

March 21, 2001

I am Not Ashamed of the Gospel!

Romans 1:16

Part 2

LTS: 2 Tim. 1:3-12

Why Christians should not be ashamed of the gospel.

Please take your bible and open it to the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. You can remain seated while I read our text for this today.

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, for my part, 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.

This morning I intend to pick up where we left off last time. As you know, we moved rather rapidly through the first 15 verses of this first chapter because they were of an introductory nature. But now that we've arrived at verses 16-17 we have hit the brakes pretty hard. In fact, last week 35 minutes of preaching only yielded ½ of 1 verse of exposition and application. The reason for this is that verses 16-17 stand together as the cornerstone, the main pillar, the lynchpin upon which everything in the book of Romans swings.

Romans is all about the righteousness of God, in the gospel of God, for the salvation of the people of God. This is that place in the epistles of Paul where he takes the time to explain the

theology of the gospel more thoroughly than anywhere else in the Bible. Paul wants the believers in Rome (and in Fort Worth) to understanding the intricacies of their salvation.

While it is certainly true that the essential core of the gospel is simple, Paul never thought of it as simplistic. There is more to the gospel than...

“Jesus loves me,
this I know,
for the Bible tells me so.”

As theologian, Charles Hodge, once said, “The gospel is so simple that small children can understand it, and it is so profound that studies by the wisest theologians will never exhaust its riches.”¹

For this and other reasons that we defined last week, Paul was never Ashamed of the Gospel. He never thought that that Gospel of Jesus Christ was in any way inferior to the teachings of men.

In Paul’s day there surely must have been many philosophers in Athens, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome.² There must have been no lack highly educated scholars, expert in their grasp of all things philosophical and scientific. The academic pressures on preachers of the simple Gospel of Jesus surely caused some to buckle under the weight of their criticism. But in Paul’s mind, the Gospel was infinitely superior to anything and everything they could contrive! And so he writes here at the beginning of his letter, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel.” And by that he means, “I am proud and overjoyed by every opportunity to preach the good news of Jesus Christ.” Paul was a Shameless preacher of the Gospel.

But last week we asked, “What motivated Paul to remain faithful to his calling. Or, perhaps more simply, “Why wasn’t Paul ashamed of the gospel?” I suggested last time that there are three truths that he believed with every fiber of his being that kept his heart encouraged and motivated to be faithful with the gospel. And if we believed these three truths as Paul did, we, too, might be unashamed of the gospel, and more motivated to proclaim it to the people in our little worlds.

We talked last time about the first reason Paul was unashamed of the gospel; namely, that he believed in...

¹ Encyclopedia of Christian Quotations, p. 437

² Adapted from William Hendricksen, *Exosition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. New Testament Commentary:* Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Book House, 1980) p.59

II. The limitless power of the gospel.

1. That is, the Gospel is sufficient in itself to create saving faith in the hearts of sinners. We don't need...

- the Gospel & soothing music
- the Gospel and drama
- the Gospel and magic tricks
- the gospel and pseudo signs and wonders.
- The gospel and a contemporary Christian band to bring people to the obedience of faith. The Gospel is sufficient. All by itself it is able to
- The gospel and a contemporary Christian band to bring people to the obedience of faith. The Gospel is sufficient. All by itself it is able to The gospel we have today is NOT a newer, more powerful, recently updated Gospel. No, the Gospel we preach is the same Good News Paul preached. It is the gospel you have repeatedly taught your children and the gospel that you, dear Christian, have always believed.

2. As I have said a number of times over the years, a faithful gospel preacher is like a waiter in a restaurant. He doesn't come up with recipe for the meal he is about to serve. He doesn't cook the meal. When he receives it from the kitchen

- he shouldn't add things to it to make it look more attractive,
- he shouldn't take anything away certain things that may make the meal less attractive.
- His only job is to get the meal to the table without messing it up!

3. All by itself, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

- The word for "power" here is the term *dunamis* from which we derive the word Dynamite.
- Paul is telling us that through the gospel God unleashes his omnipotent power to regenerate dead hearts and make disinterested sinners alive to God.

4. Friends, I want you to hear this: The power of the gospel is NOT the power of public speaking. Its Not one's ability to captivate the attention of a crowd or the person sitting next to you on the airplane. It's not the power to affect a person's emotions with moving stories or even

your personal testimony (as wonderful as that may be). No! The power of the gospel is the message of the Gospel.

1 Cor. 2:1–4 Paul reminds the church in Corinth that “when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, ⁴ and my message and my preaching were NOT in persuasive words of wisdom . . . ,

5. The power of the Gospel is the Good News faithfully delivered. You don’t need to fix the gospel, improve the gospel or defend the gospel. Just deliver it faithfully and praise God for the privilege, believing that it is the power of God for salvation.

6. Turn in your bible to Mark 4.

Jesus told a number of parables in his ministry, but here is one that may be the least known.
Mark 4:26-29

²⁶ And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Beloved, this is the perfect text for what I have been saying. According to Jesus, the role of the faithful evangelist is twofold. 1) scatter the seed. 2) bring in the harvest. That’s it! Your job as a minister of the gospel is narrow and rather simple. You can’t save anyone. You don’t have the power to make the seed grow or produce fruit. Your influence on the salvation of an unbeliever consists of one thing and one thing only; namely, that you faithfully sow the seed. In other words, tell the good news to everyone you know. Then, take comfort in the fact that the results are NOT up to you.

This is evidenced by what the farmer in this parable does after he scatters the seed. What does he do? He goes home and climbs in bed! He rests. Then, when he wakes up and goes outside to

check on his little seeds, he discovers that they are sprouting and growing? First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain.

How does that happen? How does the seed sprout and grow? He doesn't have a idea! Some invisible power gives it life and it becomes fruitful! Its amazing!

When the apostle speaks about this process (1 Cor. 3:6-7) he simply says, "God gives the growth." So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything." Your role in the process is relatively insignificant. Why? Because the work of salvation is entirely a work of God. Our labor with the gospel is necessary, but completely dependent on God. God's labor with the gospel is necessary and is dependent on No One.

Can you imagine how encouraging this must have been to Paul. He was never ashamed of the gospel because he believed in the Limitless Power of the Gospel .

Second, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because he believed in

II. The Boundless Reach of the Gospel

1, Note what Paul says (v. 16) – "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God for salvation to everyone..."

2. The word for "Everyone" is *pas* which simply means All or every. He doesn't mean that every human will ultimately be saved (Paul didn't teach universalism), rather, he means the gospel is for every kind of person, or all sorts of people. We know this because the Bible is full of warnings that those who reject Christ, and His gospel will perish and "Will not enter the kingdom of God."

3. Paul wants us to know that nothing has changed since the angels appeared to the shepherds in Bethlehem saying, "I bring you good tidings or great joy which shall be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

4. The Gospel is for all people. It is for all kinds of people.

- Its for people who were born in Israel. Its for people who grew up in Uganda or Haiti
- Its for educated people
- It is equally for the uneducated.
- It's for the poor and the rich, the healthy and the ill.
- It is for the disabled

- Its for the privileged and the under privileged.
- Its for married people and single
- Its for people regardless of their skin color or cultural traditions.
- It is for children who grew up in evangelical churches and those who were raised as idol-worshippers.
- Its for men, women, children
- The Gospel is for all kinds of people no matter the breath of their privileges or the depth of their guilt and sin.
- Look at the person next to you and say, “The gospel is for you this day!”

5. Remember, one significant purpose Paul had for writing this letter to the church in Rome was to induce them to send him on to Spain where the gospel had never been preached. For Paul, believing in the boundless reach of the gospel was NOT merely an abstract, academic proposition. It was the Modis Operandi of his life! It’s the reason he got out of bed every morning. He wanted the whole world to have the privilege of hearing the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

6. the point I want you to hear is that God’s salvation is “to everyone” by means of the Gospel. God is no respecter of persons. There is no class of humans that is excluded in the offer of salvation. People from Every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue can receive salvation through the Gospel of Jesus.

7. So the old Sunday School children’s song is good theology after all! “Red and Yellow, Black and white, they are precious in his sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world.” How do we know? “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes on him will not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved” (Jn. 3:16-17).

Why was Paul a shameless preacher of the Gospel? What kept him motivated despite the frequent opposition and his personal suffering? Paul believed in

- A. The Limitless power of the Gospel
- B. The Boundless reach of the gospel. And third, Paul believed in...

III. The effortless qualification of the Gospel.

1. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God irrevocably gives eternal salvation. BUT Please NOTE the one significant qualification. The only people who actually receive the gift of salvation are those who Believe. Notice, Paul says (16)

The gospel is the power of God for salvation [is] to everyone who believes..."

But what does it mean to "believe?"

2. The word for "believes" means to have faith in, to trust, to have confidence in something. In this case, the person who hears the Gospel must believe what the Gospel says; namely, that Jesus existed from eternity past as Creator God; that He came into the world as a real human being through the virgin, Mary; that He lived a sinless life but died a sinner's death in our place to fully experience the wrath of God that we all deserve. He then arose from the grave that first Easter morning, was seen by hundreds of people, and then ascended into heaven where he ever lives to represent us before the Father."

3. Friends, this is the Good News! But this news will accomplish nothing in your life if you do not believe it. And by that, Paul means that you can be saved by believing the Gospel, but (listen carefully) you cannot get salvation by earning it through your own works of righteousness. You must come to him by faith alone so that your salvation will be by God's grace alone in Christ alone in order that it will be to the glory of God alone.

4. This is why I call "believing" (faith) the effortless qualification. The sinner's effort at earning salvation by doing good behavior and avoiding bad behavior will only secure your just condemnation. God is determined to magnify the glory of Jesus in your salvation because of his work on the cross. All of your so-call righteousness amounts to but filthy rags in the eyes of God. You must turn completely -mind, emotions, and will – to Jesus, leaving behind any effort that you otherwise may have thought would have earned you favor with God.

5. You must come to Christ with a heart that says something like,

"Nothing in my hands I bring.
Simply to your cross I cling."

6. Here is how Paul says it (Eph. 2:8-9),

"For by grace you are saved, through faith. And this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast,"

7. Do you long for reconciliation with God? Do you crave salvation through the complete forgiveness of your guilt and sin? Then leave your efforts at the door. Fly to Christ! Fly to Christ! Fly to Christ! Those who do will be unequivocally accepted by God no matter who you are?

8. This Gospel of Salvation comes from God, through Paul to all people.

9. To the Jew First?

- Perhaps because the beginning of God's redemptive plan was focused upon the Jews. God referred to the nation of Israel as "My people," "my chosen people." He called them "My children," "my portion," and, My "treasured possession from among all the peoples. He called them the "apple of His eye." God formed them in the Loins of Abraham and saved them from slavery in Egypt with many signs and wonders, and enabled them to walk on dry ground through the Red Sea. He entered covenant with them at Sinai. He favored them by giving them tabernacle of His presence where they could actually see the radiance of the glory of the Lord. He gave them prophets through whom He spoke directly to His people. And finally, through them He gave the Christ, the Messiah, our Savior. So the gospel was for the Jews first, But,
- And also to the Greek:
 - Though God's focus was originally on the Jews, he always had a heart to save Gentiles as well. And when the Jews rejected Christ, God sent his messengers to the Gentiles – people like you and me.
 - In the book of Romans, Paul is repeatedly concerned that we grasp the dynamics of Jews and Gentiles in His church and in his redemptive plan, so we will come back to this again.

10. My friend, have you embraced this Gospel? Have you laid aside all your hope that God will receive you based on your good works? Perhaps today will be the day of your salvation.

11. This morning you have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. I plead with you NOT to harden your heart. Believe it and receive it for the glory of God and your own eternal joy.