

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #5

Romans 1:16-17

There are many things for which we should be ashamed. But there is one thing we should never be ashamed of and that is proclaiming the Gospel of God .

Now Rome was a big city with lots of people and lots of problems . It would be stimulating for them to listen to some educational or philosophical diatribe. It would be fitting if Paul would preach against slavery, after all Rome was the headquarters of slavery. It would be honorable to preach moral reform for Rome was an extremely immoral city. But Paul was not interested in any of that; what he was interested in preaching and teaching in Rome was the Gospel of God .

Paul was obligated to preach the Gospel (1:14); he was eager to preach the Gospel (1:15) and he was not ashamed to preach the Gospel (**1:16**).

PAUL WAS NOT ASHAMED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF GOD BECAUSE IT UNLEASHES THE POWER OF GOD AND REVEALS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

The power of God lies in the Word of God rightly divided and rightly taught and Paul was out to teach and preach that. Here is the only place in the Bible where the possibility of being ashamed of the Gospel is presented. Now, of course, one immediate question comes to mind. Why would Paul have to defend the fact that he was not ashamed of the Gospel?

The answer lies in the historical background. **First**, Rome was a big city with successful people and material magnificence and it is a lot easier to preach the Gospel to sweet, simple people who live in the country than to the big executives of a metropolis. **Second**, the Gospel was always under attack. The grace Gospel opposes a works system of the Jews and the cross opposes the scholarship of the Greeks. **Third**, Paul had been proclaiming this Gospel message and teaching it ever since God gave him a ministry; but from all outward appearances, Paul had not been too successful with that message. The Jews considered him to be an apostate; many Gentiles . thought he was foolish. When he went to the Roman colony of Philippi , he was beaten and thrown in jail (Acts 16:22-23). When he took this message to Thessalonica , he was chased out of town (Acts 17:5, 10). When he went to Berea with his teaching, he had to be smuggled out of the city (Acts 17:13-15). When he went to Athens , many laughed at him (Acts 17:32). Now he was about to go to Rome with the same message and he knew that some were wondering what kind of message he was teaching that was getting him into so much trouble.

The word “ashamed” is in the intensive form with the preposition “epi” in front, meaning Paul is emphatically stressing this was one message he was never ashamed to preach or present.

Now these two verses are considered by many to be the theme of the entire book. But you will notice that **verse 16** begins with a conjunction “ for ” which connects it to previous thought. Really, these two verses are in a chain of verses and subordinate clauses which begin at verse 14 and continue to verse 18 . Since the main statement of verse 15 is followed by the conjunction “for” in **verse 16**, some assume it is incorrect to take **verses 16-17** to be the theme and purpose of the letter.

Douglas Moo, a tremendous Greek grammarian, writes: “Grammatically subordinate clauses frequently stand out in importance by virtue of their content, especially in Greek, with its love of subordinate clauses.” **Therefore it is entirely possible within the grammatical flow that verses 16 and 17 do in fact reveal the important theme of the book.**

PART #1 – Paul is not ashamed to preach the Gospel because it is the power of God. **1:16a**

Listen to the words of Jeremiah - “Is not My Word like fire?” declares the LORD, “and a hammer which shatters rock” (Jeremiah 23:29).

The thing that unleashes the power of God is the preaching of God’s Word.

Paul was not ashamed to march into Rome and preach the Gospel because he knew this unlocked the dynamis, the dynamite, the power of God.

PART #2 – Paul is not ashamed to preach the Gospel because it is God’s power for salvation. **1:16b**

When you think of the word “salvation” you must also think of the word danger. If you need to be saved you are in some dangerous state. Most people have no clue as to how dangerous a state they are in. God views them as deep and depraved in sin and His wrath is aimed straight at them.

What is salvation? Salvation may be understood as the moment your soul is in a safe relationship with the Holy God. The moment you have been delivered from your sin and are in a state of being preserved from God’s wrath. How does one become saved? By faith, by believing.

Everyone who believes on Christ for salvation has a faith-produced by the power of God through His Word. In fact, Paul will say later in this very letter - faith is produced by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

When God’s Word is preached that word has a living dynamic to it that is able to save people. We do not reason anyone to true salvation. We do not have the ability to manipulate any decision for Jesus Christ. God saves people through the power of His Word. It does not matter whether it is Jew or Gentile, man or woman, boy or girl.

It is the Word of God that will bring us to the point where we totally trust God and the finished work of Jesus Christ for our salvation.

PART #3 – Paul is not ashamed to preach the Gospel because it reveals the righteousness of God. **1:17a**

James Montgomery Boice said that in 1920 an English preacher published a book on great Bible texts that made history and changed history. This was a verse of Scripture that literally did change history because this one verse was the driving force that ripped into the soul of Martin Luther and changed his life (*Romans*, Vol. 1, p. 119).

Martin Luther's father wanted Luther to be a lawyer and Martin excelled at his studies, but he was always haunted by the thought of giving an account to God. At his church in Mansfeld there was a picture of Jesus frowning and Luther would look at it frequently. During his college days two of his friends died and Martin shuddered at the thought that one day Jesus would judge him.

On August 17, 1505 at age 21, he left the university and entered a monastery of Augustinian hermits, as he would later say, "Not to study theology, but to save my own soul." Luther sought to find a relationship with God. He fasted and prayed. He did menial tasks and performed all types of penance. He confessed any thing that remotely resembled sin to the point that his superiors ordered him to stop confessing. Luther said he was a pious monk and, "If ever a monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly be entitled to it."

Luther was totally depressed and one day God sent him a man who would become his spiritual father, John Staupitz, who asked Martin why he was so sad. Luther told him it was because he had vowed to God to live a pious and sinless life but had never kept his vows. He said that he knew based on all his good works and vows, he must perish.

Dr. Staupitz said to Luther, you are looking to the wrong place for salvation. You need to look to the wounds of Jesus Christ and see His shed blood and listen to the Son of God. Luther asked where could he hear the Son of God and Staupitz said, "In the Bible."

Luther began to study Romans for a series of lectures and his eyes fell on **Romans 1:17**, specifically "the just shall live by faith." Justification that gives life is by faith. Luther's mind could not shake this and a new Biblical theology began to form. Luther kept saying we are not saved by fear of Christ; we are saved by faith in Christ. Not by fear, but by faith. It was at that moment that Luther realized the righteousness of God was found by faith in Jesus Christ. It was this very verse that changed the world. Later, Dr. Luther would say this one verse was the verse from which "all our other doctrines have flowed."

In the presentation of the true Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. In a true presentation of the Gospel, man will stand in the shadow of the righteousness of God and realize he is a hopeless sinner who is hopelessly and helplessly lost.

Frankly, here is the quintessence of Pauline theology - man cannot ever get into a right relationship with God because he cannot ever measure up to God's righteous standards. Therefore the only thing he can do is totally rely upon the only Person God accepts - Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God and when one believes on Christ one is saved because God's righteousness is imputed to us.

Notice carefully that in the text the term is "righteousness of God," not "the righteousness of God." The difference is that "the righteousness of God" refers to God's attribute of righteousness. "A righteousness of God" refers to the character and quality of righteousness one would need to be saved. In order to be saved, a person would have to have the character and quality of the righteousness of God.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “righteousness” means to be straightened . In the New Testament, the Greek word for “righteousness” means to do what is just or to do justice.

This phrase “righteousness of God” shows up some eight times in Romans: **1:17**; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3 (twice).

Now when we think of the word “righteousness,” it is proper to think in terms of the idea of a judicial straightening. When we think of the “righteousness of God” what we mean is the judicial straightening of God of a sinful man that puts man into a right relationship with Him.

Justification is not just an act of subtraction of sin, but of the addition of righteousness. In order for a sinner to be saved , God must make a judicial decision to straighten the sinner by removing sin and adding righteousness.

PART #4 - Paul is not ashamed to preach the gospel because it will produce faith . 1:17b

What is faith? Faith is what you believe in or trust in to save yourself from your sin on the day you face the Holy God.

The righteousness of God will reveal to man that he cannot possibly measure up to God’s standard and will literally produce faith in Jesus Christ. The preposition “from” is literally “out of .” It is preaching the Word that presents the righteousness of God, which produces faith.

Nothing whatsoever will ever replace the power of God found in preaching .

Practical truth worth realizing:

1. There is only one way to be in a right relationship with God - “the just shall live by faith.” Believe totally on Jesus Christ to save you and you shall be saved. Your sins will be gone and you will receive the righteousness of God.
2. We have the most dynamic and powerful message in all the world. Let us purpose together to present that powerful message to people of this city and this world.

There are many things we ought to be ashamed of - but never of the Gospel of God. For there is God’s power and righteousness.