

March 14, 2001

I am Not Ashamed of the Gospel!

Romans 1:16

Part 1

The most important need of our world today is God's salvation. But how will they receive it if the Gospel is not boldly proclaimed?

Please remain seated while I read our text for this morning.

Read Rom. 1:14-16

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.

Today, I want to pick up where we left off last time. You will remember that Paul is writing a letter to the church in Rome telling them that he really wants to visit them and is broken-hearted that his best efforts to get there have failed.

Aside from the pleasure of fellowshiping with them and getting to know them, he wanted to preach the Gospel in Rome. In fact (14) he makes it clear that it wasn't merely a desire to preach. It was an obligation.

I want to talk to you today about Paul's shameless Preaching of the gospel. And then, I want to begin thinking about the three truths that kept Paul motivated to preach the Gospel everywhere with little regard to the hardships he might experience. But first, let's consider Paul's Shameless Preaching of the Gospel.

I. The Shameless Preaching of the Gospel

1. Like Moses who, after receiving the revelation from God on the mountain, was obligated to deliver God's message to the people of Israel, so Paul, after receiving from Christ the revelation of the Gospel, was obligated to proclaim it. In Paul's case, however, it wasn't merely a message for his fellow Jews like it was at Sinai.

2. Paul considered himself a debtor to Greeks and Barbarians, the wise, and the foolish. It mattered NOT whether one was educated or un-educated; whether they were foreigners of another tongue, or the folks next door. He was a debtor to them All and he was EAGER (15) to fulfill that debt by preaching the Gospel.

3. IN fact, Paul communicated the same sense of obligation when he wrote to the church in Corinth. He says (1 Cor. 9:16) For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel." And yet, as you know, Paul faced significant obstacles to his mission of preaching the Gospel to everyone. His labor for the Lord was often a dangerous undertaking.

- Sometimes he got in trouble with the authorities.
- Sometimes it got him thrown in jail.
- Sometimes his friends turned their backs on him.

- Sometimes riots broke out.
- One time a group of people became so angry at him that they stoned him and left him for dead.
- Wherever Paul traveled, he experienced various degrees of pressure to be ashamed of the gospel. His message was not one that attracted the curious masses.
- It wasn't a message about a new and clever philosophy. If it had been, it would have been accepted at once!
- It wasn't a message about the state of government in Rome or a call to fundamentally change the empire to toward social and economic equality. If it were, the under-privileged hordes would have flocked to him in droves.
- His message wasn't a promise of health, wealth and prosperity.

Paul's message wasn't like that.

- Rather his message was that in Israel, a common carpenter was found to be the Son of God.
- It was a message declaring that sins can be forgiven by faith in the life and death of a crucified Messiah.
- Think about that! The man who claimed to be the Son of God was crucified and died on a Roman Cross as a criminal! Who would ever believe such a message?!!!

4. One author writes,

Paul preached a shameful message when he preached of Jesus on the cross. Being crucified was a degrading insult, and the idea of worshipping someone who had been crucified was absolutely

unimaginable. Of course, we don't see people being crucified now as Paul's listeners did in the 1st century, so the impact is somewhat lost on us. But Paul knew what he was up against: He wrote, “for the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing” (1 Cor. 1:18); for Jews request signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block into the Greeks foolishness” (1:18:22-23). The message of the cross is foolishness, *moria* in Greek, from which we get our word moron.¹

5. No wonder people became angry at him! And humanly speaking, it may have seemed perfectly reasonable if he just quit! Isn't that what most would-be evangelists do?

6. Paul, however, never capitulated to those pressures. He tells us (back in Rom. 1:16) that despite the hardships, he was Not Ashamed of the Gospel

- Not ashamed though for his fellow Jews saw it is a stumbling block (1 Cor. 1:23).
- Not ashamed though the "the word of the cross is foolishness" to those who are perishing (1 Cor. 1:18).

7. When Paul says, I am not Ashamed, he is using a figure of speech by which he means the opposite. To say, “I am not ashamed” is to say “I am eager,” or ‘I am proud’ of the Gospel.”

8. Paul was a shameless Preacher of the Gospel. And throughout church history God has had his choice men whose preaching was boldly unashamed. We think of men like John Huss, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and George

¹ John MacArthur, *Hard to Believe*, (Dallas, TX, Thomas Nelson, 2003), 25

Whitfield. Men who turned the world up-side-down by their preaching.

9. I also think of more modern folks who possessed the same spirit. Richard Wurmbrand was a faithful preacher of Jesus in Romania when Joseph Stalin was the ruling, murderous dictator of the 1940's and early 50's.

A. At one point in his story,

Richard and his wife, Sabina, went to a congress of Joseph Stalin and 4,000 religious leaders in Romania. They sat and listened to one priest after another pastor proclaim that communism and Christianity are fundamentally the same. Finally, Richard's wife could take no more. Richard writes: "My wife [Sabina] and I were present at this congress. My wife sat near me and told me, 'Richard, stand up and wash away the shame from the face of Christ! They are spitting in His face.' I said to my wife, 'If I do so, you lose your husband.' She said, 'I don't wish to have a coward as a husband.'"² After Wurmbrand gave his speech at the congress, he was arrested and sent to a labor camp where he endured unspeakable hardship and torture.

² Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ, Richard Wurmbrand, Tortured for Christ, (Great Britain, Richard Wurmbrand and presently by Mihai Wurbrand, son of Late Reverend Richard Wurmbrand, 1967)*, 16

10. Today, there are probably men who are made of such steel. But the reality is, even in these changing times, it is still relatively safe to preach the gospel. In our society it is still rather safe to talk to people about Jesus. And yet, fear tends to bog us down.

11. Why are we afraid to speak of Christ and proclaim his Gospel to our friends and neighbors? I suspect it is due in part to the reality that many times the guy who we hear being interviewed on TV or has the Microphone on the College campus is an outspoken, hostile atheist. But as Glen Scrivener says, “The guy with the Mic doesn’t speak for the room.”³ Just because he is loud and has been given a platform doesn’t mean that everyone agrees with him.”

12. And I have found that the vast majority of people I have spoken to about Christ were at least polite, and many of them seemed genuinely interested in what I had to say.

13. The point is, there is little reason for any of us to be ashamed of the Gospel. Unfortunately, too many of us are. But this betrays in us what John Piper refers to as “Misplaced shame.”

The Bible makes very clear (Piper writes), that there is a shame we ought to have and a shame we ought not to have. We might call the one kind, “misplaced shame” and the other “well placed shame...”

Misplaced shame is the kind of shame you feel when there is no good reason to feel it. Biblically

³ Glen Scrivener, “The Guy With the Mic Doesn’t speak for the Room.” Christian Living website. January 3, 2018.

that means that the thing you feel ashamed of is not dishonoring to God...⁴

Well placed shame[on the other hand] is shame we feel when there is good reason to feel it. Biblically that means we feel ashamed of something because our involvement in it is dishonoring to God. We ought to feel shame when we have a hand in bringing dishonor upon God by our attitudes and actions.⁵

For example, we should be ashamed of our sin or sin in our nation like Abortion. But we should not be ashamed of the Gospel. This is misplaced shame!

14. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul scolds his young protégé by saying,

2 Timothy 1:7–8 (ESV)

⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. ⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, (2 Tim. 1:8).

⁴ John Piper, *Future Grace*, (Sisters, Oregon, Multnomah Books, 1995), 132-135

⁵ Ibid John Piper

15. We ought NOT feel shame for the gospel. Christ is honored when we speak well of him. And he is dishonored by fearful silence.⁶

16. Therefore, Jesus warns (Mk. 8:38) For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy Angels.

16. Paul was a shameless preacher of the Gospel. And while it is true that only a few are called to preach, all of us should be willing and eager to speak with others about the Gospel of Jesus. But how does one keep his motivation high and not get discouraged as he shares the gospel with people who don't want to hear it?

17. For the apostle Paul, the fact that he was not ashamed of the gospel was owing to 3 truths that he believed with every fiber of his being. And I can't help but believe that if we would embrace these 3 truths, we would be more motivated to minister the gospel to the people we know. What are those 3 truths?

Paul believed in...

II. The limitless power of the gospel

III. The boundless reach of the gospel

IV. The effortless qualification of the gospel

Let's just spend a few minutes on the first of them.

⁶ Ibid, John Piper

II. The Limitless power of the gospel:

1. Paul writes, *“I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the Power of God for salvation to all who believe.”*

2. How is Paul able to persevere and even thrive in his gospel preaching? Simply stated, Paul believed that the Gospel is the power of God for salvation. In other words, the Gospel is the means by which God exerts his power to save.

3. In chapter 10 Paul will ask some rhetorical questions. He writes (10:14)

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

4. You see friend, Paul didn't believe in a “Wider Mercy.” He didn't believe that people who don't have ready access to the gospel would be saved on the basis of their sincerity to the spiritual light they had, no matter how Christless and idolatrous.

- How will they believe in him who they have not heard?
Answer: They Won't!
- How will they hear without a preacher? Answer: they won't!

5. You see, the Gospel is essential for salvation. That's why Paul was attempting to reach as much of the world as he possibly could before his time was done! He was not ashamed of the gospel because it was (and still is) the only means of saving grace.

6. The Gospel is the ONLY power that saves. Many evangelicals don't seem to believe that. They believe that, to the common man, the gospel is offensive, embarrassing, and unattractive. If you want to make an impact on the world then you have to offer things to entice people into church where they can meet new friends, build relationships and have fun. But nobody get salvation apart from the only thing that has the power to deliver it; namely, the unvarnished, undiluted, message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

7. The salvation of sinners is not a light matter. It doesn't happen spontaneously or as a result of deep feelings of need. No, the only way anyone is genuinely saved is by the exertion of the awesome power of God. A power that brings about the spiritual heart transplant the prophet Ezekiel promised would come, wherein God will remove the heart of stone and replace it with a living heart of flesh.

8. The Gospel is a power that transforms. The only way one can be efficaciously called, redeemed, reconciled to god and transformed is by the power of God in the Gospel.

9. That's why Paul never gave into the pressure to tone it down or dilute it to make it easier to accept. No, he knew that the only message that had the power to save is the true Gospel of Jesus.

10. Without the power of God through the gospel, no one ever receives the positive and negative benefits of the Gospel:

- Negatively it rescues us from sin's guilt.
- Positively it brings God's righteousness.
- Negatively it takes away our impurity .
- Positively it gives us holiness.
- Negatively it removes us from slavery to sin.

- Positively it ushers us into freedom.
- Negatively, it removes our punishment.
- Positively it fills us with blessedness and joy!
- Negatively it removes our alienation from God forever.
- Positively it brings us into fellowship with God.
- Negatively it removes the wrath of God.
- Positively it brings the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts.
- Negatively it withholds everlasting death.
- And positively it grants to us everlasting life with God forever.⁷

11. The most important need of our world today is God's salvation. But how will they receive it if the Gospel is not boldly proclaimed?

⁷ William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, New Testament Commentary*, (Grand Rapids Michigan; Baker Book House, 1980), 60