

Preaching the Gospel to Yourself

Romans 1:1-7, 14-17

Ben Deaver at New Hope Church on March 29, 2015

Gospel Proclamation re: Caesar Augustus

Imagine you are a peasant in a small Asian village trying to raise a family and eke out a humble living when a messenger arrives on horseback and unrolls a scroll.

Shawn Lesny proclaims:

“In the Roman imperial world, the ‘gospel’ was the good news of Caesar’s having established peace and security for the world.” (Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*). For example, this announcement was from a provincial assembly of Asia Minor re: Caesar Augustus (see Luke 2:1).

Gospel Proclamation re: Christ Jesus

Now imagine you are a Gentile in Rome in A.D. 56 when Nero is emperor of the Roman Empire and you receive this letter that was dictated by a Jewish tentmaker named Paul and written down by a man named Tertius and delivered by a woman named Phoebe from Cenchreae (sen-kree-eye).

Danielle McCulley reads:

Romans 1:1-7, 14-17

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAY – Paul is eager to preach the gospel to those who already believe.

“Whereas the Providence which has guided our whole existence and which has shown such care and liberality, has brought our life to the peak of perfection in giving to us Augustus Caesar, whom Providence filled with virtue for the welfare of mankind, and who, being sent to us and to our descendants as a savior, has put an end to war and has set all things in order; and whereas, having become visible... and whereas, finally that the birthday of the god, Caesar Augustus, *has been for the whole world the beginning of the gospel concerning him*, therefore, let all reckon a new era beginning from the date of his birth.”

gospel = εὐαγγέλιον = good news

- The good news of the birth of a Roman Caesar.
- The good news of a war victory by a Roman Caesar.
- Put your whole life in alignment with this proclamation of Caesar of Augustus.

Danielle read Romans 1:1-7, 14-17.

¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Paul is being utterly subversive to the Roman empire here.

Caesar Augustus vs. Jesus Christ

Ruler	Caesar Augustus	Jesus Christ
What’s the geographical extent of rule?	Roman Empire	Heaven and Earth
What’s the duration of reign?	40 years (27 BC – 14 AD)	Eternity
Who gave the authority?	Adopted heir of the Roman empire	God the Father
What promises are made?	Peace, virtue for mankind Caesar Augustus over-promises and under-delivers.	Peace, Joy, etc. King Jesus can give true peace to His land. He will crush His enemies. See Romans 9:32-33 and 1 Peter 2:6-8.
What is the punishment for rebellion?	Death, maybe, if discovered	Eternal Death
How was authority retained?	Power	Self-giving love

The cross is central to the rule and reign of Jesus Christ. The ripple effect of the cross is crazy!

- The cross is how God defeated His enemies.
- **Col 2:13-15** ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.
- Paul says in **1 Cor 2:6-8** that if the rulers understood the wisdom in God they would never have crucified the Lord of glory.

The Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) is the rule and reign of Jesus Christ.

- Paul is an apostle of this message. Apostleship—that which is sent
 - He is writing to those who already believe that he is eager to preach the Gospel to them.
 - The message of the life, death, resurrection and future return of this King of kings, Jesus Christ.

This morning we're going to talk about reclaiming the discipline of preaching the Gospel to yourself.

- Last week—Nate Sapp spoke on *Reclaiming Worship*. He referenced this discipline.
- I'm not sure that we are reclaiming this discipline as much as bolstering it as many NHers talk about this quite a bit...which is greatly encouraging. We'll have time at the end to hear your best practices for preaching the Gospel to yourself so be contemplating the possibility of sharing for the benefit of others.

Preaching the Gospel to Yourself

Jerry Bridges, an old-school Navigator, was the first to use this specific language in print (that I know of). Bridges says that he owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Jack Miller, where he got the phrase. Jack's the dad of Paul Miller who wrote *A Praying Life*. Solid dudes to learn from.

Here's what he says in *The Discipline of Grace*:

When you set yourself to seriously pursue holiness, you will begin to realize what an awful sinner you are. And if you are not firmly rooted in the gospel and have not learned to preach it to yourself every day, you will soon become discouraged and will slack off in your pursuit of holiness.

To preach the gospel to yourself, then, means that you continually face up to your own sinfulness and then flee to Jesus through faith in His shed blood and righteous life. It means that you appropriate, again by faith, the fact that Jesus fully satisfied the law of God, that He is your propitiation, and that God's holy wrath is no longer directed toward you.

Preaching the Gospel to yourself IS NOT Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism = the religion of America

- Deism = A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
- Moralistic = God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions. Good people go to heaven when they die.
- Therapeutic = The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
 - *Illus*: Stuart Smalley—"I'm good enough. I'm smart enough. And doggone it, people like me." "I am a worthy human being."

How do I preach the Gospel to myself?

- Preach sermons to your heart – Take your soul to task!
 - **Ps 42:5, 11; 43:5** Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.
 - "Yo Ben! Hello? Listen up. Why are you bummed? Hope in God! Remember?"
 - *Fighting Yourself for Joy* sermon on July 28, 2013—
<http://newhopeks.org/messages/2013/07/28/fighting-yourself-for-joy>
 - I shall again praise Him. Remember, remember, remember. How prone we are to forget! We need reminders to remember.
- We are apostles, messengers, to each other. We are also an apostle, a messenger, to ourselves.
- Preach the Gospel to yourself whether you are thinking to highly or to lowly of yourself. Consider yourself with sober judgment. See **Rom 12:3**.

- Consider Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. “I don’t want to drink this cup of suffering. Oh yeah, there is great joy for me if I drink this cup. It’s go time.”
- *Illus:* Gollum/Smeagol
- Tell yourself the story of who you are.
 - “You listen to me, Ben Deaver. You are believing lies right now.”
 - On preaching – You have to know the text you’re preaching on but you also have to know the audience you’re preaching to.
 - You do your listening well and they’ll do their listening well.
 - Listen to your heart. Then speak/preach to your heart.
 - What are your hopes that aren’t happening?
 - What are you hoping in that is failing you?
 - What are your fears?
 - What are you prideful about?
 - Then he preaches to himself.
 - Remembers the grace of God
 - We are to destroy every arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. See **2 Cor 10:5**.
 - What false gospel is being proclaimed and believed that must be subverted?
 - The gospel of...
 - ...false world religions?
 - ...health, wealth and prosperity?
 - ...good government will make my life better?
 - ...CrossFit and healthy eating?
 - ...March Madness?
 - ...keeping up with the Joneses-ism?
 - ...self-helpism?
 - ...careerism?
 - ...perfect stay-at-home-mom-ism?
 - ...me, myself and I-ism?
 - ...or something else?

Ben Deaver, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, to Ben Deaver: Grace to you and peace from God your Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **Rom 8:1** – This is my refrain when I’m preaching to my soul.
- God is in your midst, He will quiet you with His love, He will exult over you with loud singing. **Zeph 3:17** The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. You’ll have to keep preaching the same message over and over again.
- Practical ideas:
 - Get a key verse that you will go to when you’re whining to yourself.
 - Read a good book.

When do I preach the Gospel to myself?

- Regularly. Daily. Also, as needed. Take daily and as needed.
- My big deal is that I feel like I need to prove my worth to God, to others, to myself.
 - Deception from the enemy or even from myself...

My recent example: I'm an impatient father in need of the Gospel o'er and o'er again.

Yesterday with my kids when Maddox desperately wanted to help me fix Kate's bike and I desperately wanted to do it without his help. I lost my patience with the poor kid and asked myself. How can I preach the Gospel to myself in this moment? "Ben, you are an impatient father who should be grateful for the eagerness of your son to help you with this task. You should be more patient than you are now. You should come alongside Maddox and teach him rather than bring your frustration to him. But it's alright because your heavenly Father is patient with you, Ben. He loves it when you try to help Him with His tasks and He wants to teach you and show you patience every step of the way. He took out all of His frustration on His Son so that He can relate to you with utter patience. God is desperate for you to experience Him as a good, gracious Father. You'll become more like that in time. Be patient with yourself."

Dennis McCallum in *Walking in Victory: Why God's Love Can Change Your Life Like Legalism Never Could*

The truest thing about us is what God says about us. (p. 17)

If you believe the Bible, you should realize that God's view of us is the true view. If he views us a certain way, then that is, in the ultimate sense, the way we really are! Even if the majority of our peers look at things a different way, we would know they were wrong by referring to the infinite external reference point—the God and creator of all. Not only could we know that the view of our peers was wrong in some cases, we could even discover that our own view is wrong as well. If we have come to view things a certain way, but God declares they are another way, we need to change our minds. (p. 22)

Tools:

- *A Gospel Primer for Christians: Learning to See the Glories of God's Love* by Milton Vincent
- *Note to Self: The Discipline of Preaching to Yourself* by Joe Thorn
- *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers
- *The Call to Joy and Pain: Embracing Suffering in Your Ministry* by Ajith Fernando

Sharing best practices: How do you preach the Gospel to yourself?

Jessica Spade:

- **Eph 1:5 (NLT)** God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.
- "I struggle to know I'm wanted by God."
- **Is 53:7b (NLT)** He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

Jenn Geldart: Listening to two Johnny Cash albums, *Greatest Hits* and *Hymns*. Comparing and contrasting Johnny Cash's life in these two albums is a picture of redemption showing that even the worst of sinners can be saved.

Bring up ushers and PRAY. Easter Sunday next week!

Jerry Bridges: *Our worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace.*

Romans 16:25-27 ²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ!
Amen.

My Examples:

- Often before or after a great success...
- When I wake up at 3:44 am and am assailed by accusation from Satan... Early mornings, sleepless nights...
 - ACMI 2010—You're too young. You have no business being in this role. This will fail. You're not spiritually mature enough. What will others think of you? Etc.
 - Serving as Interim Pastor this past year has given me plenty of opportunities to preach the Gospel to myself. "What if things fall apart at New Hope under your leadership? Etc."

Jerry Bridges (in *Respectable Sins*):

Since the gospel is only for sinners, I begin each day with the realization that despite my being a saint, I still sin every day in thought, word, deed, and motive. If I am aware of any subtle, or not so subtle, sins in my life, I acknowledge those to God. Even if my conscience is not indicting me for conscious sins, I still acknowledge to God that I have not even come close to loving Him with all my being or loving my neighbor as myself. I repent of those sins, and then I apply specific Scriptures that assure me of God's forgiveness to those sins I have just confessed.

I then generalize the Scripture's promises of God's forgiveness to all my life and say to God words to the effect that my only hope of a right standing with Him that day is Jesus' bloodshed for my sins, and His righteous life lived on my behalf. This reliance on the twofold work of Christ for me is beautifully captured by Edward Mote in his hymn "The Solid Rock" with his words, "My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness." Almost every day, I find myself going to those words in addition to reflecting on the promises of forgiveness in the Bible.

What Scriptures do I use to preach the gospel to myself? Here are just a few I choose from each day:

- *As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)*
- *"I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25)*
- *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)*
- *Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. (Romans 4:7-8)*
- *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)*
- *There are many others, including Psalm 130:3-4; Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 38:17; Micah 7:19; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13-14; Hebrews 8:12; and 10:17-18.*

Whatever Scriptures we use to assure us of God's forgiveness, we must realize that whether the passage explicitly states it or not, the only basis for God's forgiveness is the blood of Christ shed on the cross for us. As the writer of Hebrews said, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (9:22), and the context makes it clear that it is Christ's blood that provides the objective basis on which God forgives our sins.

Evan:

- I have to remind myself that I need Christ. Rebellion.
- Journal, Bible, *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers, Coffee

Maris:

- God doesn't really want to take care of me. Therefore, I must take care of myself.
- *Note to Self: The Discipline of Preaching to Yourself* by Joe Thorn

Duell: What does God say about me? Word immersion/marination

Geldart: Who is God? Who am I?

Nate Dillon: confidence

Jonathan York: note cards and journaling

Jim Pleuss: hymns

Good stuff on the chopping block:

- Consider Peter in **Gal 2:11-14**.
- **Gospel Circles**
 - The letter of Romans is specifically about the Gospel Truth that because of the Gospel there is unity to be had between Jew and Gentile. The Gospel Conduct is to welcome one another.
- Power is needed to comprehend the overwhelming love of Christ.
 - **Eph 3:14-21** ¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Announcements:

- Why do we call things what we call things?
 - CG
 - LG
- Easter Sunday—April 5
- Baptism Sunday—May 3

Passages:

- Col 1
- Acts 17:7 ...another king's reign.

Internal Conflict

Illus:

- Gollum/Smeagol
- Stuart Smalley
 - "I'm good enough. I'm smart enough. And doggone it, people like me."
 - "You're should-ing all over yourself."
 - "That's just stinkin' thinkin'!"
 - "You're should-ing all over yourself."
 - "Denial ain't just a river in Egypt!"
 - "I am a worthy human being."
 - "...and that's...okay."
 - "Trace it, face it, and erase it."
 - "I don't know what I'm doing. They're gonna cancel the show. I'm gonna die homeless and penniless and twenty pounds overweight and no one will ever love me."
 - "I'm in a shame spiral."
 - "You're only as sick as your secrets."
 - "Compare and despair."
 - "You need a checkup from the neckup."
 - "I am a human being, not a human doing."
 - "Pee-wee Herman: There but for the grace of God go I."
 - "It's easier to put on slippers than to carpet the whole world."

http://ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Paul_Caesar_Romans.htm

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2014/10/07/353292408/why-saying-is-believing-the-science-of-self-talk>

RECLAIMING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

SERMON SERIES BIG IDEA: Let's reclaim Gospel-powered spiritual disciplines for the sake of godliness (i.e. good works to the glory of God and for the good of His people).

- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald Whitney

Preaching is meant to disrupt and entice.

- Ask for recommendations!
- I hope you're having conversations about reclaiming the spiritual disciplines and sharing successes, failures and best practices with each other.

Illus: Justin Wiebers reclaimed steel beam from Howie's. Came from the Rec Center. 1400 pounds. Similar but different function.