I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel

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[0:00] And that is the wonderful thing, isn't it? Because there's always room for more in God's family, right? You know, whenever someone comes to accept Jesus Christ,! it talks about the angels in heaven rejoicing, and we should rejoice as well, because that's the family growing.

And don't we get excited when families grow? I think you all get excited, don't you? I know you all share with me at different times and different stages in your life.
I mean, if you're younger and you're having children, is that exciting? Yes! If you are a little bit older and your children are having children, is that exciting?
Yeah, it's even more exciting, really. What about if you're older yet and your children's children are having children, is that exciting? I'm asking because I'm not there yet.
But all of that is exciting, and not just that. Even if they're not our blood family, we get excited when people have children, don't we? Because we see families growing, and the same should be true of God's family.
[1:10] When we see or hear about someone accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, that means our family is growing. And it doesn't matter if it's just here at Bethel, in this little corner of Arthur, or whether it's you hear about a revival on a college campus or something where, you know, a thousand kids are baptized.

You know what that means? Your family just grew. And you should be excited about that, shouldn't you? Whenever we hear about people accepting the Lord, I know, where's Carrie at?
Where you at, Carrie? Oh, there she is. Clear back there. When she shares about JDC, and a young man or a young lady that accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior at JDC, do we get excited about that?
Yes. You may never meet them, but should you be excited? Yeah. Your family just grew. So I hope we understand the excitement that we need to have when God's family grows.
All right. Get your Bibles out. That's not the sermon this morning. Well, kind of. Get your Bibles out. We are in the book of Romans. Romans chapter 1.
[2:19] We kind of finished up James last week, and we're going to look at this in Romans, and we may look at some other things in Romans, but so many good things to look at from God's Word. Romans chapter 1, and we're going to start in verse 16.

And once you've found that, I'm going to ask if you're able to stand, if you would, as we read God's Word together this morning. Romans chapter 1, beginning in verse 16.
And this is what God's Word shares with us today. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. For it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.
Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has showed it to them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.
[3:35] Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own heart, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves,

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who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forever.
Amen. For this cause God gave them up to vile affections, for even their women did change their natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one towards another, men with men, working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meat.
And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, righteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whispers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do they do the same, but they have pleasure in them that do them.
Let's pray. Lord God, thank you once again for this morning that you've given us, and Lord, we thank you for the truth of your word. And Lord, we just pray for the next few moments that we would focus on your word, that you would have it speak to our hearts, that it would step on our toes, if it needs to step on toes, that it would just help to shape and mold us, to be the followers, to be the believers, to be your people, the family that you want us to be.
[5:47] So speak to our hearts, Lord, through your word, and we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. You can be seated this morning. You know, all of God's word is important, isn't it?

It's all valuable. It says it's all inspired by God, and it's good for our doctrine, reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. All God's word is for who?
Us. That includes who? Okay. I want you to say, God's word is for me. It's for all of us, isn't it?
And it's for our profit. It's for our good, is what it says. And as we look here in Romans, there are so many things that we can gain from this, and that's how all of God's word is. But I want you to begin by looking at the first verse we read, verse 16.
Because this is such a powerful verse, and there's at least four different things I think we truly need to understand. As Paul is writing, he says, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
[7:00] That verse is a statement, isn't it? It's not a question. It's not a I hope something. It's not a gee, I hope it turns out like this. Paul is writing with a confidence.

And as he says this, look how Paul says it. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. How important a statement is that?
Why? It's our foundation. Why would we be ashamed of it?
Why is it important that we say, I'm not ashamed? Why would we be ashamed? Jesus made it clear, if we're ashamed of him before the world, he'll be ashamed of us before the Father.
Why would we be ashamed of the gospel? What things would make us hesitant to share about the gospel? That's the question I'm asking. Serenity? The Charlie Kirk situation?
[8:06] The world around us? And it was the same for Paul. Paul, we just finished studying the book of Acts on Wednesday nights, and we looked at all Paul's missionary journeys, as he would go out and share.

Those of you that were at Wednesday night Bible study, how often, when Paul went out and shared, did he rile things up? Every time.
Whenever Paul would go out and share, there were some people that heard the gospel and said, praise God, that's wonderful, I believe it. But at the same time, what else would happen? There was the other side.
They said, well, no, I don't believe it, and actually, I think we should just go ahead and stone him, so he'll shut up. Or I think maybe we should just go ahead and throw him into prison, so we don't have to hear him anymore.
There was always a reaction of people that would believe, but there was also a reaction of people who would not believe. And that followed Paul wherever he shared.
[9:07] He was stoned, he was thrown in prison, both of those multiple times. Would it have been easy for him to say, maybe I just better keep my mouth shut.

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It keeps getting me in hot water. But no, look what he says. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus. Paul is saying, regardless of the cost, regardless of the consequences, I am going to share about Jesus Christ, because that is who I believe in.
And for you and I, I hope we have that same boldness and confidence that we're going to say, I'm going to share about Jesus Christ. I understand there's going to be a reaction that some may believe, and some may just want me to shut up.
But I'm not ashamed. I'm going to share this. And this verse goes on to say why it is so vital that we do that. He says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.
And then he tells us why. That's why it says for right after that. This is the reason behind it. For it, does he say might be? Does he say, I think this might be the way it is?
[10:17] Again, he's speaking with confidence. He says, for it is the power of God to what? Salvation.

Again, think of the truth of that word salvation. What does salvation really mean? Being delivered? What else? Trusting in God? What's the root word of salvation? It's not a hard English lesson here, and that's good because I'm not an English teacher.
But what's the root word of salvation? Being saved. And Paul says, the reason I'm not going to be ashamed is because that's how we're saved. It is the power of God to salvation.
The gospel of Christ is the only way to be saved, is what Paul was saying. And when we really understand what that means, that should be a driving force in our lives.
[11:18] We understand it from a physical standpoint, but I think spiritually sometimes we miss it. If you were walking along, and let's say this was the edge of it, this was a shoreline, all right?

And this is all water out here, deep water, waves are up, whatever. And I'm strolling along, and all of you are out there in the water just struggling away. Some of you don't even know how to swim. What should my response to that be? To try to save you? Would you think that would be an appropriate response? That's what salvation is all about, right?
The difference between life and death. If I had, I don't know how many are here, but if I had a life preserver up here for each and every one of you, and you were out in the water struggling, and I saw, oh yeah, there's something, they could be saved with that.
Eh. About supper time, so I think there's food down there in the kitchen, so I'm just going to go down there instead. We think about that from a physical standpoint.
[12:27] How absurd would that be? How heartless would that be? How uncaring would that be? How much would that say, I really value your lives? How much?

What value would I be putting on your life? And that's what Paul is saying. The gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation.
The means by which people can be saved. And that's why Paul said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, I'm going to keep sharing it, because he understood how important it was.
It is literally the difference between life and death. And here's the challenge. I prayed that God's word would challenge us. Is that a challenge for you and I? Do we really treat God's word, understanding it is the power of God to save people, literally, from life or death for all time.
It is the power of God to salvation. You have the ability to help save people. And I'm going to say this, if you're a Christian, you don't just have the ability, you have the obligation.
[13:45] God has given you that obligation to help save people. Now, I may throw this life preserver out to some of you, and some people in the world may say, Nah, I'm fine.

Don't need it. I'm good on my own. Can you make them grab the life preserver? No. But you sure better throw it, hadn't you? That's on you, whether you throw it or not.
Whether they grab hold of it, that's between them and God. But you surely better throw that out to them. That is our responsibility. The power of God to salvation.
But this verse doesn't end there. To who? To how many? To everyone.
To everyone who believes. Again, it's a choice. Those who believe or those who choose not to believe.
[14:48] It's one or the other. But it says to everyone who believes. We just sang the song, Plenty of Room in the Family. How many can God's kingdom really hold?

We think of our church family here, and we're up in the chapel today. And you never know from Sunday to Sunday how many are going to be here. Last week we had 127 people down in the sanctuary.

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This week I knew we were going to come up here. And you know what's in the back of my mind all week long? Are we going to fit everybody in there? And we have several missing today, so it's not a problem.
But we understand in here there's limited space, isn't there? If we get enough people and can't fill it up, I'm not going to get out a sledgehammer and just start knocking out that wall. There's a limited amount of room.
But when we talk about God's kingdom, we sang the song, There's Plenty of Room in the Family. Because God is saying, It's to everyone who believes. The number can be unlimited.
[15:52] All who believe in Jesus Christ become part of that kingdom and part of that family. So we look at this verse, and hopefully we understand that we have an obligation to share about Jesus Christ.

And people have a choice to believe or not to believe. And you know, as we read on down in this chapter, look at verse 20. It says, For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.
What is that talking about? What's that talking about? Creation speaks? You know, several that were on the kayaking trip we took yesterday as a church were talking about it.
because we got to see the beauty of God. And all of us can see it all around us. You can see the leaves changing, we are watching eagles soar overhead, the beauty of the trees reflecting on the water, the beautiful, clear, auglaze river.
I wondered if you were listening and whether you'd catch that or not. But there's beauty, isn't there? What should that point us to?
[17:11] God, our Creator, God's creation. And that's what it's saying. All these things God created point people to God so that they're without excuse. There's no excuse for not knowing about God or accepting God.

So does that mean they're all going to accept God? Well, the next part of this chapter gives us a picture of the world around us.
Look at verse 21. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. They weren't thankful. They became vain in their imaginations.
And their foolish hearts were what? Darkened. I think a key part of that verse is they became vain in their imagination.
What does it mean to become vain? Conceit? Full of yourself? What's that? We understand vanity, right?
[18:16] And it's talking about mankind as a whole. That we become vain. That we want to take credit for ourselves instead of giving credit to God. And then we cease to be, it talks about, not being thankful.

Those two go hand in hand. As our vanity increases, our thankfulness goes down. That's an inverse ratio kind of thing. As our vanity goes up, we attribute more and more things to who?
Us. And as we attribute more and more things to us, we attribute less and less to God and become less and less thankful to Him. Isn't that the way it works? And it's saying that's what the world can become.
And we have to be careful that we don't become the same. They become vain. They cease to give thanks to God. And their hearts become darkened.
We wonder why there's so much darkness in the world, and there's a lot of it, isn't there? We hear shootings, we hear murders, we hear all kinds of evil things, and we see evil things in the world around us.
[19:16] Don't be surprised, folks. Don't be surprised by those things. The further people get from God, it shares very clearly that their hearts become darkened.

And when their hearts become dark, guess what starts coming out of them? Dark things. Then look at verse 22. Professing themselves to be wise, they become what?
Fools. It's talking there about having a false wisdom. And that is really what the world has to offer, a false wisdom that wants to exclude God from things.
And it starts all the way back at the beginning of Genesis. Once you cease to attribute God to creation, what happens?

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You start coming up with all kinds of theories that are separate from God. whether it is the Big Bang or theories of evolution, all those seek to take God out of the equation, don't they?
[20:21] Don't they? And to say, it all just happened outside of having a God, outside of having a creator. And the world likes to think, well, we've figured these things all out.

We've figured out how to date things, and we've figured out all these elaborate theories on how this came to be. So why would you believe the Bible? Why would you believe that there's a God?
The wisdom of the world works against the Bible and the way God says things are. But you know what? At their heart, both of those things take faith, don't they? You want to believe in a Big Bang theory that everything just, you know, there is a bang in the universe and everything just kind of coalesced and everything was created.
Does it take faith to believe that? Yes. Obviously, it takes an awful lot of faith. You've heard me say before, I read an article once that there was a mathematician that did the odds of everything just forming the way that it formed.
Do you know what those odds are equivalent to? It's equivalent to a tornado going through a junkyard and assembling a Boeing 747 that will actually fly.
[21:34] Why are you laughing? What are the odds of that? It's not going to happen, is it? And this mathematician, and I'm not a math guy, any of you know that, but by his reckoning, the odds of everything in our universe coming together in the exact way they did to support life and to create our universe and everything that had to happen to get us to the point we are, those two odds are about the same.

So folks, you're having faith one way or another. But one is fighting against God. And that's why it's talking about this false wisdom.
And it goes on down and this false wisdom that the world comes up with leads to a lot of things that are against God, doesn't it? It goes on to talk and we'll read through these verses, they're not really the subject of our sermon this morning.
but in verse 23, they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the image made to a corruptible man. In verse 24, God gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.
And then it talked about women being with women and men being with men. Do we see that in our world today? Yes. This all stems back from not wanting to regard God, from not understanding that God created it and has a plan for it and this is the way it is supposed to work because the world fights against that.
[23:10] And once we separate ourselves from God, this is where we end up. And it goes on, it talks about homosexuality and all these things, so whenever anybody tells you the Bible doesn't talk about that, you can point them to these verses because it does.

And then look in verse 28. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, what does that mean?
That's an important part of these verses. They didn't want to retain God in their knowledge. What does that mean? They didn't want to think about God. They didn't want anybody bringing up God. They didn't want to hear anything about God. So why do you think Paul started all this by saying, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? He was saying, I'm going to share it knowing full well that there are people that don't want to hear anything about it.
But I'm going to share it anyway because it is my obligation. It is my duty because I understand the importance of this. And they didn't even want to retain God in their knowledge.
[24:21] They wanted to separate themselves from God. You see, in the end, that's the choice we make. We're either choosing to have a heart that wants to follow God, or we're choosing to separate ourselves from God.

It really boils down to that, doesn't it? We like to make things complicated and talk about lots of gray areas and in-between stuff, but folks, that's what it boils down to.
We make the choice to follow God or to separate ourselves from Him. And this talks about the fact that the world so often makes that choice to separate themselves from God.
And folks, there is a consequence for that. That's another word we don't really like to hear a lot today, do we? Consequences. But when we make decisions, guess what?
There are consequences, aren't there? Would you agree with that? Most of you are nodding your heads. I hope you do. We should understand that from little children on up.

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[25:22] Do children make the decision whether to listen or not? Christina's smirking on her way out. Listen.

What? Yeah, there's going to be a consequence for that. And those consequences change depending on age, but there needs to be a consequence.
And we understand even as adults, you're free to make your own decisions in life, but are there consequences that go along with those? Yes. The decision to separate from your God is full of consequences.
Because when you separate from God, there's a whole list of things it says you end up with. Look in verse 29. We read it once, you're going to hear it again. You separate from God, look at verse 29. You get filled with all unrighteousness and here's our wonderful list for the day. Fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whispers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful.
[26:51] That's a lot of words, isn't it? Can you find one good thing in that list? When you separate from God, that is what remains.

When the world chooses to separate from God, this is what will remain. There is never a void. We need to understand that.
It always gets filled with something. So you take God out of it. It will get filled with something and this is what it will fill up with. That is true for an individual. It's also true for a society.
And if you wonder why we have so much in this world, it's because we've tried to take God out of things. And in the end, even if you look at the end of verse 32, the very last verse that we read, it says, not only do they do the same, all these things that they talked about, but they have pleasure in them that do them.
In other words, they celebrate it. They celebrate sinful behavior. Not only do they say it's right, but they encourage others to get involved in it. The reason we looked at all these other verses are for one purpose.
[28:19] And that's to understand the importance of what Paul said when he said, I am not ashamed of the gospel. My prayer is that every one of us can say that same thing.

I am not ashamed of the gospel because I understand how important it is that I share it. Because I understand that it is the power of God to salvation to save people.
And it's to everyone. It should be to everyone that we need to share with them. Because guess what? You don't know how they're going to respond, do you?
Do you ever think you know how people are going to respond? Have you ever said in your heart, well, I should share with this person, but I'm not going to because it wouldn't do any good. You ever thought that?
Folks, the verse we read, it says it's the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes. That means we throw that life preserver to who? Everybody.
[29:22] Everybody. And then they have a choice to make, but it's there. Folks, my prayer is that we understand and we have this attitude in our lives that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Don't be afraid to share it in whatever ways you can. I know some of you hand out tracts. Praise God, that's a wonderful way to share it. I know some of you strike up conversations with people in waiting rooms or offices or at work.
Praise God, keep doing that. I know some of you invite people to church so that they can come here and here. Keep doing that. This church, any other church that preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. All ways that we can throw out that lifeline to people. Keep doing it. Keep sharing. Keep saying, I am not ashamed of this.
The acts that you do in public when you're in a restaurant bowing your heads and taking the time to pray, do you think people see that? I'm going to tell you, people do see that. We've had lots of experiences where people come up and it's good to see you praying, before your meal.
[30:33] Praise God. There's people that are watching and noticing those things. Anything we can do to point people to Jesus, we should have a desire to do. And I pray that we know this as Paul knew this and we say, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That I understand it is the power of God to salvation and this is for everyone. Everyone who believes, we have to give them the opportunity to believe.

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That's our job. It's their job to make the choice but it's our job to share the choice with them. We live in a world that needs to hear it, don't we? Is there anybody in here that can say everybody I know is saved?
You know, that means we still have work to do. But God has a job for us.
And I pray we take that job seriously. Hopefully this morning this challenges you. Write this verse down, highlight it, put it in front of you where you'll remember the importance of the job that God has given you.
[31:43] Let's pray together. Lord God, once again, we just thank you for your word, for the way that it challenges us and I pray, Lord, each and every day that it would come to our minds and to our hearts and we would understand the importance of the job that you've put before us to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lord, there's a lot of other important things in our lives but this needs to be our priority. So help us not to forget this. It is truly the difference between life and death for others around us.
And Lord, we never want anybody to think at the end, why didn't somebody share this with me? Help us to be the ones to share it regardless of the cost, regardless of the consequences because we know how important it is.
We ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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