

Romans Verse-by-Verse

Romans 1:16-17 (A)

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

The thesis of the entire book of Romans: The Gospel as the power of God for salvation, which alone can make both Jew and Gentile righteous before God.

Paul says, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...*"

- **"I Am Not Ashamed Of The Gospel ..."**

Many scholars believe that Paul is using a rhetorical device from the Greek writers. It's called litotes -- an understatement made for rhetorical effect, especially the use of a negative in place of a positive.

James Stewart -- "There's no sense in declaring that you're not ashamed of something unless you've been tempted to feel ashamed of it".

Evidence of the gospel's alleged "weaknesses": In the Roman world of his day, dominated by Greek philosophy, Paul was preaching what appeared to be a novel message. See: 1 Corinthians 2:3; 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

"Paul knew the message of the cross was "foolishness" to some and "a

stumbling block” to others," because it undermines self-righteousness and challenges self-Indulgence.”

The Historical Setting:

A little more than thirty years after Jesus’ death Christianity was not a world religion. Paul was preaching the gospel to a Roman world that was filled with competing ideologies and numerous pagan religions.

The Romans had adopted most of the Greek gods, but had a very strong polytheistic institution. The emperor’s lives were dominated by ritualistic sacrifices and constant worries about appeasing the various gods. Roman life was inculcated with pagan worship.

“After all, to the outsider the gospel sounds like nothing more than the death of a Jewish carpenter, who himself was part of a small, somewhat insignificant, nation under Roman dominion.”

New Testament records of the challenges of preaching the gospel: Mark 8:38; 2 Timothy 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 1:23

So Paul ***could have been ashamed*** of the gospel. But he wasn’t! John MacArthur: *He has been imprisoned in Philippi. He has been chased out of Thessalonica. He has been smuggled from Berea. He was laughed at in Athens. He was seen as a fool in Corinth. He was nothing but an irritant and sore spot in Jerusalem. He was stoned while in Galatia. And yet he will be eager to preach the gospel at Rome...*

- **Two Reasons Not To Be Ashamed:**

#1: “... because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” (The gospel is the “dunamis” of God; it is the power of God for the salvation (soteria) of everyone who believes.)

The Greek words for power (*dunamis*) and salvation (*sōtēria*) were common terms in Hellenistic religion. Paul's use has a clear Hebraic sense.

1. God's Power:

- Psalm 79:11 calls it great power
- Psalm 89:13 calls it strong power
- Exodus 15:6 calls it glorious power
- Job 9:4 calls it mighty power
- Isaiah 26:4 calls it everlasting power
- Romans 9:21 calls it sovereign power
- Isaiah 43:13 calls it effectual power
- Deuteronomy 32:39 calls it irresistible power
- Psalm 89:8 calls it incomparable power
- Job 5:9 calls it unsearchable power

Psalm 33:8-9: "Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke and it came to be."

New Testament: The "dunamis" of God: Jesus Miracles:

- He had the power to cast out demons.
- He had power over sickness, every illness, to heal.
- He had power over nature to provide for the needs of the people.
- He had the power to still the storm.
- He had the power to walk on the water.
- He had power to call Lazarus out of the grave.

Paul is going to take that same theology of God's omnipotent power and apply it to the gospel as the *dunamis* of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

John MacArthur: "...The greatest expression of His power is found in His power to save, to transform people, to change their nature, their time, and their eternity."

It is one thing for God to work with inanimate objects – as powerful as that it – but wouldn't you agree that no more difficult task exists than to save and transform humans?

So Paul talks about *dunamis* and *soteria*, meaning salvation. The gospel is the power of God for the *soteria*, the salvation of everyone who believes.

Just as power has an Old Testament root, so does the idea of salvation or deliverance.

That's what we are going to see next time.