

## **Romans 1:16**

**By Ethan Longhenry**

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

If you were to ask many Christians why they still insist, after 2,000 years, that the preaching of the Gospel remains important and relevant, they would more than likely appeal to Paul’s declaration in Romans 1:16. Romans 1:16 provides a clarion call for the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ unto the salvation of souls.

Paul has a very specific goal in mind when making this declaration. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for Jews and Greeks, for within that Gospel God’s righteousness is revealed “from faith unto faith,” since the righteous live by faith (Rom. 1:16-17). This sets forth the basis upon which Paul will systematically explain his theology in regards to the sinfulness of Jews and Greeks, justification by faith, and the inclusion and obedience of the nations along with the rejection of unfaithful Israel throughout Romans 1:18-11:36.

Romans 1:16 begins with the affirmation that Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel. The statement provides reason to believe that one could be ashamed of the Gospel, no doubt because of its contents. For a Jewish male raised as a strict Pharisee—as Paul was—the idea that God took on flesh and dwelt among mankind was sufficiently scandalous, let alone His poverty, abasement, and humiliation (Phil. 2:5-8). The idea that the Messiah of God would not sit on a throne in a palace in Jerusalem but would be executed on a Roman cross was preposterous within Judaism, and remains so until this day (1Cor. 1:18-29). Yet few things earned Paul more ire from Jews, even from some Jewish “Christians,” than the idea that through Jesus the Gentiles could come to faith and obtain the inheritance of the promises made to Abraham without having to first become Jewish. While some Gentiles believed, many others also found the message ridiculous (Acts 17:32). For proclaiming this as the Gospel of Christ Paul encountered significant opposition, insults, beatings, and even stoning ( Acts, 2Cor.); it would have been very easy to try to water down or blunt the force of these teachings in order to curry favor with the locals. Yet Paul knew that the message needed to be preached in its purity no matter what the consequences might be for his welfare.

Paul continues in Romans 1:16 by explaining why he is not ashamed of the Gospel: it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. Paul’s point is quite profound: of all the ways God could have chosen to save people, He has chosen the means of the proclamation, acceptance, and confidence in the Good News of Jesus the Christ who lived, died, was raised in power, and is now Lord. While the message was attested by miracles, God need not constantly provide miracles to affirm it; He does not speak with a thundering voice from heaven; He does not expect it to be accomplished through legislation or any other political process; He does not even leave any monuments of stone. Instead, Jesus commissioned the twelve disciples to take His message out to the world after His death, resurrection, and ascension (Luke 24:36-53, Acts 1:1-11). That message took the Roman world by storm, and the name of Jesus has been proclaimed for over two thousand years. Empires have come and gone; once proud cities are now ruins. Yet people on every continent continue to proclaim Jesus the Christ and trust in Him because of the Gospel message.

And by “everyone,” Paul means “everyone”: the Jew first, and then also the Greek (Rom. 1:16). Jesus lived and died as a Jew, and He was and is the Messiah whom God sent to Israel. Yet in dying on the cross for the remission of sin Jesus fulfilled the Law and killed the hostility the Law engendered between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:11-18): everyone who would share in the faith of Abraham could become children of promise in Christ! The Gospel is for everyone and anyone, and God has empowered it as the means by which we can be saved. Let us not be ashamed of the message of Jesus the Christ, but believe it, live it, and proclaim it to everyone!

## **The Final Judge**

“And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules” (2Tim. 2:5).

"In the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, Ben Johnson of Canada won the one-hundred-meter dash, setting a new Olympic record and a new world record. Our American contender, Carl Lewis, came in second, and most were shocked that he hadn't won the gold. After the race, the judges learned that Johnson had an illegal substance in his body. He ran the race illegally, so the judges took away his medal. Though he ran faster and made an unforgettable impression, he did not deserve the reward. Though the world and even our fellow Christians may be impressed with and applaud our deeds, let's not forget that God is the final judge!" (Hope Again, (Word, 1996), p. 34) Let us continue to serve God in the way He has ordained in His word.

## **A Moments Wisdom**

- Failure to accord credit to anyone for what he may have done is a great weakness in any man.
- Compassion is not weakness.
- Great occasions do not make heroes or cowards; they simply unveil them to the eyes of men. Silently and perceptibly, as we wake or sleep, we grow strong or weak; and last some crisis shows what we have become.
- There's a basic human weakness inherent in all people which tempts them to want what they can't have and to not want what is readily available to them.
- The willingness to change one's mind in the light of new evidence is a sign of rationality not weakness.
- The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem.
- Expecting the world to treat you fairly because you are a good person is a little like expecting a bull not to charge you because you are a vegetarian.
- Treat a man as he is, he will remain so. Treat a man the way he can be and ought to be, and he will become as he can be and should be.
- One nice thing about egotists: They don't talk about other people.
- To be intoxicated is to feel sophisticated but not be able to say it.