

April 27, 2014
“The Good News”
Romans 1:1-17

A large passenger train was crossing the country. After they had gone some distance, one of the two engines broke down.

“No problem,” the engineer thought and carried on at half power. Farther on down the line, the other engine broke down and the train came to a standstill.

The engineer decided he should inform the passengers about why the train had stopped, and made the following announcement, “Ladies and gentlemen, I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that both engines have failed, and we will be stuck here for some time. The good news is that you’re not in an airplane.”

[Newspaper clippings] Newspapers and news on TV are constant reminders to us of bad news. But please understand this, that what is happening in our nation and around the world is simply a magnification of what is occurring on the individual level. As individual lives get worse, with more hatred, more fears, more bad behavior and morals our society will get worse; after all who is society? It’s us!. There is a terrifying power that grips all human beings at the very core of their being. Left unchecked, it pushes them to self-destruction in one form or another. That power is sin, and sin is always bad news.

While in Corinth Paul writes a letter to the church in Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. Paul’s purpose in writing to the believers in the church in Rome was to teach the great truths of the Good News of grace to the Roman church who had not had an opportunity to be instructed by any of the apostles. The theme of Romans is a righteousness that comes from God: the glorious truth that God justifies guilty, condemned sinners by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. Ch 1-11 is theological and Chapters 12-16 is the practical out working of the truths taught in the lives of the individual believers and in the life of the church.

The letter to the Romans is good news that truly is good. The good news that Paul shares is that, in Christ, sin can be forgiven, selfishness can be overcome, guilt can be removed, anxiety can be calmed, lives can be restored, and people can, indeed, have hope now and for eternity.

Paul is so overjoyed by his message of good news that he couldn’t wait to introduce it to his readers and so he bursts into it immediately in the first seven verses.

Romans 1:1-7

This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. The Good News is about his Son, Jesus. In his earthly life he was born into King David’s family line, and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority

as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Romans 1:13

I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now.

This is a good thing. If Paul had not been prevented from going to Rome he would not have written this letter and only the people in the church at Rome would have heard the Good News that Paul teaches in this letter when he had visited Rome. But because he had been prevented from going he wrote this letter that thousands upon thousands over thousands of years have been able to read and know the Good News.

Romans 1:15-17

So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News. For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." (Habakkuk 2:4)

It is the last 2 verses, verse 16-17 that I want to focus on this morning. In these 2 verses, we are given one of the greatest summaries of the Gospel ever written by man. For it is in these verses that we can see a clear declaration of God's power, purpose, and plan in the Good News message.

The way Paul begins sounds kind of strange. Out of the blue he tells us that he is "not ashamed of this Good News." Why should he be ashamed? Perhaps a little understanding of that culture in Rome at that time will help us to understand why some might have been ashamed of preaching the message that Paul had been given. There are a few reasons why some would have been ashamed. Let me suggest three:

1. Because of the moral condition of that day, especially in Rome. Paul wrote this letter from Corinth while Nero was the Emperor of Rome (Nero reigned from AD 54-67. Paul wrote this letter at the beginning of Nero's reign and, it is believed that, Paul was martyred just outside of Rome toward the end of Nero's reign). Nero was a wicked, immoral person. The city of Rome was a cesspool of sin and wicked living. The Gospel Paul preached was diametrically opposed (exact opposite) to everything Rome was. Preaching in Rome would be a challenge. Paul wanted the Rome church to know that his delay in getting to them had nothing to do with the challenge he would face in Rome. He is not afraid that the Good News might not be equal to the vulgar culture of Rome or that it and he would not be accepted, He was not ashamed – though others might be.

2. Because the Gospel Paul was preaching was almost unbelievable. Think of it, the Savior Paul was preaching was a male member of the despised Jewish race, He was said to be the Savior of man, He claimed to be the Son of God, even God Himself, yet He claimed to be a man. His death was different than other men in that He died on a Roman cross, a symbol of shame, but in dying this death, He was said to have died for all people. And, if that wasn't enough, this man was said to have risen from the dead the third day after His death. To many people, the claims of the Gospel were just too bizarre to believe. Paul was not ashamed, but others might be.

3. Because everywhere Paul went preaching the cross, he was ridiculed, cast out, imprisoned, or treated cruelly. Many would not have been able to endure the shame of the cross. But Paul was not ashamed, others might be.

Paul was not ashamed or afraid at what it might cost him to share the Good News, for this Good News is worth sharing. Although outnumbered by Persian soldiers on Plain Marathon Greece, the Athenian Army defeated the Persians. The victorious army sent Phidippides – a runner to carry the good news of victory to Athens, 26 miles away. He covered the distance in about three hours and delivered the good news. He died shortly thereafter from exhaustion. The Good News about Jesus who offers forgiveness and New Life is worth delivering even if doing so carried heavy personal cost.

Now that we know why some would have been ashamed, why wasn't Paul? After all, many in our day are ashamed of the Gospel message! Perhaps Paul was thinking of Christ's words in:

Mark 8:38

If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

But what else did he know that made him keep on going for God? What kept him traveling around the world preaching the same hated message? The answer to those questions is found in the truths that Paul reveals to us about the Good News in verses 16-17. Let's look into these 2 verses and see why.

I. THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ.

- It is the power of God at work

A. Paul tells us that this Good News is the "power of God". He does not say the Good News has such power, but that it is the power of God. The word "power" comes from a word that refers to the "**might, energy, force and strength that dwell within God.**" Paul could have used another Greek word (*energeia*), but uses this one (*dynamis*) that puts the stress on the Source rather than the process of the Gospel's power. God is the Source of salvation but He saves through the Good News message. When the Good

News of Christ is proclaimed in the Holy Spirit, God's power is at work. The message is God's Word, and the Word of God is living and powerful (Heb 4:12)

B. God could have revealed His power against sin in any way that He chose. He could have wiped us from the face of the earth. Instead, is it a blessing that when the Lord moved to do something about sin, He exercised His power and love in sending us the Good News of grace?

Nowhere is the power of God so visible as it is in the Good News of Christ! Think about it! When God takes a lost sinner like me, and saves him by His grace and makes him a new creature, that is a powerful thing. God could have sent me, sent us all to Hell, but He instead chose to send us His love wrapped up in His Son, the Lord Jesus. I thank the Lord that He loved us first - 1 John 4:19.

C. Notice that Paul's message is the "**Good News about Christ.**" Make no mistake about it, there are many different gospels being preached in our day.

There is the Gospel of religion that says, "**Turn over a new leaf.**"

There is the gospel of materialism that says, "**Your worth is determined by what you have. Gain is the goal of life.**"

There is the Gospel of liberalism that says "**I'm OK and you're OK. God accepts us like we are and will take us to Heaven if Heaven really exists.**"

There is the Gospel of society that says, "**Do as you please for life is short.**"

Paul's message, on the other hand, says, "**You are a sinner, and if you die in your sins, you will go the Hell. However, God loves you and not wanting you to perish sent His Son, the Lord Jesus into the world. Jesus died for your sins and rose from the dead. If you will place your faith in Him, then you can and will be eternally saved.**" Tell me, Which Gospel are you trusting in this morning?

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL

I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ.

- It is the power of God at work,
- saving

A. Why did God go to such lengths for us? Why did He give up His Son to die on the cross for the sins of humanity? The primary answer is simply that He loves us. However there is more to it than that. God's plan and God's purpose in giving the Good News message is "salvation."

B. The word "salvation" is a very important word. It means, "safety, preservation, deliverance." It carries the idea of "being rescued from all harm and danger." God's desire in saving sinners is to forever deliver them from spiritual death, spiritual defilement, spiritual deception and spiritual destruction. God purpose in giving the Gospel is to change our destination in eternity and our life here on earth as well.

C. The primary purpose of the Gospel message is the salvation of the lost. I don't know about you all, but I truly enjoy being saved! I am grateful to the Lord that He gave us a salvation; I don't know where I'd be without it. And we do not have to worry about. It is good for as long as He lives! (and we keep our faith in Him)

III. THE PLAN OF THE GOSPEL

I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ.

- It is the power of God at work,
- saving
- everyone who believes

A. Verse 16 tells us in no uncertain terms exactly how this Gospel message of salvation is activated. Notice that it is "saving everyone who believes."

B. This makes it perfectly clear that biblical salvation does not involve complicated religious rituals or elaborate religious exercises. It can't be earned or obtained by good works. Salvation is the product of faith and faith alone!

Ephesians 2:8-10

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

C. This is the point where many people stumble. People like to do things for themselves. They like to feel that they have a part of everything in their lives. However, in the matter of salvation, we have no part. It is all God, all the way. Salvation comes to the person who is willing to simply receive the message of Christ by faith, John 6:47; John 3:16; John 5:24; Acts. 16:31.

John 6:47

"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life.

John 3:16-17

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 5:24

"I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

Acts 16:31

"Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved

D. I am thankful that the Lord kept His Gospel inexpensive and easy to understand! My question for you is this, "What are you trusting in this morning?"

This great, saving Gospel message is for every single person in the world! No one is beyond the reach of the Gospel of grace. Notice these words from our Savior:

Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let anyone who hears this say, "Come." Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.

John 6:37

Those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them.

The pledge of the Gospel is that anyone who hears the message and needs the cure can be saved by God's precious grace!

Many are confused by the phrase "the Jew first and also the Gentile." This shouldn't bother us! God didn't give the Gospel to the Jew first in reference to priority. He gave the Gospel to the Jew first in reference to time. The point is that salvation is available to every person on the face of God's earth. These verses make it clear that salvation is for anyone regardless of their race, their social standing, their education, their ability, their wickedness, etc. There is nothing which can prevent anyone who wants to be saved from being saved. The pledge of the Gospel is for every person, everywhere! Thank God that it is so! If there had been restrictions on salvation, then I surely would have been left out! I am glad that it is a gift, by faith and absolutely free.

Now we come to the theme of Romans: (v17)

This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."

A. The Good News makes us right with God. The product of the Gospel in the life of the believer is "righteousness." You see, we have 2 great problems. 1.) We think we are basically good people and therefore acceptable to God. 2.) We are absolutely wrong about #1! People are not basically good, and cannot produce righteousness by self-will, or by their own works.

B. However, when faith is placed in the Good News message and Jesus is believed on in the heart, God takes the sinners and declares them to be righteous. What we cannot do by effort, God does by His power:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

C. Simply stated, everything people look for in religion: peace with God, acceptance by God, a right relationship with God, etc, are all given to the believer when they receive the Gospel message. That is a message worth believing and a message worth sharing and not being ashamed of.

The believer's life is to be one of faith in God, and as life is lived in faith, the righteousness of God is revealed in the believer's life. As verse 17 concludes, faith is to be the way of life for the child of God.

Conc: We have been given Good News worth believing and one that is worth sharing. The questions as we bring these thoughts together are these: Are you trusting in the Good News of Christ for salvation? Are you sharing this Good News like Paul did? Are you ashamed of the Gospel of Christ? The same message that was able to save then, can save now. The same power that worked in Paul's day is working in our day. All we need to do to see the Gospel work in power is to believe it and to share. When we do this, God will do the rest!