

Romans 1:16-17

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[0 : 00] Our sermon is taken from the first chapter of Romans. Shall we read again from verse 16? Romans chapter 1.

We shall read again from verse 16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jews first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith alone.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has showed it to them. For the invisible things of him from the creation to the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God had, so that they are without excuse.

[1 : 28] Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Profession themselves to be wise, they become fools. And they changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like a corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.

Wherefore God also gave them up to their uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections, for even unto their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of women, bent in their lust one towards another, men with men, working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

[3 : 06] And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do things which are not convenient.

Being filled with the unrighteousness, with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedience to parents.

Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, and merciful, who knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Amen. Amen. I've chosen that we discuss together, we discuss together verses 16 and 17.

Verses 16 and 17. Paul says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

[4 : 41] For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith, as it is written, they just shall live by faith alone. Here, St. Paul is, especially in verse 16 where he says he is not ashamed of the gospel.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel. He is using this to remind his readers of our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Well, because our Lord Jesus Christ had a teaching on this. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught in Luke chapter 9, 26.

He told the people that if you are ashamed of me and of my word, I will also be ashamed of you when I come in my glory.

So, Paul uses this passage to remind the Roman Christians of what Jesus himself has taught.
[5 : 50] But the question we need to ask ourselves is, why would people be ashamed of Jesus Christ? Why did Jesus Christ himself have to teach?

Why did he have to say that if you are ashamed of me, I will also be ashamed of you when I come in glory?

Why did he have to say such a thing when he was such a popular person? Because our Lord Jesus Christ was very popular in his preaching.

Why did he have to say such a thing when he was such a popular person?

Why was he given such a teaching? Why would people be ashamed of our Lord Jesus Christ? It is quite possible that people would have been ashamed of our Lord Jesus Christ because of a number of factors.

[7 : 11] One, Jesus Christ was a rabbi. He was a teacher. He was a teacher. And a rabbi, he did not live according to the standards of the teachers.

He was completely unlike any teacher of his time. He did not live according to the requirements of what a rabbi is supposed to do.

Let me illustrate by this. Since the disruption, the free church has come to have a certain form of preaching.

The free church has come to have a certain form of preaching. And therefore, every minister in the free church fits into this system of preaching.

They make their preaching as biblical as possible. And the presentation is also according to a certain manner.

[8 : 16] And the sermon is kept within a certain specific time. Generally, within an average kind of time. Now, this form of preaching is so clear that if you move from one town to the other and you go into a free church congregation, you are always aware of the fact that you are worshipping in a free church congregation.

After the preacher has preached, you are confirmed in your position that this is a free church congregation and this is free church preaching. Now, suppose a student went to the free church college.

And after the years of training there, this student comes out. And still, he doesn't preach the gospel as it is preached in the free church.

And still, he doesn't. And worst of all, not only does he not preach the gospel as it is preached in the free church, but he doesn't preach the gospel as it is preached in the free church.

If you preach a minister in your midst or in the midst of a group where people are very proud of the free church, what will happen is that some people will say, oh, he is no minister at all.

[10 : 08] And others will say, he is a disgrace to the free church. We've never seen somebody like him. He just doesn't fit into our system. But at the same time, there may be a few who are secretly admiring him.

They may admire his ways. They say, yes, this is the kind of minister we like. But they may not be brave enough to come out openly and say, we like this minister and the way he does things.

So, the fact that such a minister becomes controversial, and many people do not, are not brave enough to stand in public and say, we follow him, is very much similar to the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ in his life was something like that. He was an official rabbi. He was an official teacher. And yet, he did not keep any of the traditions of the teachers.

He did not keep to the standards that was required of a rabbi. A very clear example is this, that as a rabbi, as a teacher, he should have at least had friends, his closest friends should have been people of his fellow rabbis.

[11 : 34] Or, even if he did not have friends who were fellow rabbis, he should have friends from the respectable section of the society. But, our Lord, on the contrary, had friends who were tax collectors, drunkards, prostitutes, and fishermen.

People whom the society had classified, who were very clearly, in the eyes of the society, the sinners of the society. Yet, these were his closest friends.

These were the people he sat and ate with. Now, and apart from having this kind of day-to-day life, he was also, in his preaching, claiming too much for himself.

He said things which were meant for only God to say, like, for instance, telling the paralyzed man, my son, your sins are forgiven. And the people would ask, who are you to forgive sins?

Are you God? In fact, his ideas were such that, word went around that he was outside of himself, that he was beside himself.

[13:05] He was mad. And his family went out looking for him, to arrest him. This was the other side of our life, of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These were the things that would make other people feel ashamed of finding themselves in his good.

These were some of the things that would make a respectable Pharisee, for instance, not to accept in public that he is a follower of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A second thing that made it possible that Jesus' people were ashamed to follow our Lord Jesus Christ is possibly because he and his followers were in the minority in the group, in society.

When he formed, when he came and started preaching, he had followers, but compared to the Jews, he and his followers, they were in the minority.

[14:16] And usually, in most societies, minority groups are looked down upon. You are not only looked down upon, you are also persecuted. And so, the church from the beginning found it difficult to establish itself without persecution from outside.

Just because the majority of the society did not belong to, did not belong to the group of Jesus Christ, just because the majority of the society ignored following Jesus Christ, some people would have felt very uneasy, even if they were convinced by the ideas of Jesus Christ, they found it uneasy to become day-to-day followers of Jesus Christ, to become dedicated followers of him.

So, in that sense, they were ashamed of our Lord Jesus Christ. I can again illustrate it with this, that at the disruption when the free church was formed, I am quite sure that there may have been some people who shared the views of the free church, but who, because the free church was the small group, was the smaller group of people who had, who, who broke away, because they were the small group, some people felt, some people who would have shared the views of the free church, at the same time, did not find it easy to stand up in public and say, well, I agree with these people and I'm going to join them.

They may have, they may have behaved this way because they felt the free church was in the minority, they were the minority group, even though they may have the correct and right ideas. People would stand and secretly agree, but not come out openly, because openly they felt they would be ashamed to belong to a small group.

[16:45] Similarly, when St. Paul was writing this passage, this passage, this text, he realized that Christianity was not the darn thing.

To be a Christian was not the common thing. Christianity was not a major group in the society. And therefore, for various reasons, some people would be ashamed of even being called Christians because it wasn't the darn thing.

And he says, whatever your reason for being ashamed of the gospel, I am not. Whatever your reasons for being ashamed of the gospel, that is your problem.

It is not my problem. I am not ashamed of the gospel. And in fact, if you pray St. Paul, he would say, I am very proud that I am a Christian.

The question we need to ask ourselves now is, is it possible for us today to be ashamed of the gospel? Is it possible for us today to be ashamed of Jesus Christ and his word?

[18:14] I am sure here in Britain today, it is much more possible for us to be ashamed of the gospel than it was a hundred and fifty years ago.

Because a hundred and fifty years ago or a hundred years ago, what we read is that the congregations were always full. People went to church.

I have read of one preacher who came up to Edinburgh to preach about 18, in 1827. And when he came up to Edinburgh to preach, it was it was a week when they were having the General Assembly.

And in order not to disturb the General Assembly, his sermons were being preached in the morning at about six o'clock. And yet, six a.m., the congregation was so full with people standing outside that Dr. Chalmers himself could not get his way into that congregation.

A lot of people were standing outside and Chalmers could not get in to listen to this preacher. Now, compared with today, if a known preacher from Glasgow or Edinburgh comes here, the situation

would be very different.

[19 : 50] Christianity was then the darn thing. Today, Christians are in the minority. And because Christians are in the minority, Christians are being opened to temptations that were not existing then.

And that temptation, one of these temptations is to be silent in a situation where you should speak out as a Christian.

Christian. To be silent in a position where you should speak out as a Christian. These are some of the temptations of a minority group. Because you find yourself in a group and things are being done in a way that do not fit your belief as a Christian.

They do not fit your ideas as a Christian. But then you are tempted to be quiet or to pretend that you don't care anyway. Or to pretend that you are not a Christian which is the worst.

So each time we are put in a situation where we are tempted to be silent to some extent we are being ashamed of Jesus and his word.

[21 : 09] Each time we are put in a situation where we are tempted not to speak out our mind as Christians because it may be embarrassing. Then we are being ashamed of Jesus and his word.

But we may ask why was St. Paul if we are being ashamed of Jesus and his word why was St. Paul not ashamed of the gospel? He gives his reason in the same verse.

he says I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.

That is God has through his grace and mercy given this gospel the Christian gospel as the only means of salvation for us mankind.

We all know that God is powerful to save us as human beings. God is powerful to redeem fallen mankind. But he has decided to use only one method of saving us and that is the gospel.

[22 : 33] Although he could use various ways he has in his love and mercy decided to save human beings through the gospel. And this is what St. Paul has recognized here in this verse.

It is the power of God for salvation. The gospel is the power by which God decides to bring us into relationship with him.

God is the gospel. And what we need is to have faith in that gospel. A second reason for which St. Paul says he is not ashamed of the gospel is that he says the gospel is the righteousness of God. In it the righteousness of God is revealed. That in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed. This righteousness of God which is revealed in the gospel is twofold.

First we have the righteousness of God as God is in himself. God in his holiness God in his justice in his being righteous God's justice and his holiness in himself.

[24 : 03] That is the first aspect of God's holiness God's righteousness. And this first aspect of God's holiness and his righteousness his justice is such that when we stand as Christians or non Christians when we look at God in his righteousness what we see is not only God's righteousness but it at the same time acts as a mirror a mirror in which we see our own sin and our own unworthiness.

It is such a good mirror that when we stand before it we not only see the mirror that is God's righteousness but we see our own failures we see our own sin our own sinfulness is reflected so much in us that we can only begin to feel of how worthless we are in ourselves and how absolutely worthless we are.

At the same time we do not we see a very big gap between us sin God because God is so holy we are so unholy God is so righteous we are so unrighteous this is the first aspect of the righteousness of God referred to by Saint Paul in this passage the second aspect of this righteousness of God is that in this passage Saint Paul says this righteousness of God this righteousness of God in which you see your own sinfulness this very righteousness of God is being given to you as men in Jesus Christ that is the gospel is the way the gospel is the way by which

God in his righteousness is making us also righteous it is the way by which God it is the good news by which God himself is now bringing us human beings into a relationship with himself it is the righteousness in it the righteousness of God is revealed because the righteousness revealed in Jesus Christ is the righteousness that God gives to us we in ourselves we now look upon God and we no longer see a gap between us and God but seeing God through Jesus Christ we see that despite who we are we can now stand before

God and call God Father we can only call God Father in this way because in Jesus Christ he has revealed to us that his righteousness is also our righteousness in his righteousness he has made us righteous so that by our faith in the fact of the coming of his son into this world Jesus came into this world lived as a man and died as a man by our faith in that alone and our trust in Jesus Christ alone we now see ourselves standing before God no longer head down in guilt but facing God as a father the first aspect which

[28 : 18] I explain God's holiness is such that when we stand before God we can only look down because we see our own sin so much but now this second aspect of the righteousness of God is that Christ brings this righteousness of God to us and he says whoever has faith he is righteous before God for a very long time in the history of the church people always looked and even now people always looked to the first aspect of the righteousness of God and what did they see they saw their own guilt they saw their own sin they saw their own unworthiness because they were looking to the first aspect of God's righteousness

God's holiness God's justice and if you look to the first aspect of it it is true that God is holy and we are sinful and we are hopeless and therefore what could they do they took it upon themselves to work hard in order to become faithful to work hard to reduce the gap between them and God so there were all sorts of bodily punishments to the human person Christians were punishing themselves physically Christians were always struggling in order to be holy and even today there are some Christians when you talk to them you find that they are always conscious of their own sin they are always mourning about how ungrateful they are to

God how and how they don't have any faith at all before God how they are useless and it is always a moon about one sin or the other the cause the cause of this is looking at God looking at the first aspect of God's righteousness that is as God is in himself looking at God as he is in himself and then naturally see your own fault your own weakness see your own sin and sometimes you begin to wonder whether such Christians have any joy in being a Christian whether they have any joy any happiness in being a Christian because they have been concentrating so much on the holiness of God so much on how God is righteous in himself that they have never looked at the gospel itself the gospel in this sense is two four the holiness of God and then the holiness and righteousness of God as it is revealed in Jesus Christ in Jesus Christ although we may be sinful dirty and useless in Jesus Christ we stand before God with our eyes open in Jesus Christ we stand before God as sons and daughters no longer aliens and strangers this is what Martin Luther discovered and it was the cause of the reformation and that is what

St. Paul is telling us in these verses that in Jesus Christ the righteousness of God has been made ours in Jesus Christ we who are far away from the gospel by nature we who are far away from God in the gospel we are now made one and we can now stand before God and say Father thank you and all this we can only take it in we can only appropriate it for ourselves by faith in Jesus Christ without faith then the goodness of the gospel is useless because without faith we will not see how good the gospel is and how useful the gospel is in bringing us to

[33 : 48] God and if we do not come to God in faith if we do not receive the gospel it is useless because we go to hell all the same so what we need what is stressed in these two verses is faith by faith we look unto Jesus Christ and we see our own righteousness we see that we are now justified before God by faith we look unto Jesus Christ and we say we can now stand before God and pray and say a prayer of thanks giving but without faith we are lost and lost forever but another aspect which

St. Paul in chapter 2 of Romans warns us against is that because in these two verses he has emphasized faith so much we should not forget the other aspect of faith faith makes us to become born again but having been born again we have to go on and grow in the Christian life without faith there is no new birth and without new birth there is no relationship with God but with faith there is new birth and with new birth St.

Paul tells us there must be growth in chapter 2 verse 4 and verse 6 he emphasizes the aspect of works in fact for the rest of chapter 2 he talks in such a way that you may begin to wonder whether he is saying that salvation is by works that God will deal with everyone according to his works that's what he says in chapter 2 verse 6 God will treat us he will reward us according to our works now what he say here is that having been born again having come to Christ in a faith relationship we must grow and that growth implies obedience to

Jesus Christ and that obedience lead to good works and by them by their faith will be justified and yet having been justified we must grow because the Bible says our father is holy therefore we must be holy amen let us pray heavenly father we thank you for your love we thank you for your son Jesus Christ in whom your holiness is brought closer to us in whom despite how holy you are we sinful can stand before you and call upon your name as a father lord we pray that you will give us the needed faith to stand before you heavenly father we confess that when we have taken the faith step of coming to believe in your son

Jesus Christ sometimes we forget about the growth aspect we are praying lord that you will continue to remind us in our day to day Christian life that we are expected to grow and grow and grow father let your holy spirit remind us each time and keep us on the right path because we are not able to do it on our own this is our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord amen