

Not Ashamed of the Gospel

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Date: 11 November 2018

[0 : 00] Well, good morning. Good morning. What a privilege it is to be able to share God's word once again.

! And my prayer for us as we hear God's word today is that we will truly be affected by God's word. That we would be moved. That there would be practical effect. There's never been a time when the battle of ideas has been so vigorous.

And the participants who are aided by social media. So many and so diverse and so close.

The internet is Facebook has brought us all together. To engage in conversations and to battle, to battle with ideas. At the same time, discoveries about the infinite galaxy, gene manipulation and artificial intelligence, have left some scrambling to reconcile the scriptures with those findings.

[1 : 37] Hence today, an increasing number of people, including churchgoers, are ashamed of the gospel.

For many young people, being a Christian is just not cool enough. For many business people, being a Christian has no commercial value and might even put one at odds with one's prospective clients. For some unmarried adults, it's too inhibiting. And for many intellectuals, Christianity has just too many unanswered questions.

And so in the face of those realities, I invite all of us to consider whether or where we stand as we answer these three questions.

Question number one. What do I really believe? And what is the evidence of what I believe?

[3 : 04] What do I really believe? And what is the evidence of what I believe? Is there evidence? Question number two.

Do I belong to the secret service wing of Christianity? You know, like the CIA? I think that's the secret of the justice system.

Is there such a thing, really? But do I belong to the secret service wing of Christianity? And number three. The ultimate question at this moment is this.

Do I live as one who is ashamed of the gospel? Do I live as one who is ashamed of the gospel?

The goal of today's message is simply this. To encourage us as believers to not be ashamed of the gospel.

[4 : 07] Let us pray. I heard someone say that today, things that should make people ashamed, they're proud of.

And things that people should be proud of, they are ashamed of. Well, today we want to encourage each other as believers to not be ashamed of the gospel.

Let us pray. Father, we need your help. We ask for your help, Lord.

We ask for clarity. We ask, O Lord, that you would enable us to speak all right. And for your people and all of us, Lord, to hear as you would have us to hear.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. Today I want to challenge you to contemplate those three questions.

[5 : 11] As we consider Paul's writing to the church at Rome, as found in Romans chapter 1, verses 15 and 16.

Romans chapter 1, verses 15 and 16. Today's topic is not ashamed of the gospel. Not ashamed of the gospel.

And as you turn to Romans chapter 1, many of you will be aware that this book was written by the apostle Paul, who did not have, actually, the privilege of visiting the church at Rome, though he desired to do so.

Paul writes these words to this church that he had never visited, but that he admired from afar.

So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. Verse 16.

[6 : 28] 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 says, I am not ashamed of the gospel. Can we, like the apostle Paul, say those words with integrity? Can we really say those words? I am not ashamed of the gospel. As we assess our own circumstances, there is one way each of us might come to know our individual status.

Perhaps you are wondering, and I encourage you to ask yourself, are you ashamed of the gospel? Perhaps we might ask ourselves an answer to basic questions.

[7 : 34] The first is, what is the evidence? What's the evidence that I am not ashamed of the gospel? Surely there must be something that we, and especially others, can point to.

Is there evidence? What is the support? What do you do to demonstrate that you are not ashamed of the gospel?

And then secondly, what is the reason why I am not ashamed of the gospel? You see, it's one thing to be able to perhaps point to something.

It's quite another to provide reasons. This question seeks to get you to reason whether the evidence you say exists can withstand the rigors of an unforgiving and unrelenting world.

A world that often ridicules and looks down on Christians. In fact, you know, as well as I do, that some people make a living ridiculing Christians.

[8 : 54] Some talk show hosts. Some comedy acts. And so though there might be evidence, do you have a solid reason?

Evidence and reason. The reality is, if you say you are genuinely not ashamed of something, you must exhibit behaviors and attitudes that support that position.

If you're not ashamed of something, whatever it is, then you must exhibit behaviors and attitudes that support that.

Otherwise, one might assume, one could reasonably assume otherwise. Moreover, one would expect that you would have a good reason, or perhaps good reasons for not being ashamed.

And so as we navigate through these words of Paul, we will examine both the evidence and the reason for his position. But before we do, we need to consider the meaning of Paul's words.

[10 : 14] Not ashamed of the gospel. Therefore, today we will examine our topic under three heads. Number one, meaning. Number two, evidence.

And number three, reason. Meaning. What does Paul mean when he says, I am not ashamed of the gospel?

And I want to say to us at this point that as we consider, as we examine the meaning of these words, I want us also to consider what would have driven Paul to actually saying these words in the first place.

Perhaps the most obvious component of the question that we ask, what does it mean when he says, I am not ashamed of the gospel?

Perhaps the most obvious component of that question is, what is meant by the word gospel? And as you know, the gospel is the good news that God, who is just and holy, has made a way through Jesus, his son, for man, who is sinful to escape eternal damnation.

[11 : 48] Paul says, I'm not ashamed of that. That's what I'm not ashamed of. I am not ashamed of that. I'm not ashamed of that simple reality.

I'm not ashamed of the gospel. I'm not ashamed of the gospel. I'm not ashamed of the good news that a just God, that the just God, just and holy God, has made a way through his son, Jesus, for man who is sinful to escape eternal damnation.

damnation. I am not ashamed of that. But that's not the full meaning of what Paul says to us in these words, because we need to get a sense of what the word ashamed means.

Ashamed means to be embarrassed. You're embarrassed about something. You're ashamed. To be ashamed of something is to not want to be associated with it.

When someone says, I'm ashamed of such and such, you would expect him to avoid or to disown it.

[13 : 11] It means that it is not pleasing or satisfying. This word ashamed, though, not only has the meaning of being in an emotional state of embarrassment, but also an actual state of disappointment.

So being ashamed is not only about an emotional state of embarrassment, but also, as used by Paul here, it connotes possibility of an actual state of disappointment.

And what do I mean? Paul not only had in view the way he felt when he said, I'm not ashamed. He did not only have in view the way he felt at the time of writing, but he also had in view what would

happen on that day.

Paul considered that he would indeed rise again. And hence, on that day, he would not be disappointed. He would not be ashamed.

He would not be embarrassed. So Paul says, today, I am not ashamed. And on that day, I'm not going to be disappointed. disappointed.

[14 : 37] I'm not going to be ashamed. He'll receive his reward. But why does Paul raise the issue of being ashamed of the gospel in the first place?

Why is this important for us to consider today? I mean, one doesn't use language like that if there is no relevance. Here's what we know.

These words, I am not ashamed of the gospel. Paul launches the most important discussion on the gospel in scriptures.

In the New Testament epistles, the word ashamed, not including the word shame, is used 13 times. 12 times by Paul and one time by Peter.

It's interesting that Paul would use this word so frequently. Paul was mindful of certain realities that would ordinarily induce embarrassment.

[15 : 56] Therefore, he confronted them head on. Paul was a pragmatist. Paul, remember, Paul was a Jew of the highest order. And Paul had to contend with people who were from his past, who questioned him about the simple gospel.

Paul was reminded often of what he believed and where he was from. Paul knew that not only he but others were having to contend with the same thing.

He was mindful that the message of the gospel would not generally appeal to the philosophers and the intellectuals of the day because they saw profound answers to life's important questions and they looked in the wrong places.

That is why in 1 Corinthians 1 27 Paul wrote but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. Also Paul was aware that the fate of the leaders in the Christian movement would cause embarrassment.

[17 : 23] Paul says to the church I'm not ashamed that by extension he invites us to not be ashamed because he understood that what happened to the leaders of the church could easily cause embarrassment.

Consider the ultimate leader Jesus himself who died indeed he was believed by many to have been killed and never rose again.

That is what they said and not only that he was subjected to a dehumanizing and shameful death by way of the cross. People being aware of this could heap shame attempt to heap shame on believers and Paul himself was in chains while imprisoned.

He was very much aware of how this could cause embarrassment. listen to what he wrote to Timothy. He wrote may the Lord grant mercy to the household of Enesporus for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

He was not ashamed of my chains. Paul understood we could become ashamed when we consider the fate of the leaders in the church.

[18 : 49] How do you not be ashamed of things like that? The death of the ultimate leader and the situation that Paul himself the leader of the church the author of much of the New Testament found himself in prison and chains.

That is why Paul wrote in 2nd Timothy chapter 1 verse 8 he says to Timothy therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord nor of me his prisoner but share in the suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

Paul encouraged believers as he encourages us today not to allow the manner and the fact of Christ's sacrifice or his own imprisonment to cause shame.

Paul was mindful hear me today Paul was mindful that the simplicity and the unscientific nature of the gospel and the oftentimes suffering and hardship of believers could lead some to being ashamed of the gospel.

Paul knew the gospel simple unscientific it's not rooted in science Albert Einstein did not discover this.

[20 : 21] He understood that the suffering and the hardship that believers endured could lead to some being ashamed of the gospel. And perhaps there are some today who might tend towards

being ashamed.

Perhaps there are some here right now who might tend towards being ashamed of the gospel because of the plight of Christians.

Ashamed that Christian apologetics don't appear to win every debate. Ashamed that people in some countries are losing their life even as they proclaim the power and sovereignty of God.

Ashamed that scientific discoveries on their face appear sometimes to refute Christianity's claims.

Ashamed that a simple message of faith could inspire such profound devotion.

Ashamed that those who prosper more are non-believers. if any of those defines you or perhaps there might be something else that causes you shame you especially need to listen until the end.

[21 : 53] Let's now consider the evidence the evidence that proves that one is not ashamed of the gospel. you will notice that poor begins verse 16 with the word for.

The word for as used in this verse could be substituted and perhaps for our purposes it's best understood as because.

so let's take a look at it by substituting because there. Because I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Right? What that word suggests is that Paul is explaining a position he has taken or something he has done or will do.

When we read verse 15 we see right away that it's the latter. Let's put the two verses together.

Verse 15 and 16. Paul writes I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome.

[23 : 09] And then he says in verse 16 because I am not ashamed of the gospel. In other words Paul's satisfaction Paul's satisfaction with the gospel induced in him a certain!

a desire to preach Paul's satisfaction with the gospel his not being ashamed of the gospel induced in him a certain action a desire to preach I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome because I'm not ashamed of the gospel I am eager to testify of the goodness of the Lord because I'm not ashamed of the gospel I am prepared to go to church because I'm not ashamed of the gospel you see the point I'm making Paul says my desire is to preach because I'm not ashamed of the gospel the evidence for Paul that he was not ashamed of the gospel was that he preached! the gospel that was Paul's evidence Paul's evidence that he was not ashamed of the gospel was that he preached the gospel of course if preaching were the only evidence that we are not ashamed of the gospel most of us would have nothing to show but there is much more what is essential to note is that evidence accompanied Paul's conviction if you are like one who claims conviction of a thing and there is no evidence I ask you this how do you know your conviction is real if there is no evidence of your conviction if you say that you are convinced about something but there is no evidence how do you know your conviction is real!

I'll ask a further question what is the difference between you who say you are convicted and the one and you do and there is no evidence and the one who does not claim to be convicted in the first place there is absolutely no difference I want to challenge us in the ensuing days to make clear to the world that we are believers to stand for Jesus let evidence accompany our conviction let there be evidence let there be no doubt whether we are in the marketplace in the school yard doesn't matter where we are whether we are on Facebook or on the internet or whatever shop room whatsapp whatever it is let there be evidence that accompanies our conviction for some this week and in the ensuing days the evidence will be embracing opportunities to evangelize for others it might be defending the gospel but for all of us for all of us it should mean upholding a standard of righteousness you know god does not have does not save us because of our own righteousness he saves and keeps us saved because of the righteousness of another jesus christ yet we are charged to grow in holiness so let righteousness all of us can't all preach but we can all be righteous can't all sing but we can all be righteous perhaps your your evidence the evidence that you are ashamed of the gospel of christ is a transformed life perhaps you can point to the fact that

God turned your life around in some way or the other you don't do the things you used to do in fact very often they don't appeal to you anymore that's evidence that's evidence having considered the meaning of the term not ashamed of the gospel and having examined the evidence that ought to exist to demonstrate that one is indeed not ashamed of the gospel we now turn to our final point reason the reason why I am not ashamed of the gospel what is the reason Paul provides a simple but compelling reason why he was not ashamed of the gospel

[28 : 33] Paul writes I am not ashamed of the gospel why because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes that's what Paul said that's my reason for not being ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes that explains it

doesn't it that is why Paul endured imprisonments and countless beatings and shipwrecks and lashes with rods as well and hunger and lacking water among so many other things Paul says the gospel represents God's lifeline to man the gospel is it is the means by which God saves man from his wrath to

Paul it should be to Paul and it should also be to us it could not possibly be anything to be ashamed of as it was with Paul it should also be true for us that the gospel can't possibly be anything to be ashamed of if you're a believer today you have experienced the only power that saved you the only power that saved you nothing on earth not all the armies in the world as powerful as they are not all the money in the world as much as it is not all the queen's council in the world as brilliant as they are could save you only the gospel is the power of

God for salvation yes you could not fight by or argue your way into eternal life only the power of God expressed through the gospel does that Paul was unashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation notice that Paul did not say it was a power he didn't say that it was one of the powers no he used a he used the word there to indicate that the gospel was the only and is the only power the only way to God so you and I had nothing to do with that we had nothing to do with that that's God's doing and so we need not apologize for it there is only one way the point that Paul makes is that one ought not be ashamed of the only thing that leads to eternal life that's his argument

Paul says the only thing that leads to eternal life how can I possibly be ashamed of it you and I how can we possibly be ashamed of the only thing that leads to eternal life furthermore Paul points out I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation for everyone he says for everyone who believes here Paul makes the point that the gospel is not only God's power it is not only the only way but it is the way that is open to everyone who believes something so wonderful should evoke joy and thanksgiving not shame that's the point Paul makes perhaps some might say and some do say that the gospel is too simple and some say that too many things happen like natural disasters children being shut in schools corruption the poor being taken advantage of some say that these things suggest that it ain't true and they question the gospel but to them

I ask if you were holding on to a broken piece of wood in the middle of the ocean and a small dinghy sails by just a little dinghy to have something that you wouldn't ordinarily sail on but a little dinghy sails by would you debate its seaworthiness or would you simply jump on board jump on board Paul was unashamed of the gospel because of his experiences he had seen too much to turn back he had experienced God's hand in his life I want you to get this point because you and I many of you can say like Paul that I've seen too much it's too late you can't convince me now

[34 : 27] I've seen the hand of God in my life I'm a goner I can't be ashamed I'm not ashamed because of the experiences of others I hear them I hear what they tell me and that's good that encourages me but I am not ashamed because of my own experiences because of my own experiences because of where he brought me from and what he does for me on a daily basis having a consciousness of God an awareness of God but you know here's the simple truth despite all that we have said you and I can provide any number of reasons to support our lack of shame of the gospel but in the end in the end it is

God's irresistible call as explained by Paul in Romans 9 16 which is truly the reason for our lack of shame this is what Paul wrote concerning our faith so then it depends not on human will or exertion but on God who has mercy that's the reason ultimately ultimately you and I owe our lack of shame to the one who offers us salvation so as we end today perhaps you are here or you're listening to this message and you do not know Christ you're ashamed of the gospel it's too simple it's not rooted in philosophy it's not supported by science you don't have one of the big names behind it there's no

Einstein there's no Newton perhaps that's you perhaps that's you you fail to see the simple fallacy in your own reasoning you fail to understand this basic truth basic truth the one who stands above his creation cannot be apprehended by the thing he created unless he determines it to be so that's a simple truth how can you not comprehend that I pray that the Lord would remove the scales from your eyes so that you can see that you cannot comprehend you cannot apprehend one who created all things unless he determines it to be so in the gospel those who are unbelievers in the gospel Jesus warned that his father will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of him listen to the words of Jesus in Mark 8 38 for whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous 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 that's what Jesus says Jesus said you're ashamed of me I'm going to be ashamed of you and I want to tell you today I don't want to be ashamed of me when he comes I don't want him to be ashamed of me no one would want Jesus to declare himself ashamed of them on that day we all should want to be like those described by the psalmist where he says those who look to him those who look to him are radiant and their faces will never be ashamed and Paul when Paul says everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame it is because of the gospel those who believe will not be put to shame as the praise team prepares to come to lead us in our closing song I want to remind all of us all of us that none of us is perfectly unashamed none of us is perfectly unashamed but as God's word is preached we can examine ourselves and ask the Lord for grace to grow and grace to grow from faith to faith so perhaps you'll say to yourself you know I didn't take an opportunity to let them know that I'm a believer I had an opportunity or I was ashamed at one point in time to say that I'm a believer perhaps that's you perhaps you were in a business meeting and you went to lunch food was there and you wanted to ask the Lord's blessings but you didn't because you wondered what the others would say in that moment ashamed of the gospel perhaps you're a single person ashamed to let someone know where you stand because of

[41 : 20] God's word whatever it might be I want to say to you I want to remind you that the scriptures are not here to condemn you but to lead you and to cause us together brothers and sisters to grow in grace together together and I pray to God that that is what happens and I want to just pray for us now just before our closing prayer father lord thank you for the gospel thank you for the power of the gospel thank you for choosing us father we pray first lord we ask for your forgiveness because we know that we have fallen short so many times we've fallen short lord of the word that we have just heard we have at times been ashamed we have been in situations lord where we didn't want others to know who we truly are or we didn't want them to know the strength of our convictions lord please forgive us father enable us enable us in the days and weeks and years to come to grow in this area indeed oh lord help us to to go out of our way father to demonstrate to to cause the world to see the evidence of what we believe cause oh lord our convictions to be accompanied by action lord so that there is no doubt oh lord what a treasure you have given to us and so often we have hidden it we've buried it lord you've given to us salvation lord we have unwisely not shared it as we ought we've kept it to ourselves lord we pray in this moment that you would grant us grace to extend ourselves to exhaust ourselves lord let your gospel liberate us lord we pray for liberation lord today oh father we we ask in the name of jesus that where we have been ashamed that where we have been unwilling that you would remove those attitudes far away from us in the name of jesus we pray and all god's people say amen