans chapter 1, the introduction is in three parts.

Remember the book of Romans is The Constitution of the Christian Faith. All of the doctrines and the teachings are found in the book of Romans. And Paul wrote the book especially to establish believers in Rome in the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is written and presented it as a legal brief as if presented before court of law.

And would not you imagine that is the way it should be since in front of God's throne that is what it is like. He is the judge. And interesting that *haśśātān* in Hebrew is the prosecuting attorney. And **παράκλησις** (*paraklēsis*), *the Comforter*, is the defense attorney. And **παράκλησις** (*paraklēsis*) is used of Jesus Christ in I John chapter 2 the first three verses, that Jesus Christ is our **παράκλησις** (*paraklēsis*), our defense attorney, while Satan is the prosecuting attorney. But Paul is presenting a legal brief as if it is come right from the courtroom of God to teach us the way God sees things.

After our introduction today and, Lord willing, next week, we will begin our study on the various doctrines. The first one is The Doctrine of Condemnation. And you might think you might not want to hear that one. But it is very important that we as believers understand what that is and why.

Verses 1 through 7 is the first section of the introduction where Paul presented his capacity within the body of Christ as a slave, his calling as an apostle, and his consecration as being separated in the gospel of God.

The promises of God. He chose instruments, prophets through which to speak. His chosen communication is the Holy Scriptures. And the creed of those Scriptures is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The word of God talks about Christ.

He told us the pedigree of Christ, His humanity. That He was born through the seed of David according to the promises. His deity - that He was pronounced son of God through the resurrection of the dead. And His identity, He is identified as Jesus Christ our Lord.

He says the provision, in verse 5, that God gives His grace for obedience unto the faith. The position of God's people, verse 6, they are the called. We are saints. We are believers by calling. He has called us and drawn us by His Spirit.

The people involved. He is writing to the Christians in Rome whom he has never met. He has never been there to minister to them so he is establishing them in the things of the gospel.

And then the preface in verse 7, he pronounces *grace*, that is the greeting in Greek. And *peace, shalom* to the Jews in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The second part of the introduction, verses 8 through 15, Paul's personal care about them. We have studied about his prayer life in verses 8 through 10. We studied his passion in verses 11 and 12. That he had a desire and a longing to see them that he might, in verse 13, his plan to impart some spiritual gift to them. And even in his expression of personal care we get introduced to the very doctrine and truth that we are going to study throughout the book of Romans. And that is the fact that God's gift to us is spiritual, not human. It is not physical.

Paul said in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3 that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the spirit realm. They are not human. They are spiritual.

His prompting in verse 14. We saw that he says, **I am a debtor to minister to the Gentiles and to you who are in Rome also.** Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles.

In verse 15 that leads us up to verses 16 and 17 for today, he says, **I am prepared as much as is in me to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.** And by *the gospel* he is making reference not just to the salvation message, but the entire gospel, both for preaching to the unsaved and teaching to the saved. He is ministering to people who are already saved.

And so he says in verses 16 and 17 - we have studied Paul and his information, his personal care, and the power of the Gospel, verses 16 and 17. These two verses are what the gospel of Romans is all about. Paul says in verse 16, **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is *the* power of God unto salvation to everyone believing;** (Notice the participle; to everyone who is continuously, lifestyle, believing) **both to the Jew first, and to Greek. For in it,** that is, in the Gospel, **the righteousness of God is being revealed from out of faith into faith.** Notice how the literal translation is, that the righteousness of God is revealed from out of faith into faith. **According as it has been written,** and this is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4, **"The just shall live from out of faith."** The English says *live by faith*. It is from out of faith as a source.

Verse 16. It is important to understand, Paul says, **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.** The word *ashamed* means *to withdraw*. It does not mean to blush and be embarrassed. It means *to withdraw*. So when he says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," it means, "I am not going to withdraw myself from it." And in a moment we will see that he expressed in First Corinthians that the gospel is foolishness to those who are not saved. And so he says, "When I am around people that think it is foolishness, I do not withdraw." And there is a reason for it: **For it is the power of God for salvation.**

Paul says in First Corinthians chapter 1 verse 17 that Christ has sent me to preach the gospel, not to baptize. Verse 18, **Preaching of the cross to them that are perishing is foolishness but to those of us which are saved it is the power of God.** How do you explain to somebody when you pick up the Bible, and open up the Bible, and you see words on a page, how do you explain to people that it is not a religious guide or a religious book that belongs to the Christian faith? How do you explain to people that that the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12 that **The word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, and it cuts through right to a person's heart and becomes the critic and the**

judge of the thoughts and motivations of the heart? That God's Spirit makes it alive and it is powerful? How do you explain to people that when the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached that the power of God's Spirit takes that truth, convicts people, draws people to Christ, and they are born-again of the Spirit of God?

That is also my approach to the argument with evolution. We can take the Bible as our textbook and an evolutionist can take some kind of science so-called textbook and argue back and forth between textbooks. And eventually it is, "Well, that is what you believe and here is what I believe." It really boils down to this that even though the Bible tells me who created all things and how all things were created, it is not because of that that I hold a conviction and a belief as to who created the universe. It is because His Spirit, according to Hebrews chapter 11, it is by the faith of His Spirit that I believe and understand that the worlds were created by the word of God.

You can argue all you want to. You can take my Bible away from me so that I cannot quote any verses. You can present your presentation and you can make me in the human even begin to doubt, or even appeal to some kind of logic or reason that would make me think, "Well, you know, that sounds logical." But there is a spiritual force, a Person that is more powerful than I, nor anything in the universe, that convicts me and persuades me that what that book says is true. You cannot take that away from me. I cannot even take it away from me. If I wanted to disbelieve it I cannot get away from God's Spirit in me saying, "I was there and I did it. I am convicting you and convincing you. I am making the Scriptures alive." They are alive and they are powerful. How is it that people can preach and teach out of this book and people can feel convicted?

I have told you of times in the past when people have come and we have just studied the genealogy and they were visitors I thought, "Boy, this is going to be pretty boring for them." But just as we read through the names and studied about certain people in the names you could see conviction and tears and uneasiness, just by reading names from the word of God. That is how powerful it is. Not because of any human power, but because of the power of God. It is the power of God to those who are saved.

How do I explain to an unsaved person how powerful God's word is to me? How it energizes my life, how it changes and transforms my life, not because I practice its principles but because God's Spirit by His power renews my mind? How do you explain that to somebody that just does not understand? We studied the first hour that false teachers in the church will be natural, function according to the natural human senses. They do not understand spiritual things. How do you explain to somebody who has never been born of the Spirit of God about spiritual things of the Scriptures and of the Lord? They can only relate as if you are explaining the Grand Canyon to somebody who has never been there. They will either believe you or not believe you. They will either get a picture of it, or dismiss it.

Paul went on to say in First Corinthians chapter 1 verse 21, he says, **Blessed be God that the preaching of the gospel came through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.** It is foolishness. That is why I have said to you before, it is God's designed plan because it is so foolish. To preach God's word. Which is why, for the most part, more than any

time in church history the church is getting away from the word of God and more into entertainment, and more into a feeling, and expressing experiences. Because it is boring to somebody who is not empowered by God's Spirit. It is just a book. Why go to church? It is boring. But to those who are saved it is the power of God, something happens inside of them, something happens to them as we study the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it, the gospel, is the power of God for salvation to everyone believing. The word *believing* is a participle. Those who are part of and continuously be a part of the faith. The word *belief* comes from the word *faith*. A *believer*, which is the term for the participle, is somebody who is continually under the influence of the persuasion of God's Spirit. They are believers.

Both to the Jew first and to the Greek. When Paul traveled he went to the synagogue first. He knew salvation was for the Jew first. They are God's chosen people but they are still not saved. So he would go to the synagogue and when they rejected him, and kicked him out of the synagogue, then he went to the Gentiles who were in that city, and preached the gospel to them. Then the Jewish people got mad, "What are you doing?" Preaching to the Gentiles. You rejected it and God has commissioned me to go to the Gentiles and preach the gospel as well. They are receptive to it. So Paul went to the Jew first and then to the Greek, or the non-Jewish person.

Verse 17, **For in it (that is, *the gospel*) the righteousness of God and is being revealed.** Present tense that means right now, presently, it is being revealed. And notice what is being revealed: *the righteousness of God*. Sometimes we hear the word *righteousness* and we associate it with some kind of a holiness maybe or a religious holiness. But *righteousness* just means to be lined up with or to be right with God, whatever is right with Him. It too is a judicial term. What I think is right and what the court thinks is right and what the court laws, and rules, and regulations say is right can be completely different. And so, what is right in the sight of God? What is His righteousness? **His righteousness is being revealed in the gospel.**

Remember I associated Isaiah chapter 55 verse 11 where God says, **My ways are not your ways and my thoughts are not your thoughts for as the heavens are high above the earth so are my ways than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.** Completely opposite. We have no idea about the ways of God. And it is foolishness for us as His people to think that I can take His word and process it through my natural way of thinking and it is going to come out right. Cannot be. It must be administered by God's Spirit. It must be revealed. And the first thing I recognize is, "That is not the way I see things," or, "That is not the way I would do things." **The righteousness of God is being revealed**, notice the literal translation, **from out of faith into faith.** That is how it literally reads.

In other words, if you remember what Paul said earlier, **That I might impart some spiritual gift to you.** That by our mutual faith, both of yours and mine, there will be a ministry there. People who are born of the Spirit of God are said to be *of the faith*. Paul says, "I can hardly wait to get there. I really have a desire to be there, so that when God spirit works through you" - and it is called *persuasion* because you cannot hear it audibly, you cannot feel Him. It is a persuasion that comes over you that changes you and ministers to you; that comes from you to

me and from me to you. It is a ministry of God's Spirit by faith. It is a persuasion that is in the spirit realm that we submit to. It is the way in which God communicates to us and it is being revealed from out of faith into faith. And so it is interesting that the gospel of Jesus Christ is only revealed spiritually by faith. It is not human. It cannot be researched with the human faculties and someone come out right in their understanding of the word of God.

According as it has been written. He says all of this is based on something that God has already said. Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4 that is repeated several times in the New Testament: **The just (or righteous person) shall live from out of faith.** That is the literal translation, *from out of faith* as a source. Again the emphasis is spiritual. God is changing us over to learn to live by faith; the ministry of His Spirit through His word rather than the human senses. When we receive Christ we become *of the faith*, we become a believer. But there is a process of change. We have become a new creation. We now function spiritually and in the human, but we are to learn to live by faith and not by the unstable, insecure, philosophically wrong, human flesh. Everything that we know and everything that we understand has been shaped and formed by our life here on the earth and it has nothing to do with the very truth and philosophy of God, the way He thinks the way He looks at things. I have been influenced and affected by the world and by sin.

And so we are made a new creation, Second Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17, **For everyone who is in Christ has become a new creation (a new creature): old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.** So this gospel of Jesus Christ - and what Paul is about to present to us - is the power of God. Just by studying words on a page to those who are saved the power of God takes those concepts, takes that truth, not only ministers to us but changes and transforms us as people. It is foolishness. To religious people even, that is foolishness. It is just a religious book. We take it and we practice it. That is in the human. Remember it is all spiritual. We expose ourself to God's word and to God's Spirit, He brings us the comfort, and the refreshment, and the encouragement that we need because He ministers to us that He is in charge of everything. Everything. And everything that happens, everything is under His plan.

But it also ministers to us about our own life and realizing that sin has separated me from my God, and sin has influenced me to live a life that is totally opposite and different than the purpose for which I was created and that is to serve Christ. By receiving Christ I am brought back now to a right relationship with the Lord but I still need to be changed. I have been transformed. I have been changed to become a new creation in Christ Jesus. But now it is the ministry the Spirit of God the transforms my mind to bring me back, and change me back, gradually over the years for me to function in the way that He had originally planned for me, to serve the purpose that He has for me. Everybody has a purpose. Everybody has a function that nobody else has in the body of Christ. And so over time we become changed and transformed.

I often get the question, "How do I know what God created me for?" Well, you have to be changed, transformed, over a process of time. And whatever He creates you to be, and whatever He does through you is your function in the body of Christ. And the body of Christ needs you, needs the Lord through you. Your family needs you. Your friends need you. Not for you as a human being, but for you as a vessel through whom Christ has chosen to express the

gospel of Jesus Christ. It will be foolishness to those who know you but reject the gospel of Christ. But it will be the power of God to those who are receptive.

Paul said in Second Corinthians chapter 2, **The gospel of Jesus Christ is life to those who are living and death to those who are dying.** It brings out two kinds of people. People will either say, "I don't believe that stuff," and the gospel will be death to those who are dying. But to those who are living, it will become alive and real, and there will be a change and transformation take place. But first Paul says, "We have to learn the various doctrines of the Christian faith."

Next week as we begin with verse 18, we learn The Doctrine of Condemnation, which is in itself a judiciary term. It means *to pass sentence against someone*. I think you would want to know if somebody came up to you and said, "Do you know I checked the books and you have a judgment against you? The judge has already ruled against you in a court of law. And it is on the books, you want to know about it?" You did not know you are wanted person, did you? But there has been a judgment passed. We are going to have all of that explained to us as we go through the rest of chapter 1 and chapter 2.

Let's close with prayer.