

I Am Not Ashamed

Romans 1:8–15

Studies in Romans #3

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This morning in God’s providence we come to this great statement of the theme of Paul’s letter to the Romans in 1:16–17. I say it’s in God’s providence, because, as you know, on Friday the Supreme Court of our nation ruled that same-sex marriage is now legal in every state. And our text confronts us today: **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. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”** I originally planned to go through this text as always, but given what has happened I want us to focus our hearts on this phrase: **I am not ashamed.**

Paul has told the Romans that he was eager to come to Rome to preach the gospel to them. His soul was gripped and mastered by the gospel, which set his soul on fire.¹ Now he tells them why: *For*—this word explains his eagerness—**I am not ashamed of the gospel.** And again he tells them why he is not ashamed: **for the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.** Then he tells them again why the gospel is powerful to save: **For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”**

¹ Philip, 23.

Again, I want to focus our hearts on this phrase today: **I am not ashamed of the gospel.**

1. *The Reality of Being Ashamed*
2. *The Reasons for Being Ashamed*
3. *The Remedy for Being Ashamed*
4. *The Results of Being Unashamed*

The Reality of Being Ashamed

The fact that Paul states **I am not ashamed** shows us *the reality of being ashamed*, that it is a real possibility for us to be ashamed. Jesus said this was a temptation in Luke 9:26 (Mark 8:38): “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” Paul had to exhort Timothy in this way as well: “Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord” (2 Tim. 1:8). Are you ashamed today of the gospel? Are you ashamed today of the Word of God? Are you ashamed today of being a Christian? The radicals are going to try and make you feel ashamed on your Facebook page. They are going to try and make you feel ashamed when you are reading your Bible at Starbucks. They are going to try and make us feel ashamed as they picket churches, as they disrupt our churches, and as they sue our churches. Are you going to be ashamed? Martin Luther said, “To be ashamed of the Gospel is a fault and cowardice in pastors, but to contradict it and not to listen to it is a fault of stupidity in church members.”² How so?

² Luther, 150.

The Reasons for Being Ashamed

Let me give you six *reasons for being ashamed*:

First, we are ashamed of the gospel because it sounds like foolishness. “Let me get this straight, God became man, died, rose again, and says that if I only believe I can have eternal life?” When we measure the gospel according to the world’s wisdom, yes, it sounds foolish to say we do not need to do anything to be saved. This is why “no other religion is so offensive to the pride of man.”³ The ancient Romans measured the claims of Christians against their wisdom and called them “atheists,” because, “as all rational people know, the gods have bodies, but you Christians say he is an invisible spirit.” The gospel is foolishness to the world because as 8:5 says they cannot understand spiritual things being carnally minded. And now we’re told that to believe what an antiquated book says about marriage being instituted between one man and one woman is foolishness. Now overnight the whole history of the world has been overturned: and we’re the foolish ones!

Second, we are ashamed of the gospel because it seems powerless. And yes it is when we measure the gospel according to the world’s power. The gospel is proclaimed in words, not at the tip of a sword or gun. And so it’s powerless, humanly speaking, to effect any change. But as Paul said, “the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. 1:25). I think the main way we see this shame in so-called Christian churches today is the emphasis on music and multi-media. “I mean, if we just preach the Word that’s not effective enough for the modern person.” And so we feel ashamed when we don’t see the

³ Haldane, 1:95.

gospel “working.” Let me ask you, what’s going to happen when social and political pressure begin over same-sex marriage? I think we’re going to have a lot of empty strip malls and commercial buildings where mega churches once stood.

Third, we are ashamed of the gospel because of its lowliness. Our Savior left the glorification of eternity for the humiliation of this world. He was conceived out of wedlock, he was a carpenter’s son, he did not go to the best schools, he did not have an army around him, he did not have a crown of gold on his head, he had no vast land holdings. And he was crucified! Our whole religion is one of lowliness and weakness. And we see this in those who follow Jesus Christ. As Paul said, “Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 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. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God” (1 Cor. 1:26–29).

Fourth, we are ashamed of the gospel because it seems to lead to licentiousness. As we’ll see later on in Romans 6 the charge of the Jews, the legalists, was, “If grace superabounds beyond all our sins, should we continue in sin that grace might abound all the more?” And so our temptation is to divorce the gospel from the law and use just the law to get people to behave. That’s legalism.

Fifth, we are ashamed of the gospel because it sounds dangerous. Jesus is Lord, not Caesar! And so they said of Christians that they turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). They said they were upsetting the public peace. How true this is going to be in the

months and years to come. Will you be ashamed and tone it down? Will you do what other so-called Bible-believing evangelical Christians have done and say that what the Bible describes is not the homosexuality we know today? Will you say Paul is antiquated because he had no concept of sexual identity?

Sixth, we are ashamed of the gospel because of our own fearfulness. When we fear those who can destroy our bodies more than He who can destroy both body and soul in hell, we are ashamed of the gospel. Robert Haldane once said “the fear of opposition and contempt...often leads to the corruption of the gospel.”⁴

The Remedy for Being Ashamed

What’s *the remedy for being ashamed*? How can we be bold? How can we stand up and be counted among the faithful? Let me give you a little illustration and then I’ll tell you how.

I’ve had to go to our brother Al Tappouni a couple of times with a crack in my windshield. Here’s this big windshield but when a rock hits it and a small crack develops, you have to deal with it quickly. If not, that little crack starts to move and get bigger and bigger until the windshield is no good. When we no longer think that the Old and New Testaments are not the Word of God but the words of men, a small crack develops in our faith. What’s the remedy? We have to believe with confidence that the Bible we hold in our hands in the Word of God. It’s as simple as that. Our Heidelberg Catechism says,

⁴ Haldane, 1:95–96.

“True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true...” (Q&A 21)

Why? Because if God has not spoken to us, we have no fundamental basis for knowing anything about him, his world, how we can be saved, and how we are to live. This is why our forefathers called Scripture the *principium cognoscendi*, the cognitive foundation for knowing anything about God. I cannot tell you how depressing it is to read so-called Christians on Facebook respond to a quote from the apostle Paul saying, “He’s a man,” to the effect of saying, he was just a good religious teacher for his time, but he’s irrelevant to us today. Here’s how the Westminster Larger Catechism states how we read the Word, though: “The holy Scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very Word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer” (Q&A 157).

I am not ashamed of the gospel!

The Results for Being Unashamed

Let me end with *the results of being unashamed*. Obviously, to be unashamed of the gospel and for us to go out unashamed of the biblical teaching in every area, means we are going to be shamed, persecuted, attacked, and the list goes on. I take this as a given. But we also need to leave here in confidence that if we hold forth the word of life

God's Holy Spirit will be poured out upon us as individuals and as a congregation to revive us, and through us, to revive our community.

We have to remember, the church in Rome had many reasons to be ashamed, least of which was their small size amidst the capital of the Roman Empire. But in due time this became the capital of the Christian west. They would be persecuted but preserved; and in being preserved they would propagate a message that would conquer the Roman Empire from within without swords but by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

I want to ask you today, will you stand with me against the tide of the world? Will you stand with me against your own Supreme Court? Will you stand with me against your own government? Will you stand with me no matter who walks in those doors and mocks? Will you stand with me no matter the lawsuit? Will you stand with me even if our landlord is pressured to terminate our contract? Will you stand with me if we have no building and have to meet on the beach, in a park, in a house or houses?

I am not ashamed of the gospel!