

The Good News is Really Good News

Part 1

Romans 1:15-18

March 22nd, 2008

Scripture

“So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 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.’ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”

Many scholars believe that in these two verses is Paul’s letter to the Church in Rome in a nutshell. Some have called these verses the summary of the whole of Christian teaching. It is kind of like when we had to turn in those research papers in school. Somewhere toward the beginning in our first paragraph, we had what is called a thesis statement. We had to tell the teacher what the paper was going to be about. Now in speaking, somewhere in the beginning of the speech you usually tell the audience what you are going to tell them. Next, you get busy telling them what you said you would tell them. Then, after you finish telling them what you told

them you were going to tell them in the beginning, you finish by reminding them of what you just told them you were going to tell them!

That is kind of what the Apostle Paul will do in Romans 1:16-17. He will tell us what this entire letter is about. But more than that, verses 16 and 17 fit into the overall context between verses 15 and 18. In these verses we understand that as a debtor, Paul had been entrusted with the gospel. He believed he was under divine obligation to deliver it to those to whom it was intended. He believed the gospel was for everyone, everywhere. Paul said he was eager and ready to preach the gospel at Rome. The question is why was he so eager to get to Rome? He will tell us in verse 16, but first, watch this. In verses 16-18, Paul will use the word "for" four times, and each is vital to our understanding of verses 16 and 17. It will lay the foundation for our entire study of the book of Romans.

1. Paul is ready to preach because he is not ashamed of the gospel.

In verse 16 when Paul said, "**For** I am not ashamed of the gospel", the "for" tells us he is so eager to preach the gospel because he is not ashamed of the gospel. If you are ashamed of something you have been given, you will probably not be really eager to give it to the person whom it is intended for. But if you are proud of something you have and you actually glory to have it, it will cause you to be eager to give it to the person whom it is intended for.

2. Paul is not ashamed because the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

This second "for" is telling us why he is not ashamed of the gospel. Verse 16 says, "**For** it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jews first and also the Greek." The reason the gospel is the power of God for salvation is explained in our third "for."

3. It reveals the righteousness of God.

Paul is eager to get to where he is going because he has something in his hand that he is not ashamed of and he wants to deliver it. He knows that what he is holding in his hands is the actual power of God for salvation to everyone that believes. Verse 17 says, "**For** in it the righteousness of God is being revealed." In other words, he has so much confidence that the gospel will bring people to salvation because the righteousness of God is being revealed. In Scripture, the righteousness of God can refer to God's attribute, His saving activity, or God's divine achievement. But the reason Paul is trying to get the gospel into the hands of the Romans, and to Spain, is because he believes the gospel reveals how a person who is not right with God can be made right with God. The urgency of why he needs to get where he is going is revealed in verse 18 with our fourth "*for*."

4. The righteousness of God needs to be revealed because the wrath of God is already being revealed.

The bad news is that some of us have been misled. Some believe that one day a person who does not know Jesus will face the wrath of God on the Day of Judgment. That is true, but it is not true in its totality. The Bible teaches that the wrath of God, at this very moment, is already being poured out on people who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We need to get the gospel to people because the wrath of God is not something in the future; the wrath of God is already being revealed.

When we get to Romans 1:18, you may be surprised at what the wrath of God is. You may have noticed that it seems like there are people in our community who can do certain things and get by with it. They are not affected by it. Then, you see someone in the Church do the same thing and they get busted on the spot. You want to tell God that it just doesn't seem fair! As a believer, it seems like every time I accidentally mess up and get into sin, I get disciplined. But my neighbor does not go to church, he does not know God or claim faith in Christ, and when he does it, it seems like he gets blessed by doing it! That is the wrath of God being revealed. I am going to propose something that will blow your mind. I

believe Romans teaches that God has backed off from sinful man and has decided to let man be as sinful as man wants to be. That is not God being loving, or kind; it is Him pouring His wrath out on sinful man. This is going to set the stage for God for our salvation because He can then step into our lives and rescue us from a life where we could be more sinful. He is going to transform us from a sinner to a saint and He is going to put a new nature in us. He is going to change our want to, so that now we don't want to do what we used to want to do. Now, we want to live a life in obedience to Him! That is good news!

The Good News

This is what Paul realized he had been trusted with. He said I am ready to preach the gospel. This phrase, "*preach the gospel*", takes three words in English to translate the one original word in the Greek. It literally means "to share the good news, to proclaim the good news, to publicize the good news." In other words, just give it away. The word ***gospel*** literally means "good news." Because the "good news" is really good news, Paul is going to say he is not ashamed of the gospel. Remember in verses 2-4, I taught you three things about the gospel:

1. **It is of God.**
2. **It is old news contained in the Old Testament Scriptures.**
3. **It concerns Jesus.**

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15:3-5, Paul defines the gospel:

"That which I have received I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."

The Apostle Paul believed the gospel is the death, burial, resurrection and appearing of Jesus Christ. The good news is that God's Son Jesus died for our sins. He was buried, but He did not stay dead. On the third day, He

came back alive! He did not just come back alive though. To validate the resurrection and to let folks know He was alive, the Bible said that He began to appear to different disciples. Scripture shows that it is the death of Jesus that gives validity to His life. It is the resurrection of Jesus that gives validity to His death. If He had not gotten up on that third day, it would not have mattered what He said He did, or who He said He was. There would have been no meaning in the death of Jesus had He not gotten up on the third day! His appearances and ascension back to the Father's right hand side give validity to the resurrection.

- **Resurrection and Death of Jesus**

I was reading about a pastor named A.H. Hackley. One Sunday morning he was preparing his final thoughts for his sermon when he heard a liberal preacher on a radio broadcast make the statement that it really doesn't matter if Christ was resurrected from the grave, all that matters is that you believe He was. Pastor Hackley said to his radio, "lie, lie, lie, He is alive, He is alive, it does matter!" From the other end of the house, his wife heard him and came rushing into the room and saw him arguing with the radio. His face was blood red. She tried to calm him down and said it would not do him any good to argue with the radio. She told him if he really wanted to do something that would have a lasting influence, then write a song about what he was feeling right now. So the next week he studied and reread the gospels, and then penned these words, ***"I serve a risen Savior, He is in the world today, I know that He is risen whatever the world may say."*** It does matter! Listen, if Jesus did not get up, you and I are still in sin!

I heard about a Sunday school teacher who was fervently and passionately teaching on the resurrection to her four year old class. She got through explaining the death and resurrection, and when she finished her energetic, passionate lesson, she turned to her class and asked if any of them knew what the first words Jesus said after the resurrection. A little arm shot in the air. That arm was attached to a cute little girl and she was about to burst. The teacher finally called on her and she said, (just as

energetically as her teacher) "He said ta da!" I do not know if that is exactly what He said but I believe when He got up there had to be an "I told you so!"

From Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem, He warned His disciples that when they got to Jerusalem it was not going to be good. And it was not just because of the scribes, Pharisees, and religious leaders, but because of the divine plan of God. He would go to Jerusalem and would fall into the hands of sinful men, and He would be nailed to a rugged cross! But He wanted us to understand that He was dying for our sins. He told them He was going to die, but not by accident; it was on purpose! And He told them to rest assured when He went to the tomb, because on the third morning He would not be there; He would be alive! Why do we not get that? He is not in a Palestinian tomb somewhere, He is alive. God's plan is to free you from you and from being as sinful as you want to be, involved the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son.

Romans 4:25 says:

"He was delivered up because of our offenses and He was raised for our justification."

The phrase "*delivered up*" means "crucified." It means they hung Him on a tree. They hung Him on a tree because He had to be delivered up for our offenses. This word "*offenses*" literally means "to purposely step over." Have you ever stepped over the line? Have you ever been told where the line was and to stay behind it, but before long you found yourself over the line? Do you remember when your parents caught you over the line and you tried to explain why? No matter how you explained, you knew you did not step over by accident. You knew where the line was, but you purposely stepped over the line. Hey guys, we did not accidentally get into sin. We purposely stepped over the line. Christ did not come to die for people who were good and just made a mistake; He came to die for the ungodly. He came to die for the rebels. He came to die for the disobedient. And He came to die for those who were spiritually dead in sin and held by

trespasses and sins. Do you understand that He died for you? He took your place. Please do not look at the cross and just see the physical suffering of Jesus on a cross. See Him hanging on the cross with your sin, dying in your place, and God judging you in Jesus. He took the sin of humanity upon Himself, and He died. He did not just go to sleep one night and not wake up. He died a purposeful death. Then, they buried Him in a Palestinian tomb and three days later He came back alive. He was delivered up for our sin.

God did not just let Jesus die to forgive you, He let Jesus die so that when God raised Him back alive, He could make you a new you! He was raised up for our justification. Justification means that He made us right with Him. Before salvation we were in the wrong, we were on the wrong side of God. But because we have come to God through the cross, we, who were in the wrong, are now in the right because we are in Christ. You are a brand new you if you have been to the cross. This is why Paul says he is not ashamed of the gospel.

But why did he have to say it? Do you think maybe there had been some times in Paul's life that there may have been a hint he might have been a little bit ashamed? Sometimes our words might betray us. It would be kind of odd for a man to say he was not ashamed unless there was a possibility of him being ashamed. Maybe he wrote these words for my benefit. Maybe he knew there would be times as a pastor and as a Christian that I might be ashamed of the gospel. When Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:8, he told him to never be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of his chains, because that is the gospel. And Jesus said to his disciples as He got ready to leave Caesarea Philippi that if they were going to follow Him, they had to deny themselves and take up their cross. Then He said, "*Whoever is ashamed of Me before men, Him I will be ashamed of before the Father.*" There must have been a possibility that some of them were going to be tempted to be ashamed.

I think there are two reasons why someone might be ashamed of the gospel.

1. To the educated man, the gospel is foolishness (1Corinthians 1:18).

Christians are laughed out of educated circles. It is absolutely the most foolish message known to man that God would send His Son in the likeness of man, put Him on a cross, lay the sin of man on Him, bury Him, three days later raise Him back alive, and tell you that all you have to do to be saved is look to that tree and trust what He did. That does not make sense to the intellect of man. Some Christians fear the sharing the message because of this.

2. To the religious man, the gospel is a stumbling block.

There are many people who will be in churches on Sunday mornings that are offended by the way we preach the gospel of Christ. There are some people who just will not accept that God has done everything that can be done for our salvation, and all we can do is to put our trust in what God did, and it is not based on anything we can do. They believe that God does His part, but man has to do his part. Some will not share the gospel with those people because it is a stumbling block to them.

But Paul was not ashamed. He believed there was a group of people for whom this very message was the power of God! He called that group "*the called*" in 1 Corinthians 1:23-24. We have a message that we have been entrusted with, and though to some it will be a stumbling block, and foolishness to others who will totally reject it, there will be a person who will be birthed to new life in Christ when handed this message! Their life will never be the same. If you are not ashamed of something and you glory in it, you want to share it. You are ready to give if you are proud to have it and know it belongs to someone else. So why are we not sharing it? Do not be ashamed to speak up, and let's never back down and miss an opportunity.

