



Sermon Notes | Not Ashamed of the Gospel: Part I | Romans 1:16a

## **INTRODUCTION**

Our study brings us to the pinnacle of this letter's opening. We shall see, in the verses set before us today, the culmination, the crescendo, of what we have studied so far. In verse one of the letter to the Romans, we were introduced to the '**gospel**' of God, and in verse two we learned that this '**gospel**' had been promised through the prophets in Old Testament Scripture. The '**gospel**' is therefore old news that has always been 'good' news.

The 'good' news also concerns The Son and His lineage, the Seed that descended from David's line according to the flesh, from God. God came down, yes, but He came as man. The '**gospel of God**', which is also the '**gospel of Christ**, *fully man, fully God*, concerns the Christ. The good news is the powerful declaration that concerns the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God --- Christ raised in '**power**' by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Holiness.

The '**gospel of God**' comes with a charge and a commission. It is embedded in Apostleship, capital "A" Apostleship, the first official office; Paul, and the others, and then us. The free gift '*to be saved and sent*'. It is a grace. It is the '*ministry of being sent*' to bring about '**obedience**' that is faith. It is the '**obedience**' of faith, not of the Law. Faith is not true faith without '**obedience**', obedience 'for the sake of His Name', because the Name of Christ is the worthy name above all names. Jesus Christ is the only worthy name. We live in 'obedience' so that His name would be called upon. He is the beacon of hope to the nations. And now, in the big ancient city of Rome, gathered saints abide, their faith having been proclaimed in all the world of that time. By way of '**ministry of proclamation**' the Roman saints had been 'saved and sent' by grace, proclaiming 'thankfulness', to serve '**wholeheartedly**' and to '**support**' one another, as is our obligation and commission.

We've been climbing in our study, and now we have reached the summit. The view of today's two verses, and the vista before us is such that we need to stop and look. The great content of the '**gospel of God**' lies before us: the Power of God, Salvation, the Righteousness of God, and Faith. These are '**gospel pillars**', grand '**gospel themes**', unveiled to foreshadow where Paul is going.

Romans 1:16-17

*"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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith'."*

How these verses, these '**pillars**' are introduced in verse sixteen, determine our manner of approaching them. Paul declares, '*I am not ashamed of the gospel*'. (vs16) One response might be, What is there to be ashamed of? Why should we be ashamed? This is the 'good news', news about God. How can one be ashamed, ashamed of the truth that God grants 'grave victory' and 'resurrection' by way of Jesus Christ? How can one be ashamed of 'freely given grace', grace that cannot be earned or worked for? It is not just a gift to Paul, or to me, but is a 'gift' to the nations. What is there to be ashamed of?

There is encouraging irony in this. Liberal scholarship, who have long forsaken and abandoned the Bible come to this text and want to comment on this Bible reference. They stated that Paul should say, 'I am proud of the gospel.' They went further, and assumed the inspired text was wrong, amended, and so correcting God, these errant men stated that 'ashamed' was the wrong word. But by changing the text, they missed the point again in their thoughtless boasts about Christ. A noted and accurate quoter states, "There is no sense in declaring you're not ashamed about something unless you've been tempted to feel ashamed." Christians, with the right understanding, know this temptation. Omniscient Jesus stated this instruction to His disciples on this very subject.

Mark 8:38

*"For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."*

Let us remember Christ's words about Him 'not being ashamed'. The temptation to be ashamed is a very real reality for Christ's imperfect followers, including for Paul who addresses the subject with the Corinthian church.

I Corinthians 2:2-3

*"For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling."*

Paul knows 'the truth' was a stumbling block to the Jews, and folly to the Gentiles. Yet he wants to not be ashamed, but to live with courage, so that he will honour Christ.

Philippians 1:20

*"... as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death."*

Paul encourages the younger saved Timothy, charging and exhorting him to live likewise, unashamed.

II Timothy 1:8

*"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God..."*

II Timothy 1:16

*"May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains."*

Paul is not ashamed. Thinking of Christ's words in Mark 8, we see that Paul reveals that he is speaking of shame not as being just psychological shame, that is of embarrassment. No. He speaks of a bigger shame, a shame that is the opposite of confession, but a shame that 'shuts up', and causes one to shrink away, to say 'I have nothing' to confess, my Lord, causing one to refuse to testify. Hence, Paul declares openly, "I am not ashamed." I will not shut up about Christ our Lord. In paraphrase, 'I am a Christian, and I confess Christ.'

This confession of 'no shame' is confirmed elsewhere in the New Testament by others who come after Paul. Both Peter and John speak of the importance of not being ashamed.

I Peter 4:16

*"Yet, if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God."*

I John 2:28

*"And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming."*

'Be not ashamed'. Let this be true when Christ returns, Paul exhorts. This truth, that there was a shame existing by some, was in part, the context of the New Testament churches, and was the continued environment into the second century. We learn from a letter sample found from the Roman Celsus, who describes how he felt about Christianity; not all saw its value and worth.

*"Let no cultured person draw near, none wise and none sensible, for all that kind of thing we count evil; but if any man is ignorant, if any man is wanting in sense and culture, if anybody is a fool, let him then come boldly to Christianity."*

Such mockery and taunting of the Christian faith sounds very much like today, with the claims that only those lacking sense and culture, only those who are ignorant and fools, those from different classes, would embrace and drink up Christianity. They may say this, but this is the Christian message to those who doubt. Paul writes:

I Corinthians 1:18

*"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*

To the 'foolish world' Christianity is but folly. To the Christian, the one who has been saved, 'it is the power of God'.

Romans 1:21

*"For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened."*

Where then is the wise one? Where is the scribe, the debater of this age, God asks? God calls them to court. This is the wisdom of God. He will save people through a 'foolish' message. The Jews seek signs. The Greeks seek wisdom. But to those '**called**', God's chosen, we preach Christ crucified, which is a stumbling block to both the Jews and the Greeks who consider it to be folly. But the news is not folly. It is the '**power of God unto salvation**', for the 'foolishness of God' is wiser than man, and the 'weakness of God' is stronger than man.

I Corinthians 1:21

*"For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe."*

We cannot be relevant to the world. It is impossible. We cannot be liked by the world. Such is foolishness. It is clear today, the world calls us fools. They don't want anyone 'exposed' to this 'foolish' news of salvation. They seek to protect themselves from the blessing of this message, passing laws, and indoctrinating us against our God. They call evil good, and good evil. This is the righteousness of men of the day, but this is not 'our' confession. Yet this is nothing new. The prophet Isaiah said the same in his day.

Isaiah 5:20

*"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"*

Christian, we are proclaiming 'bold confession'. The Four Reasons Why We Are Not Ashamed: Part I: The Power of God, The Power of God in Salvation. Part II: The Righteousness of God, The Righteous Shall Live By Faith.

## **I. THE POWER OF GOD: (v. 16)**

Romans 1:16

*"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."*

Paul states, "I am not ashamed" "**it is the power of God**". This word '**power**' comes from the Greek word *DUNAMIS*. It is the same root word from which the word dynamite comes from. It is helpful to think of it being 'power' like no other. Think 'all power'. Think God's 'Omnipotence'. Only God's '**power**' can transform, change man's nature, make everything new. Only the '**power of God**' can do this. His '**power**' is the only answer. Our faith rests on this '**power**'. This is how the '**gospel**' reads about this '**power**'.

I Thessalonians 1:5a

*"... because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."*

I Corinthians 2:5

*"... so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."*

We live our lives in 'felt weakness' yet we gain our power from '**the power of God**', and we derive our strength and faith also from His Sovereign '**power**'.

II Corinthians 12:9

*"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."*

II Corinthians 13:4

*"For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God."*

Colossians 1:11

*"... being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy."*

Colossians 1:29

*"For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works with me."*

II Thessalonians 1:11

*"To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power."*

I Corinthians 6:14

*"And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power."*

This is Sovereign God **power**. It is the only power. It is power that stands alone. It created the universe, the whole cosmos.

Jeremiah 27:5

*"It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me."*

Psalms 62:11

*"Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God..."*

This power belongs to God. No other power is needed. This power is our hope. To look for any other power is a futile search. You cannot find any other such power. Seek His '**power**' alone!

Romans 5:6

*"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."*

Romans 8:3

*"For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh..."*

Under the Law, we are weakened by the flesh, made 'helpless', impotent, and powerless. His '**power**' is the **only hope** for the corrupt fallen man. Logically, and theologically, it is the **only 'power'** to save.

## **II. THE POWER OF GOD IN SALVATION: (vv. 16-17)**

Romans 1:16-17

*"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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith'."*

Paul refers to the domain of '**power for salvation**'. The '**salvation**' by God, that is, saving a person, is God's greatest demonstration of the '**power of God**'.

Is there a need to be saved, people might ask? Saved from what? I am doing okay. I am doing well. I don't need to be saved, they may say. But NO! '**Salvation**' is definitely needed. The Bible's message of '**salvation**' is not speaking about a salvation for this life. The concern is for '**eternity**'. It is true that 'saving' in this life does happen. There are firefighters, medical people and doctors. People are saved from drowning and other issues. But this is not what Paul is talking about. Naturally speaking, people are generally doing fine. And if in trouble, such as drowning, you can say, I will save you. Though their arms are flailing, they would understand that they were in trouble and needed help, 'saving' from the water which is drowning them. But when God says, 'You are drowning 'spiritually' and your 'soul' is lost', would they want to listen? Will they see the problem? God says, You need saving from the 'just penalty after death'. The 'wrath of God' is before you, for we have declared war on God. Being at war with God, we therefore deserve the 'wrath of God' that awaits mankind. Wrath, not the love of God, not warm fuzzies from God, not warm pats on the back... Wrath is what awaits mankind, the wrath of God, the just penalty, that which is what we deserve! Though the feeling is unpleasant, that does not make it untrue. Scripture is clear:

Romans 1:18

*"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."*

Wrath leads to the destination of 'hell', not the place the world talks loosely about. No, not a bit. This is a place of eternal separation from God, a place of anguish forever. This is where we all deserve to go by 'our nature'.

Psalm 51:5

*"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."*

Paul will explain further in Romans, chapters 5 and 6, about why and how, by 'our natures' that we deserve God's wrath, that we are sinners by our DNA nature, and because we practise sin, because of our fallen nature.

Romans 5:12-14,19a

*"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned --- for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come." "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners ..."*

Romans 6:6, 23

*"We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ... For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

A child is naturally bad; there is no need to teach the child how to do wrong. We need to hear this truth. We deserve this fate which is before us. To compound the problem, we absolutely cannot help ourselves. We cannot save ourselves from this hell. And no one else can help us either. Only God Alone has the '**power to save**'.

Psalm 49:7

*"Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life."*

James 4:12

*"There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?"*

Therefore, God Alone is the answer. This is the '**gospel**' news, the good news, the '**gospel proclamation**', **THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION**, that which we cannot do for ourselves. By God's '**power**' our soul can be saved. But not everyone will be saved. No. Only the ones who believe will be saved.

Romans 1:16

*"... it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."*

To those who believe, to those who do not mock but trust God. The believers will be saved. This is the fuel of the '**gospel**' spread. God has called, and only those called will respond. The 'good news' declared this '**power**' to save, offered to the Jew first, and then to the Greek (the non-Jew), offered to a people, then to a nation.

Paul was '**not ashamed**' that people who believe will be saved! Not just the Jews, like in the Old Testament. There is now a 'worldwide' call to all nations. The message now must be '**proclaimed**' to all the nations. Men and women need not perish. God provides the Way to escape His wrath, no longer slaves to sin and death.

Romans 6:20-21

*"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God."*

Paul is not ashamed of salvation, but the '**saved**' in Christ are ashamed of the things in our past, things that used to be focused on, things that used to be partaken in. We 'feel' the shame of our sin which is now forgiven. But we will not need to feel ashamed forever.

Romans 8:1

*"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death."*

This shame of today that is in view, the tolerance of sin that is seen today, the very things you have been freed from. Are you ashamed of these sins' prevalence? Yet you do not declare it. It is not just a statement of 'I don't care for the old way of life.' But are we '**shamed**' by those sins that we tolerate? We must be ashamed of those words.

But we also look forward to the fruit of new lives in Christ. And for this, may we with Paul 'not be ashamed'.

Romans 6:22-23

*"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life Christ Jesus our Lord."*