

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn in our Bibles then to the chapter of God's Word which we read, the epistle to the Romans chapter 1. And as God would help me, I might concentrate on verse 16. Romans chapter 1 verse 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. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel. Now why would someone be ashamed of the Gospel? Well just think about it. Just think about it from the view of the general public. What is the Gospel story? A carpenter's son who claimed to be God but ended up being crucified and then he rose from the dead and anyone, anywhere, anytime who believes in him will get to heaven and they'll have their lives changed. Now to the general public, to the general public, that's just something fanciful. It sounds fanciful. To the general public, it could be a bit embarrassing even at times if you're not into religion. But I know that I am supposing you are religious.

What would religious people think of that? Well, any guru claiming divine power who ends up being crucified, well that's just a contradiction in terms. If he's got divine power, how can he not take care of his whole life? Well, as I say, that's what the general public think, that's what religious people think and the apostle Paul knows perfectly well.

That rhetorical skills, articulated reasoning is not enough to convince the rank and file of religion people of the gospel. He knows it takes something else. It takes nothing short of divine power. So I'm not ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Paul is going to continue preaching this gospel no matter what.

Now, fast forward 20, 30 years in Paul's life. Fast forward over two decades for when you met Jesus on that Damascus road and everything altered. He's in prison and you write the letter to the Colossian Church. And at the end of the letter you can read it chapter 4 verse 3. He says, now look, I want you to pray for something for me. I want you to pray for an open door. An open door. What do you think that open door is? It's not an open door simply that the prison gates would be open and he'd get out of prison. Read it.

Colossians chapter 4 verse 3. He says, pray for an open door that I might preach boldly. Now wait a minute. How did he land in prison in the first place? Because he preached boldly.

[4 : 3 6] And he says, pray that I'll get out of prison again so that I'll do the same thing. Preach the gospel boldly. Why? Why does he say that? Because he's not ashamed of the gospel. Fast forward a few more years in Paul's life till eventually, eventually he's in prison again.

And word comes, he'll never get out. His final appeal for liberty has failed. And we know from secular history that a few days, a few days, it can be counted in days, after writing his last letter, 2 Timothy, he loses his head. He's executed. He's beheaded a few days after writing his last letter to Timothy. What does he say to Timothy? Timothy is, you can say, successor. I don't suppose the Christian church was ever in such a vulnerable position. I am sure there were thousands saying, oh well, that's the end of Christianity. Paul's their best man. He's dead. The only one who's going to take his place. Oh, Timothy, Timothy, Timothy.

What does Paul say to Timothy? Does he say to Timothy, now Timothy, be very, very careful. Be very careful. Look what's happened to me. And you see, he was looking back on his life five times Paul's skirt. Now, do you know how the Bible defines scourging? Lashes, stripes with a skirt. It doesn't say 40 times. Do you notice? It says 40 minus one. Sorry, it doesn't say 39 stripes. It says 40 minus one. That's significant. Why? Why were the orders to Romans, to when they when they scourged their slaves or scourged whoever they were to scourge? Why, why does he say 40 minus one? Why was it 39 stripes? Because they say, at the 40th stripe, you could die. They mustn't kill them. They weren't condemned to death just to be scourged. That happened, Paul, five times. And here he is reviewing his life and giving advice to his successor when he's in prison. He says, Timothy, Timothy, what does he say? Take care. Does he say, be very, very careful how you put this? See what happened to me? Be careful it doesn't happen to you. Is that what he gives his, is that the advice he gives his successor? No, no, no. What does he say to him? Timothy, preach the word. Be instant in season, out of season. Be ruthless. Be careless as you preach this gospel. You see, Paul is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. What it cost him? Five times scourge, plus three times beaten, ship wrecked, so on. What it cost Paul? But at the end, he determined this gospel's got to continue going out, despite what it might cost those who pro-climate.

So we ask, why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel? Now, Paul is an intelligent man. Paul is no moron. Paul is no rookie. Paul is very intelligent and highly educated. I've read that by the time Paul was 21, by the time he was 21, he had the equivalent of two PhDs, very highly educated person. This is the man that's saying, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, even though I get scourged five times for it. Why is he not ashamed of it? Three things I'll mention. Number one, he knows it is true. Christianity is about truth. And Paul, as an intelligent, highly educated person, wants to examine this, and that's why you read after his sudden conversion of meeting Christ on the Damascus Road, he wants to go and study this because he's highly intelligent. And for three years, he goes to Arabia. Is this message superficial? Is it credible? Is it authentic? So he goes back in all his education and all his teaching as it were to study it. So I'm not ashamed of it. I know it's true.

I know the gospel is real. It confirmed the facts, its credibility, its authenticity.

[10 : 44] So he says, I am not ashamed of the gospel. But there's another reason. I believe that he was not ashamed of the gospel. He's not ashamed of it because he knows it's relevant for everyone. There are some amazing facts of truth that can be discovered. They're not going to make an iota of difference to your life or my life. But see this gospel? Boy, is it relevant to every human being on the face of the earth? Christianity is about reality.

Christianity is about the meaning to life. Why we were, why we are here. What we are here to do. Christianity is about life after death. About where we go once we leave this world. There is nothing more relevant to every human being than the gospel. So Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel because I know it's true and it is relevant to every human being on the face of the earth. But you know, I think there's a third reason why Paul would say, I am not ashamed of the gospel. He knows the gospel has power. He's experienced it.

It changed and transformed his life. It changed his life on the Damascus road. He says, I am the chief of sinners. It's often thought that the most difficult person in the world to convert to Christianity is the atheist. Not right, not correct. Atheists are known not for their strong belief, but for their strong unbelief. An atheist is full of what he doesn't believe, what he says isn't true. Atheist isn't the most difficult person to convert. The most difficult person to convert is the died in the wool religious bigot. And that's precisely what Saul of Tarsus was until he met Christ who is the truth. A died in the wool religious bigot. Absolutely convinced. One time Paul was convinced. In fact, when

Paul began that journey on the Damascus road in his pocket, documents to capture these Christians and prison them because this Jesus Christ is a usurper until he met him. Until he met him. That had all changed. Is it Christopher Morley, the English poet who said on one occasion, I had a million questions to ask God when I met him. But when I met him, they all fled from my mind and it didn't seem to matter. All the questions you think are important and you're going to ask God when you meet him or you see him. But when you actually do see

God, they fled from his mind and the questions were insignificant. The questions meant nothing when he met God. Paul could identify with that. He was convinced Jesus was just a usurper until he met him. Where do you meet Christ? You'll meet him in the gospel. So it's time to ask the question, what is the gospel? What is this thing that Paul is not ashamed of?

[15 : 45] Where do we start? Well, let's start where Paul started. Let's start where the Bible starts. It actually starts in verse 18. That's why I read the last part of the chapter. The wrath of God has been revealed from heaven. That's where you start the gospel. Do note, don't you? The starting point is not God loves you. My friend, God is love is a wonderful, wonderful truth. But listen, it means nothing until you also understand God is holy and he is angry with the sinner every day. That's the starting point. The question is, how can such a holy God who thinks so terribly about sin, that sin is not a bumbumiddle thing which he hates? How can such a God have mercy on such a person as me? The love of God means nothing until you understand God is holy and God must punish sin. If God lets sin off, he is no longer God. He is no longer holy. He is not a just person if he lets sin off.

He must punish sin. He must. That's why the gospel shines. God punished his son instead of the committers of sin. That's the gospel. It's wonderful. It's amazing. Now, it is helpful if you're doing outreach. We learn from here that God is angry, that the wrath of God been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Now, what is ungodliness and what is unrighteousness? It's just basically leaving God out of your life. Just life minus God. We were created to worship God and if we do not worship God we're sinners. We failed in the very purpose of our existence if we don't worship God.

Unrighteousness, ungodliness is living without God. It's disagreeing with God. You might be living a clean life. You might be living a good life, a conscientious life. You might be keeping all the commandments. All they and God gives you cancer. You say, I'm not a happy bunny with God. I'm not pleased about that. You're disagreeing with God. That's sin. I remember when the doctor told me I'd cancer. I said, I don't feel a thing. I have got a neck of a pain. Oh, he says you got cancer. There's no such thing as objective truth. Tell you this. It doesn't work with a doctor. I said, a doctor, a doctor, a hang-wrung woman. I said, I tell you, you got cancer. Sobering. Back when I went in, who's right? Who was right? What I felt? Or what the biopsy said. What do you mean there's no such thing as objective truth? Absolute nonsense. Living without God. Sins of omission are sometimes more serious than sins of commission. And if any of us who've heard the Gospel, if any of us ever land in a lost eternity, it will not be because of something we've done. We get that. If you go to hell, it will not be for something you've done. Because everything you've done can be forgiven in one moment. If you go to hell, if I go to hell, it will be because of something I have not done. I have not repented of my sin. I have not believed in Christ. Sins of omission are very, very important to God. Time to define the Gospel, having stated the problem, the background, the context as they say, what is the Gospel? I give you my definition, as I understand the Scriptures. The Gospel is a genuine offer from God to all people everywhere, irrespective of their background or their behavior, a genuine offer of instant forgiveness of sins, past, present, future. Grasp it.

It's a wonderful offer, forgiveness instantly of all your sins, past, present, yes and future, upon or through repentance and faith in Christ. That's my understanding of the Gospel. Let me say it again, it's vital. It can be life saving and life changing. It is a genuine offer from God to those who hear the Gospel, you hear the Gospel. It's a genuine offer from Him of instant forgiveness of sins through repenting of them and trusting Christ for salvation. That's the Gospel. That's the power of God. That can transform a life. That can change a whole community. It can change a nation. That's why Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel and isn't it amazing? I find it amazing. A person can glorify God more by believing the Gospel than if you kept the whole law of God perfectly all your life.

Isn't that something? You and I are never, ever going to keep God's law perfectly, even for the rest of our lives. But supposing we're able to keep it all perfectly from the moment we come into the world to the end, we glorify God more by trusting Christ, by committing the keeping of our souls to Him. That more God receives more glory. But remember, you were made, and I was made, to glorify God. And you might be here today and say, look, how can I glorify God? A poor sinner like me, how can I glorify God? You can glorify God by trusting Christ with your sins, by handing your sins over to Him and saying, now you make me holy. You give me your righteousness. And you see, we read there in the last part, exchanging the truth of God for a lie. The truth of God is this. Corrupt as you are, sinful as you are, hell deserving as you are. Exchange the perversion of your life, the sins of your life, exchange them for Christ's righteousness. Exchange it. Swap Christ, give

[25 : 30] Him your sins, and He'll give you His righteousness. That is life changing. That is what Paul is not ashamed of. That is why Paul was happy, well, not happy, but prepared to endure scourging five times, beaten three times, to be shipped, etc., etc., etc., etc., for the Gospel. I am not ashamed of that. It's true, it's relevant, and it's powerful. Do you understand? As we close, do you understand why Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel? Dear. One last thing.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. The Gospel has inbuilt power in it to transform lives. But only because Christ is in it. It's not just a message. Christ is the message, because Christ is in it, and because Christ died, and only because He rose from the dead. You see, if He didn't rise from the dead, then He wasn't who He said He was. He wasn't the God of truth. He wasn't God. He could rise from the dead. But only, that power is available only if you believe.

Can you commit the keeping of your soul to Christ? That's what made all the difference Paul's life, a died-in-the-wool religious bigot. The glorious Christ transformed him, and he could die for this Gospel. I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it's the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. May God, the Holy Spirit, make His Word effectual to everyone of us. Let's bow our heads. Our Father in Heaven, we ask that you would take the things of Christ and make them ours today, in here, right now. May we not trifle with the Gospel. May we take it seriously. Heavenly Father, hear us in mercy, answer us in peace. And all we pray, we pray for your glory in the name of your dear Son, the

Lord Jesus. Amen. Now we conclude our service by singing from Psalm 66 in the Sing Psalms portion of your praise book, page 83, Psalm 66, we sing verses from Mark 5 to 12. Come see what God has done, His mighty works of old, His deeds towards the human race. How awesome to behold. To verse 12, you let us be oppressed and went through flood and fire, but yet you brought us to a place which met our hearts desire. Psalm 66, verses 5 to 12. Come see what God has done, His mighty works of old, His deeds towards the human race. How awesome to behold.

To let His people pass on through water's straw, He turned the sea into dry land, let us rejoice in God. With my downpour he rules, all mission sets his eye, so then nor perils and their kind, but yet's internal rise. O people's face are gone, his presence so heavy, he has preserved our soul alive from seven cantor beings.

[31 : 21] He has made us a God, a Savior as we thought. You let your burdens on our hearts, in chains we were confined. You let us be oppressed, we went through flood and fire, but yet you brought us to a place which met our hearts desire.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.