

Unashamed  
Romans 1:16-17  
May 28, 2023

### Text

**<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."**

### Prayer

-Baptisms  
-Memorial Day

### Intro

Our society loves justice.

If you look through the TV listings during the middle of the day, you'll see shows like Judge Judy, Judge Jerry, The People's Court, Divorce Court, and Relative Justice.

This continues in primetime. Of the top 25 most popular primetime network shows in America last season, 12 of them were dedicated to crime and law enforcement. Shows like:

Chicago PD

FBI

The Equalizer

NCIS

NCIS Hawaii

NCIS Los Angeles

You have TV channels which largely air crime related programming. Headline News is basically the Forensic Files channel. Investigation Discovery is basically the true crime channel.

Shows like Cops and America's Most Wanted became cultural staples.

Cable channels cover high profile court cases exhaustively, such as OJ Simpson, Michael Jackson, Casey Anthony, and last year's trial with Amber Heard and Johnny Depp.

We live in a society that LOVES justice.

It's also true of popular movies. We love stories of good and evil.

6 of the top 20 highest grossing movies of all time are Marvel super hero movies with storylines where good defeats evil.

Other movies with themes of good and evil pervade the rest of the top 20: Star Wars, Avatar, the Lion King.

Even in sports, we want the right thing to happen. When a referee or an umpire makes a bad call, there is outrage.

Because we love justice. We love when the right thing happens.

But then we consider the idea of a just and righteous God...

And suddenly, the world doesn't like that so much.

The idea of a Holy God who could judge people is so often looked on with contempt.

How could God judge?

Judging is bad.

We love justice. But the idea of a God who judges, we often hate.

And it's on that train of thought that I want to consider our passage this morning from Romans 1.

The gospel is the righteousness of God revealed to the world and points a sinful world to true justice and righteousness.

Bridge

The main idea of our passage is that we should not be ashamed of the gospel in a shameful world.

And so we'll look at this morning's passage in three parts, and what they teach us about the gospel.

What it is.

Who it's for.

How it works.

### I. What the gospel is:

Verse 16.

Paul begins by saying:

**<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation**

There is power in the gospel because of what it represents. It is the message of grace and forgiveness that comes from faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

He is the Lord who came into the world for our salvation. And by understanding the gospel, it introduces us to the will of God. It communicates God's redemption. And the gospel shows us God's faithfulness to his people.

I love this quote from Leon Morris: "The gospel is not advice to people, suggesting that they lift themselves. It is power. It lifts them up. Paul does not say that the gospel brings power but that it *is* power, and God's power at that. When the gospel is preached, this is not simply so many words being uttered. The power of God is at work. When the gospel enters anyone's life, it is as though the very fire of God had come upon him."

### Unashamed

Paul says that he's not ashamed of the gospel, but many in our world can live with this temptation that the gospel is something to hide from, something to try to change, something to water down.

And I think this happens for several reasons.

One that I already touched upon. There are doctrines associated with the gospel which many find offensive. The doctrine of sin. That all sin and fall short of the glory of God. Our world doesn't like that idea. We like to lift up our own goodness.

As I said in the beginning, many don't like the idea of a morally righteous God who judges sin.

In fact, many try to judge God and say that he's not quite good or not quite loving because he judges sin and doesn't atone for our sin in the way we think that he should. Many act like we should be entitled to whatever grace or blessings the Almighty has, just because we say so.

For so many in our world, we want what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace."

Our world wants an easy gospel that asks nothing of us. For so many, they want Jesus as a life coach but not as our savior, and certainly not as our Lord.

Some are ashamed of the gospel because they don't like the idea that it is only Jesus who can save. They want to be their own savior. They want to believe we can be good enough.

They say things like "what about a really good person?" or "what about a person of a different faith?" or "what about a person who has never heard the gospel?"

And so they try to find a way around the gospel, find ways around the exclusivity, or the necessity of Christ as the only one who can bring salvation.

Not ashamed of the gospel, because the gospel says that we are hopeless, we are dead in sin apart from Christ.

People can be ashamed of the gospel because of certain moral teachings in the Bible. Sure, we can all get on board with teachings that it's good to love other people.

But there are harder passages to follow.

For many, they don't like the total devotion that Jesus calls us to. They want to live their own lives and do their own things.

There are passages which deal with suffering. The doctrine of hell. Those are not popular ideas.

There are Biblical passages that cut against the grain of our society. Passages which challenges the contemporary Orthodoxy on issues related to gender and human sexuality.

And so for many, there can be a temptation to disregard Biblical teachings that they don't like.

Treating the Bible like it's something that we need to hide from or sugarcoat.

There are those who mock the gospel message.

They mock the message of forgiveness, that God forgives people just because they have faith. They ask, "then why even worry about being good?"

The message of grace is offensive.

And so it can be our pride in ourselves which causes us to try to make the gospel something less than what it is.

People do this because they don't understand it. Their hearts have never been touched by grace. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul says that the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved, it is the power of God.

On the other side of the coin, there are those who live ashamed of the gospel because they don't think it's quite sufficient on its own. Sure, they believe in Jesus, but they feel like they need to live as though he needs our help in saving us. Like it's up to us, in our own strength, in our own ability, to get it right and try to be good enough. That too is not the gospel.

As the great Puritan minister Jonathan Edwards said, “the only thing you contribute to your own salvation is the sin that makes it necessary.”

People can be ashamed of God when the going gets tough. When bad things happen, when life doesn't go as planned and question the savior who allows these things to happen.

Perhaps that's part of the reason that for Christians, so many of us struggle with sharing our faith. Because there's a part of us that doesn't truly think it's good news.

We functionally live ashamed of the gospel when we don't want to believe what it teaches, want to add to it, want to take away from it, want to make it what we want it to be, rather than what it is.

There can be many reasons why a sinful world would be ashamed of the gospel.

But our text gives THE reason why we should not be ashamed.

Because it is the power of God for salvation.

It is the message of life to a world that is dead in sin. It is the message of forgiveness to a world that is guilty. It is a message of hope in a world that, apart from Christ, is hopeless.

That we do sin and that we cannot fix the problem of our sin on our own, but the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ offers forgiveness.

We come to our second point.

II. who it's for.

Verse 16 continues:

**it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

The point here is emphasizing that the gospel is for everyone. The gospel is for the whole world, for all who believe it and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. The gospel doesn't discriminate. No person or group is more deserving of the grace of God than any other.

No one deserves it based on his or her own merit.

Without Christ, we are all equally unworthy.

There is one gospel and all who are saved are saved because of the same gospel.

No one's sins are so great that the cross of Christ cannot redeem. No one is stained so much that the blood of the lamb cannot wash them.

It is something that everyone desperately needs. And it is something which God offers to all who believe. Not ashamed of the gospel.

In verse 16, where Paul says that the gospel is given **to the Jew first, and also to the Greek**

The point is that in God's providence, the hope of salvation was first given to his chosen people, but now in Christ, the offer is global.

When Paul refers to Greeks here, it is meant as a representative for the rest of the world.

That is the good news.

It's for the person who was raised in church and the person who was not.

It's for the person who has had a lifetime of walking a straight and arrow path and for the person whose had a lifetime of struggles.

It's for the person who's known Jesus for years, and it's for the person who meets Jesus today.

It is for all who will come to Christ and believe in him by faith.

Not ashamed of the gospel.

So. So far we've talked about what the gospel is and who it's for.

Third point.

How the gospel works.

### III. How the gospel works.

Verse 17 says:

**For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."**

What does that mean here?

God is righteous, morally. He is perfect and without sin. He is holy.

Furthermore, everything God does is in accordance with his righteousness.

And so, because God is righteous his gospel is also righteous. And the way God forgives sinners is righteous. And the judgment for the ungodly is righteous.

The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel.

And this passage says that the righteous shall live by faith.

Faith is the basis for our righteousness before God. It's trusting in the Lord. Later on in Romans 4:3, Paul refers to Abraham. And it's that Abraham believed and it was counted to him as righteousness.

It has always been faith that has saved people.

That's not A way to be saved. It's THE way to be saved.

And the reason why we can be made right is because we have a savior who took the punishment of sin for us. God is good. People are not. But because God is good, God made a way for people to be forgiven.

That way was Jesus Christ. He paid the price. He gave his life for yours, because there had to be a penalty for sin.

God would not simply wipe the slate clean because that would be unjust. Sin demands justice because sin comes at a cost.

And we sin all the time. We're sinful people.



But on the cross, Jesus bore the cost of sin.

Illustration - fixing something broken (Tim Keller)

I've used this before, but Tim Keller gave a great illustration.

That there's no such thing as simply forgiving.  
Forgiveness always comes at a cost.

Imagine that I broke something of yours that was expensive. Maybe a TV or computer, maybe I accidentally broke musical instrument or a window. Someone must pay for it.

You could say "don't worry about it. It's fine, I'll take care of it."

Then you'd be bearing the cost.

Maybe you'd say "No way buddy, you're replacing this."

Then I'd be bearing the cost.

Maybe we'd come to some sort of mutual agreement where we both went in 50/50, then we'd be sharing the cost.

Maybe you'd say "just forget it. I don't need to replace or fix this. I'll just go without."

Then you're still bearing a cost of not having it.

Insurance paying for it is someone bearing the cost.

When we forgive, we bear a burden.

And the bigger the wrong that someone does, the more costly it is to forgive.

If you think of the worst thing someone has ever done to you, to truly forgive that person, that costs something.

But with our sin, we could not pay that price.

Forgiveness is not as simple as just ignoring a wrong done.

So with our sin against God, how does God approach forgiveness?  
All of the wrongs and injustices in the world. All of the wrongs and sins in our own lives, in our hearts, our actions.

We could have never paid that price. We could never have done enough to earn our forgiveness.

There was no hope.

But on the cross, we see that Jesus himself bore the cost for us.

Illustration - courtroom

When we were in the courtroom and guilty of our crime, Jesus confessed on our behalf and took the punishment for us.

In Christ, we are found “not guilty.”

That is the gospel. That it is a righteousness that comes from God.

In the gospel, we are justified because an innocent man took our punishment for us. Jesus paid the price, he bore the cost of our sins.

And so, when we want to rely on ourselves to bear that penalty, and we’re saying that we don’t want Jesus to give us his righteousness, then we must bear the cost ourselves.

But what we are incapable of doing is earning God’s grace or forgiveness on our own.

As Paul will say in Romans 5:

**God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.**

## Application

There is justice in God's judgment for unbelief. But God made a way. And the way to him is the cross of Christ. God is glorified in all people. For those who believe, by means of his grace. And for those who don't, who refuse the evidence of God, who refuse to accept the grace of Christ, who's sin has no atonement, who have the opportunity and yet still deny the work of Jesus, God is glorified in his just and righteous judgment.

And so the way to forgiveness and grace is to know that Jesus is the Lord, who took on the weight of our sins. Like the popular Christian hymn says "amazing love, how can it be, that you my king should die for me."

And we believe and the righteousness of God is revealed in us who are justified through the perfect life and death of the righteous savior.

## Conclusion

So taking everything in this passage together in what it tells us about the gospel.

What it does.

It reveals the power of God. The power of a God who is mighty to save.

Who it's for.

It's for the Jew and the Greek. It's for everyone who places their faith in Christ.

It's a message that all the world desperately needs. The gospel. To understand the weight of sin and the glorious grace of Christ.

How it works.

Because God justifies us when we have faith. He makes us right. Jesus takes the punishment for us. All forgiveness comes at a cost, and the cost that God paid was in the death of his son. And the price that Jesus paid

was living the righteous life we could not, dying the unjust death that we deserve, and raising to life so that all who believe in him can have forgiveness and life.

An innocent man died the death of the guilty and rose so that the guilty could be declared innocent and join him in eternal life.

And I'll say it again, but it works through faith. It works through knowing what Jesus has done. The Bible says that if you confess your sins and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, you are forgiven. We aren't saved through knowing obscure theological ideas, or through following a checklist, or through our own goodness, or through trying to earn our way to God.

We are saved by a person who's a personal God. Who died a personal death for people.

I am not ashamed of the gospel.

Not ashamed of a God who made a good world. Not ashamed of a God who is righteous. Not ashamed of a God who is perfect and who has standards. Not ashamed of a God who made a way. Not ashamed of a savior who took my penalty. Not ashamed of a savior who loved me and was willing to die for me. Not ashamed of a savior who rose from the dead so that all who believe can also enjoy eternity with him. Not ashamed of a God who did all of these things, despite the fact that we don't deserve them.

Not ashamed of the gospel. Because it's the only message that brings life and grace.