

The Gospel and God's Righteousness

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

(11)

[Romans 1:1-17](#)

(Continuation from 09/27/15)

C. Paul's Boldness for Christ: Unashamedness of the Gospel, [Romans 1:16-17](#)

Romans 1:16-17 (NASB)

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.”

¹⁷“For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous *man* shall live by faith.”

([Romans 1:16-17](#)) Introduction: these two verses contain one of the greatest summaries of the gospel ever written. It is a clear declaration of God's power to save all who believe, no matter their nationality or condition. It is a clear explanation of why Paul was never ashamed of the gospel.

1. **It is the good news from God Himself (v.16).**
2. **It is the power of God to save (v.16).**
3. **It is the revelation of God's righteousness (v.17).**

([Romans 1:16-18](#)) Another Outline: The Power or Urgency of the Gospel.

1. **It saves ([v.16](#)).**
2. **It reveals the righteousness of God ([v.17](#)).**
3. **It makes possible a life of faith ([v.17](#)).**
4. **It delivers from the wrath of God ([v.18](#)).**

([Romans 1:16-18](#)) Another Outline: Paul's Four “For's.”

1. **For I am not ashamed ([v.16](#)).**
2. **For the Gospel is the power of God ([v.16](#)).**
3. **For the righteousness of God is revealed ([v.17](#)).**
4. **For the wrath of God is revealed ([v.18](#)).**

After having gained the attention of his readers by explaining the purpose of his writing and then introducing himself ([Romans 1:1-15](#)), Paul now states the thesis of the epistle. These two verses express the theme of the book of Romans, and they contain the most life-transforming truth God has put into men's hands. To understand and positively respond to this truth is to have one's time and eternity completely altered. These words summarize the gospel of Jesus Christ, which Paul then proceeds to unfold and explain throughout the remainder of the epistle. For that reason, our comments here will be somewhat brief and a more detailed discussion of these themes will come later in the study.

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As noted at the close of the last chapter, the introductory phrase “**for I am not ashamed of the gospel**” adds a final mark of spiritual service to those presented in [verses 8-15](#), the mark of unashamed boldness.

[Romans 1:16-17 \(NASB\)](#)

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.**

¹⁷**For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”**

Paul was imprisoned in **Philippi**, chased out of **Thessalonica**, smuggled out of **Damascus** and **Berea**, laughed at in **Athens**, considered a fool in **Corinth**, and declared a blasphemer and lawbreaker in **Jerusalem**. He was stoned and left for dead at **Lystra**. Some pagans of Paul’s day branded Christianity as atheism because it believed in only one God and as being cannibalistic because of a misunderstanding of the Lord’s Supper.

But the Jewish religious leaders of **Jerusalem** did not intimidate Paul, nor did the learned and influential pagans at **Ephesus**, **Athens**, and **Corinth**. The apostle was eager now to preach and teach the gospel in Rome, the capital of the pagan empire that ruled virtually all the known world. He was never deterred by opposition, never disheartened by criticism, and never **ashamed**, for any reason, **of the gospel** of Jesus Christ. Although that **gospel** was then, and still is today, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, it is the only way God has provided for the salvation of men, and Paul was both overjoyed and emboldened by the privilege of proclaiming its truth and power wherever he went.

Although every true believer knows it is a serious sin to be ashamed of his Savior and Lord, **he also knows the difficulty of avoiding that sin**. When we have opportunity to speak for Christ, we often do not. We know the gospel is unattractive, intimidating, and repulsive to the natural, unsaved person and to the ungodly spiritual system that now dominates the world. The gospel exposes man’s sin, wickedness, depravity, and lostness, and it declares pride to be despicable and works’ righteousness to be worthless in God’s sight. To the sinful heart of unbelievers, the gospel does not appear to be good news but bad, and when they first hear it they often react with disdain against the one presenting it or throw out arguments and theories against it. For that reason, fear of men and of not being able to handle their arguments is doubtlessly the single greatest snare in witnessing.

It is said that if a circle of **white chalk** is traced on the floor around a goose that it will not leave the circle for fear of crossing the white mark. In a similar way, the chalk marks of criticism, ridicule, tradition, and rejection prevent many believers from leaving the security of Christian fellowship to witness to the unsaved.

The so-called **health and wealth gospel** that has swept through much of the church today is not offensive to the world because it offers what the world wants. But that spurious gospel does not offer **the gospel** of Jesus Christ. Like the false teaching of the Judaizers, that is “**a different gospel**,” that is, not the gospel at all but an ungodly distortion ([Galatians 1:6-7](#)).

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Galatians 1:6-7 (NASB)

⁶“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

⁷ which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”

Jesus strongly condemned the motives of worldly success and comfort, and those who appeal to such motives play right into the hands of Satan.

A scribe once approached Jesus and said, **“Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.”** [Matthew 8:19 \(NASB\)](#) Knowing the man was unwilling to give up his comforts in order to be a disciple, the Lord answered:

Matthew 8:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹“Then a scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.”

²⁰ Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

Shortly after that, **“another of the disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father’”**. [Matthew 8:21 \(NASB\)](#) The phrase **“bury my father”** did not refer to a funeral service but was a colloquialism for awaiting the father’s death in order to receive the inheritance. Jesus therefore told the man:

Matthew 8:22 (NASB)

²²“But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

Geoffrey Wilson wrote, “The unpopularity of a crucified Christ has prompted many to present a message which is more palatable to the unbeliever, but the removal of the offense of the cross always renders the message ineffective. An inoffensive gospel is also an inoperative gospel. Thus Christianity is wounded most in the house of its friends”. ([Romans: A Digest of Reformed Comment](#) [Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1976], p. 24).

Some years ago I spoke at a conference, after which the wife of the pastor approached me. Expressing an unbiblical mentality that is common in the church today, she said, **“Your message offended me, because you preached as if all of these people were sinners.”** I replied, **“I’m glad it came across that way because that is exactly the message I wanted to communicate.”**

Paul’s supreme passion was to see men saved. He cared nothing for personal comfort, popularity, or reputation. He offered no compromise of the gospel, because he knew it is the only power available that can change lives for eternity.

1. [\(Romans 1:16\) Gospel— Ashamed: Paul was not ashamed of the gospel, because it was the good news from God Himself; that is, the gospel is the news that God has given to the world and wants proclaimed to the world.](#)

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Romans 1:16 (NASB)

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.”

The fact that the gospel had been given by God Himself made Paul unashamed of the gospel. No man should ever be ashamed of anything concerning the Sovereign Majesty of the universe. However, Paul had every reason to be ashamed.

1. Paul’s day was a day of moral degeneracy, the hideous days of Nero. Rome was a moral sewer, a cesspool of detestable and inconceivable wickedness. Such a day stood diametrically opposed to the moral righteousness of the gospel.

2. Paul was by nationality a Jew, a race that was thought by many of that day to be a despicable sub-human race, worthy only to be cursed, ill-used, and enslaved. Naturally, Paul would be apprehensive among non-Jews. In the flesh he would be tempted to shy away from them.

3. The gospel Paul preached was almost unbelievable. A male member of the despicable Jewish race was said to be the Savior of the world, and not only was He said to be a Jew, He was said to be a mere man like all other men. But not only that, His death was said to be different from the death of other men. He was said to have died **“for all other men,”** that is, in their place, as a substitute for them. And then to top it all, He was said to have risen from the dead. His resurrection was said to be the proof that He was the very Son of God. Such unbelievable claims made the gospel a contemptible thing in the minds of many. A natural man would shrink from making such phenomenal claims.

4. Paul was often rejected, not by just a few persons, but by whole communities. The authorities imprisoned him in **Philippi** ([Acts 16:19-23](#)).

Acts 16:19-23 (NASB)

¹⁹**“But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,**

²⁰ **and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews,**

²¹ **and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.”**

²² **The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods.**

²³ **When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely.”**

The religionists ran him out of Thessalonica and threatened his life in **Berea** ([Acts 17:5-15](#)).

Acts 17:5-15 (NASB)

⁵“But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

⁶When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also;

⁷and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”

⁸They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.

⁹And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

¹⁰The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

¹¹Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.

¹²Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

¹³But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

¹⁴Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.

¹⁵Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.”

The intellectuals laughed him out of Athens ([Acts 17:32](#); cp. [Acts 17:16-32](#)).

Acts 17:32 (NASB)

³²“Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, “We shall hear you again concerning this.”

Acts 17:16-32 (NASB)

¹⁶“Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.

¹⁷So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.

¹⁸And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, “What would this idle babbler wish to say?” Others, “He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

¹⁹And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?”

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²⁰ For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.”

²¹ (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

²² So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.

²³ For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

²⁴ The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;

²⁶ and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’

²⁹ Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

³⁰ Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,

³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

³² “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began to sneer*, but others said, “We shall hear you again concerning this.”

His message was *considered foolishness to the intellectuals (the Greeks)* and a *stumbling block to his own people (the Jews)*. There were several times in Paul’s life when he could have given up in shame and fled to some part of the earth to begin life all over again.

Thought 1. Many are ashamed of the gospel. They are ashamed because they fear **ridicule**, **rejection**, and **loss of recognition**, **position**, and **livelihood**.

They fear **two things** in particular.

1. There is the fear of intellectual shame.

This is the fear that the gospel does not measure up intellectually. It is judged not to be for the scholar or philosopher. **Note:** this feeling is common

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to those who do not understand the philosophy of the gospel. No greater philosophy exists; no greater reasoning has ever been worked through.

A man holds either to the philosophy and thought of the world, or to the philosophy and thought of God's Son, the gospel of Jesus Christ and His redemption. There is no question which philosophy and intellectual thought is greater.

1 Corinthians 1:25 (NASB) (cp. **Romans 1:18-31**).

²⁵ “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NASB)

³⁰ “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.”

Romans 11:33-34 (NASB)

³³ “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

³⁴ For Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?”

1 Corinthians 3:18-20 (NASB)

¹⁸ “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise.

¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, “*He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness*”;

²⁰ and again, “The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.”

James 3:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.”

1 Samuel 2:3 (NASB)

³ “Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; For the Lord is a God of knowledge, And with Him actions are weighed.”

Isaiah 40:28 (NASB)

²⁸ “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.”

Daniel 2:22 (NASB)

²² “It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.”

2) There is the fear of social shame.

Many fear if they accept and proclaim the gospel, they will be.....

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1. ridiculed and mocked
2. left without job and livelihood
3. passed over and cut off
4. rejected and ignored
5. left without family and friends
6. abused and killed

2 Timothy 1:7-9 (NASB)

⁷“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity [fear], but of power and love and discipline [sound mind].

⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

⁹who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.”

1 Peter 4:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“If you are reviled [reproached] for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

Proverbs 29:25 (NASB)

²⁵“The fear of man brings a snare, But he who [putteth] trusts in the Lord will be exalted [safe].”

Isaiah 51:12 (NASB)

¹²“I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies And of the son of man who is made like grass.”