

## Not Ashamed: The gospel is God's power to save

### 1. Don't be ashamed of the Gospel

Roman cultures negative view of Christianity:

- Here is a letter of Celsus a 2<sup>nd</sup> century renowned writer attacking Christianity. "Let no cultured person draw near, none wise, none sensible. . . but if any man is ignorant, if any is wanting in sense and culture, if any is a fool, let him come boldly [to Christianity]" (William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], p. 21; cf. Origen's *Against Celsus*).
- He said Christians are like a "swarm of bats, ants crawling out of their nests, like frogs holding a symposium around a swamp, and worms cowering in the muck! **"They must make their choice between two alternatives. If they refuse to render due respect and homage to others gods (religions), let them not come to manhood, or marry wives, or have children, or indeed take any share in the affairs of life; but let them leave immediately, and leave no posterity behind them, that such a race may become extinct from the face of the earth.**
- in Rome, archaeologists discovered a derisive painting depicting a slave bowing down before a cross with a jackass hanging on it. The caption reads, "Alexamenos worships his god." – John MacArthur commentary on romans 1:16

A Modern letter reflects the views of many today regarding Christianity:

I believe it is no longer a healthy religion." The young man's name is Dan, and he explains why he is apostatizing. "The Church has become the number one enemy of Western Civilization. Soon the only people left in Christianity will be third-world immigrants and a handful of self-hating whites."

From 1937 to 1998, church membership remained relatively constant, hovering at about 70 percent. Then something happened. Over the past two decades, that number has dropped to less than 50 percent, the sharpest recorded decline in American history. Meanwhile, the "nones"—atheists, agnostics, and those claiming no religion—have grown rapidly and today represent a quarter of the population. – The Atlantic March 10, 2021

#### **Jesus warned of being ashamed. Matthew 5:11-12**

*"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

#### **Jesus was not ashamed.**

**He refused to stop preaching it when the crowds left him. John 6:60** *"Therefore many of his disciples when they hear this said "this is a difficult saying, who can listen to this?"*

#### **He refused to stop preaching it when religious leaders were offended. Matthew 15:8-14**

*You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:*

<sup>8</sup> *'This people honors Me with their lips But their heart is far away from Me.*

<sup>9</sup> *'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'"*

<sup>10</sup> *After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand. <sup>11</sup> It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."*

<sup>12</sup> Then the disciples \*came and \*said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were [d]offended when they heard this statement?” <sup>13</sup> But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. <sup>14</sup> Let them alone; they are blind guides [e]of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

**He refused to stop declaring the truth of who He was which is central to the gospel, even though He knew he infuriated the religious leaders (Matt 26:63-65)**

**Paul was not ashamed of the gospel, but boldly identified with Christ,**

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. – MacArthur commentary on Romans 1:16

## How is being ashamed of the gospel evident?

### 1. Identifying with Christ but not his words: we deny HIM. Mark 8:38

<sup>38</sup> For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

### 2. Refusing to identify publicly with him. If we are not ashamed, we are willing to identify with him even at a cost to us. Eg. Onesiphorus 2 Timothy 1:16-17

*The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, **he eagerly searched for me and found me—***

### 3. Refuse to identify or participate in gospel ministry if it results in suffering. 2 Timothy 1:8

*Therefore 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, who 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,*

### 4. Alter the gospel to attract not convict people. 1 cor. 1:21-25

**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).

In 1 Corinthians 1:20-25, the apostle Paul warned of altering the gospel and reminded us that preaching the gospel will always offend people. It was a stumbling block” to the Jews and all religious people. This word means ‘scandalous, something highly offensive. It was foolishness (Greek word ‘moronos’ is where we get the English word ‘moron’. The gospel was moronic to the intellectual Greeks.)

#### 1 Corinthians 1:20-25

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the [e]message preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For indeed Jews ask for [e]signs and Greeks search for wisdom; <sup>23</sup> but we

preach [a]Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.<sup>25</sup> Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

**Gal. 1:8-10 Paul knew the temptation of the Jewish Christians was to appease their relatives by preaching justification was not by faith in Christ alone.** The Judaizers altered the gospel to appeal to people. They didn't want to offend the religious tradition and sensibilities of the Jews. Paul said, even if an angel preached a different gospel, let him be accursed. . . He said he was not seeking to please men but God.

5. **Become a useless, powerless church or Christian. - A church with few genuine conversions and many false conversions. Paul said only the gospel was the power of God to save. To not preach it removes the very means God uses to save people, leaving a church filled with people, who not hearing the gospel, are believing a wrong Jesus and a false gospel, therefore remaining unsaved. Acts 4:12 says there is only one name under heaven by which man may be save, that is Jesus.**

Jesus said He is the light of the world (John 7:38-39) and that His word (the gospel) is a light shining in a dark place (**2 Peter 1:19-21**). He said we are to hold up for all to see the word of life, that we may shine in the midst of a perverse generation. Listen to what Jesus says is true of those who no longer do this. They become useless, profitless to those around them:

**Matthew 5;13-16**

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how [e]can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a [i]hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a [a]basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

*We are in a day in of hardship for the church and need to be strong in proclaiming the gospel. **Proverbs 24:12** says, "If you are **slack** in the day of distress, Your strength is limited." In other words, If you are negligent to do what God calls you to do when it is tough, you have little strength. Churches may have thousands but if they are not preaching the gospel in a tough time when doing so will cost them, they are evidencing they, though appearing strong, are actually spiritual weak.*

## **What we must know about the gospel to not be ashamed.**

1. **All need salvation.** Matt 1:21. *"Unto Salvation for ALL who believe"*
2. **Salvation is only possible by God's work not man's.** It is the *"Power of God" to save.* The word 'power' is the Greek word 'dunamis' from which we get the word 'dynamite'. It meant power exerted effectively, not randomly. It is God's explosive power to change the human heart, to raise the dead, to become human, bear out sins, rise from the dead and then convince a deceived, diabolically influenced, spiritually dead rebel to humble himself and receive it. Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:9-10 God makes it clear we do not have the power to change our hearts or earn our salvation:  
**Jer. 13:23** *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to do evil"*  
**Romans 5:6** *"while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the godly"*. The word 'helpless' meant one who was paralyzed, completely incapacitated. It was used of the lame man who had to be carried to the temple daily to beg for alms (Acts 3:3-8)

Illustration: It takes great power to get a person to the Moon, or Mars. It takes Divine, infinite, unfathomable power to get a person to heaven.

Dwight L. Moody commented that *the gospel is like a lion. All the preacher has to do is to open the door of the cage and get out of the way!*<sup>1</sup>

3. **The gospel saves all who believe.** Immediately and fully. The gospel is *“the power of God to save everyone who believes.”*  
**The word ‘Believe’ means to rely on, trust in what has been done. The Hebrew word for believe in the Old Testament is ‘amen’. It means to regard as absolutely reliable, trustworthy. It was first used of Abraham when God told him, though he was 100 years old, he would have innumerable descendants. Genesis 15:7 says “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness”.** . .  
 - God does not first ask men to behave but to believe
4. **The gospel when believed results in a life of believing. *“From faith to faith”.* **One who believes is said to be receiving Christ (John 1:11-12).** Those who believe are indwelt by Him and continue to believe and follow Him. The gospel, when believed, brings a person to heaven through righteousness of Christ and brings heaven to them on earth, through the life of the indwelling Christ.**
5. **It is contrary to human thinking. *righteousness of God is revealed.***
  - a. It is revealed by God because it is not obvious to man. It is contrary to the instincts of his fallen nature to believe God will freely credit righteousness to a believer apart from works.. Man assumes by good deeds he can win god’s favor. The bible says all who believe in Christ are saved because Christ’s righteousness is credited to them apart from any works, yet those who are saved will evidence this by the good works that Christ produces in them.

**Illustration: Luther thought it meant God’s punitive righteousness is revealed**

Before his conversion he had said, “If I could believe that God was not angry with me, I would stand on my head for joy” p. 20 Piper’s *The legacy of sovereign joy*, 2000.

I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, “the righteousness of God,” because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous.... Night and day I pondered until ... I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. **Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before “the righteousness of God” had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven.**

Paul testified of this same realization in Phil. 3:3-10

6. **Faith in God’s word has always been the means of salvation *As it is written. Paul quotes the OT prophet Habakkuk 2:4 to demonstrate this. “The just live by faith.”***

<sup>1</sup> Mounce, R. H. (1995). [Romans](#) (Vol. 27, p. 70). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Other OT verses which indicate that God always saves by faith, not works:

Isa. 12:2:

“Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and will not be afraid, for Jehovah, even Jehovah, is my strength and song; and he has become my salvation.”

“For thy salvation I am waiting, O Lord” (Gen. 49:18).

“Salvation belongs to the Lord” (Ps. 3:8).

“Thou art the God of my salvation” (Ps. 25:5).

“The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?” (Ps. 27:1).

“O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have achieved salvation for him. The Lord has made known his salvation. He has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations” (Ps. 98:1, 2).

“My righteousness is near. My salvation has gone forth. And my arms will judge the peoples ... My salvation will be forever. And my righteousness will not diminish ... My righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations” (Isa. 51:5–8).

“He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has wrapped me in a garment of righteousness (Isa. 61:10).

## **Biblical truths that will keep us from being ashamed of the gospel:**

1. ***Know the power of the gospel to save. 1:16***
2. ***Know the righteousness of God conveyed. 1:17***
3. ***Pray – ask for freedom, confidence to speak. Acts 4***
4. ***Be assured of your salvation and Christ’s protection. 2 Tim. 1:12-18***

*For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*

*Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*

*Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.*

*You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.*

*The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me—the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.*

**Persecuted pastor Andrew Brunson missionary to Turkey for 25 years and formerly wrongly imprisoned there for 2 years. From his speech at the Global Prayer of US election integrity**  
 So how does a believer prepare for such times? Brunson said the pursuit of God is key. ***“The way we prepare to stand in difficult times is by cultivating love for God,” he explained. “Intimacy fuels perseverance. We are willing to suffer for those we love.”***