

“Ashamed of the Gospel”
Romans 1:16
(Preached at Trinity, January 28, 2007)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we’ve seen **Verses 8-15** contain some personal statements from Paul
In **Verse 8** he expressed how grateful he is for the reputation they were demonstrating before all. They were living their faith.
Romans 1:8 – “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”
2. Paul also expressed his heart for the church –
 - A. He prayed for them continually.
Romans 1:9 – “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;”
 - B. He had a great desire to come to them that he might strengthen them in the faith.
Verse 11 – “I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.”
3. In **Verses 14-15** Paul expressed another reason he felt such a strong burden to come to them.
“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. ¹⁵ So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.”
4. Paul saw himself as a debtor. Paul knew that he had received the gospel by God’s grace. He hadn’t earned it. He knew he didn’t deserve it.
5. Paul was a debtor because of the nature of grace. Grace did not make him a debtor to God but it did make him a debtor to other men who are in the need of grace.
Paul’s debt was not a debt that he had just because he was an apostle. It was a debt he had because he was a Christian.
6. This is true of all of us. The Gospel is to be freely shared with others.
Matthew 10:7-8 – “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. ⁸ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”
7. Every Christian has an obligation to make sure every person in our generation hears the Gospel – we must seize every opportunity
8. In **Verses 16-17** Paul states the theme of the entire Epistle. They are the most important verses in the entire letter. They are the heart of all Christian religion. They tell us how a man or woman might be made right before God. We will look at these two verses more carefully over the next few weeks.

9. We must begin with the first phrase because it is closely tied to the previous two verses. Paul had stated that he was a debtor to all men; he was obligated to bring the Gospel to all men. This could be very intimidating because we live in a world where lost men do not want to hear the Gospel. It is foolishness to those in unbelief. Those who embrace it will be hated and despised. In spite of this Paul was setting forth to settle his debt. He was not ashamed of it but owned it as his own.
10. Christianity is a religion for valiant warriors. So often Christianity is portrayed as a religion of weaklings following a weak Jesus.
- A. Jesus is portrayed as being soft, gentle, almost effeminate. This isn't accurate. Jesus is coming back as a mighty warrior defeating all who stand against Him – and none shall stand.
- B. He calls us to stand, fearlessly, courageously, in confidence as we battle all the forces of evil. It is an epic battle to be fought by heroes of the faith.
11. **Verse 16** opens:
Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”
 What does it mean to be ashamed? It is tied closely to what it means to be embarrassed or humiliated.
- a. We all had those uncomfortable moments we wish we could erase
 My mom told a story about being humiliated by some words she spoke when a large woman got on the bus.
 I was once very embarrassed in blowing the candles out on my birthday cake.
- b. Perhaps you've gone to a gathering of people only to discover you were dressed inappropriately and were embarrassed or ashamed.
- c. Or perhaps the thought of speaking before a large group of people would terrify you. You would be too embarrassed to do such a thing.
- d. We've all had those uncomfortable times when we can feel ourselves blushing with shame or embarrassment. We always want to present ourselves in the best light.
12. Paul knew clearly that the Gospel would often put a Christian at odds with the world, yet he boldly stated, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” The Gospel will often expose you to the ridicule and contempt of the natural man.
 Lloyd-Jones said of the Gospel – “One of the best ways of testing the preaching or exposition of the gospel is this – Is it offensive to the natural man? Will it annoy the natural man? Will the natural man hate it? I assert that if it does not do that, there is something wrong with it somewhere. If you find the natural, unregenerate man praising either the preacher or his message the, I say, you had better examine that preaching and that preacher very carefully.”
13. When Paul brought the Gospel to the Gentile world there were constant situations that placed him in a bad light – they might have made him ashamed.
2 Corinthians 11:23-25 – “. . . in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. ²⁴ Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. ²⁵ Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;”
- a. These are things that would humble a man – Paul was often placed in prison. He was whipped, beaten with rods, and even stoned. These were punishments reserved for the worst of criminals.
- b. Paul states clearly, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”
 In other words, there was nothing that could happen to him that would cause him not to bring the Gospel to the lost or to retreat in shame.

14. There are many who never share the Gospel because they are too embarrassed. They are ashamed of the Gospel. I am not discounting personality.
- a. Some are natural extroverts who find it easy to express themselves to others
 - b. Some are introverts who may not think quickly or may not feel comfortable expressing themselves to strangers
 - c. Ultimately, however, it is more of a question of what is your threshold of fear? A person might feel comfortable talking with people in casual conversation but would be terrified if his safety was threatened or even if he was called upon to sacrifice his comfortable life.
15. What are some of the things that might cause a person to be ashamed of the Gospel?
- I. Unbelief - One of the greatest causes of unfaithfulness in the Gospel is unbelief
- A. An unbeliever has no understanding of spiritual realities.
 1. He has no relationship with Christ - He has no experience with Christ
 2. He knows nothing of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence
 - a. He knows nothing of the equipping of the Spirit - gifts
 - b. He knows nothing of the leadership of the Spirit
 - c. He knows nothing of the power of the Spirit
Acts 1:8 – “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”
 3. The unbeliever cannot testify to that which he knows nothing about
 - B. The unbeliever does not possess the love necessary to give himself for the sake of others.
 1. The believer has been captivated by the love of Christ
 2. We willingly and joyfully serve him
 - C. There are many who profess Christ who act as if they do not know Him. They forget they serve a Master who possesses all power who commands us to fight for Him.
- II. Pride
- A. Pride leads us to be most concerned about ourselves
 1. Pride creates a spirit of selfishness
 2. Pride causes us to be more concerned about our own comforts and pleasures than the labors of the kingdom
 - a. What would cause a man to sell everything he has and go to the mission field? Would you be willing? Most Christians today will not even give up anything that would cause a bit of inconvenience.
 - b. You might respond, “But that’s not my calling.”
 We are all called to have that mindset
Matt. 19:21 – “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.”
Luke 14:33 – “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

Matthew 16:24-25 – “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. ²⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

- c. Have you ever asked God if that would be His will for you? Lord I will follow you wherever you would have me to go. It may not be easy.

Matthew 8:19-20 – “And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. ²⁰ And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.”

B. Pride leads us to be most concerned about what others may think of us

1. This is sinful conceit

- a. Why is it we get embarrassed?
Why is it we blush?

Is it not because we want others to have a high view of us?

Psalm 101:5 – “. . . him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.”

- b. When our self-image causes us to be ashamed of the Gospel it is sin

2. Christianity expects the rejection of men but we must not allow their rejection to turn us from our duty to Christ.

Mark 8:38 – “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

C. Pride also leads to feelings of superiority

1. The so called “Christian right” in America tends to look with disdain at those who do not think as we do.
2. We must reach out to all men in love and humility
Romans 1:14 – “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.”

III. Fear

A. Fear is not of God

2 Timothy 1:7 – “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

1. Fear is consistent with unbelief

Revelation 21:8 – “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

- a. Adam - **Gen. 3:10** - "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked and I hid myself"

- b. The parable of the talents -
Matthew 25:24-25 – “Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine.”
 - 2. Fear comes from the blindness of our own heart and the lies of Satan
 - 3. Fear denies and mistrusts God's Sovereignty. Fear doubts that God is able to accomplish His purpose for the good of His people.
- B. God commands us not to fear
 - 1. The phrase “fear not” appears 63 times in the Bible
 - 2. This has been God's command to His covenant people from the beginning.
Genesis 15:1 – “After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward.”
- D. Christianity is described as a warfare
 - 1. In **Ephesians 6** Paul describes the Christian armor that we wear as we go into battle.
 - 2. We are to be valiant soldiers
1 Timothy 6:12 – “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”
 - 3. We must march forth with boldness.
Hebrews 13:6 – “So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.
 - 4. We have been assured of power.
Acts 1:8 – “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Conclusion:

- 1. We must pray for the wisdom and strength to overcome anything that will cause us to be ashamed of the Gospel. The Gospel will often bring the disdain of those who do not receive it. They will often hate us but our joy of Christ must keep us pressing on. This is what our Lord did.
Hebrews 12:2 – “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”
- 2. As we saw last time, we owe the world the Gospel. We must be faithful to the task proclaiming that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.