

Im Not Ashamed Of The Gospel

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[0 : 00] Have you ever been afraid to talk about the gospel with someone? Have you ever worried that if you said the wrong thing you might turn someone away from Jesus?

So instead, you've kept quiet and you've said nothing. Have you ever kept silent about your faith because you didn't want to be made fun of or alienated in some way?

Have you ever been ashamed of the gospel? I think most of us, at some point in our lives, have acted in a way that suggests that we somehow are ashamed of the gospel.

The reality is we live in a culture that mocks and ridicules Christ and knows who follow Him. Most of us have a desire to fit in, to be like others, and sadly at times we cave to that desire.

We can keep what we know to be true about Jesus to ourselves so that we won't offend or stand out from the crowd. Now it might seem that this struggle to stand firm in the gospel isn't quite as relevant in a place with such a rich Christian heritage and such an outwardly strong Christian culture even today.

[1 : 23] However, the pressure to be silent is still present, even here. In a place where church attendances may be more common than other parts of Scotland, it can be tempting to assume that everyone already knows the gospel or that they don't really want to hear it again.

There can also be a subtle pressure to conform to a cultural Christianity, a faith that goes through the motions without always embracing the transformative power of the gospel.

In a somewhat outwardly Christian setting, the gospel can become something assumed rather than embraced, a heritage rather than a living truth.

This too is a form of being ashamed of the gospel. If it means we avoid the real conversations that reveal the depth and need of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The challenge for us is to ensure that our faith is not simply cultural or traditional, but personal and powerful.

[2 : 36] Paul's message in Romans 1, 16 and 17 calls each of us here to stand boldly in the truth of the gospel.

Not merely because of tradition, but because of that transformative power of Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

In our context, we might find it easy enough to talk about church with others, but how easy do we really find to talk about Christ?

The temptation to keep silence, to be ashamed of the gospel, is not something new in our day. It is the same struggle that believers of every generation have encountered.

Those in the first century lived in a day when society was incredibly hostile to Christ. Jews and Gentiles alike were mocked, they were belittled and persecuted for their faith.

[3 : 35] While Roman culture embraced all sorts of pagan idolatry and accepted many expressions of faith, they found Christianity despicable and foolish.

Is that not always the way of the world? The world will accept almost any religious belief, except for the truth of Christianity.

I don't know if you know, but the earliest depiction of the crucifixion was discovered early in the first century in Rome, and it's a piece of graffiti carved into a Roman wall.

This graffiti depicts the scorn that Roman society had for Christians in general. It showed a man bowing before a cross with a donkey upon that cross.

When the caption read, Alex Amenos, that is the man's name, worships his God. That type of ridicule, that mocking which existed from the earliest days in Rome, still exists in our society today.

[4 : 50] Roman culture was especially resistant to the gospel because believers worship Jesus, the one who was crucified.

Crucifixion was despised by the Romans. It was so despised that Roman law forbade the crucifixion of Roman citizens. Yet the very heart of the gospel is that Jesus was crucified for us.

He died one of the most humiliating deaths. We receive salvation by putting our faith in the one who was crucified.

We worship the one who died upon a cross. To the Romans such a concept was appalling.

How could anyone worship someone who was humiliated to the point of death by crucifixion? It was foolishness.

[5 : 51] It was absurd to them. Yet this is the message, the truth that Paul proclaims to all who would listen. This is the gospel that he wrote about in his letter to the Romans.

A gospel that he wrote to Roman believers, a group who were surrounded by those who thought that the Christians were fools for worshipping the crucified Jesus.

The world's always mocked and belittled those who put their faith in the God of the Bible. They did it in Rome and they do it here today.

We know we should not be ashamed of the gospel, but so often the pressure to fit in can overwhelm us and we remain silent.

If you've ever done that, if you've ever remained silent when you knew you should have spoken up, if you've ever been ashamed of the gospel, there is good news for you.

[7 : 00] Our passage this evening contains two great truths. Two great truths that if we fully grasp will keep us from being ashamed of the gospel.

So let's read again verses 16 and 17 of Romans 1. 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.

So I just want to very simply take those two thoughts. The gospel is the power of God for salvation and the gospel reveals the righteousness of God.

So firstly, the gospel is the power of God for salvation. Paul boldly declares that he is not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation.

[8 : 06] The word power here comes from the Greek word dynamis, which we would recognize as the root word for words like dynamic or even dynamite. When this word is used of God in the New Testament, it describes a power that surpasses human understanding.

A power that performs what is beyond our natural capacity to accomplish. This is not ordinary strength or influence. This God's supernatural power is miraculous ability to bring about what is humanly impossible.

In fact in the gospels, dynamis is often used to describe miracles. Acts that reveal God's divine intervention.

So we could rightly say, as Paul implies, that the gospel is the miraculous power of God for salvation.

This phrase, the power of God for salvation captures the very nature of what salvation is. Salvation is not just a religious experience or a moral improvement.

[9 : 19] It is a profound transformation, a miracle that rescues us from the depths of sin and death. Salvation is something we cannot fully explain and it is beyond our ability to achieve it by ourselves.

It is as if God has reached down and intervened in our lives, pulling us from spiritual death to life, from darkness to light, from alienation to reconciliation.

The gospel is no mere message, it is active, life giving. It is a force that accomplishes the miraculous work of salvation within us.

Paul's wording here is precise and deeply significant. He does not say the gospel is about the power of God or even that it explains the power of God.

He does not say that the gospel reveals the power of God. Instead, he tells us that the gospel is the power of God for salvation.

[10 : 30] It's not just a story or a description of God's work. It is God's powerful means of transforming life. The message of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is more than information.

It is the means by which God acts to bring people into his kingdom. When the gospel is proclaimed, God's power is unleashed and it has the potential to change lives in ways that no human effort could.

The power of the gospel is also exclusive. It is the one and only means by which we can be saved. No amount of human wisdom, strength or moral effort can deliver us from the punishment our sins deserve.

None of that can bring us in the right standing with God. It is only by the gospel, this miraculous divine power that we are saved.

Salvation then is not a joint effort where God meets us halfway. It is entirely his work, accomplished by his power. In saying the gospel is the power of God for salvation, Paul reminds us of the reality that we need to be saved.

[11 : 53] The necessity of salvation implies our helpless state, our need for rescue from sin and all its consequences.

The gospel does not merely instruct us how to live better lives or give us guidance on moral conduct. Other addresses our deepest need to be reconciled with our God, to be rescued from the penalty of sin and to be restored to life.

Salvation is the work of God alone and it is brought about through the gospel which is itself the power of God.

When we share the gospel we are not merely communicating facts or offering advice, we are sharing the very power of God to save.

The gospel has the power to change hearts, to open blind eyes, to soften hardened spirits, to bring new life.

[13 : 07] This is why we, like Paul, can be unashamed of the gospel. It is the mighty, miraculous power of God at work for salvation.

As we recognize the power of the gospel, we are reminded of our own helplessness and our complete dependence on God's grace.

This should both humble us and fill us with awe. It is a miracle of God offered freely to all who believe.

So what is the gospel? Simply put, the gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ. It is the good news that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world, was born of a virgin and lived a perfect life.

He being fully man and fully God died upon the cross in our place. His death paid the penalty for our sins and He was resurrected on the third day demonstrating His power over sin and death.

[14 : 17] He ascended into heaven and intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father. But to understand why the death of the eternal Son of God is good news, we must understand the bad news.

That we were born sinners and that as sinners we stand condemned before God. We have rebelled against our Creator and we deserve to spend eternity in hell for our rebellion.

If we don't understand the bad news, the good news of the gospel makes little sense. If we're honest with ourselves, this is often why we are ashamed of the gospel.

We don't want to talk about the bad news. We don't want to tell a friend that they are headed for hell. We know that telling someone who is close to us that they are living in rebellion against God or that they are heading for damnation unless they change their ways is an offensive message.

It's offensive to hear that your best is not good enough for God. It's offensive to hear that you cannot earn your salvation and that you can never be good enough on your own.

[15 : 46] The gospel is an offensive message because it declares that we and ourselves can never be good enough. No matter what we do in our own strength, we are tarnished by sin.

Yet, this is what Scripture declares to be true and we should never be ashamed of sharing the reality of sin.

As I said before, if we don't explain why people need salvation, then the good news of the gospel will make no sense to them.

That's why Paul starts in verse 18 of this chapter and continues basically till the end of chapter 3 to expound on the sinful condition of man.

He deals with the grievous nature of our sin. He explains in great detail how desperately humanity needs salvation.

[16 : 46] The fact that the gospel speaks about sin should never cause us to be ashamed of it. Because while the gospel explains the seriousness of sin, it also provides a cure for that sin.

The gospel is the power of God to those who are dying. It is the means by which people can be saved.

So how can we be ashamed of the gospel? The gospel isn't our personal opinion. It's not just our belief system. It is the power of God.

And it is the means of salvation for all who believe. Who is this gospel for? The verse says the gospel is for all who believe.

Or as it could be translated for all who have faith. Real faith is not just agreeing that facts are true.

[17 : 46] It's putting our trust and reliance in the person of Jesus Christ. In order to be saved, to be rescued from our sin, we must believe in the Lord Jesus.

When the jailer asks Paul, what must I do to be saved? Paul replied, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

Salvation comes not from what we do, not by being baptized, not by coming to church, not even by avoiding sin and living righteously, if we could even do that.

Salvation comes through faith in Christ Jesus. And this salvation is for all who believe. How can we be ashamed of the message that brings hope to those who are dying?

How can we be ashamed to share the way that provides salvation to people who are perishing? How can we be ashamed of offering a message of salvation that is available to all who would believe?

[18 : 57] When we truly grasp this truth, it should give us the same boldness that the apostle Paul had. And we too should be able to say, I am not ashamed of the gospel.

Paul now continues with his second reason why he is not ashamed of the gospel. Because it shows us the righteousness of God.

Look again at verse 17. For in it, that is the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith.

As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because it revealed the righteousness of God.

The word righteousness can be used in several ways in scriptures. It can describe an attribute of God. God is a righteous God, meaning he always does what is right.

[20 : 09] It can refer to God's faithfulness. He is righteous in keeping his promises. In the Old Testament, the righteousness of God often describes how he faithfully kept his promises to save his people.

It can also describe the righteousness that God imparts to those he declares righteous, those who are in the right relationship with him.

So which meaning does Paul intend here? Paul uses, in a sense, Paul uses the righteousness of God to encompass all of those meanings.

The gospel reveals how a righteous God brings a sinful people into a right relationship with him.

The Bible is clear that no one on earth achieves perfection. We have all sinned. The Bible talks about us as believers being righteous.

[21 : 11] It doesn't mean that we are perfect. It means we've been placed into a right relationship with God through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The word revealed here, it literally means to make something fully known. It's the same root word as apocalypse, that great unveiling at the end of time that will make God fully known to us all.

The gospel makes the righteousness of God fully known. It shows us how a holy God can be in a relationship with sinful humanity.

His righteous character is revealed through the cross because full payment was made for our sins. He did what was right and just, as the penalty was paid in full and justice was served.

His righteousness is revealed in how he fulfills his promises in the Old Testament to save humanity and provide a way for salvation.

[22 : 20] His righteousness is also revealed in how he made a way for us by giving us the righteousness of Christ.

The wonder of the gospel message is that we who are sinners have been declared innocent of our sin. This is the revelation of the gospel, that our righteousness which belongs to God is given to every believer.

Paul puts it this way in Philippians 3, and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

Paul declares that the righteousness we are given by God isn't based upon what we do, but in the one in whom we have believed. When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, we are given the righteousness that comes from God alone.

We who are by nature vile sinners are declared by the righteous judge to be innocent of all wrongdoing.

[23 : 39] We are forever more treated as if we have lived Christ's sinless and perfect life. As it says in 2 Corinthians 5, for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

That's what the gospel message reveals to us. This declaration is something that God alone does for us. The gospel is all about God's righteousness, not our own righteousness.

The gospel reveals that we can never earn salvation, so he purchased it for us. The gospel message reveals that we need his righteousness to enter into his presence.

The gospel reveals God's righteousness. It is a God-centered message for his glory and his praise. If we truly grasp this truth, the wonder of the revelation of his righteousness in the gospel message, then we should never be ashamed of the gospel.

Again looking at verse 17, for it is the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

[25 : 10] This is how the righteousness of God is revealed. It says it's revealed from faith to faith. That phrase can be interpreted in several different ways.

You'll maybe notice if you've got a different Bible translation. Some say from faith to faith. We have faith for faith on the screen there.

Some say from start to finish by faith. Others say by faith entirely. These all are possible grammatically. However, I believe the best understanding of this phrase is the righteousness of God is revealed from start to finish by faith.

Paul uses this phrase from faith to faith to emphasize that the righteousness of God is revealed by faith and by faith alone.

We first receive the gospel by faith and we go on living faith every day. God's righteousness to us is revealed by faith.

[26 : 17] It comes from faith in him and it continues as we grow in our faith day by day. If all that seems like pointless grammar, the takeaway for you here is that the faith is not a one-time act.

While there is certainly a point in time when you go from death to life, when you first place your faith in Jesus Christ, that faith will continue to grow throughout your life.

Paul clarifies when he says, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. This is a quote from Habakkuk.

I'm just going to read some further context. It's in Habakkuk chapter 2. Behold, his soul is puffed up. It is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

So in the context of the passage, God is responding to Habakkuk and explaining that a man's heart is revealed by his actions.

[27 : 21] Those who are living boastfully reveal that their heart is not right and the righteous one is also evident by their actions, for the righteous one will live by faith.

This verse was first written in a time of national crisis for Israel. The prophet Habakkuk was pleading with God about the evil around him, and God responded by declaring that the proud would face judgment and the righteous would live by faith.

So what does it mean to live by faith? It means placing our confidence not in what we see around us, but in the promise of God.

Habakkuk had to trust that God would act, even when he could not see how or when. And Paul, echoing this in Romans, is calling us to the same.

Faith as a way of life, not just a moment to react. Believing by faith requires us to trust in God's righteousness, to believe that even when we are met with resistance, our God is faithful to accomplish his purposes.

[28 : 41] Faith, then, is not just an initial act of belief. It's about letting that faith transform every area of our lives.

It's about allowing our trust in God to shape our relationships, our decisions, and even our identity. Faith that is alive shows itself in a life that seeks to honour God, not out of fear or obligation, but out of love and trust.

As believers, we're called to live by this faith every day. The world around us may encourage pridefulness, self-reliance, yet the righteous, those who belong to Christ, are called to humbly place their confidence in him.

This is the daily faith that sustains us, the faith that will keep us bold in the gospel.

To live by faith means that we seek to live our lives honouring the Lord. Living by faith is a description of all true believers.

[29 : 54] We are those who live by faith. We are to show what we have believed by our actions from day to day.

Paul puts this in 2 Corinthians 5, so we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

That phrase to walk by faith, not by sight is another way of saying, we live by faith. We seek to live our lives in a way pleasing to the Lord.

This is the essence of what it means to be a believer of Christ. This is what it means to walk by faith. We obey him not because we are seeking to earn our righteousness, but because we understand that we could never do that.

[31 : 07] We say yes to obedience to God's word, not because we think we are better than others, not because we are trying to earn our reward. We walk by faith because it is our ambition to live a life that is pleasing to him.

Those who have been declared righteous by God walk by faith. Salvation has always been God's grace through faith, and that faith transforms us and causes us to seek to live lives that are pleasing to him.

Our faith is the means by which God saves us, not our works. The principle that faith is evident in actions is quoted here as support for what Paul had just said, that our entire lives as believers should be characterised by faith.

As I said, faith in the Lord is never a one-time act. We do not return to our past lives of sin. Faith in the Lord transforms us.

When we have been declared righteous by God, it changes us. This concept that the righteous shall live by faith is core to the biblical message.

[32 : 29] We who have been declared righteous by God will live lives by faith. This is why Paul could say he was not ashamed of the gospel, because he lived by faith.

He lived for an audience of one that is the Lord. The reality is that when we are fearful to share the gospel, it means we are living for the approval of men and not for the approval of our Lord.

When we desire to be liked or popular or accepted, when we change our behaviour based on who we are trying to please, if we realise that there is only one who has declared us to be righteous and that we are called to live by faith each and every day, living alone, living solely for him, this should shape our attitudes and encourage us not to be fearful.

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because he understood the message we have in these verses. He understood the precious truths that we have outlined tonight.

This is how we can live our lives, never again being ashamed of the gospel. We need to realise that it is the gospel that saves all who believe and it is God's only way of salvation and it is available for all who would believe.

[34 : 03] So as we begin to wrap up, I just want to encourage each of us to consider what it might look like to live unashamed of the gospel in our lives.

It's one thing to know that the gospel is the power of God for salvation, that it reveals his righteousness and that we are called to walk in faith.

But it's another thing entirely to live this out, especially when our world often stands opposed to us. Take a moment and think, who is God placed in your life that needs to hear the truth of the gospel?

It might be a friend, a co-worker or even a family member. Who around you needs to see the hope and love that we have through Christ?

Now consider what's holding you back. Is it fear of how they might react or perhaps the discomfort of feeling vulnerable?

[35 : 18] We've all felt it. But remember this, the message we carry is not about us, it is about the power of God working through us.

When we choose to live unashamed, we are trusting in his strength, not our own. So this week, I challenge you to take a small step in boldness in your faith.

It doesn't need to be grand, it could be as simple as sharing a short testimony of how Christ has changed your life. It could be as simple as inviting someone along to church, of offering to pray with someone who is struggling.

We are not ashamed because we have a message worth sharing, a message that offers true hope to a hurting world.

Let's pray together that God would give us courage to live unashamed of the gospel so that we might reflect his light in all we say and do.

[36 : 26] Father, we thank you for this time of worship and for the powerful truth of your word. Thank you for reminding us of the gospel's power, the salvation that we have through Jesus and the confidence that we can have in living unashamed of it.

Lord, as we go from here, we ask that you would fill us with your spirit. Give us boldness to share your love and truth with those around us.

Help us to live by faith, trusting you in every situation and relying on your strength, not on our own.

Let the hope and joy of the gospel be evident in our words and actions, drawing others to love you. Remind us each day that we are your ambassadors and we are called to share the message of Christ in a world that desperately needs it.

Father, guard our hearts and minds in the days ahead. When we face challenges or moments of doubt, remind us of your promise and your presence with us.

[37 : 38] May we live confidently in your truth, unashamed and unwavering. We entrust ourselves to you, Lord, when we ask that you use us for your glory.

May we leave here with renewed purpose and courage and may our lives reflect the light and love of our Lord Jesus. In His mighty name we pray.

Amen. We are going to conclude with a final hymn, Christ our hope in life and death.