

## ***“The Trans-Testamental Gospel”***

### **Romans - The Gospel of God**

Romans 1:1-17

The Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

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**Jeff:** Caleb provided me a copy of *Foundations of Covenant Theology* by Lane Tifton. And Lane Tifton was my adviser in my doctoral program at Westminster in Philadelphia, the original Westminster. *(Laughter)* But anyway he is at the Reformed Forum now as a scholar and resident. He also pastors a church in or around the Philadelphia area. But these are from some lectures that he gave on covenant theology, and they're well worth it. If you're interested you can go to the Reformed Forum website and purchase a copy, which is where I imagine you got it.

**Caleb Falbo:** Yes.

**Jeff:** I said to Caleb that the ironic thing is that I'm on the editorial board for the Reformed Forum. And not only do I not have a copy of this really interesting book, but I had to pay for it. *(Laughter)* So I appreciate the gift of this book very much. Don, why don't you lead us in? *(Music)*

Our gracious God, we are so thankful for this day and for the love shed abroad in our hearts by the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we're thankful that You covenanted with the Son that we might have life, and that from all eternity. And Father, we're thankful to be in this place now, recognizing that it is by Your sovereign appointment that we are here, and also for our good. We recognize that the study of Your word is an aid to our spiritual well-being; it's a means of grace which You use to bring about Christ in our lives. And Father, we recognize as well that in bringing about Christ in us You are ministering to others through us. And so, Father, we pray that You will make the study of Your word at this time a blessing to each one of us, and a blessing to those we encounter even throughout today. Lord, we ask that You'll bless us and strengthen us as we study. And we pray that You'll make us fruitful in the lives of others.

Lord, we also pray that You'll be with our brother Bruce. We're thankful for his life and for his ministry, and for what an excellent example he has been throughout his life.

Father, we're thankful not only for our brother Bruce, but for others who are even sitting here who have been wonderful examples to us. We can't help but think of the bishop. We're thankful for his life and ministry, and others as well. And Father, we pray that Your hand of blessing would be evident not only upon them but as we spend time with men who have been fruitful, not only in their own lives but in ours as well.

Father, we pray that You'll bless the study of Your word to us. We pray that You'll bless our families. We pray that You'll bless our hands as they are put to the task of working. And Lord, we pray that even in this cursed fallen world that You'll make even the means by which we earn our bread a joy to us, even as it comes from the sweat of our brow. And so, Father, as we open Your word make it a light to us, for we ask it in the precious name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, let's turn to Romans chapter 1 today—Romans chapter 1. I think that what we're going to do is go up to verse 17. But I'm going to have us start reading in

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1:1 just to get a little bit of the context. There’s something that was left hanging from chapter 1 that I wanted us to think about for a minute. And again we can spend as much time or as little time on some of these things as you like. Please Feel free to interact. Well, let me read to you Romans 1:1-17. Don, you know I tried to stall as long as I could. But take your time and get your Bible out.

**Don Maurer:** No problem; I got it right here.

**Jeff:** You got it?

**Don:** Yup.

**Jeff:** All right; read it.

**Don:** 1:1-17?

**Jeff:** 1:1-17.

**Don:** Okay. NKJV. *“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, 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 you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

*“Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.*

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”* This is the word of the Lord.

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** Okay. So we left off the last time not talking about romans at all. And again a great discussion; it was very positive. And I think it was profitable, and maybe we could do some things like that in the future, where we think through some implications from the gospel for life. But I want us to get back to Romans today. And again I want us to think about Romans in a way that is as thorough or as brief as you want. In other words I want to stop at some of the places that I think are important. But I want to stop at the places that you think are important as well. So feel free to interact at any given point.

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In the first seven verses we left something hanging. That was what I called “the trans-Testamental gospel.” And basically when I talk about the trans-Testamental gospel I’m really talking about that gospel that goes from the Old and the New Testament. And you see that in the opening verses of Romans chapter 1. For instance you see that the gospel was “*promised beforehand through the prophets.*”

**Transcriber’s Note:** ESV.

**Jeff:** Now that’s important for us. And I think it’s important for us because oftentimes I think we have a tendency to think that the gospel emerges in the New Testament or in the Gospels. And we forget that the gospel is something that was introduced and prophesied and spoken of and promised in the Old. And I think that one of the clearest examples of that is not only here in Romans 1, but for instance, if you think about Galatians chapter 3, one of the things that you see in Galatians 3 is that discussion about Abraham.

But listen to what it says. This is a fascinating portion of text. I’m going to start in verse 7 of chapter 3.

*“Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham.”*

Do you hear that? The gospel was preached to Abraham. And this is what it goes on to say. “*Saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’*” Now that’s Genesis 3. “*So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*”

In other words, the gospel was preached to Abraham and he believed, and he received the righteousness of God. And when we believe the same is true of us.

In other words, can I put it another way? The saints of the Old Testament were not saved in some way different from the saints of the New Testament. If you were saved in the Old Testament you are saved according to the gospel that was preached to Abraham. In fact I would say it like this. You were saved according to the gospel that was preached to Adam and Eve after his fall in the garden. The gospel has not changed. It was the same in the Old as it is in the New.

But there’s a historical difference, isn’t there? I mean, there’s pre-cross and there’s post-cross. And so those who lived in a pre-cross era looked forward to the promise of the fruition of the gospel in signs and in types and in prophecies, and so on. But we look back to the fulfillment of that promise in Jesus Christ, because God has spoken definitively and decisively in His Son, just like it says in Hebrews 1:1-3.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Hebrews 1:1-3, ESV. “*Long ago, at many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the Heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God, and the exact imprint of His nature. And He upholds the universe by the word of His power.*”

**Jeff:** I think this is a big point. And I think it’s one of those points that I think we just need to stay with for a few minutes, because literally everywhere I go if I’m talking about this particular point I have someone who will come up to me and will say to me, “Well how were the saints of the Old Testament saved? Wasn’t it by obedience to the law? But in the New Testament it’s by grace.”

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And so think about it. Wasn't it John Newton? No, it was Martin Luther who said that the one who can navigate the relationship between law and gospel is truly a theologian. And it was John Newton who said that most of the problems that we encounter in the Christian life come from not being able to understand the relationship between law and gospel. So this is an important point. And I just want to open the floor at this point and see if you have any questions that you'd like to consider, or things you would like to wrestle through. But I think this is a fairly clear point in the Scriptures that I think often gets confused.

And here's why I think it gets confused. It's because of this. What do you do with the law? And that's not an easy question. And it's asked twice in the New Testament. So Paul says, what about the law? He says, "I know that's what you're thinking. Why the law?" If it's been by the promise, then why the law?

And you've heard me say this before. If I say to my son, "I'm going to give you my car tomorrow. Tomorrow it's yours; I promise. You come back to me tomorrow and I'm going to give you the keys; it's yours. I'll sign the deed over."

And he comes back to me tomorrow and he says, "Dad, I'm coming to collect on the promise."

And I say, "Great! Now here's what you have to do in order to claim the promise. You have to go wash the car. It's going to substitute for the car that I'm going to give you. You have to wash down the house and stain the deck. Then I'll give you the car."

And what is he going to say? Well he's obviously going to say, "Wait a minute! You promised to give me the car without conditions. And now all of a sudden there are these conditions, these legal conditions that are introduced. If I don't do this then I can't have this."

**Sig Tragard:** You should have warned him.

**Jeff:** I know; I should have warned him right away. Thanks, Sig. (*Laughter*) But he would say to me, "What about that, Dad? Why are these conditions introduced after you promised?" And you see, that's the question that Paul asks in Galatians and romans. Why the law? If it's by the promise, why the law?

And he even asks it this way. "*Does the law nullify the promise?*" And the answer he gives is no. And the question to be asked is why? And the answer is because the law was always meant to drive us to the promise. The law was meant to discover sin in us. And as it discovers sin in us that leads us to the promise of the gospel.

So it's not an easy thing. It's something we find that is wrestled with in the New Testament. But what questions do you have that you might wrestle with this? Oh yes; you had a question about this. (*Laughter*)

**Bishop Rodgers:** Not being a Lutheran, the law is not only that which drives us to Christ. It also guides our Christian life.

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely. I mean, the law really is a reflection of the righteousness of God. And so after we're saved, after we receive the gospel we ask, well how shall we then live? And the law answers that question for us.

**Ted Wood:** To me the question is not so much law and gospel which is definitely the question, because the law is meant for us. But it's more a question not of how you deal with the law and the gospel but how you deal with a sovereign, completely holy and

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perfect God. That to me is the more primary question than law and gospel. Law and gospel are ways to get at that.

Right now I’m teaching Exodus in our church. And there are a lot of people in the church who weren’t going to come to the class because “Oh, that’s Old Testament. That’s not going to be very interesting.” But there are huge amounts of law and gospel in Exodus, starting with the character of God.

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely. You know, years and years ago I was listening to Christian radio and heard someone on there say that if you want to help someone’s self-esteem you don’t try to build their self-esteem. If you want to help someone’s self-esteem you introduce them to the character of God.

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** And someone might say to you in response, “Well, if I introduce someone to the character of God that will actually diminish him.” That will only diminish them in relationship to their sin before the living God. Once they hear and receive the gospel all of a sudden they are then built up in the God who saves them. And that’s a great point, Ted. It’s a way to access the character of God.

**Ted:** I’ve just come to the place where that’s always where you start: who is God. Maybe you can just expand this a bit. In Galatians 3:7 it says the gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham. If we were to go around this room and say, “Okay guys, what is the gospel?”, it would involve Jesus dying for your sins and accepting Him as your Savior, and things of that sort. But I’m just wondering about the gospel that Abraham heard. Did he hear “Abraham, accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, repent and go to a Bible-believing church,” and things like that?

**Jeff:** Yeah; that’s great. That’s really great, because we’re in Genesis chapter 12. So that’s the question. The question is this. Let’s say your Bible only went to Genesis 12; you have a 12-chapter Bible. Where would you find the gospel?

**Bishop:** Genesis 3:15.

**Don:** Yes.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Genesis 3:15, ESV.

*“I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
And between your offspring and her Offspring.  
He shall bruise Your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel.”*

**Jeff:** Okay. What’s 3:15?

**Bishop:** the proto-evangelion.

**Sig:** In English, please.

**Bishop:** The early statement of the gospel.

**Jeff:** The early statement of the gospel—the proto-evangelion. And it’s that what? That Adam fell in the garden. And God said, “Your wife is going to suffer in child bearing.”

**Bishop:** “Bruise his head.”

**Jeff:** Say that again.

**Bishop:** Bruise his head, bruise His heel. The proto-evangelion.

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**Jeff:** So the Seed will crush the head of the serpent. And the serpent will strike at the heel of the Crusher. And that’s the first proclamation of the gospel. And so this comes again to us in Galatians. The Seed that was promised in Genesis is Christ. He is the One who crushes the head of the serpent, even as the serpent strikes at His heel. What other indications do we have of people living in the light of this gospel presentation between Genesis 1 and Genesis 12 beside Genesis 3?

**Bishop:** *“In you all nations shall be blessed.”*

**Jeff:** Okay. That’s Genesis 12:1-3, right? Is that right? Yes, that’s it. So *“through you all the nations, all the ethnos, “will be blessed.”* And that’s what we find repeated in Galatians 3. Go ahead, Don.

**Don:** Jeff, what about when Eve names Cain, thinking that perhaps he was the one? And she was wrong. But perhaps he was the one to be the Deliverer?

**Jeff:** Well, I think you’re getting a couple of stories crossed, which is ironic, which is amazing to me. Do you realize how historic this is—that we caught Don mixing two stories together? *(Laughter)* I mean for those of you who don’t realize it, Don can tell you the commercial that was running in 1972 on the program “Chips.” *(Laughter)* He can tell you the products that were being advertised and sing their songs for you. *(Laughter)* I find this to be an unrelenting moment. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** Wait a minute!

**Jeff:** And I know what he’s going to do. Because he’s the transcriber it’s going to get cut. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** Wait a minute. In Genesis chapter 4 *“Adam knew his wife,”* and they have Cain.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** And Eve says, *“I have gotten a man from the LORD.”* Right?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** And there are commentators like Jim Boice, for example, who says that he believes that this means that Eve thought that Cain was the Deliverer.

**Jeff:** Well that may be, but I’m actually thinking that you’re thinking of Genesis chapter 6.

**Don:** No.

**Jeff:** Actually Genesis chapter 5, where Lamech names Noah, thinking he will bring rest.

**Don:** Nope. No, I wasn’t thinking of that, Jeff. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Okay, so I don’t see this. You’re going to have to help me with a little bit more specifics. Cain knew his wife. No, not Cain knew his wife.

**Don:** *“Adam knew his wife.”*

**Jeff:** Adam knew his wife.

**Don:** They bore Cain.

**Jeff:** *“She conceived and bore Cain, saying, ‘I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.’”*

**Don:** Yeah. Jim Boice points out that *“with the help of”* was probably not in the original text; it’s an English interpolation. I don’t know if he’s right or not. But what the text literally says is, *“I have gotten a man, the LORD.”* And so perhaps Eve thought this

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was the Deliverer. It’s true with Noah too, with Lamech naming Noah. But I thought it was interesting that this happened in Genesis 4.

**Jeff:** Okay. So I guess we’re going to have to expunge the record. Don has redeemed himself. *(Laughter)* All right, Don; we’ll await another day. *(Laughter)*

Well, I was thinking of chapter 5 when Lamech names Noah saying, “*Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief,*” (or rest) “*from our work, and from the painful toil of our hands.*” And so let’s say that Don is right in Genesis 4 and that Boice is right, that there’s an anticipation in Genesis 4 that Cain will be the man who will give them relief. And then in Genesis chapter 5 Lamech believes that’s the case with Noah.

So what are they doing? Obviously there’s this trend in the thinking. And when you think about it Genesis 6-9 is all about the Flood. And 10 and 11 are about Babylon. So when you think about the trajectory of this you think, hey, faithful people are looking for the Redeemer that was promised, the One who would crush the head of the serpent and provide rest. And that means to provide rest for the nations.

And so we get to Galatians chapter 3. And it says, “And the Scripture preached the gospel to Abraham.” And notice. I want you to notice that this is the high view of Scripture that is in the Scriptures. If you go back to Genesis chapter 12 it says, “*And God said to Abram.*” And here in Galatians it says that the Scriptures said it, because in God speaking in Genesis so the Scripture speaks; God speaks in the Scriptures. And so what you have is, you have this statement by God that is actually a gospel statement—that God will save through this promise that is being given.

**Brave Man:** Can we just go back a step to 3:15, the Genesis part where we actually have the first statement of the gospel? I’m just kind of not seeing where that is. I went right over that without really understanding. Slow down.

**Ted:** But then again, you’re not Don.

**Brave Man:** You’re not what?

**Ted:** I said, “And then again, you’re not Don.” *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Okay. So let’s go to Genesis chapter 3. I’m not scratching where you’re itching.

**Brave Man:** Yeah. I just don’t quite understand why a couple sentences here are considered the first mention of the gospel. Maybe it’s just something I’ve never thought of.

**Jeff:** Okay. So when you look at 3:15 there is the enmity between “*you and the woman.*” He’s talking to the serpent. “*And between your offspring and her Offspring. He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.*”

And so we often think about that as the gospel. But we have help in doing that. So for instance, if you go to Galatians chapter 4 you notice first of all that there is this promise of the gospel inverse 4. “*But when the fullness of time had come God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that they might receive adoption as sons.*”

And so there is this idea that here is this One born of a woman. But if you go backward into chapter 3, notice what it says in verse 15. “*To give a human example, brothers, even with a manmade covenant no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been*

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*ratified.*” Now this is in light of the question, why the law? *“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his Offspring. It does not say ‘and to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘and to your Offspring.’”*

What’s behind this is the Seed: *“and to your Seed.”* It doesn’t say “seeds,” but it says “Seed.” And you can obviously see the connection between that and Genesis 3:15, where there is going to be *“enmity between your offspring”*—your seed, and her Seed, right? *“‘And to your Offspring,’ which is Christ.”* And so when he defines who that Seed is that’s going to come and crush the head of the serpent—that Offspring, not the offsprings—the One who is the Offspring or the Seed is going to come; it’s Christ who is going to come.

So there is this promise in the Old Testament coming out of Genesis 3:15, that there is going to be One who crushes the head of the serpent and gives them rest from the curse. And you can see how they see that in this light, because when you go to the New Testament where this kind of language is really taken up explicitly. And then you see them saying that this is the fulfillment of this; it is Christ.

So if you’re just looking at Genesis 1-12 you can see what they anticipated. But the problem for them is the same as in 1 Peter for the prophets. In 1 Peter it says this. It says, *“Concerning this salvation the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.”*

You have to remember that the idea is that this is progressively being revealed to them. And so they’re inquiring, looking into who is this One who is going to redeem. By the time you get to the New Testament Paul says, “Let me tell you who that Seed is, who that Offspring is. It’s Christ.” But that Offspring is understood to be a singular Deliverer who would come and give them rest. So does that help?

**Brave Man:** I think I understand it now a little bit because it mentions the Seed, and it kind of sets the stage a little bit. Everything starts to evolve from there. It doesn’t say this. Maybe it does. I’m referring to the Genesis part. It’s about a Deliverer for that because of the Fall. It doesn’t talk about that.

**Jeff:** No. It talks about Him crushing the head of the serpent. It doesn’t put it in the language that you were suggesting.

**Jim Hamilton:** When we talk about 3:15 we’re really talking about the devil here, right?

**Jeff:** Yes, and his offspring.

**Jim:** And his offspring.

**Jeff:** Right.

**Jim:** Okay.

**Jeff:** And you have to remember that when you get to Genesis chapter 6 the world is divided between the sons of God and the sons of men. And you’re going to bring this up, Don. I know that Boice sees the sons of God as angels and the daughters of men as—

**Don:** Yes; I disagree with him there.

**Jeff:** Yes, I disagree with him as well. I think that’s believers and unbelievers.

**Don:** Yes.



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**Jeff:** So the sons of God are believers, and the daughters of men are unbelievers. And they are married, and so on. And there’s the corruption in the world as a result, and so forth. But the point is that you see the division of the lines of the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the Deliverer. We see that in the text very vividly.

**Jim O’Brien:** Jeff, also in Genesis, when Seth is born, it specifically mentions that he was born in Adam’s image as opposed to God’s image. I think I know the answer to that. But could you elaborate on that just a little?

**Jeff:** Yeah. I’m not sure. I mean, maybe somebody else has a stronger take on this. I’m not sure that I invest a lot of importance into that statement. I’m not sure I would read a ton into that. I guess I’ll just leave it at that. Maybe somebody else would.

**Jim:** I’m wondering if he was pointing out the godly line, as opposed to the others.

**Jeff:** Yeah. I’m not sure if I have a definitive answer on that.

**Bishop:** As you see in this third chapter of Genesis, there is a crescendo. God is dealing with the results of their sin. But finally, when we get to the proto-evangelion, we actually see the fundamental crisis, which is God and Satan, which then characterizes the whole story from then on.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Bishop:** I don’t know if I’m going too far with this. But it seems to me that the heel can refer to the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The head is the absolute victory over sin.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Bishop:** Okay.

**Jeff:** Yes; that’s great.

**Ted:** But that was not seen at that time by Abraham. He would not have known.

**Jeff:** But the interesting thing—and this is where you’ve got to interpret the Scriptures—is that it says in John chapter 8—this is what Jesus says—“*Abraham saw My day,*” and rejoiced. So he saw something of that, right?

**Ted:** Right; absolutely.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** I think that when we read Genesis and preview the gospel in Genesis we see that you’re dealing with lots of parts that take time to pull together. Genesis 3:15 is one. I’m looking also at Genesis 3:14, where it says: “*Because you have done this, you are cursed.*”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** And I looked again and I went forward to Cain, where he had slain Abel. I come back to these words, and these are very haunting words. On the one hand it’s starting off with the character of God—total holiness, total perfection. Then on the other side you have this. “*And the LORD said, ‘What have you done?’*” “What are you doing? What is the act that you’re doing?”

It says, “*And now you are cursed.*” And then Cain’s response to that is, “*My punishment is greater than I can bear.*”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** And I looked up the word in Hebrew for *cursed*, and it means—I’m sorry; I don’t have it.

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**Jeff:** Let me consult my intern. *(Laughter)* Do you know that Hebrew word for *cursed*?

**Clay:** No. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** I’m surprised, because I asked him that before and he knew. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** It was like great repugnance. I mean, it carries an almost emotional feel to it.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** So I guess I’m saying that it’s not only that this is happening. But you don’t understand the Seed and the crushing and the serpent. And you don’t understand it until you learn and understand the depth of the curse.

**Jeff:** Yeah, yeah.

**Ted:** And so you start off with the character of God and the curse upon man. Oh, that’s it—*great loathing*. So when God says that a man is cursed, God has great loathing toward him.

Now this has just been striking me in the last several weeks. I went to a big family gathering with lots of nice people. We had a great time; it was on the beach. But I began to realize that none of those people were engaged in the Lord and in the faith, and that every one of them was in line for hell. And I didn’t want to think about it. I don’t want to think about the curse that lies on all of us. And so you almost have to ask yourself a question. I mean, each one of us has to come to the place where we say, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. I’m like Cain. God is sovereign; He’s perfect, He’s holy. And the punishment I deserve is greater than I can bear, and will result in the total destruction and great offense that God takes in them.”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** These are all kinds of performance things. But it hits the mark.

**Jeff:** Oh, it does. And here’s the thing about it. When you think about what you just said, that drives us to the question—what is the gospel?

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** And this is something else I want to think about, and think about this very briefly. What is the gospel? How do we typically think about the gospel? It says it right here in romans 1. The gospel is that which concerns the Son.

Think about that. That’s not typically what we think about the gospel. We think about the gospel as sort of the Roman Road or an EE presentation, or something like that. But here it says “*the gospel concerning His Son.*”

Now the salvation that comes from that comes from the Son, and it’s legitimate to think that way. But I don’t think we typically think about it. And again, you know, just as Ted reminded us, when we think about these things we start with God. And when we think about the gospel we start with God. We start with God’s Son because this concerns His Son.

Now there’s a question here. Again I just want to point it out to you. The gospel concerns the Son, but in what sense? It’s an interesting thing when you think about it.

If I were to direct you to chapter 1, verses 3 and 4, just let your eyes fall on 3 and 4. I’m going to propose something to you. But I want you to have in your head what you would think about 3 and 4 before I propose it.

**Sig:** In romans?

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**Jeff:** Romans; Romans 1:3-4.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Romans 1:3-4, NKJV. *“Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”*

**Jeff:** Just let your eyes fall on those verses. Get familiar with them for a minute. (Pause) Now I want you to see the parallelism that exists between 3 and 4. Take a look at the screen; this is what you see. “Descended (or born)” (verse 3), “declared” (verse 4.) “According to the flesh,” (verse 3), “according to the Spirit of holiness” (verse 4.) “From the seed of David” (verse 3), “from the resurrection of the dead,” (verse 4.)

The question is, when you think about the gospel concerning the Son, using this parallel, what do you think of? Now older commentators and theologians thought of the hypostatic union—the two natures. In verse 3 we find the human nature. And in verse 4 we find the divine nature. And so they thought to themselves that Romans 1:3 and 4 pointed us toward the hypostatic union—the two natures in the one Person, Jesus Christ. And that is where we start when we think about the gospel.

And later a guy by the name of Gerhardus Voss comes along in his *Biblical Theology*. And he says that we shouldn’t think about these two verses as pointing us to the two natures of Christ. We should think about these verses pointing us to epochs, in other words to historical categories, like the humiliation and the exaltation of the Son of God.

And so when we think about verse 3 we think about him descending according to the flesh—the seed of David; humiliation. And when we think about verse 4 it’s the declaration of Psalm 2—*“this day,”* and so on, and that coming to fruition in the Resurrection—*“according to the Spirit of holiness, resurrected from the dead.”* This is the exaltation. This is the idea of a transition from one particular historical moment to the next. Go ahead, Don.

**Don:** I can’t help but note the difference in translations. The NKJV that I have says *“who was born of the seed of David.”* I think you have the ESV, which says *“descended.”* What a difference; “descended” is much more intense.

**Jeff:** Yeah. And I think the word in the New King James Version, (though I struggle to admit it), is probably more accurate. (Laughter)

**Don:** Okay.

**Jeff:** So it’s an interesting debate as to what’s in mind here, because you can sort of move in many directions as a result of it. But it’s not something that we need to spend a lot of time with. But I just want to put in front of you what we sometimes take for granted. There is more of a type of depth to it that we oftentimes miss, both historically and systematically.

So let’s think about Paul talking about *“I’m not ashamed of the gospel”* in 1:16 and 17. Now we’re going to back up and study these other verses. But what does he mean by this in 1:16 and 17? *“I am not ashamed of the gospel.” “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 to faith. As it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”*

**Transcriber’s Note:** ESV.

## ***“The Trans-Testamental Gospel”***

**Jeff:** What is he saying here? It’s something simple; “I’m not ashamed of the gospel.”

In what sense is it simple? Well, if you look at commentaries, or if you look at the way that people have described this little statement, it’s interesting. Calvin says, “*This is an anticipation of objection.*” In other words, I understand that you are going to object at what I’m about to say. But I want you to know that I am not ashamed of what I’m about to say—that sort of thing.

W. G. T. Shedd, another famous theologian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, says this. “*Paul hints at the scornful treatment which Christianity had received.*” In other words it was a shameful thing, because the Founder of their faith, as it were, was put on a cross. And so he hints at the shamefulness of the cross as it comes to light in the gospel.

But what if this is a *litotes*? And you know what a *litotes* is. It’s a positive expressed in a negative. And you all know what this means. And if you use the *litotes* in your daily speech it says something about you. I do, and it says something about me. I won’t tell you what it says.

But if somebody asks, “How are you today?”, and you say what? “Not bad,” or you say, “I’m hanging in there,” you really mean “I’m doing pretty well today.” But you express “I’m doing pretty well today” by saying, “I’m not bad.” That’s a *litotes*.

Now I think that what Paul may be using here is a *litotes*. So “I’m not ashamed” means “I glory in the gospel.” The question that we have to ask ourselves is, why the use of shame language? Why that language, if that’s what he means? If it really means that I glory in the gospel, why does he say, “I’m not ashamed of the gospel?” That’s what we have to think about. Why the *litotes* in that sentence?

Well, the question that we have to ask ourselves is, what is the gospel? Now we already asked ourselves this at one point. But I think we have to remember Ted’s point at this point in our study. And that is that the gospel is based heavily on the crucifixion of Christ. That’s where He becomes “*sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” And so the Crucifixion is a shameful thing. The cross was a shameful death.

But I want you to notice the context of the passage—Romans 1:1-17, because I think that even though, as Shedd does, we can see the cross, I think there is something else in terms of the context of what it is that we’re looking at. In other words, there is something else here in the text that might drive us to the conclusion that I’m arguing for.

For instance, there’s a developing theme. In verse 1 Paul is a *doulos*, a slave. Now your translations may have “*servant.*” And it’s interesting to me that even in some modern Bibles they talk about why it is that they render *doulos* as *servant* instead of *slave*. My ESV argues for the fact that “we were culturally sensitive to the fact that *slave* communicates something in our own culture. And so we think that *servant* is the right idea here, and we use it.”

But a *doulos* is a slave. And Paul calls himself a slave. And a slave is a person who is legally owned by someone else, and whose entire life was determined by his master. That’s a slave. Even if it’s an indentured servant, it’s still a slave. Paul is a slave of Jesus Christ. That’s first.

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Second, go to verse 7: *service to the Deity*. This is what you find in the Old Testament at various times. It’s another idea of servitude. Paul serves the gospel of the Son. So he’s a slave to God; he serves the gospel.

And in verse 14 we find another word: *“under obligation.” “I am under obligation.”* Now how does Paul describe himself? Paul describes himself as a servant, as a slave. He is a debtor, a person under moral obligation to do something. He’s a slave to Jesus Christ.

Now this raises a question. How was slavery viewed back in the first century? Well, let me give you this quote from Gaelan, who was a physician. He says, *“When I was a young man I imposed upon myself an injunction which I observed through my whole life, namely, never to strike any slave of my household with my hand. My father practiced the same restraint.”*

Now we could say to ourselves, “Well, that’s a wonderful thing. This guy is really compassionate toward his slaves.” Why might he have said that?

Go on and read the next paragraph. He said, “Because you might hurt your hand.” *(Laughter)* You know, he’s a physician. He says, *“if you hit a slave with your hand you may break a bone.”* “So don’t do that.”

And then he goes on to say, *“Always pick up something. Always hit them with something. Don’t ever use your hand.”* He’s not compassionate, not at all.

Sonitus had this tattooed on them. *“I have run away; hold me. When you shall have returned me to my master Sonitus you will receive a gold coin.”*

**Sig:** He had that tattooed on his slaves?

**Jeff:** The slave was the lowest that one could be in society. Paul says that he is a slave to Christ and the gospel. And he’s not ashamed of it. I think that’s the point. That’s the point he’s driving home. “I am a slave of this gospel and not ashamed of it.”

Now I don’t know about you. But I think that we could get really practical at this point. And I think we could get really practical at this point by thinking about how many times, without confessing it to one another, how many times we were put in a situation where we were actually ashamed to bring forward the name of Christ or to make our Christian faith known to those we were with.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Jeff:** And I think it happens far too often. And I don’t know about you, but when I was first a believer and when I was first saved I worked in a factory. I’d go into the lunch room and I brought my little Bible. I put it in my lunch box and I would pull it out. And I can remember thinking to myself about this passage: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel,”* because you know what? I was struggling with shame. I knew I was going to get ridiculed for it; I knew it. And I didn’t. But the point is that I was struggling at this point to make it known that I was a believer—not to stand up and say, “Hey, I’m a believer!”, but just to pull out my Bible and put it on the lunch table as I was eating lunch.

And you know, we all struggle with this in some way or another. And this is where we live.

**Bishop:** I think of Jesus’ statement. “If you’re ashamed of Me before men, so I’ll be ashamed of you before My Father in heaven.” That is really heavy.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** *“My punishment is greater than I can bear.”*

## ***“The Trans-Testamental Gospel”***

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** I mean, with every violation I’m ashamed of the gospel; I’ll admit it.

**Jeff:** Yeah. We’re out of time. I want to run one thing by you really quickly. I want you to see something, though. I want you to see the juxtaposition of this.

What is the gospel? It’s interesting that he uses the word *gospel* when he talks about not being ashamed. The gospel is used in a statement like this: Emperor Octavian, 9 B.C. “*The birthday of the god who was for the world the beginning of joyful tidings*”—there’s our word for *gospel*—“*which have been proclaimed on his account.*” In other words, a gospel was when an emperor was born or had ascended to the throne. That was good news, joyful tidings to the entire world. In other words, things will be different because of this emperor and his ascent to the throne.

And so it’s this juxtaposition of “I am a slave to God. But I am a servant of the gospel,” which says that everything in the world is going to be different, changed. And isn’t it striking that we would be ashamed of that proclamation which is going to change the world! And that’s the thing I think that we have to wrestle with. I think that’s the thing that we do wrestle with. With that let’s pray and we’ll adjourn.

Father, thank You for this day and for the time You’ve given, and for Your hand upon us. And thank You, Father, for the gospel of Jesus Christ. We pray and give You thanks that You brought Your salvation through Your Son to us. Lord, let us not be ashamed of it, but let us glory in it, for we ask it in Jesus Christ’s name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. (*Applause*)