

Not Ashamed of the Gospel

“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.’ ” (Romans 1:16-17)

This coming week take the gospel of God and your praises of God wherever you go, sharing his good news with all who will listen. As you ponder this action it will raise, for some, this question, “Am I ashamed to do this?” This takes us to the very heart of the book of Romans, chapter 1 verses 16 and 17 – a kind of theme of Paul’s letter to the saints in Rome. This is our focus this morning.

Feeling Shame

Today we will focus on the words from Romans 1:16, “**For I am not ashamed of the gospel.**” I hope you see the link between verse 16 and verse 15. The reason Paul is eager to preach the gospel in Rome, found in verse 15, is that he is “**not ashamed of the gospel**” as he says in verse 16. Let me begin with a general question, “**What makes a person feel ashamed?**” Here are some examples for you to consider as we ponder this question.

First, let me take us to an example in the Bible of King David and his wife Michal. Our story begins with David gathering 30,000 fighting men of Israel and many of the people Israel and they travel to retrieve the Ark of the Covenant to bring it back to Jerusalem. They celebrated this homecoming of the Ark with song and music. Now the David’s wife Michal had not gone with the king and as the Ark was brought into the City of David, into Jerusalem, Michal looked out her window and saw David, “**Wearing a linen ephod, David danced in the**

LORD's presence with all his might.¹⁵ He and the entire nation of Israel brought the ark of the LORD with shouts of joy and the sounding of rams' horns." ... Dropping down to verse 20 we continue, "When David returned to bless his family, Saul's daughter Michal came out to meet him. 'How dignified Israel's king was today! He was exposing himself before the eyes of the slave girls of his palace staff—like a mindless fool might expose himself!' ²¹ David answered Michal, 'I didn't dance in front of the slave girls but in front of the LORD. He chose me rather than your father or anyone in your father's house, and he appointed me leader of Israel, the LORD's people. I will celebrate in the LORD's presence,²² and I will degrade myself even more than this. Even if I am humiliated in your eyes, I will be honored by these slave girls you speak about.' " (2 Samuel 6:14-15 & 20-22) King David was more concerned about honoring and celebrating the Lord than what some people, including his wife, might have regarded as shameful. He was willing to be shamed for the sake of the Lord because he was not ashamed of his God.

How about what this means today? To help, here are a few more present day examples.

A boy brags to his friends that he can outrun the new kid at school. So the kids set up a race, one lap around their block. Both boys walk the route to see where all the obstacles are. This done, they line up. The neighborhood kids are all out watching. Someone says, "Ready. Set. Go!" The race is on and the bragging boy is simply left in the dust. The new boy finishes a good distance ahead of the braggart. When that happens it is very likely that the braggart feels ashamed. He feels that he has made a fool of himself and he has because he did not live up to his boast.

Have you ever noticed that kids can be cruel at times. I hope you relate at some level to this story? Place yourself in this example, imagine there is someone you don't like at school and their dad is in jail. So you elevate yourself, by making fun of him, calling him names and pointing out to people that his dad is a crook. At the same time you boast that your dad is a successful financial officer at a major bank. Then one day you go home to the terrible news that your dad has been arrested and charged with embezzling hundreds of thousands of dollars. The next day you don't even want to go to school because you are so ashamed, ashamed both of your father and your own behavior. You now know what it is like for the boy you ridiculed.

Or what if you put a lot of effort in how you look – trying to present yourself in just the right way. Here is story from my life; I remember my dad was being honored at a formal event. A friend told him that the dress was formal white dinner jacket with black tux pants. When my dad and my mom arrived there were 100s of people there and all the men were wearing black tux. My dad was the only one in white. It was an hour drive home and there was no time to correct the mistake. He did not want to go in and certainly did not want to be recognized in front of everyone. He was embarrassed and yet he had to suffer the shame of it. He was honored and also embarrassed.

Finally, I remember in elementary school having a large part in a school presentation. I worked hard to memorize my part and worked on my delivery. I really had it down pat. As things began my heart began to pound as I walked out on the stage. Then all the practice went out the window – I froze. Everything stopped. The teacher prompted me. I was turning red and sweating like crazy and looking for a place to hide. Everyone was staring at me. The teacher took the time to come out on the stage and talk to me, calmed me down

and then I was able to start and it all went very well. Yet, I was so embarrassed, so ashamed, I wanted to disappear. Unfortunately, this would not be the last time in my life I would suffer embarrassment. I know I am not unique, for we all know what it is to be embarrassed or to be ashamed.

What would keep you from being embarrassed or ashamed in situations like that? Well, one answer would be that stronger legs would have kept you from losing the race and being put to shame by the new boy in the neighborhood. A more honest dad would not have embezzled, so you wouldn't be ashamed of him. With better counsel from your friend you wouldn't have dressed all wrong for your presentation and big night. Better nerves in front of a group would have let you remember your lines and speak them with excellence. In other words, you could avoid being ashamed if you, your family and friends could always keep yourselves in the best light and never let anyone feel negative things about you.

King David did not worry about being in the best light or negative feelings of others, but his concern was for the Lord. Let me ask you, "What is your level of concern for the Gospel of Christ and glorifying the Lord through your life? Are you willing to be shamed for the gospel?"

Freedom From Shame

Paul says in Romans 1:16 that he is "[not ashamed of the gospel.](#)" Does he escape being ashamed because he keeps himself in the best light? No, it is exactly the opposite. Believing and preaching the gospel constantly put Paul in a bad light with other people. It constantly stirred up other people to shame Paul. He gives us a list of ways that he was shamed in his ministry of the gospel, reading from 2 Corinthians chapter 11 beginning in verse 23, "[...with far](#)

greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers...” (2 Corinthians 11:23-26) Paul was shamed but not ashamed of the gospel.

You see, Paul’s way of not being ashamed of the gospel was not that he could keep himself in the best light or that he had enough charisma that people always liked him and approved of what he did. Look back at Romans 1:14, “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.” When Paul looked out on the huge world of unbelief in his day he felt a debt to all unbelievers – Greeks and barbarians alike. He had a debt to share the gospel with them. He didn’t look with utter disdain on the pagans of his day. My beloved, we need to beware of our attitude and not do this either. Our conservative lifestyle has been so polarized America that we slip easily into feeling disdain rather than debt to unbelieving people. Not so with Paul even though he hated sin, he loved sinners. He felt so overwhelmed with undeserved grace that he knew himself a debtor to all – Greek and barbarian, wise and foolish. Christ had saved him, the worse of all sinners, how could he not share the gospel of Christ with those, who like he had been, so desperately needed Christ.

Did the world of unbelievers want Paul to pay them his debt owed? Do the unbelieving neighbors and colleagues around you want what you have to give the gift of the gospel of good news? I think there are not many. In 1

Corinthians 1:22-23 Paul writes, “For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.” Paul had a debt to pay to Jews and Greeks and barbarians, but most of them – as it is today – did not want his message of love and grace and hope. It was foolishness to them and a stumbling block.

So, before we can see in Romans 1:16 that the gospel is the basis of Paul’s freedom from shame, we see that it was first the basis of his being shamed. If an unbeliever, when presented with the gospel, tries to shame the believer’s assurance in it, he will not prevail because the believer is free from the shame thrown at him by the world because of his faith in the truth of Christ.

Paul knew both shame and not being ashamed. He was like Jesus. Jesus was abandoned by his friends, falsely accused of blasphemy, beaten with rods, ridiculed and taunted, stripped of his clothes, scourged with a whip, tortured in public and made to look like a fool as people shouted at him on the cross, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” (Luke 23:37) We will believe if you come down from the cross. These people shamed Christ, yet he held fast because he was not ashamed of who he was with God the Father.

Despising Shame

What did Jesus do with all this shame – this shaming behavior of others towards him? What would you do with it? We model Christ and this is what modeled - in Hebrews we are instructed, *Christ* “... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2) Jesus despised the shame. What does that mean? It means that when shame began to threaten his heart and to tempt him to abandon a clear and obedient witness to God and to the gospel, he said to shame,

“Shame, I despise you. I will not yield to you. I will not give to you any satisfaction. You may do with me whatever you please – in the short run – but I will not obey you or follow you or give in to you. I despise you, shame, and will not let you rule me for I belong to my Father.”

How could he do that? How can you do that? Hebrews 12:2 says, Jesus did it “for the joy that was set before him.” Shame was stripping away every earthly support that Jesus had, his friends gave way in shaming abandonment, his reputation gave way in shaming slander, his decency gave way in shaming nakedness, and his comfort gave way in shaming torture. So, if His present supports were all being stripped away in shaming persecution, how did he not succumb to such shame? Hebrews 12:2 gives us the answer, Jesus set his heart not on the supports of the present day, but on the joy of the future where he would soon be “seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Though he was being shamed, Jesus was not ashamed of his God and Father. Though Paul was shamed he was not ashamed of his God and Father or his Christ Jesus. Why? You see Jesus knew God the Father had power to save him, but that his death would bring glory to his Father, that he would be seated at his Father’s right hand forever and that it would make possible salvation for mankind. Paul knew though they slay him he was eternally with Christ.

Paul understood this and he lived so that he could say, “I am not ashamed” in spite of all the cultured Greeks who mocked him as preaching foolishness and all the unbelieving Jews who derided him as preaching a false Christ – “I am not ashamed of this gospel.” Why? “For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” In other words, the message of Christ who “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” is the power of salvation.

(Romans 1:4) One may have to live with shame placed on them by others, but one is not to be ashamed because through Christ they receive God's grace and everlasting salvation. Everlasting salvation is worth so much more than earthly honor.

Shamed Yet Not Ashamed

How then do you overcome feelings of shame when you are shamed for believing and sharing the gospel? Answer; ponder the power of the gospel to bring forgiven sinners to final, everlasting joy. Nothing in the world can do this except the gospel of Jesus Christ. Judaism cannot because it stops short of Jesus, and Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam – they do not have a Savior who can solve the problem of separation from a holy God through sin and offer sinners hope by grace through faith and not works. Only one message saves sinners and brings them safely into the presence of God – the gospel of Jesus Christ. It, alone, is the power of God unto salvation.

Therefore, Paul would say and Jesus himself would say, “Suffer, yes. Be misunderstood, yes. Be shamed, yes. But do **not** be ashamed.” This world will work to shame you but you need not be ashamed. Because the message of God's saving work in Christ is the only final triumphant message in the world. Short-term pain. Long-term gain. For the joy of your salvation set before you, take up your cross, follow Jesus, be shamed and despise the shame, but never be ashamed!

In closing, let me point out that times have changed. Christ was shamed as a false prophet, but he rose from the dead. Paul was shamed for leaving Judaism but he was not ashamed of the saving gospel of Christ. In more recent times, in the 70s believers were criticized because the unsaved world said the gospel is

not true. In the 90s believers were criticized for claiming there is absolute truth. Today, believers are criticized for believing that there is only one way and that those who do not believe are wrong and destined to eternal ruin. The world tries to shame believers as arrogant and narrow-minded. The greatest weapon of shaming today in the world of religious claims is the accusation that you are intolerant and therefore mean-spirited and egotistical.

To that we must steadfastly respond, “It is the most loving thing in the world to tell the truth about the way of salvation.” Jesus said, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.**” (John 14:6-7) For the sake of God’s love for us and our love for Christ we must pay our debt to the world and despise that shaming of the intolerant world that claims tolerance and say to the world, “**There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**” (Acts 4:12) The gospel of Christ alone is the power of God unto salvation.

So, my beloved “**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.**” (2 Timothy 2:15) Share the gospel with all who will listen and bring them to church to hear the Word of God preached! Go, go and share the gospel of Christ despising the shame of the world and yet do not be ashamed.