

Shamelessly Preach Christ (RPTS)

RPTS Chapel Message

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Turn in your Bibles to Romans 1. Romans 1 and the two familiar verses, 16 and 17 in Romans 1.

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 to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word and for the encouragement you give us in and through this your word. And we thank you for your servant, the Apostle Paul, and the things written by inspiration of the Spirit for our encouragement and direction. So as we look into this particular text this morning in Romans 1, we pray that you'll open our hearts, open our eyes and bless us, we pray. For the sake of Jesus Christ the Lord we ask these things. Amen.

Expository preaching. T. H. L. Parker comments on the subject of expository preaching as he does a study of Calvin's work and preaching. He says something like this, "Without explanation, there is no exposition. Without application, there is no preaching." That's kind of an arresting statement. Without explanation, there is no exposition. Without application, there is no preaching.

Well, some would object to this little statement of Parker's but I think he's right on and part of our difficulty is that when it comes to the application of the word of God, application and preaching, sometimes we draw back a little bit. We're a little intimidated. We're perhaps a little embarrassed to make direct application of the word of God, but you see, Paul comes to us directly here in this text, does he not, and he says, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel," and he gives us reasons for his lack of shame with regard to the Gospel and he speaks to our need to be shameless in preaching Christ, right? So this is exactly what we need to do. We need to be shameless in preaching Christ.

You see, Paul was eager to preach Christ and he tells those at Rome that he's eager to preach to them also. A little bit of context here. Verses 13 and following in the first chapter, he says,

13 I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. 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.

Paul, you see, now is very likely in Corinth as he writes to those who are in Rome. He's very likely in Corinth at the end of his third missionary journey and he's about to return to Jerusalem with gifts for the church in Jerusalem which is in great need, and now he writes to the church at Rome and indicates he wants, as a part of his long-range plan, after he goes to Jerusalem, to come back and to go to Rome but that's not the end of the story, he wants to move on and move further west, as it were, to Spain. This is what he really wants to do.

He's eager to preach the Gospel and you and I need to be eager to preach the Gospel in this way also, do we not? You and I do. Do you have plans to preach the Gospel in the future? Is this your desire? I know some of you have obligations and you're thinking about those obligations even now, to preach the Gospel, and I pray that God will open the door for me to preach the Gospel in various venues.

That's the desire of my heart and this was the desire of Paul's heart, to preach the Gospel at Rome also but why, now, is he so eager to preach the Gospel? It's because he knows the Gospel is the power of God. What an amazing statement this is. Look at our text again and Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel." Maybe we ought to read verse 15 too, "So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation." The Gospel is the power of God for salvation. The Gospel is a message. It's a message about Christ. It's a message about Christ's coming into the world of his living a perfect life; of his dying a perfect death on a cross to pay the penalty for sin; of his rising again from the dead; of his ascending into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father; his pouring out the Holy Spirit from the heavenly throne; and of his reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords. It's a message and Paul says that message is the power of God and the reason that message is the power of God, that God in his good providence has chosen to use this message, this Gospel, as the means of changing the lives of men and women and young people and children.

Listen to what the Catechism says, it asks this question, "What are the outward means whereby Christ communicated to us the benefits of redemption?" Answer, "The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicated to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the word, the sacraments and the prayer, all of which are made effectual to the elect for salvation, especially the word, the sacraments and prayer." Then

the Catechism asks, "How is the word made effectual to salvation? The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners and building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation."

The benefits of salvation are extended to men and women through the instrumentality of the preaching of the word of God and this is why Paul says that preaching the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It's God's appointed means. Oh, friends, trust God's appointed means. Trust God to utilize his means to do the work he is so good at doing himself. Are you going to do better? Doubtful. Doubtful.

And Paul says that this Gospel, this Gospel of Jesus Christ, is the power of God for salvation because in it, in it is revealed the righteousness of God. Our text again, "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." And when Paul speaks about the righteousness of God, friends, Paul is speaking about the righteousness of Jesus Christ and that Jesus Christ lived an absolutely perfect and righteous life. Paul says in Romans 7, the law is holy and righteous and good, and Jesus Christ exemplified in flesh the law and he is holy and righteous and good.

Turn with me to Romans 10 in the first few verses and notice how Paul connects Christ with the righteousness of God. Romans 10, the first few verses. Paul says,

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

And notice what he says then,

4 For Christ is the end [or the goal] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

The law, Torah. The law composed of moral stipulations and ordinances of worship in the ceremonies pointed to Christ. The law in its moral stipulations brought guilt to the sinful conscience, and then the law in its ceremonies set forth the beauty of Jesus Christ and those who fail in the moral law would turn to the sacrifice, showing forth Christ and trust in Christ, the promised Savior. The law points us to Christ and the righteousness of Jesus Christ is God's righteousness manifest in human flesh.

Turn back now to Romans 1. Notice that this Gospel now, the power of God bound up in the righteousness of God, is to be broadcast to all nations; it's to be freely extended to people everywhere. Paul says, "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." It's to be freely offered to both Jew and Greek. Paul puts it this way, "to the Jew first," and to

the Jew first because salvation was of the Jews, and to them first Jesus Christ came, but the Jews were to be a light to the Gentiles and the Gospel, therefore, was to be extended to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles, and Paul says, "I'm eager. I'm eager to preach the Gospel to all and to freely extend the call of the Gospel to all."

Don't be reserved, friends. Don't be reserved in calling men and women to Christ. I think in our churches we are too reserved in calling men and women and young people to Christ. We think to ourselves, "Oh, everyone here knows the Gospel. Everyone here knows Jesus Christ. I can get onto other matters." No, friends, be rooted in the Gospel and the centrality of the Gospel and be eager to preach the Gospel first of all to everyone within the congregation, and then within the community. Sow the word. Sow the word, not sparingly but bountifully. What does Jesus say? "Those that sow sparingly will reap sparingly." Why do we reap sparingly? Been there, done this.

What does the pastor need to do? The pastor needs to prepare the sermon for Sunday, so the pastor sits in his study and he spends 40 hours sitting in his study. What about the community? What about sowing seed to the community? What about inviting people to hear the word preached on the Lord's Day morning? What about calling the people to come? Broadcast the word widely.

This was Paul's objection and I think he tells us so in this text, but he adds the caveat, doesn't he? Listen to the text now, "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 man shall live by faith.'" The Gospel must be apprehended by faith. Men and women must respond to the good news by trusting Jesus Christ and his righteousness and when men and women, when you trust Jesus Christ as your righteousness, you then apprehend the revelation of the power of the Gospel in your own life.

This is part of what takes place. "It is the power of God unto 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 just shall live by faith.'" And when you trust Christ, that marvelous transaction takes place. Your sin is transferred to Christ and his righteousness is given to you and you are right with God and you experience the power of the Gospel and so Paul says, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel."

Verse 15, "So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." Notice the connective now, the little word "for." "For I am not ashamed of the gospel." Why? "For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Why? "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.'"

How could you ever be ashamed of the power of God? But sometimes we are intimidated and fearful to make a pointed application.

Spurgeon would say, "When you preach the Gospel, don't preach about the Bible and about the Gospel, and don't just preach about people. Preach to people and to their hearts." This is how he would put it. And J. C. Ryle would say, "Don't use the regal 'we.' The 'we' is for kings and for dictators and for presidents. They talk about 'we.'" The pronouns for the preacher are "you and I," and I say to you this morning, dear friends, shamelessly preach Christ.

You see, this is the message that Paul gives to you. This is the message that not only Paul gives to you but God gives to you and Jesus Christ his Son gives to you. Shamelessly preach Christ.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word. We are inadequate to it but we thank you that the apostle says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation, 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 just shall live by faith.'" May it be, Father, that we live by the Gospel, your people here, and that as a result, as a people, the Gospel will go forth and that men and women will be converted and that your pastors, your elders, your people given opportunity will shamelessly proclaim Jesus Christ. Bless us to this end, we pray in his good name. Amen.