

Not Ashamed

July 30 – Romans 1:16, 17

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Day 211 – 154 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Thus far, in our adventure through the New Testament chronologically, we have averaged reading 15 verses a day. We have certainly read more, and sometimes even less, but very rarely have we read just one or two verses. Today was such a day. Why? These two verses are key to understanding Paul's letter to the Romans. In the previous verse (v.15), he told the Romans that he was "eager to preach the gospel" to them. Now, in two verses, he explained why. Then, Paul spent the rest of the letter expounding his summary. Before going on, let's stop and look at his summary more closely.

What exactly is the gospel? Why do we call it "the good news"? Paul described the gospel as "the power of God for salvation..." (v.16). The word *salvation* means deliverance, rescue, release, or recovery from a previous state. It is the act of saving or preserving from the state of destruction, what we call redemption. What is it that we are saved from? The wrath of God, which Paul explained in the next section (v.18-32). Why is God wrathful? He is righteous (holy, pure), and mankind is unrighteous (sinful, ungodly). Our rebellion and unrighteousness warrant God's judgment and punishment, which is the destruction we deserve.

But God, in His mercy and love, has made a way for us to escape His wrath and be saved from destruction. His Son Jesus is "the Way" of escape. "No one can come to the Father except through Him" (Jn. 14:6). What does that mean? One must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the sinless, sacrificial Savior, who exchanged His righteousness for our unrighteousness, by giving His life to pay the penalty for our sin, thus appeasing the wrath of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

This way of salvation is not something we (mankind) conjured up, not something we earned by our own merits, or even something we would naturally desire (for we are rotten and rebellious). Rather this salvation was revealed

to us by God. Salvation is His work, not ours, believed by faith not ours but given by God (Eph. 2:8, 9), from start to finish or "from faith to faith," Paul wrote (Rom. 1:17).

This God-given salvation by faith initiated with and was offered to the Jews first, Paul wrote. Then, it was offered to the Greeks or Gentiles. Salvation from sin was promised by the Old Testament prophets (who were Jewish), fulfilled by Jesus Christ (Jewish), and propagated by His disciples (also Jewish). Paul even highlighted a passage from the prophet Habakkuk, "But the righteous men shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4). Redemption has always been through faith. Remember, God reckoned Abraham as righteous because of his faith (Gal. 3:6, 7). But God, in His grace, has extended His salvation to all people, Gentiles included.

Daily Reflection

While Paul's summary may seem elementary to us, to the people of his day the gospel was revolutionary, unforeseen, and wonderful. How could anyone refuse or despise such a generous gift? **Why would anyone hide such wonderful news or cower from sharing it with others? Because of the marvelous gift of God, Paul wrote that he was not shamed.** Though many called him a fool and even more threatened to persecute or kill him, **Paul did not and would not back down from proclaiming the name of Jesus.**

Are you (or have you ever been) ashamed of the gospel, of Jesus, of the Bible, or of salvation? Why or why not?

Darkened-Hearted Fools

July 31 – Romans 1:18-32

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 212 – 153 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Why do people need the gospel, and what happens if they reject it? Apart from the gospel, people become **darkened-hearted fools** who pursue and promote ungodliness and invite God's wrath (v.18). What does that mean?

First, **all people know the truth of God**. They know God exists because of conscience, creation, and causation. Regarding conscience, mankind has an inner sense of God's existence because each person has a conscience (a sense of right and wrong). Each person knows that it's wrong to lie, steal, cheat, and murder. Why? God has written His laws on their heart or conscience (v.19; 2:14, 15).

God has also revealed Himself to us through creation. God is "clearly seen through what He has made, so that they are without excuse" (1:20). Along with creation is causation, that something cannot come from nothing. Something can only be produced by something else or someone else. Every effect has a cause. The effect of creation was caused by a Creator.

Second, **though people know the truth of God, they suppress it or ignore it** (v.21). While we have been given a conscience, some people choose not to listen to it or obey it. To suppress means to stop, restrain, conceal, or obstruct. While people know that God exists, they live as if He does not. Why? They don't want to be accountable to Him. To ignore God "excuses" them from judgment and eases the conscience.

Third, **when people suppress the truth of God, they will naturally default to unrighteousness** (v.18). Godless men do ungodly things. "They become futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart is darkened" (v.21). The word *futile* means worthless. Apart from God, man's thoughts and ideas are nonsensical, illogical, even absurd (Ps. 14:1; 53:1). That's why Paul wrote, "Professing to be wise, they became fools" (v.22).

Not only will godless men believe and promote foolish ideas, but they will also follow the baser sinful instincts (feelings) and commit detestable acts (v.23-28). Though God created people to worship Him, when they ignore Him, they worship someone or something else. The effect of "suppressing the truth" and worshipping these things is a long list of evils (v.29-32).

Finally, **God cannot allow sin and rebellion to go unpunished**. Rebelling against God and His laws has consequences. While God will judge people in heaven, He also judges them on earth, while they live. How so? He allows people to experience the consequences of their actions. Paul wrote, "God gave them over to a depraved mind" (v.28). When people rebel against God's natural laws, there are natural consequences.

Daily Reflection

When we consider our country, the illogical ideas, decisions, and actions are consequences of the godless worldview that we've embraced. They are evidence that God has already given us over to our "depraved mind" and is allowing us to experience the consequences. Each year, we are startled by some deplorable deception. But remember, godless men do ungodly things.

God is the origin or beginning of wisdom, life, and salvation. Suppressing the truth of God, rejecting His existence, authority, and instruction leads to disaster. **While the godless might profess to be wise, they have become darkened-hearted fools.**

What about those who have never heard of Jesus? Are they excused? Is ignorance bliss?

No Excuse

August 1 – Romans 2:1-16

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Day 213 – 152 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Paul followed his explanation of unbelief and its consequences (1:18-32) with a warning to those who think they are living a good life and will escape the judgment of God. When Paul listed those acts that “are not proper” but exhibit “a depraved mind” (v.28-32), it would have been easy for some of his readers to dismiss or justify themselves by thinking, “Well, I don’t do any of those things, so I’m okay.” But Paul immediately challenged that thought by saying, “Therefore, **you have no excuse**” (2:1).

He continued, “Everyone who passes judgment condemns himself, for he who judges practices the same things... Will you escape the judgment of God?” (v.1-3). In other words, even though we may not view ourselves “as rotten as someone else,” we are still rotten, and God is right to judge us for what we’ve done (v.2, 5). Remember, our standard of goodness is not the behavior of others. Our standard is God, who is holy, pure, and perfect. In light of His perfection or holiness, we all fall short.

Those who do not see themselves as rotten, but rather who are “stubborn, having unrepentant hearts, are storing up wrath for themselves...” (v.5). They might think that since God has not judged them yet, they are good people. But Paul wrote that God has extended His “kindness, tolerance, and patience so that they might have time to repent” (v.4). **Whether we are more rotten or less rotten, judgment is coming for us all, for God is impartial** (v.11).

But the Jews might say, “We are God’s people, His chosen nation. Surely, He will be lenient on us. Surely, He will look past our transgressions and go easy on us.” Again, Paul squelched this thought by writing, “All who have sinned under the Law (of Moses) will be judged by the Law, for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified” (v.12, 13). Simply put, being Jewish meant nothing. **They have no excuse.**

But the Gentile Greeks or Romans (non-Jews) might say, “We were not given the Law (of Moses), therefore how can we be held liable for breaking it?” Again, Paul crushed this argument by writing, “All who have sinned without the Law will perish without the Law... For the Law was written on their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts accusing them” (v.12-14). While it is true that Gentiles were not given the Law of Moses, they know God’s moral law (Ten Commandments) instinctively, because all people have a conscience (sense of right and wrong). Since all people are made in the image of God, they have His standard of morality impressed on their hearts and minds. No one acts without knowledge of right and wrong. **Thus, there is no excuse for Gentiles either. All have sinned.**

Daily Reflection

Paul took away every excuse. Before God, all people are rotten. All have sinned and fall short of His holy standard. But didn’t Paul also write, “To those who by persevering in doing good will receive eternal life” (v.7)? He did. The problem is that no one falls into that category. Rather everyone falls into the second category, which Paul described, “Those who are selfishly ambitious and disobey the truth deserve wrath and indignation” (v.8). Because we are rotten, we cannot earn our escape from judgment.

While this passage may seem heavy and depressing, the truths that Paul communicated are essential to the gospel message. Take a minute to explain why.

Condition of the Heart

August 2 – Romans 2:17-3:8

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Day 214 – 151 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

After condemning all people (Jews and Gentiles) and arguing that there was no escape from judgment (2:1-16), Paul addressed objections to his claim. The Jews, for example, might counter by saying that they were God’s chosen people, they were given His Law, and they bore His covenant in their flesh through circumcision. God would never condemn them in His wrath and judgment. Right?

Wrong. That would be like saying, “God would never condemn Americans, right? Or He wouldn’t send church members to hell, would He? We read our Bibles all the time, we give money to ministries, and we say our prayers. Surely, we are exempt from God’s judgment.” The Jews thought they would get a pass because of who they were. But Paul confronted such prideful thinking (2:17-29).

First, being Jewish never saved anyone. Having the Law of God did not keep one from God’s judgment, and circumcision never earned favor with Him. These are merely external aspects, when **God is more concerned with the internal condition, the heart** (v.28, 29). What good is having the Law if one does not keep it? What good is circumcision if one does not keep the covenant it represents? Even Gentiles (non-Jews) who “practice the Law” can be more Jewish than the Jews (v.25, 26).

Paul was not suggesting that salvation comes through the Law because no one could follow it perfectly, except Jesus. Rather, he was making a point. Jews boast of having special privileges and a special relationship with God, but **those things profit them nothing when it comes to sin and judgment.**

So then, what good was it to be Jewish? “What advantages or benefits did they have” (3:1)? They have (or had) many advantages, Paul said, one being that they were entrusted with the “oracles of God,” the promises and prophecies

of God in the Scriptures (3:2). But the Jews might say, “Since Israel was not saved, being God’s special nation, does that mean God did not keep His promises, or that somehow He is unfaithful?” (v.3-8). “May it never be,” Paul wrote. God is always truthful. It is humans who are unfaithful (v.4).

Daily Reflection

The key verse is Paul’s statement, “He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God” (2:29). If Paul wrote this today, he might say, **“He is a Christian who is one inwardly, for salvation is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by doing things.** Pleasing people is meaningless. He must be pleasing to God.”

Take a minute to read *Matthew 7:21-23* and *Luke 6:46*. Will there be Jews in hell? Will there be “Christians” in hell? Explain your answer.

Have you ever believed that God would not judge or condemn you because of all the good things you’ve done, such as go to church, read your Bible, give, serve, or live like a good person? What’s the truth?

Not Even One

August 3 – Romans 3:9-20

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 215 – 150 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

We continued Paul’s explanation of the gospel in his letter to the Romans. After establishing the fact that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” (1:16), he explained what happens to a person or society who rejects God and His gospel (1:18-32). Then, Paul proved that **no one has an excuse** because God’s law has been given to both Jews and Gentiles (conscience), and **all are condemned before the law** (2:1-3:8).

Paul’s purpose in this was to demonstrate that **no one can boast of his righteousness before God, not even one** (3:10). “We have already charged that both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) are all under sin,” he wrote (v.9). Then, Paul quoted from *Psalms* to demonstrate mankind’s depravity (v.10-18; *Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3*). Notice how many times the words *none* and *all* appear. Then, focus on the psalmist’s description of us.

None of us is righteous before God (v.10).

None of us understands the righteousness of God or how to be righteous in His eyes (v.11).

None of us seeks for God, a relationship with God, or how to be in right standing before God (v.11).

All of us have turned aside from God’s standard of righteousness, meaning all have rejected Him or rebelled against Him (v.12).

All of us have become useless or futile in our attempts to be right in God’s eyes (v.12).

None of us does what is good or right in God’s eyes (v.12).

All of us are mean, hateful, lying, cheating, murderers at heart, having no fear of God (v.13-18).

Daily Reflection

Try this. Ask ten people the question, “Would you consider yourself to be a good person?” All ten will answer in the affirmative. **We are all blind to our rottenness.** We even support our answer with all the “good things” we’ve done. Our pride cannot admit our sinful shame.

But when asked, “Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever stolen anything? Have you ever lusted, dishonored a parent, worshiped something or someone other than God,” or any other of the Ten Commandments, we quickly realize we are not good at all. What happened? **We were exposed to God’s perfect standard of righteousness, to which none of us can attain, and our eyes are opened to who we really are.**

The perfect moral law of God shames us all, “so that every mouth may be closed” (v.19). **No one can boast of his goodness before God** (v.20). In fact, we must admit that we are rotten to the core (v.20). The law has a way of humbling our pride. It also forces us to swallow another truth. We have broken God’s laws and, therefore, we are “accountable to Him” (v.19). He is our Judge, and we stand condemned. He can do with us what He wants. If He gave us what we deserved, what the law required, it would be death and hell.

These verses are not fun to read. In fact, we would rather skip them. However, they are essential to the gospel message. Why?

Would you consider yourself a good person?

Justification by Faith

August 4 – Romans 3:21-4:25

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 216 – 149 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Paul continued his explanation of the gospel in his letter to the Romans. After leaving us on a cliffhanger in the previous passage (3:9-20), presenting the truth that there is none righteous, not even one, he filled in the rest of the story. Once we understand the bad news, and we are silenced before the law of God, we are ready for the good news. **There is a way to be right before God, but it's not through human works or by adhering to God's law** (which is impossible). So then, what is this good news?

To explain the good news of the gospel, Paul introduced the word *justification*. To be justified means to be absolved or forgiven of sin and guilt and thereby released from judgment or punishment. Once justified, a person is no longer viewed as unrighteous, but righteous, just as if he had never sinned. But how is that possible, if "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23)?

Since all have sinned and cannot please a holy God by works (v.27, 28), then there must be another way for people to be saved, and there is. God the Father sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross "as a propitiation through His blood" (v.25). A propitiation is an act of appeasing the wrath of an offended person, in this case God, who was (and is) offended by sin. The only act that would appease God's wrath would be the sacrifice of a sinless individual on behalf of sinners. That sinless individual was Jesus, who paid the penalty of our sin on the cross. God the Father accepted His sacrifice and "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become righteous" (2 Cor. 5:21). This great exchange was an act of God's grace, an undeserved gift (Rom. 3:24).

Does that mean that all people are saved or absolved of their sins? No, **only those who believe in Him by faith are justified** (v.22, 28, 30), and that faith can be exhibited by Jews and Gentiles, "for there is no distinction" (v.22).

But Jews might argue that only they can be saved by faith, because of Abraham (4:2-5). Paul concurred that Abraham was indeed saved by faith (not by works). However, Abraham believed God by faith before circumcision, meaning before he became "Jewish." In other words, Abraham believed God by faith while he was still a Gentile (v.9-12). That means that Abraham is father of all who are saved by faith, Jews and Gentiles (v.13-21; Gal. 3:6-14).

Just as Abraham's faith was counted to him as righteousness (Rom. 4:22), so also **God counts us as righteous or justified because of our faith in Christ** (v.22-25). In his eyes, we are holy, just as if we had never sinned, not because of anything we've done, but because of what Christ did on our behalf (3:24, 25).

Daily Reflection

Salvation is by grace alone (given freely), by faith alone (not by works) in Christ alone (no one else). But if faith saves us, then can't we boast that we saved ourselves? Read *Ephesians 2:8, 9*. How did Paul answer this question?

To demonstrate that you understand Paul's explanation of salvation, write it out here. Include sin, wrath, judgment, propitiation, grace, faith, and justification.

Benefits of the Gospel

August 5 – Romans 5:1-11

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Day 217 – 148 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Paul continued teaching on the gospel in his letter to the Romans. His clarifications are some of the richest insights we have in the New Testament. After having explained that sinners are made right with God by faith (justification) and not by works (3:21-4:25), Paul listed some of the benefits of our justification. Note the transitional word *therefore* in the first verse, followed by the introduction, "Having been justified..." (v.1). Let's consider these benefits.

The first benefit of having been justified by faith in Christ is that **"we have peace with God"** (v.1). We are no longer viewed as His enemies, but His friends (v.10). There no longer exists any animosity between us. Our war with God has ceased. Why is that? Our sin, which was the cause of our offense, has been removed.

The second benefit is that **we now have unprecedented access to God** because of the position in which we have been placed by Christ. We are no longer estranged from God; rather we now "stand in His grace" (v.2). The curtain or veil that once existed between God and sinners has been removed, and we now enjoy God's favor permanently.

Third, though we once fell short of the glory of God (3:23), **we now "exult (rejoice) in hope of the glory of God"** (5:2). What we lacked to measure up to His standard of righteousness has been supplied by Christ. Now, we will get to live in the glory of God for eternity.

The fourth benefit of the gospel is our view our earthly trials (v.3-5). We no longer view them as judgments or punishments. Now, we can view them as means through which God is sanctifying us, conforming us into the image of His Son. In other words, **we can now have joy in our tribulations, knowing that God will use them to produce good results in us.** With His love in our hearts, we know that our trials are not

meant for harm but to produce perseverance, proven character, and hope (v.5).

The fifth benefit is that **our salvation is eternally secure in Christ** (v.6-10). To redeem us from sin and death, God the Father "demonstrated His love toward us" (v.8) and sacrificed His only Son. After having gone to such great lengths to secure our salvation, will He not keep us in His possession forever? Paul answered with a resounding yes! "Having been reconciled to God by Jesus' death, we shall be saved by His life" (v.10). In other words, Jesus died to secure our salvation. Now, He lives to sustain our salvation.

The sixth benefit of the gospel is that **we can "exult in God because of Christ"** (v.11). To exult means to rejoice or express joy. Once we understand all that God has done for us in our salvation, how can we not leap for joy?

The last benefit Paul listed is that **we have been reconciled to God** because of Christ (v.11). Because He has dealt with our sin, and we are now at peace with God, we are no longer distant from Him. He now welcomes us into His fellowship forever. Our relationship with Him has been mended.

Daily Reflection

While this list seems overwhelming and remarkable, it only scratches the surface of what God has done for us through Christ. How can we not rejoice in the benefits He has earned for us at the cross? Take a minute to thank Him.
