The Power of the Cross

Bible Study Guide
Scripture: Romans 1:14-17; Romans 6:1-4
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Opening Prayer & Welcome

Begin with prayer, thanking God for the power of the gospel—power that saves, transforms, and obligates us to share it with a lost world. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand the depth of what Paul is communicating in Romans and to give you boldness to proclaim this gospel without shame. Pray for those who haven't yet experienced the power of the cross, that today would be the day they say yes to Jesus.

Introduction: Context is Everything

Key Definition: The power of the cross is God's divine might displayed through the gospel of Jesus Christ—power that obligates believers to proclaim it, breaks through all human barriers, and saves everyone who believes.

Scripture Foundation: "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.'" - Romans 1:16-17

Understanding Romans: Why Paul Wrote

Before diving into the text, we need to understand context. Romans was written during a time when Christians were called to live countercultural lives in the Roman Empire. Rome was the superpower of the world—boasting military might, political dominance, advanced engineering (aqueducts, roads), and cultural sophistication.

But Paul makes a revolutionary claim: The power that truly matters is not Rome's military legions or architectural achievements—it's the power of the gospel. What the empire could not do with all its armies and authority, the cross has accomplished: it saves sinners and changes lives.

Paul's Purpose in Writing:

- He longed to visit the Roman Christians but was hindered
- He wanted to impart spiritual gifts and encourage them

- His ultimate goal: to preach the gospel and show them how to be in right standing with God
- Romans is about righteousness—how God makes people right with Him

How to Study Scripture

Bro. Fred gave us practical instruction on approaching God's Word:

1. **Grasp the context first** - Understand why the book was written and to whom
2. **Get a good survey book** - Invest in New Testament or Old Testament survey resources or introduction books
3. **Don't just read—study** - Know the background before diving into a book
4. **Pay attention to the author's thesis** - Romans 1:16-17 is Paul's thesis for the entire letter

Questions:

1. Why is it important to understand the context before studying a book of the Bible?
2. What resources do you use (or could you use) to better understand Scripture?
3. How does knowing Rome's cultural context help us understand Paul's message?

The Big Idea

The cross of Christ contains divine power that obligates every believer to proclaim it, breaks through every human barrier, and saves everyone who believes. We access this power through faith expressed in baptism, where we are united with Christ in His death and resurrection, enabling us to walk in newness of life.

This is not philosophy. This is not advice. This is power—God's power—to save, transform, and send.

Point #1: The Cross Obligates Every Believer

Key Scripture: Romans 1:14-15

"I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."

Main Points:

- Paul declares he is "under obligation" (in debt) to proclaim the gospel
- This obligation extends to all people: Greeks, barbarians, wise, foolish
- The obligation flows from who Paul is and what God has done for him

- Every believer shares this same obligation

Key Teaching:

"Paul says the cross obligates every child of God to tell. He says, 'Now I am under...' And another, if you've got a King James version or another translation, it says, 'I'm in debt.' I'm in debt to God."

Five Reasons Paul is Obligated:

Let's trace through Romans 1:1-5 to see why Paul says he's in debt:

1. He's a Bond Servant (v. 1) - "Paul, a bond servant of Christ Jesus"

- A bond servant is a slave who chooses to remain with his master forever
- Paul voluntarily submitted his entire life to Jesus
- Every Christian is also a bond servant to Christ

2. He's Been Called (v. 1) - "called as an apostle"

- God called Paul on the Damascus road (Acts 9)
- Every Christian has been called by God through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14)
- We didn't choose God first—He called us

3. He's Set Apart (v. 1) - "set apart for the gospel of God"

- Paul was separated, consecrated for a specific purpose
- Every believer is set apart (holy, sanctified) for God's purposes
- We're not living for ourselves anymore

4. He Met the Resurrected Christ (v. 4) - "declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead"

- On the Damascus road, Paul met Jesus after His resurrection
- The resurrection is proof that Jesus is who He claimed to be
- We serve a living Savior, not a dead religious figure

5. He Received Grace (v. 5) - "through whom we have received grace"

- Paul, the chief of sinners, was shown incredible mercy
- If anyone needed saving, it was Saul the persecutor
- Grace obligates us—we who were saved must tell others

Additional Reason: People Are Under God's Wrath (v. 18)

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

Paul is obligated because anyone living outside of Christ falls under the wrath of God. The only thing that can save a person under God's wrath is the power of the gospel.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you feel "in debt" to God to share the gospel? Why or why not?
2. Which of the five reasons Paul lists resonates most with you personally?
3. How does understanding that people are under God's wrath motivate evangelism?
4. What would change in your daily life if you truly felt obligated to tell others about Jesus?

Truth Bomb:

"Might I suggest to you, every one of us have been called by God. You've been called to obey the gospel of Jesus. Right? Secondly, you are set apart for the gospel of God. Right? And every last one of us are bond servants to Jesus. That's right. All of us. Which means all of us like Paul are obligated to preach and teach the gospel."

Application:

Stop treating evangelism as optional. You are obligated—not out of guilt, but out of gratitude. You're a bond servant, called, set apart, and saved by grace. Someone under God's wrath needs to hear the gospel from you today.

Point #2: The Cross Breaks Barriers and Shame

Key Scripture: Romans 1:14, 16; Romans 2:1-11

"I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish... 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."

Main Points:

- Paul's obligation extends across all cultural, intellectual, and ethnic lines
- The gospel breaks down human barriers that divide us
- The gospel also breaks shame—both the shame we feel and the shame others try to place on us
- There is no partiality with God—the gospel is for everyone

Key Teaching:

"This is the only power that can break through the barriers of mankind. Amen. Doesn't matter where you are. Doesn't matter how you grew up. Doesn't matter where you live

or where you used to live. God's power can break those barriers."

The Barriers the Gospel Breaks:

1. Cultural Barriers - "Greeks and barbarians"

- Greeks represented civilization and culture
- Barbarians were considered uncivilized outsiders
- The gospel crosses every cultural divide

2. Intellectual Barriers - "wise and foolish"

- The gospel isn't just for the educated elite
- It's not just for the simple-minded either
- Both scholar and laborer need the same Savior

3. Ethnic/Religious Barriers - "to the Jew first and also to the Greek"

- Jews had a covenant relationship with God through the law
- Gentiles were outsiders to that covenant
- But the gospel makes both groups equal before God

4. Moral Barriers - Romans 2:1-11

- Some Jews thought they were better than Gentiles because of their moral behavior
- Paul shows that passing judgment on others while practicing the same sins is hypocritical
- All have sinned—there is no partiality with God

Breaking Shame:

Paul says, "I am NOT ashamed of the gospel." Why would anyone be ashamed?

- **The cross was shameful in Roman culture** - Crucifixion was reserved for the worst criminals
- **Christians were persecuted** - Following Jesus could cost you your job, family, or life
- **The gospel seemed foolish** - A crucified Messiah? Resurrection from the dead? It sounded absurd

But Paul declares: I'm not ashamed. Why? Because this gospel has POWER.

Romans 2: God Shows No Partiality

"For there is no partiality with God." (Romans 2:11)

Paul addresses Jewish believers who thought they were exempt from God's judgment because of their heritage. He shows:

- Having the law doesn't save you—keeping it does (and no one can)
- Judging others while practicing the same sins condemns you
- God's kindness should lead us to repentance, not presumption
- Tribulation and distress come to everyone who does evil
- Glory and honor come to everyone who does good—Jew and Greek alike

The Point: The gospel levels the playing field. We're all sinners in need of the same grace. The cross breaks down every wall we build between ourselves and others.

Discussion Questions:

1. What barriers does the gospel break in your community or context?
2. Why do you think Paul emphasizes "to the Jew first and also to the Greek"?
3. Have you ever felt ashamed to share the gospel? What caused that feeling?
4. How does Romans 2:1-11 confront self-righteousness and religious pride?

Truth Bomb:

"The gospel, while it makes a distinction between the saved and the unsaved, what the gospel shows, if any man remains outside of Christ, then you are serving and living under the wrath of God. But then the blessing is any person that chooses to get in Christ, no matter what the race is, no matter what the gender is, no matter what side of the track you lived on, God is not partial in blessing them."

Application:

Stop comparing your sin to someone else's. Stop thinking you're better than others because of your background, education, or behavior. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. And if God shows no partiality, neither should we.

Point #3: The Cross Has Saving Power

Key Scripture: Romans 1:16-17

"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.'"

Main Points:

- The gospel is God's power (dunamis—dynamite) for salvation

- Salvation is rescue from wrath, deliverance from sin's power, and restoration to God
- This power is available to everyone who believes
- The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel—how God makes sinners right with Him

Key Teaching:

"The gospel is not philosophy. The gospel is not mere advice. The gospel is not even a suggestion. It is. It contains divine power that shatters sin, breaks chains, and raises the dead."

Understanding "Power" (Dunamis):

The Greek word *dunamis* (δύναμις) is where we get our English word "dynamite." Paul isn't saying the gospel is like dynamite—he's saying it IS divine power. It's God's might, God's strength, God's ability at work.

What the Gospel's Power Does:

1. **Saves from wrath** - Rescues us from God's righteous judgment
2. **Delivers from sin** - Breaks the power of sin that enslaves us
3. **Restores to God** - Brings us back into relationship with our Creator
4. **Transforms lives** - Changes us from the inside out

The Scope: "To Everyone Who Believes"

Notice: the gospel's power is available to everyone who believes. Not everyone who:

- Earns it
- Deserves it
- Works for it
- Is good enough

But everyone who **believes**—trusts God enough to obey Him.

The Depth: "Unto Salvation"

Salvation is not just a one-time event. It includes:

- **Past**: Justified—declared righteous the moment we believed and were baptized
- **Present**: Sanctified—being made holy, transformed daily by God's power
- **Future**: Glorified—will be fully redeemed when Christ returns

The Righteousness of God Revealed:

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith."

The "righteousness of God" here is not primarily about God's righteous character (though He is righteous). It's about **how God makes people righteous**—how He justifies sinners and puts them in right standing with Himself.

This righteousness:

- Cannot be earned by keeping the law
- Is not inherited through heritage
- Is received through faith in Jesus Christ
- Is revealed progressively ("from faith to faith")

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean that the gospel contains "power"—not just information?
2. How have you personally experienced the saving power of the gospel?
3. Why is it important that salvation is "to everyone who believes" rather than "to everyone who earns it"?
4. What does "the righteousness of God" mean in this context?

Truth Bomb:

"You have better have discernment. You have better know what you're getting into before you get into it... This judgment is unrighteous judgment. This is pointing your finger at people as if you ain't got issues. Y'all hear what I'm saying? Difference."

Application:

Stop trying to clean yourself up before coming to Jesus. The gospel has power to save you as you are. Your job isn't to be good enough—it's to believe and obey. Trust the power of God to do what you cannot do for yourself.

How We Access the Power: Romans 6:1-4

Key Scripture: Romans 6:3-4

"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

Main Points:

- We access the power of the cross through baptism

- Baptism is not a ritual—it's where we're united with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection
- In baptism, the old man dies and we're raised to walk in newness of life
- This is how we tap into resurrection power

Key Teaching:

"How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?"

What Happens in Baptism:

1. We're Baptized INTO Christ - This is the point of contact, the moment we're placed into Christ

2. We're Baptized INTO His Death - We participate in Jesus' death; our old self is crucified with Him

3. We're BURIED With Him - Just as Jesus was buried, we're immersed, symbolizing death and burial

4. We're RAISED With Him - Just as Jesus rose from the dead, we're raised to walk in newness of life

5. We Walk in Newness of Life - We live as new creations, empowered by the Spirit

The Power Connection:

Notice the connection: "as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power that works in us when we're baptized into Christ. We're not just starting over—we're tapping into resurrection power.

Baptism is Not Optional:

Throughout the sermon, Bro. Fred emphasizes that baptism is the God-ordained way to access the power of the cross. It's not:

- A work we do to earn salvation
- A ritual that magically saves us
- An optional add-on to faith

It's the moment where faith is expressed, where we're united with Christ, and where God's power transforms us from sinner to saint.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to be "baptized into Christ"?
2. How does baptism connect us to Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection?
3. What is "newness of life" and how should it be evident in a Christian's daily walk?
4. Why do you think many people today view baptism as optional when Scripture presents it as essential?

Truth Bomb:

"When I'm immersed, I'm then connected with Jesus. And because I'm connected with Jesus, I then put to death the old man. I'm putting him to death. And how? Through the agency of baptism."

Application:

If you haven't been baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you haven't accessed the power of the cross. Today is the day to respond—to believe, repent, and be baptized. If you have been baptized, are you walking in the newness of life that baptism signifies? Or have you disconnected from God's power?

Practical Application: Reconnect to the Power

For the One Who Hasn't Obeyed the Gospel:

If you've never responded to the gospel through faith, repentance, and baptism—now is the time.

Here's what you need to do:

1. **Believe** that Jesus is the Son of God, crucified for your sins and raised for your justification
2. **Repent** of your sins—turn away from them and turn toward God
3. **Be baptized** into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-4)
4. **Walk in newness of life** empowered by the Holy Spirit

Don't wait. You're under God's wrath right now. The gospel has power to save you, but you must respond in faith.

For the Christian Who's Been Disconnected:

Bro. Fred said something powerful: "We live life as children of God. We come in here, we look apart and everything, and we've lost power. You've been disconnected. The world has a way of disconnecting us from God's power. And now is the time to reconnect."

Signs you've been disconnected:

- You've lost your sense of obligation to share the gospel
- You've become ashamed or hesitant to talk about Jesus
- You're living in unrepentant sin
- You've lost the joy and power you once had

How to reconnect:

1. **Confess your sins** - 1 John 1:9 promises God will forgive and cleanse
2. **Return to your first love** - Remember what Jesus saved you from
3. **Get back in the Word** - Let God's power flow through His Word
4. **Start sharing the gospel again** - Obligation leads to action

The good news: You don't have to pay for this power. The rate doesn't go up. It keeps coming every month. All you have to do is submit to it.

Three Action Steps for This Week:

1. Pray for someone to obey the gospel

- Write down their name
- Pray daily that God would draw them to Himself
- Look for opportunities to share the gospel with them

2. Examine your own connection to the power

- Are you walking in newness of life?
- Have you been disconnected by sin, apathy, or worldliness?
- What needs to change?

3. Share the gospel with at least one person this week

- You're obligated—act on it
- Don't let shame or fear stop you
- Trust that the gospel has power to save

Group Discussion & Reflection

Discussion Questions:

1. **What stood out to you most about the "power" of the gospel? How does understanding it as divine dynamite change your view of evangelism?**
2. **Which of the three main points (obligates, breaks barriers, has saving power) challenged you most personally?**
3. **How does knowing you're "in debt" to God change your daily priorities?**

4. **What barriers exist in your life or community that need the power of the gospel to break through?**
5. **Have you been "disconnected" from God's power? What practical steps will you take this week to reconnect?**

Personal Reflection:

- **Are you walking in the newness of life that baptism signifies?**
- **Who in your life needs to hear the gospel from you this week?**
- **What's keeping you from feeling and acting on your obligation to share the gospel?**
- **How can you help others reconnect to the power of the cross?**

Closing Prayer

Father, we are overwhelmed by the power of Your gospel. Thank You that it's not mere philosophy or advice—it's divine dynamite that shatters sin, breaks chains, and raises the dead. Thank You that we are obligated to share it because we are bond servants, called, set apart, and saved by grace. Forgive us for the times we've been ashamed or silent. Help us to boldly proclaim this gospel that breaks every barrier and saves everyone who believes. For those here who haven't accessed this power through baptism, draw them to respond today. For those who've been disconnected, help them reconnect. May we walk in the newness of life that comes from being united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. In Jesus' powerful name, Amen.

For Further Study

Additional Scriptures:

- Acts 2:36-41 (Peter preaches the gospel; 3,000 baptized)
- Acts 9:1-19 (Paul's conversion and baptism)
- Galatians 3:26-27 (Baptized into Christ, clothed with Christ)
- Colossians 2:11-12 (Buried and raised with Christ in baptism)
- 1 Corinthians 1:18 (The word of the cross is power to those being saved)
- Ephesians 1:18-20 (The power that raised Jesus works in believers)

Memory Verse:

"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." - Romans 1:16

Remember: You're obligated. Not because God is a hard master, but because you're a grateful bond servant. You've been called, set apart, and saved by grace. The gospel

has power—divine, life-changing, barrier-breaking power. So tell it. Live it. And watch God work.
