

## NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

### **TEXT: ROMANS 1:16, 17**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. The theme of this great epistle is salvation through "the gospel of Christ" (1:16).
2. By the way, many of the modern translations, such as the ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NIV, etc., have omitted the words, "of Christ."
3. "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" (ESV).
4. This is yet another reason we must stick with our beloved KJV. The theme of this epistle is salvation through "the gospel of Christ" (1:16).
5. The *Scofield Study Bible* says that Paul's epistle to the Romans embodies "in the fullest way the doctrines of grace in relation to salvation" (p. 1191).
6. Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (1:16). At first this might seem like a strange statement. After all, we live in a country where the vast majority of citizens profess to be Christian. Throughout our history, many of our great leaders, such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, professed faith in Jesus Christ and quoted the Bible frequently.
7. But things were much different back in 60 AD. The worldly heathens in Rome had little respect for the Jews and Jesus Christ was considered a lowly Jewish carpenter.
8. Also, crucifixion was the lowest form of execution given to a criminal. To a proud Roman, it made no sense to put your faith in a Jew who was nailed to a cross.
9. The Romans boasted that their city was the greatest in the world. They had conquered the little nation of Israel, and they controlled their capital city of Jerusalem. Christianity was identified with Jews and with Jerusalem.
10. The Romans had their great military leaders like Julius Caesar. They had their great statesmen and poets and philosophers. They were a proud people. The Gospel had little appeal to them.

### **I. PAUL WAS NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST**

1. The apostle Paul was "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (1:16).

2. Rome was a powerful nation militarily, but the Gospel has power to change men's lives. This was the power these wicked Romans needed.
3. Rome was corrupt, full of crime, debauchery, drunkenness, immorality, and homosexuality. The philosopher Seneca called the city of Rome "a cesspool of iniquity."
4. The poet Juvenal called Rome "a filthy sewer into which the dregs of the empire flood."
5. So Paul knew their only hope was in the Gospel -- "the power of God unto salvation."
6. It is interesting to note that this epistle is one of the most important documents ever written. It is Paul's most famous epistle. And what is its great theme: salvation through the Gospel of Christ (cf. 6:23; 10:1, 9-13).
7. This was Paul's emphasis, and it must be ours as well. The Gospel is for "every one that believeth" (1:16). Our Lord said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

## **II. THE GOSPEL WAS PREACHED "TO THE JEW FIRST"? (1:16b)**

1. I would like to say a few words about the phrase, "to the Jew first" (1:16). Some people hold that this means we must bring the Gospel to the Jew first before we bring it to the Gentiles.
2. The word "first" is used differently in Scripture. Those who hold that the Gospel must be preached to the Jew first insist that "first" in Romans 1:16 means "first in priority."
3. The word is sometimes used that way in Scripture. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
4. But the word often means "first in time." Mark 4:28 says, "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."
5. To say we must preach the Gospel to the Jew first before we preach it to the Gentiles would contradict Romans 2:11 and other Scriptures.
6. Personally, I believe "first" here means first in time, not first in priority. In other words, the Gospel came to the Jews before it came to us Gentiles. "First" means precedence, not preference.
7. The Jews were highly privileged. It was to the Jews that God first gave the Scriptures (Rom. 2:10; 3:1, 2).
8. The great British prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, was once teased in the House of Lords about his Jewish ancestry. He replied, "Yes, my noble lord. I am a Jew. And when your ancestors were living on

- acorns in the German forest, my ancestors were giving to the world law, literature, religion, and our very Saviour."
9. Jesus was born a Jew. The Bible says He "came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). He instructed His disciples not to go "into the way of the Gentiles...But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5, 6).
  10. The Great Commission was to begin "at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8), and it did with three thousand souls saved on the day of Pentecost.
  11. To insist that "first" in Romans 1:16 means "first in preference" or "first in priority" would make it extremely difficult, if not impossible for those ministering in countries where there are few, if any Jews (parts of Africa, China, certain islands, etc.)
  12. Having said all that, however, I do believe that most churches, even those in areas where there are large numbers of Jewish people, are not making a serious effort to reach Jewish people.

### **III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED FROM FAITH TO FAITH (1:17)**

1. There are two choices for mankind: "the righteousness of God" (1:17) or "the wrath of God" (1:18).
2. If we make that right choice and choose Christ, "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (1:17) or "out of faith into faith."
3. Before we were saved we were out of faith. We had no (saving) faith.
4. Martin Luther was a very religious monk but he was not saved. After reading "The just shall live by faith" he was saved by God's grace.
5. God wants to save every man, woman, and child. The Gospel is for every one – "to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise" (1:14).
6. It is for the Jews as well as the Greeks (Gentiles) (1:16b; cf. I Cor. 1:22-24).
7. However, while the Gospel is universal in scope, salvation is limited to "every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).
8. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16).
9. So the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith (1:17). God is not impressed with man's righteousness. The Bible says "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6).

10. We need to be clothed with the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not with the filthy rags of our own self-righteousness.
11. The repentant sinner is accepted by God, not because of anything good he has done, but because of what Christ has done for him. This is based on faith – "The just shall live by faith" (1:17).
12. Philippians 3:9 says, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."
13. "From faith to faith" (1:17) means being saved by faith, living by faith, walking by faith, being prepared to die by faith, and going up to heaven by faith. Do you have this kind of faith?
14. "The just shall live by faith." We are saved by grace through faith, and we are kept by grace through faith, and we live by grace through faith.

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Here in Romans 1:16 and 17 we have the theme of the epistle:
  - \* The source of the Gospel -- "God"
  - \* The nature of the Gospel -- "the power of God"
  - \* The purpose of the Gospel -- "unto salvation"
  - \* The scope of the Gospel -- "to everyone"
  - \* The reception of the Gospel -- "everyone that believeth"
  - \* The efficacy of the Gospel -- "the righteousness of God revealed"
  - \* The outcome of the Gospel -- "The just shall live by faith" (outline by W. H. Griffith Thomas)
2. "As it is written" (Rom. 1:17) refers back to Habakkuk 2:4. This Old Testament Scripture is quoted three times in the New Testament – here in Romans 1:17; in Galatians 3:11; and Hebrews 10:38.
3. For God to say something four times it must be very important.
4. Are you living by faith?