

Romans 1:16,17

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All of God's word is important. Everything we find on the pages of inspiration deserves our attention, our interests and our respect. Especially, given the dispensation in which we live, the great epistles of the New Testament should be read, studied and reviewed by God's people. And there are several significant statements or confessions made by Paul, comprehensive in their reach and profound in content.

Consider this marvelous statement written by Paul: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'," (Rom. 1:16,17).

h THE GOSPEL

The word translated "gospel" simply means good news. The gospel is the message that is good, from Jesus Christ, about Jesus Christ and based on His death, burial and resurrection (see 1 Cor. 15:1-4).

When Paul told people about Jesus Christ, and gave instructions to them about responding to Christ and living in Him, he was preaching the gospel. Likewise today, when we simply tell people what the New Testament teaches about the Savior; when we show people from the Scriptures: how to be saved, how to keep saved and all the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, that's gospel preaching (Acts 8:4-5,12-13,35-40).

The opening paragraph of the Roman epistle is packed with truth about the gospel. It is the gospel "of God," (1:1), and it was "promised before, in the Holy Scriptures," (1:2). The gospel concerns Jesus Christ (1:3), and this is the message Paul preached (1:1,15). This gospel message is "the power of God to salvation." The truth revealed in the New Testament is the power God uses to reach us, to save us and to guide us toward Him.

Outside of Romans there are other key passages affording us good instruction about the gospel:

The gospel is called the gospel "of the kingdom" in Matt. 24:1. When a penitent believer obeys the gospel, he is added to the kingdom (see Acts 8: 12, Col. 1:13). Christ reigns as King now, and obedience to the gospel brings us into that kingdom.

Acts 20:24 shows, the gospel is the gospel "of the grace of God." This is a suitable description because there is no DO-IT-YOURSELF PLAN OF SALVATION (Eph. 2:5-

10). Sinners can be saved only by submitting to and obeying God's plan, whereby He favors us with salvation in Christ. God's unmerited favor toward man found full expression in Jesus Christ, and the gospel tells us about that and calls upon us to respond.

So, the message of salvation in Christ - as set forth in the New Testament - is the gospel. Robert Turner has said that the "good news" or gospel "...may here be limited by context to the heart of God's plan, Christ dying for our sins (vss. 1-5, 1 Cor. 15:1-3); but "gospel" is also used to refer to the whole of revealed truth in Christianity (2:16; 1 Cor. 9:14)." Reading Romans, by Robert Turner, p.#22.

Man is called upon to RESPOND to this message, and live accordingly.

1. The gospel must be heard, Eph. 1:13; Rom. 10:1.
2. The gospel is to be believed, Mrk. 16:16.
3. The gospel calls for obedience, Rom.1:5; 10:16 & 6:17,18.
4. The gospel calls for a holy manner of life, Gal. 2:14;

Phil. 1:27.

If you are not a Christian, you need to hear, believe and obey the gospel! You should open your mind to the truth recorded in the New Testament about Jesus, who He is and what He did for you. With care, you should note what the apostles told sinners to do:

1. HEAR: Acts 2:14; Rom. 10:17.
2. BELIEVE: Heb. 11:6; Jno. 3:36.
3. REPENT: Acts 17:30; Acts 2:38.
4. CONFESS: Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37.
5. BE BAPTIZED: Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21.
6. LIVE IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL: Phil. 1:27.

You need to understand, your obedience to the gospel puts you into a relationship: IN CHRIST (Gal. 3:26,27) and a member of His body (1 Cor. 12:13). You should find people who are conducting themselves as subjects to the Head, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22,23). And let all that you do be according to the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17; 2 Jno. 9). As you do these things and grow in Christ you'll feel stronger and stronger about the gospel, day by day; and you'll increase in your depth of appreciation for God, His grace and His Son. You'll confess with Paul: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ"

Paul was NOT "ashamed." Shame is the state of one who has lost esteem; who is not proud. Shame commonly carries the ideas of regret, guilt and disapproval.

It is significant, as you read through the Bible, you do not read about shame until after sin was committed. Before transgression there was no grounds for regret; no reason for disapproval or guilt. BEFORE EVE AND ADAM SINNED, the Bible says, "... they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed," (Gen. 2:25). AFTER they

sinned the record says: "...the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from God ... the Lord called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden and I was afraid ... so I hid ...,' (Gen. 3:7-10).

This is intriguing: BEFORE SIN, no shame; no grounds for regret, no reason for disapproval or guilt. AFTER SIN: the presence of shame, manifesting itself in this effort to hid from God.

This helps us understand what SHAME is. It has to do with regret, guilt and disapproval. SHAME implies that something is wrong .. not good .. something to be concealed. If shame implies regret, guilt, disapproval and wrong, the reverse of that is: A SENSE OF PRIDE; GLORY; HONOR; APPROVAL!

THIS WAS PAUL'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GOSPEL: a sense of pride, honor and approval. He had no feelings of regret about the gospel; he was not ashamed to preach it, to defend it, to commend it. He held the gospel of Christ in high regard; he viewed the gospel as good news, in the highest sense. Thus his affirmation here: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ..."

"Paul's mention of not being ashamed of the gospel is appropriate, because in the city of Rome were all the trappings of human glory, pride, selfishness, power, and cruelty, also every extravagance of intemperance, vice, and idolatry. Raw, naked force was enthroned there. Those fierce Romans had controlled the world for centuries; and, in their lustful exploitation of power, they had shamelessly held all human honor and virtue expendable. Ruthless, unprincipled, power-politics sat naked and unmasked upon the throne of Caesars; and, if there had been a place on earth where the gentle teachings of the Son of God were despised, the great harlot on the Tiber was that city. Jesus had warned his disciples that God himself would be ashamed of any who were ashamed of Jesus and his word (Mark 8:38); and in this epistolary war-cry, Paul hurled the challenge of his faith in Christ like a steel gauntlet into the face of proud and arrogant Rome." (Commentary on Romans, James Burton Coffman, p.#24).

"...I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ!" Paul had full confidence in the truth and power of the gospel he preached.

h HE SAYS THE GOSPEL IS "THE POWER OF GOD TO SALVATION."

"Salvation." Here is one of those common religious words, we often use but seldom define. There are a number of technical, or theological definitions I could read to you and a variety of complex explanations concerning the original Greek words.

Perhaps it is better to use this simple definition: Salvation is a trip; it involves movement from one place to another, not physically but spiritually! Salvation is what takes you from the danger of sin to the safety of righteousness. Salvation means moving away from Satan to God. Salvation means my attachment to Satan (the bondage of sin) is broken when I surrender to Jesus Christ, the Savior, and I am now attached in fellowship to God through Christ. God worked all this out before the world began, and when the fullness of time came, He sent forth His Son. In this word "salvation," there is emphasis on rescue; rescue from the human problem Paul describes in Rom. 1:8-3:23. "Paul sees a world lost in sin, facing inevitable judgement and just condemnation, and tells us this is the remedy for that condition," Robert Turner, p.#22. THE GOSPEL!

The apostles were sent out with this message and they were told to baptize penitent believers and command them to observe all the teaching of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). This is the gospel, and in this message there is the power of God to move sinners from their sin to the refuge and safety of righteousness in Christ.

The only thing powerful enough to take you from the bondage of sin to the freedom of righteousness in fellowship with God is the gospel. Human merit isn't the ticket. Faith alone is not the way. The creeds of men have no saving power. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD TO SALVATION...."

The gospel message; this plan we have on the pages of the New Testament is the power God uses to transport sinners from sin to righteousness.

So, when a sinner hears the gospel; believes it; turns from sin; confesses his faith in Christ and is baptized, he is, in a manner of speaking, transported from sin to righteousness!! It says, in Col. 1:13, delivered "from the power of darkness and translated .. into the kingdom of the Son of His love."

Our confession should be the same as Paul's: "...I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation..." There is more in this great passage ...

"..For everyone who believes, for the Jew first, and also for the Greek..."

The gospel is God's power to save; to be saved means, moved from the guilt and danger of sin to the peace and safety of righteousness. And this happens in the life of individual when they obey the gospel.

Now Paul states, IT IS FOR EVERYONE!! It was taken to the Jews first, but it also went to the Greeks, or Gentiles. It is for everyone, regardless of nationality, genealogy, race or ethnic culture. The gospel is for ALL. This was hard for some Jews to accept. It may have been a matter of dispute among some classes of Gentiles. Men may be selfish, narrow, prejudiced and caught up in traditional patterns of bigotry.

Notwithstanding man's evaluation or viewpoint, this says THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone ..."

But, is this teaching universalism? NO! This says: "For everyone who believes!!" Let there be no doubt, God sent His Son and the gospel was instituted for the benefit of all men! God does not desire "... that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," (2 Pet. 3:9).

It is clear, God sent His Son and gave the gospel for the benefit of all men. But all men are called upon to hear the gospel; to believe in Christ, and to accept what God has done, in their own lives! God, by His grace, gave the gospel. Man, through an obedient faith, is to receive or respond to this gospel (Eph. 2:8). The gospel is for "everyone," but it says: "Everyone who believes."

h This statement, "everyone who believes" should be explored. What does this mean; what is involved in believing? This is crucial ...

Because there is a common view that believing is a single act of mental assent, that accomplishes salvation before any obedience; before baptism. Now that cannot be; "faith alone" is to be rejected on the basis of several things the Lord said:

In Mark 16:16 He declared: "He that believeth and is baptized" shall be saved. When Jesus spoke about the kingdom of heaven, and entering that kingdom, He said: "... he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven," (Matt. 7:21). So it cannot be that we are saved at the moment of mental assent, before faith becomes active. That view does not agree with plain statements Jesus made.

But, right here in Romans chapter one; long before the subject of justification by faith is introduced, there is some very clear teaching about the essential role of obedience.

Back in the opening sentences; in verses 1-7 ... the aim, the direction of everything is captured in that phrase: "...for obedience to the faith." That tells us, the kind of faith essential to be righteous before God is faith that obeys!

So when I read in verse 16, this phrase: "...everyone who believes," I assume; I understand the role of obedience, as set forth all through the Roman letter (see 1:5, 6:17,18).

"Who believes, trusts, fully and exclusively, in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Christ is the personal object of this faith, the means of man's redemption; but faith in Jesus as Lord demands faith in His resurrection, His absolute authority, His promises; and submission to His commands, teachings, and all that goes with them."Robert Turner, p.#23.

So, all through Romans and really, all through the New Testament and the Bible, faith is presented to us as trust in God or belief that is so deep, it prompts obedience.

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. This gospel is the power God uses to save people who have sinned. It is "for everyone who believes; the Jew first, and also the Greek."

VERSE 17 -- "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed, from faith to faith; as it is written, 'the just shall live by faith'." There are three things I want to note, concerning this verse.

h "The righteousness of God."

In some passages in the Bible, this phrase, "the righteousness of God" has reference to RIGHTEOUSNESS, as an attribute or characteristic of God. This is the use of the phrase in Psalms 9:17, "I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness."

Another use of this expression is curious. The word "righteousness" is sometimes used in an accomodative way, having reference to the efforts of men to be right with God through their own devices and methods. In Phil. 3:9 Paul says when he came to Christ, he rejected his "own righteousness." And in Rom. 10:3, Paul said some were ignorant of God's righteousness and they were "seeking to establish their own righteousness." (Remember what we observed earlier - there is no "do-it-yourself" plan of salvation!)

So here is a word, and its' significance depends upon context - - in some places it means, an attribute of God; in other places, the imagined attainment of human merit.

But we are concerned with Rom. 1:17, and the use of the word here: "For in it," [that is, in the gospel plan], "the righteousness of God is revealed." Here the significance is: the condition or quality of being right in the sight of God.

While living in sin, transgressing God's law and trying to guide yourself through life without God, you are not right; your state is wrong; you do not enjoy fellowship with God. BUT, in the gospel, God reveals how you can be right, in condition, in quality and in life. The gospel tells us HOW WE CAN BE RIGHT.

What a tremendous thought; what a proposition, that should invoke in each of us gratitude and praise toward God. We have sinned; and in sin we are wrong ... But, the gospel tells us HOW WE CAN BE RIGHT. In the gospel - God reveals His plan, which has the purpose of putting us right with Him.

Notice the phrase, "from faith to faith." In Romans chapter one, we find the word "faith" used in two different ways:

* 1:5, THE FAITH - the body or the system of teaching,
the gospel message as a whole. (See also Jude 3).

* 1:8, THEIR FAITH - at verse eight: "...I thank my God through
Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of
throughout the whole world.

So there is THE FAITH (the message, the body of teaching) and
THEIR FAITH (the belief of the message by these people who lived in Rome