

Romans

Bible Study

Preaching the Gospel

Romans 1:16—17

The Greek word translated as gospel is where we get our English word for evangelism. It literally means *good news*. We normally think of the gospel as being the good news of salvation, but as previous lessons pointed out, this good news can also relate to any message from God. The announcement of the Kingdom by John the Baptist and Jesus with His Disciples was certainly good news (the Gospel of the Kingdom). Paul's revelation of the Mystery was also good news (the Gospel of the Grace of God). It is incorrect to automatically think that the gospel is only about how to get saved.

Romans 1:16, however, is a passage where Paul is definitely using the word gospel in terms of our salvation.

Unashamed

Why would Paul say he was not ashamed of God's word unless there were those who thought it was shameful to boldly proclaim what God told Him? Everywhere Paul preached the Gospel, there were those who opposed him. As he traveled into Lystra, he was stoned, dragged outside the city and left for dead (Acts 14:19). While preaching in Philippi, Paul was beaten and imprisoned (Acts 16:19—24). In Thessalonica and Berea, Paul was run out of town and had to flee for his life (Acts 17). In 2 Corinthians 11:24—27, Paul lists the many beatings, whippings, pains and misery he endured for the sake of the gospel message. He was denigrated because he was a minister of the Mystery, but yet he continued to boldly proclaim God's marvelous message of Grace.

In spite of all these hardships, he was ready to go to Rome to proclaim this same Gospel that he was so hated for. Things in Rome were not all that great for Christians. Aquila and Priscilla left Rome because of the persecution against believers (Acts 18:2). Paul was still ready to go to Rome and preach boldly, just as we see him doing in Corinth (Acts 19:8; 2 Corinthians 7:4). It was Paul's prayer that he be able to speak boldly the truths of the Mystery (Ephesians 6:19—20).

Though all these hardships, it was always his desire to point people to Jesus Christ, and to proclaim the Mystery as given to him personally by Him. He was so unashamed of the Gospel that he was willing to die rather than being silent about what he was told to preach (Philippians 1:20—21). He understood that the power of God was contained in the message, and therefore it was elevated above anything man could ever come up with.

Timothy seemed to have a problem with being bold in his proclamation of the gospel. He was plagued with the fear of persecution causing him to back away from boldly proclaiming the doctrine taught to him by Paul (2 Timothy 1:7—8). He was reprimanded by Paul to not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. Paul was Timothy's example of how he should preach the gospel, holding fast the sound words taught to him by the Apostle Paul. Although he suffered greatly, he never was ashamed of proclaiming the gospel, and he expected Timothy to do the same (2 Timothy 1:11—13). He was to be a good faithful and unashamed workman who rightly divided Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15).

These words are directed to us also. We should be so overcome by the love of God and the power contained in Scripture that we do not hesitate in sharing what we know with others. We are usually held back because of feelings of inadequacy and/or worry of sounding foolish, forgetting that it's the power of God that makes biblical truth come to life. It's God who can take these weak vessels and use them for His glory. Being ashamed is the result of operating in the flesh instead of in the power of God.

I believe churches, in general, are ashamed of Paul's gospel. Most try to avoid it, or mix it with doctrine meant for Israel, thus diluting Pauline doctrine. Most churches don't understand Paul's unique revelation

of the Mystery and feel more comfortable with preaching Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Even mid-Acts churches are ashamed of Paul's gospel and try to cover up what they privately say is the truth. This is in stark contrast to Paul teaching Timothy to be bold and stand strong in the doctrine that he was taught by Paul (2 Timothy 1:13).

The power of God

Have you really thought about Scripture being powerful? The Bible contains printed words on paper, but yet they are said to contain God's power (Hebrew 4:12). This power is the Holy Spirit that energizes a believer to understand how these words give life and the ability to transform a reprobate life.

The gospel has the power to bring a person to salvation, changing a person from sure damnation to eternal life. The light given to us through Scripture, works to illuminate people in understanding his/her condition and ultimate need for a Savior (2 Corinthians 4:4—6). On the day of Pentecost, the Hebrew believers experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in an outward display of miracles, signs and wonders. Today the Holy Spirit demonstrates the power of God through the gospel by changing the heart of those who believe.

God is the one standing behind the words of Scripture. He is the same power behind the resurrection of Christ from the dead and will one day raise us to life everlasting. Additionally, we have His power contained in these mortal bodies (2 Corinthians 4:7; 12:9; Ephesians 3:20). When we are walking in the Spirit, we are operating by the power of God which is contained in us. This exceedingly great power was demonstrated when He raise Jesus from the dead (Ephesians 1:17—23).

We also can experience God's power when He lifts us up and energizes us to serve Him (Ephesians 3:16). This is a power wrought in us that is not available to the unsaved. We are given this power for strength in carrying out what He wants done. When everything around us seems to be falling apart, our relationship with Him keeps us firmly planted in Him. We are able to stand firm because we have been strengthened by His power (Colossians 1:11) and to be filled with all the fulness of God (Ephesians 3:19).

From faith to faith

This little phrase has confounded many. It is often understood to be speaking of an increasing faith, growing from a weaker faith to a stronger faith. That idea is often supported by verses such as Luke 17:5 "Lord, increase our faith." Other ideas include moving from an immature faith to a mature faith, from a Law oriented faith to a Grace oriented faith, From the faith of the preacher to the faith of the hearers; from faith in Jesus to being justified by faith, or from faith and only faith are we saved. There are many other ideas beyond these that attempt to explain what is being taught here.

Looking at the context, we are being told of the power of God being demonstrated through the righteousness of God, which is Jesus Christ, sent in the flesh and dying for sinners (2 Corinthians 5:21). It is through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ that we can be justified by faith (Romans 5:1). Our faith is based upon His faithfulness. This faith of Jesus Christ is in view in the following verse.

Romans 3:22 even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Galatians 2:16 and Philippians 3:9 also refer to the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Note that most translations miss this by using the term: "faith in Christ" instead of "faith of Christ." The King James Bible, I believe, accurately shows Christ as the subject of our faith, not the object.

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