

## Romans 1\_16-17.mp3.mp3

**Todd Fletcher** [00:00:04] "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who is descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have also received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I mentioned you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may in part to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you, (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to the Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So 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 the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith." Thus reads the words of the Lord you may be seated. So as we come to Romans again we hit two very important verses, and then the Greek is just one sentence, and this is Paul's thesis statement. So to bring us all back to grade school or primary school when you were in your grammar class as I was kicking paper footballs over to my friend as they were doing this and not paying much attention in English. It is important to know how basic essays and grammar and studies work. And what we see here is even in Paul's time 2000 plus years ago, you see that Paul is using a thesis statement for the book of Romans.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:02:48] Well, what we see with theses statements is that they outline what is about to happen in the rest of the essay, they outline the arguments, the whole point of why I'm writing. Glory is a professor and she has to read, she is at Front Range Community College, and so she gets all of the well-educated high schoolers that come out of our various systems that are amazing writers and oftentimes she has to ask them the question, what was the point of that? Because there was no thesis statement, there was no point, there was no argument being made, it was just thoughts upon a page. But Paul is a good writer and Paul wants us to know his thesis of the entire book and that is, "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 as revealed from faith for faith as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith." And in fact, that last phrase there, "the righteous shall live by faith," is a quotations from Habakkuk. And some have argued that the entire book of Romans is simply a teaching, an exposition, an expounding of that one sentence in Habbakkuk, the righteous shall live by faith.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:04:11] I was doing some study on a man named Desmond Doss. Desmond Doss is an interesting person, he's a World War II veteran and Desmond Doss's religion forbade him from carrying a gun or threatening another human life. So he was a pacifist. Which was very inconvenient when he was drafted into the Second World War, so Doss was a conscientious objector placed as a noncombatant. And there are many people like this in World War II, many pacifists that were drafted in all wars, you get drafted it

doesn't matter whether you're a pacifist or not, but he was he was dubbed a noncombatant. And was the target of ridicule from other soldiers. He was serving as a field medic in Okinawa when the Japanese attacked his unit on top of a cliff, cutting down nearly every man. Doss quickly rigged up a stretcher that could be lowered by a series of ropes and pulleys to the ground below and then by himself and under fire, he retrieved each soldier in his unit, one at a time and lowered them to safety. A conscientious objector running into the line of fire with no weapon. President Truman said it was 75 men that Doss pulled to safety when he was presented with the Medal of Honor. But Doss insists it was probably closer to 50. That was only one instance of astonishing bravery and self-sacrifice Doss displayed throughout his military service and his story is told in the documentary of the conscientious objector.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:06:03] Why did I just tell you about Desmond Doss? I think we as Christians forget what our primary mission is. I'm not going to make a statement on pacifism or anything like that, I'd be far too controversial. But I want to point out something to you about what Desmond Doss was focused on and that was saving people who made fun of him. Saving people who mocked him for being a pacifist. He did not kill anyone in World War II, he saved 75 people in World War II. I think it's interesting that even though he was a target of ridicule, he risked his life for those who mocked him, who spat upon him, who made fun of him. And he saved 75 of them and received the Medal of Honor. As Christians, I think sometimes we get entangled in this world affairs and we start fighting our enemies. We pick up guns and we start shooting at those who are across the aisle from us. But I remember Jesus who once said to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. And if someone slaps you on the cheek then turn the other cheek, and if someone demands your cloak or get your shirt, give them your jacket as well. And if they make you go one mile, you go two miles, this is our Lord Jesus. And we're so quick to say, well, He couldn't mean that, but Jesus knew exactly what He meant when He taught on the Sermon on the Mount, and that was that we are not in it to defend ourselves we're in it to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ. I think Desmond Doss is such a perfect example of what it looks like to be on mission. He had a belief that it was wrong to pick up arms and kill other human beings. Now, that is a debated belief, especially if it's a war and you're defending your country, and that's not the point I'm trying to make. The fact is, is that he held to his convictions and that you saved 75 people who mocked him for being a conscientious objector.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:08:22] And I think the gospel is that way, isn't it? That is it is the only weapon that God has given the church to go into a dark world of people who don't want to hear it, who hate you, who hate the very things you're saying, who hate your king, Jesus as if they hated Me they're going to hate you. But we run in to the front lines with the gospel in hand and we save whomever we can save even though they hate us. We've got to get back to the gospel and Paul is on point in this entire book, and his point is, as Christians, we are focused on the gospel message, that's it. Now, if you're saying, well, that's boring, there's so many other things in this world that I want to be focused on other than the gospel. Well, okay I understand that, but you're not biblical if that's how you approach life. Everything needs to be seen through the prism of the gospel. Those are the lenses which we wear, gospel lenses. When people make fun of you and people mock you, when they attack you, you see them as or you aim and you pray, you see them as Christ sees them as people made in the image of God who are in desperate need of the gospel. That when our enemies attacked us, we pray for them, that when they persecute us, we love them. I think as the church, we need to get back onto loving our enemies with the gospel because you know what we were once enemies, all of us, we were enemies of God. And while we were enemies of God, Christ died for us.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:10:01] So when we come to this passage here, what we see is Paul making some very bold statements, and I pray this is a bold sermon because I've titled it a "Call to Boldness." So you never want to title a sermon, a call to boldness and to be a dud. I like Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and I was watching a documentary called Logic on Fire, and his daughters are the ones doing a lot of the speaking and they said there were some Sundays, you know, they're English, so they have a much better accent than I did, they said there are some Sundays that after father was done speaking, we said he was on his own today. But there were other Sundays when he was done preaching that they felt the unction of the Holy Spirit and they knew that he wasn't alone. And so I just pray that God gives me unction for today, that I'm not alone behind this pulpit and that we can hear what Paul has to say.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:10:54] So, we're going to break it into three parts and that is in a call to boldness we are called first, like Paul, to proclaim the gospel in power, that's the first half of verse 16. We are called to proclaim the gospel to all, that's the second half of our 16. And we are called to proclaim the gospel by faith, that's verse 17. And Christians, just remember we are called to proclaim the gospel, all of us not just the preacher, every Christian on the planet who has ever existed has been called to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not just the preacher, it's sad because we are a culture of outsourcing. And I think many of us have outsourced the gospel to professionals. The fact is, is we're all equipped, we all have the Holy Spirit, we're all called to proclaim the gospel. So my argument today is going to be simply this, here's my thesis statement, I want everyone in this room to tell others about Jesus Christ, in boldness and not to be ashamed, for it is the power of God for those who believe.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:12:11] So, as we get now to our text, let's think of that Paul begins and he says, "for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God, for salvation to all who believes." Let me ask you a question. Do people really change? Can they change on their own? We're all good Christians in here, so we all know, well, everyone can change, you know, God could save Hitler. Yes, but but in practice, do we believe people could really change? The Bible says no, people don't really change. Jeremiah 13:23, "can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" The answer is no, and that's in reference in context to sinners. Do sinners really change, can sinners actually change their own hearts? And the answer is no. But Jeremiah, 31 versus 31-34 make it very clear, turn there, if you will, we need to read that, actually. Jeremiah 31, so Jeremiah leaves his readers in a, just a pool of tears with that statement, Jeremiah 13, there's no one can change and people are left asking the question, well, then how do we change, how can we be saved if I can't change myself, am I hopeless? And the answer is, you're hopeless, without God, that's the key isn't it, "but God." Those are always the best phrases and Scriptures, "but God." You are hopeless, you are destitute, you have no future in your sin, "but God," and here's the "but God" of Jeremiah. Jeremiah, 31, starting in verse 31. "Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make," underline all the "I's" if you're an underliner, underline all the "I's," "when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I had made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant that they broke," he's talking about the Mosaic covenant, "though I was their husband, declares the Lord, but this is the covenant that I will make," notice the I, "I will make with the House of Israel after those days, declares the Lord." Here it is, "I will put my law within them, I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be My people and no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and his brother saying know the

Lord, for they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest, declares Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more".

**Todd Fletcher** [00:15:19] Ezekiel says, "it is God who takes out the heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh." God's the One who does the surgery, no one has ever done heart surgery on themselves. I didn't source that, I didn't look up any medical journals, I can just guess no one has ever done a heart surgery on themselves. But God does the surgery. And as you come to Romans you see Paul is not ashamed of this because it's your only hope, this is the sinner's only hope. And he says, for I am not ashamed of the gospel. Why does he begin his thesis statement with such a statement, "for I am not ashamed of the gospel?" Which means that some might consider that he should be ashamed of the gospel or maybe some people are ashamed of the gospel. But Paul makes it clear, I am not ashamed of the gospel!

**Todd Fletcher** [00:16:28] Well, what does it mean to be ashamed? It means this; to experience a painful feeling or sense of loss in status...a painful feeling, a sense of loss of status. Let me ask you the question, I could read 1 Corinthians 11:23 through 29 and walk you through all of Paul's sufferings, all those who mocked him, all those who persecute him, all of them who thought he was just a little lowly apostle while there were super apostles walking around. But let me ask you, what did Paul lose? We did this downstairs and I got some good questions, and I hope the people downstairs at the nine o'clock service or the Bible study downstairs have learned that I use their answers and I steal them, I plagiarized them for my sermon. Because I don't know, I just I'm just asking them for information, I just kidding. What did Paul lose? One said he lost freedom. He did lose his freedom, didn't he? He was in prison a lot, he was transporting to prisons a lot, he was under guard a lot. One said, comfort, yeah he lost a lot of comfort. Those prisons that he was in that he would have killed for a prison like we have today. That doesn't have rats and sewage draining into the floor. You know, when I write a letter or when I write an essay or when I'm working on a sermon, I have to have my set up perfect. Let me, so those who have been to my house they've seen my little wall of books and then they see my IKEA table and I've got a candle there and I've got a picture of a fake world that I made called Twourlin, we'll get to that later. I've got my music, I've got all these different things and if it's not just so, it's really hard to write. And then right when you get started, you know, your daughter comes in and says, Daddy Olivia has a poop and then you're like, okay have you talked to your mother yet? No, she's not, she's not doing it, okay.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:18:45] And I look at Paul, and when Paul wrote the book of Romans, which is perhaps the best piece of literature ever penned by a human, these works of art are done in the worst of circumstances. You know, some of the books that he wrote, he was in prison, he was he was sitting in sewage. Asking that someone might bring him some books and a coat. And Paul says in Romans, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, I've lost a lot. We were talking about Paul's old dad and I said there's nothing Paul never writes about his dad and Aaron corrected me, and he says no, he did say that his old man was crucified, but he never writes about his dad. What do you think about Paul's dad who sent him to the finest schools? In Tarsus, who is sending him to Gamaliel? That was the Harvard of his day, Gamaliel a famous, a famous rabbi. He had the best education he had the best upbringing and then he threw it all away for Jesus Christ. Remember it says that he cast his vote against Christians. That means he has to have some power, didn't he? To cast your vote against Christians at a young age means that in a young age, likely in his early 30s, he had enough influence and power in the Sanhedrin or in local synagogues to cast his vote against Christians, meaning that he was an up and comer. He was destined

for greatness in the rabbinic schools. And I don't know why he doesn't reference dad, and it's probably because most of his family disowned him for following Jesus Christ.

**Todd Fletcher [00:20:59]** Most of his friends that he grew up probably never wanted to see him again. In fact, even among the apostles, his new crew, there was some conflict. In fact, most of Paul's best friends abandon him, and he would be alone in prison, even Christians abandoned Paul. And Paul says this, in case you're wondering, I'm not ashamed, because all of that I count as rubbish compared to the riches of Jesus Christ, I'm not ashamed, I wouldn't change a thing. Why? Because it's the power of God for the salvation to everyone who believes. This is a fun word, power, it's dunamis, that's where we get the English word dynamite. It is the dynamite of God. The gospel blows up things, it's awesome you walk into situations and you preach the gospel and it just blows everything up. That's what we are little dynamiters, I don't even know if that's a word. We just throw dynamite in people's lives. And we want to see lives changed with the gospel and Paul says, I have found the pearl of great price. If you've ever heard it taught that the pearl of great price is you, that God found such an amazing pearl in you, and then He sold everything He sent His Son to die for you, if you've ever heard that the pearl of great price is you, that was a terrible sermon that you heard, you're not the pearl of great price. Who is the pearl of great price? Jesus. That those who find Jesus have to count the cost. Remember the the rich young man, the rich young ruler who comes to Jesus, here's a perfect candidate for the gospel ministry, he comes to Jesus and he wants to follow Jesus. And again, back then, it was hard to find people. You couldn't just look him up on Google and and see what time and place they would be somewhere and get your tickets and reserve your spot in line. It took effort to find someone in the ancient times. And this rich young ruler works hard to find Jesus, he finally gets up to Jesus, he can finally say, I want to follow You, I love You, I want to be with You. And Jesus says, oh, that's so terrific, I'm so excited, have you, have you kept the commandments? And the guy says, Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, I've kept the commandments, I'm a good good Jew. I'm wealthy, I'm rich, I'm good looking, I've kept all the commandments, I'm your guy, Jesus.

**Todd Fletcher [00:23:53]** The other disciples, they're standing there saying, oh man, this is awesome, like this guy is going to be great. Jesus says, OK, OK, OK, one question, are you willing to sell everything and give it to the poor? Because if you do that, then you can follow Me, and the rich young man says, we'll no, why would I? That's kind of important to me, like that's my name, rich young ruler. And Jesus says, then you can't follow Me. What Jesus is saying in that situation, and the disciples are just dumbfounded at this, is Jesus just totally blew it, I mean that guy could have funded their ministry for years. Jesus looks at his disciples and they're like, okay if he couldn't be saved, how can anyone be saved? And Jesus says with men, it's impossible, but with God, all things are possible. It's harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than a camel to go through the eye of a needle, which just, you know, save you from all the research, that's impossible. What He's saying is, is that it costs a lot, it's free, the gospels free, it's a gift, but it costs a lot to follow Jesus. And what we see here is that Paul says that it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, it's the dynamite of God, it can change lives but it'll cost you everything. So how does a leopard change his spots, how does an Ethiopian change his skin? They can't, only the power of God can save sinners, period, end of story, point blank, that's it.

**Todd Fletcher [00:25:52]** And so Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel because this is the only thing that can save people. And if I am on a mission for the gospel, I can preach the gospel, the power of God to everyone, and it'll make them saved, it'll bring them into completion. That's the idea of salvation, is that you are now in right standing with God, that

your life is now whole, it's got purpose, it's full of God's design. It's what He intended for your life that it brings salvation to everyone who believes, that's so important. You know, Christians were mocked by their faith, they needed this they needed this type of leadership, they needed to hear Paul say, I'm not ashamed and neither should you be. Listen to how people spoke about Christians back in the day, ancient pagans mocked Christianity not only because of their idea of substitutionary atonement, which seemed ridiculous itself, but also because of their mythical gods, their mythical gods were apathetic in the ancient times people saw these gods as bigger than us, but we're just kind of their playthings. They were detached and remote, totally indifferent to the welfare of men. If you read ancient times, Greek and Roman history, and you look at their gods, the pantheon of gods, those gods couldn't care less about humanity. They just saw them as things for entertainment.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:27:22] The idea of caring, redeeming, self-sacrificing God was beyond their comprehension, that sounded like a weak God. While excavating ancient ruins in Rome, archeologists discover a derisive painting depicting a slave bowing down before a cross with a jackass hanging on it and the caption reads, "Alexamenos worships his god." Others said it gets worse for Christians and the late second century, there was an attitude that existed, a man named Celsus wrote a letter bitterly attacking Christianity, and he said this of Christians let no culture person draw near, none wise, none sensible, he said, for all that kind of thing, we count evil. But if any man is ignorant, if any is wanting in a sense of culture, if any is a fool, let him come boldly to Christianity. Of the Christians, he further wrote, we see them in their own houses, wall dressers, cobblers, full Fullers, most uneducated and vulgar people. He compared Christians to a swarm of bats, to ants crawling out of the nests, to frogs holding a symposium around a swamp, I like that, and to worms cowering in the muck.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:28:42] For anyone to become a Christian, it was a "social game killer." You lost all your status if you became a Christian. Why would anyone become a Christian and that's why people are still asking that question today, have you noticed that? Oh, Christians, they're just you know, just uneducated fools. If they really went to school, they would learn that God is a myth. This is what our elite are saying today. In fact, maybe it would be better if these parents didn't have a chance to teach their people about God because all they're doing is passing on foolishness. In Plato's book The Republic his goal was to take children away from parents so that they could educate them in culture and not in foolish myths. Just so you know, that idea is still being propagated today, where the government wants to take your children and tell them what to believe and to eradicate myths like God and Christianity. This is still alive today.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:29:49] So this has direct application for us today. So let's look now where he says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, it is the power of God to salvation, to everyone who believes. And now we're going to focus on the everyone. To everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. So the Jews, you have to understand this about Jews, they had had a hard life. The Jews, from their very conception, had a hard calling. They were called to be distinct, they were called not to intermingle with the world around them, to commit adultery with other gods, to intermarry with other cultures. Well, let's turn to Genesis Chapter 12, because we're going to see something that this will help you understand your Bible so much better, especially the Old Testament, if you can understand this one thing. Turned to Genesis 12 and what we see here is called the Abrahamic Covenant. And up until Genesis 12, it's kind of a broad focused, God is focusing first on Adam and Eve and then it goes, obviously they fall in the garden, then it goes broadspectrum and starts looking at all of humanity. And then when it finally gets to

Genesis Chapter 12, after you know the flood, and it goes back to Noah and then all of humanity is destroyed and then it goes back broad again. But when it gets back to Abraham in Chapter 12 things begin to narrow and things begin to focus on the people who would be eventually called Israel. In verse one of Chapter 12, listen, it says, "now the Lord says to Abraham go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you, all the families of the Earth shall be blessed," underline that last section, in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:32:02] The role of Israel was to be a light to the nations, to show the other nations, the Gentiles, their God and to convert the nations to the worship of their God, there was whole processes for this. But we know the story of Israel, don't we? That they did what Jesus said not to do, which is they hid their light under a bushel. Jesus says, why would anyone light a lamp put it on a table, and then put a basket over it? Why would anyone do that? We want to be a city on a hill so that the whole world can see the truth, the light of God, the light of the gospel, the light of redemption. But what the Jews had done up to this point is that they had hid their light under a bushel. They had become so opposed to the Gentiles that they had gotten off mission to the Gentiles. In the Psalms, we tried to find the Psalm downstairs and then we gave up, but it's in multiple Psalms, which is this, God loves the gates of Jerusalem, the gates of Zion. Not the walls, the gates. What are what are walls intended for? To keep people out, what are Gates intended for? To let people in. The gospel is about reclaiming the world for Jesus Christ. It's about the gates, it's about letting people in and the Jews had struggled with this. They had not only been exiled they had also been people, have tried to eradicate them, we've seen that in modern times as well before Paul wrote here, they had an Antiochus Epiphanes who made it his sole purpose to eradicate the Jewish religion.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:34:05] We see the diaspora where Jews were dispersed across the land and all they could do was just keep little groups, little little communities and protect their Jewish identities. And then comes World War two and Hitler and all those travesties that were done against the Jewish people, and yet again they continue to persist and we ask the question, why are the Jews here today? It's because they have been very good at maintaining their distinctiveness, haven't they? But that has also become a problem. I was once told by a counselor, this is on more of a personal note, I had a rough childhood with stepparents, one was fairly abusive when it came to verbal abuse. And I was considered a problem when it came to inheritance because my family's wealthy and so we had multiple stepparents that would come in and they would try to kick me out of the house. And there was a moment where I had to step dad and step mom that were both trying to get me out of the house, which means I just had nowhere to go. And I became very bitter and angry and I built walls so that people couldn't hurt me. And I went to a counselor and my counselor said this, he said, Todd, the wall that you built now will save you, but it will eventually hurt you if you don't tear it back down. And I think a lot of us do this right, we build walls so that we can't get hurt. But the problem with walls is it doesn't let people in either, does it? And the Jews have been hurt a lot and they built walls and they despised Gentiles, many of them. But the thing about walls is they need gates, they need to allow people in.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:35:49] And so the gospel is about allowing the nations back in, bringing the Gentile's back in to salvation, it's amazing. And Paul is saying this, he says, I'm not ashamed, the gospel is the power of God to everyone who believes. That's incredibly important to all believers, and this word belief means to trust in, to have faith in. How do

believers have access to God? It's through faith and faith alone. What is it to believe? What is it to have faith? It's to trust. Does anyone in here have faith? In other things besides the gospel? The answer is yes, we all have faith in a lot of things. Every time we get on an airplane, we have faith, we believe that we can take a very heavy metal object into the air and that somehow some way we'll get where we're supposed to go and land safely. That takes a lot of faith. Driving over a bridge that below it is certain doom, you have faith in the engineers you've never met, just hoping this bridge holds when I drive across it. We all exercise faith. All of you are sitting in a chair right now, are you not? You have faith that that chair will hold your weight. And so what we see is we know faith, but what the gospel is all about is everyone who believes, who puts their trust in Jesus Christ, everyone who believes that, and He says this to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:37:24] And let me ask you this question, do you really believe that God can save anyone? We all nod our head up and down, yes, but do you really? I think sometimes we think of certain people, let's just think of our favorite politician. Do you believe God can save them? Well, not them, well maybe them, in theory, yes, God could save them, but they'll never be saved. Do you pray for them? And I say favorite politician, I mean, your favorite politician, tongue in cheek. Do you pray for their salvation? Well, they couldn't, they're just they're just too old now, they're and they're and they're like they're 100 years old and they've been in Congress for 80 years. I mean, they can't be saved. Yeah they can the gospels for everyone. If you still have breath in your lungs, you can be saved. Notice I didn't talk about Democrats or Republicans because there's probably a mix of us in here, but the point is, is we should be praying for the other side. Praying for their salvation, praying for the administration, praying for people who we don't like. You know, even the Gentiles, they're kind to people that are kind of them. But a Christian loves those who persecute them, Christians love wicked people, why? Because we were once all wicked.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:39:01] And then you get to verse 17 here. Let me deal with this first, the Jew first and also the Greek, this is a heavily debated passage. What does this mean? Let me just say there's a couple options here. First, that we know that the gospel, the plan of redemption, Romans 9 says that to the covenants and the promises and the blessings of the Lord they belong to the Jews and that Gentiles share in these things, we share in the covenants, in the promises, they're the natural branches, if you're a Gentile, you're a wild branch, your wild. That's from a kid show. Don't despise the natural branches, because to them belongs the covenants and the promises. But Gentile's now partake in the tree, they now partake in the promises of God, don't despise the natural branches. How much easier is it for you to be removed from the tree being an unnatural branch, or a wild branch than a natural branch? And so Paul's argument, Romans 11, is it's one tree and there's different types of branches, but don't despise the other type of branch. So that's one possible meaning is it's to the Jew first and then also to the Greek, and that word can mean Gentile as well.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:40:16] Other possibility, as you see, Paul, does this, he goes into towns, he goes to the Synagogue first, he preaches the gospel to Jews, and then and then after they either reject it or some receive it, then they turn to the Gentiles. That's a very good method, because when a Jew comes to understand Christ as Messiah, they're the best evangelists. Because they know the Bible backwards and forwards, most of them, and all they need is the missing link, which is Jesus, and when they get that piece, when they see that Jesus is the Messiah, when you see a Jewish evangelist, they can change the world. They are incredibly powerful. And seriously, this is why I pray for people like Ben Shapiro. Jews who have rejected Jesus, but if they just got the gospel, oh, my



goodness, it could be amazing. And so, you see Jesus is going to the Jews and then it expands to the Greeks, you see Paul is going to the Jews and then he expands it to the Greeks. But the point is the gospel is for everyone to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:41:16] Now, let's get to verse 17, this is where the sermon really begins, I'm just kidding. I'm almost out of time, this is why I'm only doing two verses at a time. Verse 17, "for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith." This is "the verse" in Romans, this is "the verse." This is the verse that you underline, and then you highlight, and you smudge, because you're like so focused on this verse. This verse lit a match that is still burning in this very church in the Reformation. When Martin Luther read this verse, it wrecked his entire world. Because he had a belief that salvation is by works, not by faith, but Martin Luther read this and he saw "the righteous shall live by faith." That is brilliant Paul, I'm so glad you invented that. No, Paul didn't invent that. This is a quote from Habakkuk. Paul says it's always been this way, the righteousness of God has always been revealed by faith. He goes into this in depth so you can see in Romans 4, when he says, was Abraham saved by circumcision? No, because he was justified before he was circumcised. Therefore, Abraham was saved by faith.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:42:47] You see this entire argument running through the book of Romans, the righteous live by faith. Well, what does it mean to be righteous? Remember, we talked about a saint, according to the Catholic Church, as someone who has two verified miracles, and then they die in some exemplary way. The problem with that is that's not in the Bible, the New Testament refers to saints as all who are chosen by God and regenerate, have the Holy Spirit and adopted into his family. Those are saints. That's why he says in verse seven, he says to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called saints. And so what you see here, what he says is, that the righteous, the saints live by faith. What does it mean to be righteous? This is where we will kind of focus the end here. What does it mean to be righteous? This is a really important question. All that it means is that you have right standing with God. That you're right with God. There's nothing separating you from God, there's nothing in between your relationship with God that you are declared righteous and you now have full access to God because you're in right standing with Him. And what he says is the righteousness of God is revealed, it is given, it is imparted, to those who believe. God's righteousness becomes your righteousness, Jesus, His righteousness becomes your righteousness, that's the gospel. So that the righteous might live by faith. If you can get that. Then you've got the gospel.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:44:42] And that let me remind you of Desmond Doss, he got this understanding, that when you live to serve others, even your enemy, that is all that matters. The gospel is not a gift, it's not a prize to be held and protected from other people. The gospel is a gift that is to be given over and over and over again and to those people who hate you, to those people who spit at you, to your enemies, to those people across the aisle, that gospel is for them. And if you hold on to it you're like the steward who had a talent, do you remember the story? And he buried it in the ground, don't bury your talent, don't bury the gospel, multiply it, share it, give it, proclaim it, proclaim it boldly.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:45:43] And now we're going to get real personal. Do you proclaim the gospel? Do you? Do you tell your friends and your family about the gospel? Do you tell your coworkers about the gospel? Do you do it in boldness or do you say it kind of, you turn all red and you you don't make eye contact, yeah, I'm a Christian, don't fire me, please. Yeah, I really want that promotion, yeah, I go to church sometimes. Well, I think all of us at times have not been incredibly bold when it comes to the gospel. And as times get

harder, as persecution ramps up, it'll be even easier to just be like, yeah, I mean, yeah, oh I do. I do love God, but yeah. I mean, you know what I'm talking about, right? We need to say what Paul says, which is I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of your salvation. Fire me, don't hire me. Yeah, make fun of me, spit on me, do whatever you want to me, I'm not ashamed of the gospel.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:47:02] Isn't that like, can I get an Amen? I'm not ashamed of the gospel. No one in here should be ashamed of the gospel. And when you have a whole church that stands up and they say, I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the dynamite of God, man I feel like a Baptist preacher right now. Proclaim it to everyone, it'll change lives. Let me ask you the question, are you walking in faith? Because when you live this way, when you live boldly for the gospel, when you are not ashamed of the gospel, you will suffer loss, I promise you, in this world. You will be mocked, you'll be kicked out of line for promotions, you'll lose friends, you'll lose family members. But it is the righteous who walk by, what? Faith. Because you know that God has reserved for you a place in heaven that no one can take away. And that you're a child of God and no one can take that away, and so you're not ashamed if you suffer things in this world. Because you count it all as rubbish for the sake of Christ Jesus. One man once said, faith is the willingness to risk anything on God. May that be us, let's pray. Oh, Father, I pray that we would not be ashamed of the gospel, Lord may we suffer loss for Your Son Jesus Christ, may we be counted worthy to suffer for His name. Lord we look to heaven, we bank in heaven, our treasure is in heaven, or should be. And so, Father I pray that we would walk by faith and not by sight and that we would wager it all on Jesus Christ, and we pray this in His name, Amen.