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Sermon Notes

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The Gospel of God: Power for Salvation, Not Cause of Shame

Romans 1:16-17

I. The Powerful Weapon of Shame, More Powerful Gospel of God

A. Sources of Shame

1. The Constant Audience... Approving & Disapproving

2. Case Studies in Shame

expensive meal, unable to pay... big race, unable to deliver

public speaking, unable to hide... criminal activity, unable to answer

3. Common denominator, common path of resolution

a. the not-so-silent audience

b. the solution: never disappoint... people pleasing through constantly acceptable performance

B. Greatest Occasion for Shame: Judgment Day

1. Shame of sin

Romans 6:21 “What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!”

2. Shame of rejecting Christ

Mark 8:38 “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

3. Shame of unfruitfulness & disobedience to Christ

1 John 2:28 “And now, dear children, continue in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming.”

4. Shame removed by the gospel

Romans 9:33 “See, I lay a stone in Zion that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will not be put to shame.”

Jesus Christ is a stone of stumbling to the unbeliever, but for the believer, He alone can free us from shame on Judgment Day... On that Day, despite all our sinful wretchedness, He will claim us by name as members of His holy Family

Hebrews 2:11 “Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.”

BUT in this present world, Jesus is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense...

C. The Gospel Causes Shaming Behavior

1. Paul’s debt... Greeks and Barbarians, wise and foolish: BUT NONE NATURALLY WELCOME PAUL PAYING OFF HIS DEBT!!!

1 Corinthians 1:23 “...we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks.”

2. All of these had different ways of shaming Paul...

[Paul and Silas in Philippi] Acts 16:22-24 “The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.”

3. Shaming behavior intrinsic to rejection of gospel

- a. message sounds foolish or utterly offensive
- b. forces sinners to face their sin
- c. they defend themselves, lash out against the messenger
- d. tool: ridicule, heaping shame on the evangelist

Illus. Chinese Christians in Cultural Revolution... dunce caps & scornful crowds

Illus. How I treated Steve Chamberlin... dinner at Sigma Chi

1 Peter 4:4 “They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.”

BUT for all of this, Paul makes a stunning claim: “I am not ashamed of the gospel...”
How is this possible? The greater power of God as displayed in the gospel

D. Triumph Over Shame By the Powerful Gospel

1. Gospel causes occasions for shaming by unbelievers
2. Gospel also gives freedom from shame for believers
3. Christ’s example:

Hebrews 12:2 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

- a. Christ humiliated totally... spat upon, mocked, scourged, publicly rejected, crucified
- b. HUGE amounts of shame heaped upon Christ
- c. how did he deal with it? HE DESPISED THE SHAME
 - i) “despise” = hate with deep hatred... perhaps, as a messenger of Satan threatening to turn Him from His purpose
 - ii) BETTER... “despise” = “scorn”, “treat with contempt,” “look down on,” “think lightly of”
- d. “FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM”... thought nothing of the shame

Idea: temporary, earth-bound shame means nothing compared to the surpassing greatness of the joy set before us... salvation for those who believe, and a rich welcome by our Lord

Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel? BECAUSE the gospel alone has power to save sinners!

Look shame in the eye as a messenger from Satan... say **“I despise you, shame! I think nothing of you... public ridicule means nothing to me, if only I may save some by this message!!”**

E. Suffer, But Don't Be Ashamed

1. Every faithful Christian will receive shaming behavior
2. Don't let it bother you in any way! This is a sign to people who watch you

Alistair Begg: Shame in the 60's "I can't believe you think this is really true!"
["You're a simple, ignorant fool"]

Shame in the 90's "How dare you claim that you have the only truth!"
["You're an arrogant, intolerant bigot!"]

The gospel itself gives us power to triumph over shame

II. How is the Gospel the Power of God for Salvation?

A. Key question: what is the salvation Paul has in mind here?

1. Not merely converts, though it does make converts
2. Evangelicals = tendency to see "salvation" as static, once-for-all event in the past

We ask, "Are you saved, brother?"

3. Salvation as a process or as a future event seems unbiblical... but it is very Biblical!!

Philippians 2:12 "... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling..."

Hebrews 9:28 "[Christ] will appear a second time, not to bear sin but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

Romans 5:9 "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"

Romans 13:11 "Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

B. Salvation Here is Comprehensive... not just to begin but to complete!!

Piper: "Salvation is eternal safety and joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God."

1. Justification a once for all event

2. BUT sanctification follows justification
3. AND final glorification completes God's salvation plan

Paul means all three... the gospel is the power of God to accomplish all of this in the lives of those who are believing

C. "Power"... Does Salvation Take Power??

1. Power = creative force, to make changes, to produce an effect

Greatest power: resurrection & triumph over death

Ephesians 1:19 "[That you may know] his incomparably great power for us who believe."

Ephesians 2:1 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins..."

Ephesians 2:4 "But God... made us alive in Christ!!!"

Final power: resurrection from the grave

1 Corinthians 15:42-43 "So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised IN POWER!!!"

2. Power = authority, to declare... authority also to judge

God has the authority to declare us righteous in Christ, to declare that all our sins are forgiven... and no one can question His decisions!!

Romans 8:33 "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns?"

All of this power for salvation comes through the gospel message!!!

BUT there is a condition! You must believe its message

"I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for all who believe"

D. Ongoing Belief the Condition for Salvation

1. Greek tense: present continuous

"... the power of God for the salvation of everyone who is believing."

2. Faith is given by God through the hearing of the gospel

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace are you saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is a gift of God...”

Romans 10:17 “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”

3. Faith is renewed continually by fresh hearings of the full gospel

vs. 15 “That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.”

4. Faith that starts but doesn't finish is actually no faith at all

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you have received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, IF YOU HOLD FIRMLY TO THE WORD I PREACHED TO YOU. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.”

“Vain belief” is a false kind of “faith” which James actually calls a “dead faith”... it does not save; it starts but doesn't finish

For the true believer, the gospel constantly renews their faith causing growth

5. This gospel is for EVERYONE who believes

- a. not just for Jews... not just for certain tribes, languages, nations, peoples
- b. one gospel for the entire world
- c. only one thing rules you out: UNBELIEF

III. The Priority of the Jews: What It Means, What It Doesn't Mean

“... first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

A. In what sense the Jews are first

1. Chosen people of God

Deuteronomy 14:2 “... you are a people holy to the Lord. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession.”

Deuteronomy 7:7 “[The Lord chose you] because the Lord loved you...”

Amos 3:2 “You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth...”

2. Guardians of Old Testament Scripture

Romans 3:1 “What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.”

Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, David, Solomon, Ezra, Nehemiah... all of them were Jewish, and they gave their Scriptures to their Jewish people for safekeeping

3. “First for the Jews” Chronologically

“First to the Jews”; they received first news of the Messiah by reading it in Scripture

4. Salvation is from the Jews

[Jesus & the Samaritan woman] *John 4:22 “You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.”*

a. Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 12:3 “Through you all nations on earth will be blessed.”

Galatians 3:7 “Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.”

b. Announced by Jewish prophets

vs.2 “... the gospel He promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures”

c. Illustrated by Jewish religion

Hebrews calls the sacrificial system an “illustration of salvation”... **all those animals**

d. Fulfilled by a Jewish messiah

Matthew 1:1 Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham

Galatians 4:4 “When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law...”

e. Proclaimed by Jewish apostles, beginning in Jerusalem

All the apostles were Jewish, and they began by preaching in Jerusalem

Acts 1:8 “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem...”

f. Gentiles seen to be “grafted into” a Jewish olive tree

Romans 11:17 “... you [Gentiles], though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root...”

5. Announced first to Jews by apostles

Paul’s consistent pattern in Acts... first to the Jew, then to the Gentile

Acts 13:46 “It was necessary for us to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it, and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.”

6. Priority on Judgment Day Blessings and Curses

Romans 2:9-10 “There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory honor and peace for everyone who does good, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

Luke 12:48 “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required.”

B. In what ways the Jews do not have priority

1. No priority in righteousness or merit before God

Romans 3:9 “What shall we conclude, then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.”

Romans 3:22-23 There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

2. No priority in how they are saved

Romans 3:29-30 “Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles, too? Yes, of Gentiles, too, since there is only one God who will justify the circumcised by faith, and the uncircumcised through that same faith.”

Romans 10:12-13 “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

3. No priority in participation in God’s covenant blessings

Ephesians 3:6 “This mystery is that, through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

IV. Summary and Application

A. Not ashamed of the Gospel

1. Gospel produces shaming behavior in unbelievers, freedom from shame for believers
2. Paul is free from shame... for the gospel means salvation for all who believe

B. Gospel is the power of God for salvation for believers

1. Gospel alone has power to present you holy before God on Judgment Day
2. “Salvation” not just “conversion” but justification, sanctification, glorification
3. Power = take you from spiritual death to eternal glory

Power = authority to declare and to judge... declared righteous, acquitted by Judge

4. Believers need to hear and to feed on the gospel day by day to strengthen their faith

C. “To the Jew first...”

1. Priority of Jews... what it means

Chosen people of God, guardians of Scripture, chronologically first, salvation is from the Jews, announced first to world by Jewish apostles, priority on Judgment Day

2. Priority of Jews... what it doesn't mean

Priority in righteousness or merit, or in how they are saved, or in covenant blessings

D. Applications

1. Are you ashamed of the Gospel... or have you learned to “despise the shame?”
2. Are you feeding on the Gospel daily so that you grow in faith and in your salvation?

3. Have you come to faith in Christ?
4. The Jews need the gospel too!!