

Are We Ashamed of the Gospel?

In my last article I shared a brief overview of important events in the life of Martin Luther as we began our look at the recovery of the gospel during the Protestant Reformation. Luther found the relief from his sin that he was searching for in the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:16-17. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes...For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" In this article, I hope to challenge us with an important personal question that we should each ask ourselves, "Am I ashamed of the gospel?"

Let me begin by noting that non-Christians are ashamed of the gospel, ultimately because of their pride. They don't want to admit that they need anything or anyone but themselves. This is the person who believes that religion is a 'crutch.' He can make it through anything in life on his own and has no desire to hear of his sinfulness or his need of a Savior. In Luke 9:26 we read these words from the lips of Jesus, "For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory...." What about those of us who claim that we're not ashamed of the gospel? What may be some factors that can keep us from telling others about Jesus?

Sadly, we can convince ourselves that no one really wants to hear the gospel so why bother. In an affluent society where we have so much, the problem of sin is not something that Americans are regularly thinking about in their day to day. For example, some say, "Why do I need to hear about Jesus? My life is going well. I have a good job; I have everything that I need and many things that I want. Why would I need to know about salvation from sin?" In addition to this, Christians may also convince ourselves that everyone in our community has already heard the gospel and yet, that may not be true at all. We're living in what some are calling a 'post Christian' culture. There are those, even in small towns, who've never actually attended church or even been to a vacation Bible school where they were exposed to the story of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Another reason that we may be ashamed to share the gospel is intimidation. We may feel that we're unable to tell others how to be right with God in Jesus Christ. We can be embarrassed if we're not able to answer all the questions that someone may have so we find contentment in just trying to be, generally, kind to people and even tell them that we occasionally attend a local church but we never share the gospel. Lastly, we may be ashamed of the gospel because of a fear of rejection. We want to be accepted by others, so we succumb to peer-pressure rather than taking the chance of being an object of scorn and ridicule.

The apostle Paul, himself, knew what it was like to be ridiculed by others. In Acts 17 he's speaking to some of the philosophers of his day and some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" When Paul spoke of the resurrection some "mocked" him. In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul writes, "For the word of the cross is folly (foolishness) to those who are perishing....but we preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles..." If we're honest, many of us

have had opportunities to tell of the love of God in Christ but, unlike Paul, we didn't want to be 'mocked' so we kept quiet. When Paul writes, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...." the implication is this; if we truly understand our sin problem; if we truly understand God's grace given as a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ; if we truly understand that the answer to the problems of the world is the gospel, it's impossible to justify keeping this good news to ourselves.

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