

Message #4

Romans 1:16-17

There are many things in life of which we should be ashamed.

1. We should be ashamed of our sin.
2. We should be ashamed of our pride, jealousy, envy.
3. We should be ashamed of our lying and lust.
4. We should be ashamed that God has been mocked and taken out of schools.
5. We should be ashamed that creation truth is not taught.
6. We should be ashamed that there is no fear and reverence of God.
7. We should be ashamed that we live in a country that calls the killing of babies in abortion a choice.
8. We should be ashamed that depending on where you live, one color of a person is considered better than another color.
9. We should be ashamed that people cannot even determine whether one is male or female, as if the choice is left up to them.
10. We should be ashamed of the fact that abominable sins are flaunted, promoted and paraded.
11. We should be ashamed that we see a lack of truthful, honest justice that permits those guilty to walk free.
12. We should be ashamed that we live in a land that says, “all religions are good” even though they demean Jesus Christ and promote that which will lead people to burn forever.

But there is one thing of which we should never be ashamed and that is preaching and proclaiming the Gospel of God. The Gospel of God is not only the most wonderful message to proclaim, it is the most powerful and most important message to proclaim.

A real threat in our world and a real threat in Paul’s world was the threat of being ashamed of proclaiming the Grace Gospel of God in a world of religious systems and works. People are ashamed and afraid to open their mouths and present the Truth. People are afraid of what others might think. People are scared and intimidated to boldly proclaim the truth about Jesus Christ being the only way to having the righteousness of God.

Rome was a big city with lots of people and lots of religion. The major politicians of the world were there. It was the kind of place where people were stimulated by academic and philosophical lectures. If a man like the Apostle Paul came to that city to talk about humanistic subjects, he would have been well received. He could have lectured on slavery or moral reform or the importance of religion and would have fit in well. But Paul was not interested in doing that.

Paul said in **verse 14** that he was obligated to preach the gospel. Paul said in **verse 15** that he was eager to preach the Gospel. Paul says in **verse 16**, I am not ashamed to preach the Gospel. What we see here is this:

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

The greatest need every person has in this world is the need to be right with the God who ordained their life. To actually have a relationship with the true God, we have to have His righteousness. Our problem is we don't have that righteousness. This is where the Gospel of God becomes so crucial and so applicable.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said there are no two verses in all of Scriptures that are of "greater importance" than these two right here (*Romans, Chapter 1*, p. 258). These two verses are considered to be the theme of the entire book of Romans.

Martin Luther, the Reformer of the 1500's, said, "I can do nothing else but preach the gospel." Romanism cannot give you the righteousness of God. Religion cannot give you the righteousness of God. A denomination cannot give you the righteousness of God. Our works cannot give us the righteousness of God. Our attempts to be good cannot give us the righteousness of God. It is found in One Person, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel reveals that.

The Apostle Paul was not interested in going to Rome to entertain people with his oratorical skills or stimulate them with his scholarly academic intellect. Paul was not interested in going to Rome to amuse people with religious talk. Paul was not interested in going to Rome to discuss political or social issues. He was not interested in going to Rome to tell stories to entertain a crowd.

Paul said I am going to Rome to systematically teach and proclaim the Gospel of God. It is not preaching against issues that changes anyone. It is the power of God that changes people. The power of God lies in the Gospel. The power of God lies in the word of God rightly divided and taught.

The Gospel of God is the power of God and the way to unleash that power is to proclaim and preach the word of God. That unleashes the power of God.

Now of course one logical question that comes to mind is why would Paul have to defend the fact and state that he was not ashamed of the Gospel? He had been proclaiming the good news that sinful man could be made right with the Holy God. Why would Paul have to say, "I am not ashamed" of that message when it is clear he was not ashamed. He had been preaching and teaching and proclaiming this message ever since God gave it to him (II Tim. 1:8, 16), which at this point was for nearly 25 years.

The answer lies in the historical background:

- 1) Rome was a big, bustling city filled with successful people. There were big businesses in Rome. There were politicians in Rome. There were educated people in Rome. It is much easier to preach and teach in a country setting than a mega city setting. Many in big cities think more about marketing and numbers than preaching.
- 2) Paul's Gospel of Grace opposes all religious systems of works. Paul was proclaiming a message foreign to all religions of the world.

- 3) Paul's Gospel message of grace did not measure up to the scholarship of the Greeks.
- 4) Paul's Gospel message of grace did not measure up to the rigid legalism of the Jews.
- 5) Paul's Gospel message had not seemingly been too successful everywhere he preached it:
 - A. In Philippi, he was beaten and thrown in jail (Acts 16:2-23).
 - B. In Thessalonica, he was chased out of town (Acts 17:5, 10).
 - C. In Berea, he had to be smuggled out of town (Acts 17:13-15).
 - D. In Athens, many laughed at him and his message (Acts 17:32).

Now he wanted to take that same message to the biggest and most prestigious city in the world, Rome. As word spread about Paul, some were wondering what kind of message is Paul preaching and proclaiming that gets him into so much trouble. The message is the Gospel of the Grace of God and Paul says I am not ashamed of it.

There are four main reasons Paul presents as to why he is not ashamed to preach the Gospel:

REASON #1 – Paul was not ashamed to preach the Gospel because it is the power of God.

1:16a

Most do not realize the actual power that exists in the living word of God. Jeremiah said, “Is not My word like fire?” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?” (Jer. 23:29). When God's word is accurately preached, it has the power to shatter the pride and arrogance of man. It has the power to soften a hard heart and cut into the soul.

That noun “power” (*dunamis*) is one that refers to great power and might at a mighty level (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 123). This same word is used in **verse 20** to describe the majestic power God displayed in creation. In fact, we get our English word dynamite from this word, which suggests an awesome, explosive, majestic level of power.

D. L. Moody used to say the Gospel is like a lion in a cage. All a preacher must do is open the door of the cage and get out of the way.

What is stated by Paul here goes so against the grain of the way most think. The power of God is not unleashed by music or a band. The power of God is not unleashed by a movie or seminar. The power of God is not unleashed by a singspiration or dinner. The thing that unleashes the power of God is the preaching of God's word. Nothing else will ever replace this preaching of God's word for unleashing God's power.

People want to change. People have a desire to change. People want to do better and be better.

The problem is most people don't know where to get the power to do it. Some look to a program for a change. Some look to a pill for a change. Some look to counseling to change. But very few realize that it is the preaching of God's word that can and will change my life.

Paul knew this and he said I am not ashamed to come into Rome and preach the Gospel because it is preaching that will unleash the power of God.

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

When any person thinks of the word “salvation” they must also think in terms of the word danger. If a person needs to be saved from something, they must be in some immediate dangerous situation or state or else it doesn’t make any sense.

Let’s suppose that you are home and comfortably sitting in your home and all of a sudden the fire department crashes into your front door and says you need to get out right now. You would probably say, “Why?” Let’s suppose they said because someday you could have a fire and we must save you. You would say well you don’t need to save me because there is no fire. To need salvation there must be some imminent danger.

People don’t realize the dangerous state they are actually in, in the sight of God. God views all as deep and depraved in sin and they are heading to His wrath, which is aimed straight at every sinner. Every human is one breath away, one heart attack, one coma, one accident away from going into eternity and dropping into hell. Every human needs to be saved because all are in danger of losing eternity.

What exactly is salvation? **Salvation may be understood as the moment you are in a safe and permanent relationship with God**. Salvation is the moment when you have been delivered from your condemned sinful condition and have been delivered from the potential of experiencing God’s wrath.

Paul says I am not ashamed to preach the Gospel because this is what has the power to save people. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ for salvation has a faith that has been produced by the inspired word of God. In fact, Paul will later state in this very book of Romans that faith is produced by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

What Paul is actually saying here is that when God’s word is preached, it has explosive, dynamic, divine power that can bring one 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 preached.

It does not matter if it is a Jew or Gentile. It does not matter if it is a man or woman or a boy or girl. It is the preaching of God’s word that brings people to salvation. It is the careful preaching of the word of God that will cause people to totally and only trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

The most important thing we can do is not to out think or out reason or out smart an opponent. The most important thing we can do is to accurately proclaim God’s word. We are never more useful or more powerful as when we are proclaiming God’s word. That word can set people free from sin and from guilt and from eternal condemnation. It is the power of God for salvation and we must not ever be ashamed to proclaim it.

REASON #3 – Paul was not ashamed to preach the Gospel because it reveals the Righteousness of God. **1:17a**

In a true, accurate presentation of the Gospel of God, the righteousness of God will be revealed and so will the sinfulness of man. In a true, accurate presentation of the Gospel, a person will look at the righteousness of God and see himself as one who is hopelessly and helplessly lost.

When we think in terms of the righteousness of God, we need to think in terms of God’s majestic holiness and righteousness to which we can never attain because we are so sinful.

It is a proper understanding of this very point that causes a boy or girl or a man or woman or Jew or Gentile to see himself honestly as not measuring up and getting close to that righteous standard. To be right with God would mean we are as righteous as God and our problem is none of us are.

Donald Grey Barnhouse used the illustration of an Olympic swimmer. He said you could take the best trained Olympic swimmer in the world that can swim farther and faster than any other swimmer in the world. He said if you take him out in the middle of the Atlantic and tell him to swim to shore, he will drown just like a guy who never put on a bathing suit. He won’t make it on his own. He is up against the ocean.

We are up against the righteousness of God and we are all drowning because we are all sinners. We have no chance of making it ourselves. We need to trust in something other than us. So to have God’s righteousness of salvation we cannot look to ourselves for it. We will have to look to someone else and that someone else is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God and when one believes in Him and invites Him into his or her life, one is saved and has peace with God.

Now the actual phrase “righteousness of God” (dikaiosunh qeou) is important in its grammatical structure. It is important to the book of Romans. In fact, other than II Corinthians 5:21, this phrase is only used in Romans and it is used some 8 times in Romans: **1:17**; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3, 3.

This first phrase does not contain the article “the” before righteousness. What this means is this is not a reference to God’s attribute of righteousness; it is a reference to the character and quality of righteousness that God has.

In regard to a person being saved and being in a safe relationship with God, that person would need to have the character and quality of the righteousness of God, which no human has. The Gospel that is actually preached has the power in it to reveal the need of the righteousness of God to a person and actually bring that righteousness into their life.

No wonder Paul was not ashamed to preach it.

REASON #4 – Paul was not ashamed to preach the Gospel because it is God’s revelation of a faith system. **1:17b**

The Gospel is a “from faith to faith” (ek pistewc eis pistin) or “out of faith into faith” message. What in the world does that mean? What this means is that God’s gospel has been revealed out of God and it is a faith method of salvation. In other words, the faith in Jesus Christ method of salvation is God’s system of salvation. It is His way for a sinner to be saved. It is a faith system. God’s system of justification and salvation is a faith system that is the message that stemmed from God and is offered to man. It is a message that offers man salvation through faith.

The faith to which Paul is referring is what a person trusts in or believes in to save themselves from their sins and to save them from the condemnation of God.

What is it that you trust in to save you from your sins and save you from hell?

The faith that God has revealed that will actually give a person the righteousness of God is a faith in Jesus Christ. It is a total faith based trust in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of God is not a message that says all people are safe from hell because Jesus Christ died on the cross (Universalism). The Gospel is a message that those who believe in and have faith in Jesus Christ to save them are safe. Paul will later say those who call out to God and believe in Jesus Christ will be forever saved.

God’s faith system is revealed by an accurate unfolding of the Gospel of God. The preaching of the word of God clearly presents the righteousness of God that leads one to faith. Man will realize that he cannot live by his works. Man will realize he cannot be saved by his works. Only through faith in Jesus Christ will one ever be saved.

Those who will be justified in the sight of God will have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ and not in themselves or their works.

What can produce this faith? It is the Preaching of the Gospel of God. Sinners may be justified by faith. Paul says I am not ashamed to proclaim this message because this message is the power of God to save souls.