

"Unashamed!"

Romans 1:16-17

I. Introduction

- A. Instead of seeing the gospel as a task, we should see it as a treasure
- B. Even after all that Paul had been through up to this point because he preached the gospel, he was still eager to share the gospel again
 - 1. Forced to flee Damascus
 - 2. Stoned and left for dead in Lystra
 - 3. Beaten, arrested, and imprisoned in Philippi
 - 4. Chased out of Thessalonica
 - 5. Laughed to scorn in Athens
 - 6. Nearly torn to pieces in Jerusalem
- C. Paul was unstoppable—he was not intimidated by:
 - 1. The religious and political leaders of Jerusalem
 - 2. The intellectuals of Athens
 - 3. The caesars of Rome
- D. Paul was eager to engage in exactly what got him jailed, beaten, and scorned over and over because he found joy in sharing the gospel

II. Because It's Good News

- A. Why should we be ashamed of good news?
- B. Rome was the most powerful empire in the world at that time (AD 60)
 - 1. Rome was the political and cultural center of the world—the heart of civilization (*caput mundi* in Latin)
 - 2. Any news that came out of Rome affected the entire world
 - 3. It would have been easy for Paul to be intimidated by the sheer size and power of Rome
- C. Not everyone saw the gospel as good news
 - 1. Most people then, like today, considered it bad news
 - a. The gospel was identified with a poor Jewish carpenter who had been crucified
 - b. The Romans conquered and occupied Judea; they saw the Jews as inferior
 - c. The Romans imposed crucifixion only on the very worst of criminals who stood against the empire
 - 2. Who would put their faith in a dead Jew who had been crucified?
 - a. Rome had great religions and great philosophers
 - b. Romans referred to Christians as *atheos*—atheists, because Christians had rejected the Roman pantheon
 - 3. Some Romans even referred to Christians as cannibals—the result of misunderstanding the Lord's Supper
- D. The gospel is unattractive and repulsive to a natural, unsaved person
 - 1. The gospel speaks about man's lost condition

2. The gospel strikes a blow to human pride and ego
- E. People tend to react adversely to the gospel because it exposes their sinful nature
 1. Because of their adverse reaction to the gospel, we tend to grow silent
 2. We become embarrassed of our message, even though it is good news
 3. Fear is probably the greatest roadblock to sharing our faith with others
 - a. "The fear of man brings a snare" (Proverbs 29:25)
 - b. But it's such good news that it must be shared

III. Because It's God's Power

- A. The Romans boasted in their power
 1. At the time, the Roman legions were the most powerful fighting force in the world
 2. Rome had over 55 million subjects
 3. When Caesar Augustus ordered a census (see Luke 2:1-3), entire families returned to their hometowns because they feared Rome's power
- B. Even with all that power, Rome was still powerless to save
 1. Rome's power couldn't change one soul for all of eternity
 2. Rome was strong militarily, but weak morally
 3. The gospel is the one message that can change people's lives
- C. The gospel is the power of God—in and of itself, it's powerful enough to accomplish God's purpose in a fallen world polluted by sin
 1. Saul's transformation from the enemy of Christianity to Paul the apostle
 2. 3,000 people at Pentecost in a single day
 3. Thousands responded during the first and second Great Awakening, thousands more during the Welsh and Moravian revivals
 4. More than two million through the ministry of Billy Graham
 5. Powerful enough to convert scholars:
 - a. Augustine
 - b. Dr. Francis Collins
 - c. Antony Flew
 - d. C.S. Lewis
 - e. Martin Luther
 6. Powerful enough to convert celebrities:
 - a. Johnny Cash
 - b. Alice Cooper
 - c. Bob Dylan
 - d. Brian Head Welch
 7. Powerful enough to change murderers: David Berkowitz (the Son of Sam)
- D. Not only is the gospel God's power, God also promises power to those who speak it
 1. "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8)
 2. God promises to meet you in that moment when you decide to speak the good news

IV. Because It's Given Freely

- A. The gospel is for everyone
 1. It's not only for a chosen people

2. It is freely given "for everyone who believes" (v. 16)
 - B. When Paul said it was "for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (v. 16), he wasn't speaking exclusively; he was speaking chronologically
 1. The gospel was promised through Jewish prophets, in Jewish Scriptures, to a Jewish nation, with a Jewish context, about a Jewish Messiah, but it is for the whole world
 2. It came to the Jews first, "for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22)
 3. The gospel is nondiscriminatory
 - C. Paul borrowed the word *debtor* (see v. 14) from a Roman word used in economics
 1. It meant to borrow money from someone or to entrust money to someone for someone else
 2. Paul was in debt because he had been entrusted with the gospel by Jesus Christ for other people
 3. Jesus gave us the treasure of the gospel, and we are in debt to those people it's meant for until we deliver it to them
 - a. If the gospel stops with us, it's a crime
 - b. The moment we're set free from sin and death by Jesus, we're encumbered by a debt to deliver the good news to those who are still lost
- V. Because It Gets Us Right
- A. The theme of Romans is the righteousness of God
 1. How to get right with God
 2. How to make wrong people right with God
 - B. This implies that we're not right with God naturally
 1. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" (v. 18)
 2. Romans 3:10
 3. God can make anyone right with Himself by conferring on them the status of His righteousness (see Romans 3:21-24)
 4. It's not something you can produce—it's something you have to receive
 - C. God wrote us a letter, telling us that He was coming (the Old Testament)
 1. He constantly promised it
 2. It was fulfilled when Jesus came
 3. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9)
- VI. Because It's Greatly Simple
- A. What do you need to be saved?
 1. God is not asking people to *behave* in order to be saved—He's asking people to *believe* in order to be saved
 2. Romans 10:9
 - B. Belief will change behavior
 1. You're not saved by behavior; you're saved by belief
 2. But if it's real belief, it will change your behavior
 3. It's not the faithfulness of Christians that saves them; it's faith in Christ that saves
- VII. Conclusion
- A. Eternal life is a gift—it's not an earning
 1. It's free, not a fee

2. Received, not produced
- B. The gospel is too simple for some
 1. That's why religion is such a big business
 2. People will accept that they're sinners, but they will not accept that they can't solve the problem themselves

Figures referenced: Augustine, David Berkowitz, Johnny Cash, Dr. Francis Collins, Alice Cooper, Bob Dylan, Antony Flew, Billy Graham, C.S. Lewis, Martin Luther, Brian Head Welch

Cross references: Proverbs 29:25; Luke 2:1-3; John 4:22; 14:9; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:18; 3:10, 21-24; 10:9

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