

## Not Ashamed – Romans 1:8-17

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Read Text

#### B. What We're Doing

1. For those who missed last week, want to let you know we've made a change to our study plan on Sundays.
2. Instead of a sermon drawn from our study in 1 Kings which we begin this Wednesday, we're studying verse by verse through Paul's Letter to the Romans.
3. Last week we covered vs. 1-7. Today we'll look at vs. 8-17.

#### C. Set Up

1. This is still writing the opening/introduction of the letter.
2. You know how it is when you write a letter;
  - a. You begin with pleasantries,
  - b. Something like, "Hope all is well with you. How's the fam? How's work? Did you ever get that nose job?"
  - c. Then you mention a few things about how you're doing;
  - d. After which you get in to the *real reason* you're writing.
3. Romans begins much the same way. Paul identifies himself as the author, then sends his blessings.
4. In v. 8 he begins to tell them how often they've been on his mind.

### II. TEXT

#### A. V. 8

**<sup>8</sup>First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.**

1. Though no Apostle nor other Christian leader founded the Church in Rome, it was nevertheless a solid work.
  2. History tells us that the community of believers was quite large & active in sharing their faith.
  3. The population of Rome was massive & it had a large Jewish section.
  4. As the saying went, all roads lead to Rome so it was inevitable the Gospel would take root there. Many of both Jews & Gentiles had come to faith.
  5. The reports that had reached Paul about the church at Rome described it as vibrant & healthy.
  6. So he sends them a cheerful greeting, *praising* their *solid reputation*.
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7. *What's our reputation?* If Paul were writing *us*, what would he say about what he'd heard?
  8. Most churches have some kind of reputation in their community, even if it's only among a few.
    - a. *Larger* churches tend to have a more *widely known* reputation for obvious reasons.
    - b. I recently found out CCO is the largest church in Oxnard & the 4<sup>th</sup> largest Ventura County.
    - c. What's *our* reputation? **What are we known for?**
  9. We ought to aim for being a people & place that knows, loves, & serves God. Where learning & living God's Word is *more than a motto*, where it's what's happening.
  10. A reputation like that isn't built by a public relations campaign or a marketing program.
    - a. It isn't the work of just the pastors & staff.
    - b. It's something *every member of Calvary* shapes as we live out our faith in the trenches of daily life.

#### B. Vs. 9-10

**<sup>9</sup>For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, <sup>10</sup>making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.**

1. Though Paul had never been to Rome & knew few of the people there, yet he was praying earnestly for them.

2. He knew Rome would be a strategic center for the expansion of the Gospel so a vibrant, healthy church was crucial.
3. So important was Rome to the spread of the Faith, Paul had often asked God for the ability to go there.
4. In vs. 11-17, he gives **3 reasons** he felt compelled to visit them. Vs. 11 & 12 gives the *first* . . .

### C. Vs. 11-12

**<sup>11</sup> For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— <sup>12</sup> that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.**

1. The *first reason* Paul wanted to go to Rome was because of the *mutual encouragement* getting to know them would provide.
2. As an apostle, he knew he had gifts that would build them up.
3. And because he knew how the Body of Christ *works*, he trusted there would be people there who had gifts *he'd* benefit by.
4. Just because he was an *Apostle*, Paul didn't think he was on some lofty pedestal above everyone else.
  - a. He didn't think of himself as having arrived at some place of *spiritual perfection* that rendered him *immune* from the needs of those of "lesser spiritual stature."
  - b. He didn't see himself as a *celebrity* who had to guard himself from mingling with the unwashed masses.
  - c. He was simply a *brother* in Christ who genuinely enjoyed rubbing shoulders with others & sharing their lives.
  - d. He was *imminently approachable* because he was humble & unpretentious in his walk with God.
  - e. Though he knew his calling was unique, he didn't have an ounce of *self-importance*.
5. I've had conversations with people who've worked with believers who became well known & much sought after. Their success ruined them. The celebrity-status they attained moved them to think they were too important to mingle with the common folk.
  - a. They arrive in a limo, are ushered by bodyguards into a secure room filled with goodies their agent demanded be provided,
  - b. Then when it's time for them to appear they enter the stage through a special door.
  - c. They *perform their routine*, then exit back through the secure room, hop into the limo & drive off to an expensive suite.
  - d. Many musicians & speakers are treated this way, because they *demand* it.
6. In *contrast* to this crass form of religious celebritydom is the example of Billy Graham who is arguable *the most well known* religious personality in the world next to the Pope.
7. Though Billy's ministry has ranged over 50 years, he's stayed *incredibly humble*.
8. Some time back, Diane Sawyer interviewed Dr. Graham.
  - a. In attack mode she asked, "What would you consider your *greatest failure*. Was it your friendship with Nixon, your visit to Russia, or something else?"
  - b. Billy's reply was so typical. He said, "Well Diane, I'd say *my whole life* was pretty much a failure."
9. The Billy Graham Library was dedicated just a couple weeks ago & 3 ex-presidents were there to speak; Carter, the elder Bush, & Clinton.
  - a. All 3 gave glowing speeches remarking on Graham's integrity & humility despite his tremendous fame.
  - b. It was obvious Billy was *uncomfortable* with all the praise they heaped on him.
  - c. When he finally took the platform, he said, "I feel like I've just heard my *memorial service!*"
10. Paul didn't see himself as a celebrity to be shielded from contact with the commoners in Rome.
11. They were his brothers & sisters in Christ with important gifts from which he knew he could benefit.
12. He wanted to *add to* & be *blessed* by the faith they had a reputation for.

**D. Vs. 13-14**

<sup>13</sup> Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. <sup>14</sup> I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.

1. Paul's *second reason* for wanting to visit Rome was his *sense of obligation*.
2. It had often been on his mind to go there but none of his plans worked out.
  - a. Coupled with his prayers for them mentioned in v. 10,
  - b. Paul had *acted* by seeing if God would bless his attempts to go to Rome.
  - c. It was clear the time wasn't right since none of his inquiries panned out.
3. Paul's sole focus was to faithfully serve the Lord in his calling *where ever he could*, & Rome seemed like a plum spot so he endeavored to go there. But it became clear to him God's blessing did not lie in that direction – YET.
4. This is something we need to take note of. It's a valuable lesson about how Paul saw the intersection between God's will & ministry.
5. From what we read in *Acts* about his missionary journeys & what we find *here*, we get the idea Paul's view of faithfulness worked like this . . .
  - a. He knew he was called to be an Apostle to the Gentiles & simply sought to be faithful *where ever* he was.
  - b. When he heard about a place where there were Gentiles but no church, he saw it as an opportunity.
  - c. But he was *strategic* too. If he was called to preach to Gentiles, he considered where the best place to set up shop was so he could reach as many as possible, as quickly as possible.
    - 1) Antioch in Syria was a good spot to begin.
    - 2) Antioch in Pisidia made a good center for reaching all of Galatia.
    - 3) Philippi, Athens, & Corinth were prime in securing Greece.
    - 4) Ephesus was the door to all of Asia so he spent over 3 years there.
    - 5) But the richest spot of all was the *heart of the Empire* – Rome! If all roads lead **TO** Rome, all roads lead **FROM** it as well!
  - d. So he made plans & tied to go, but as happened when he tried to go into Asia on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, God shut the door.
  - e. It was nearly 3 years before Paul finally made it to Rome, and when he did – it was at the expense of Rome herself – he went as a prisoner.
6. The point is this – Paul didn't sit on his hands, *agonizing* in prayer about *where* to go *before* he went.
  - a. He knew God called him to go & preach. It was *in his going*, as he walked in the Spirit, that he knew the Lord would *steer* him.
  - b. I've known many who sense God's call to service but instead of doing something, anything, they sit & agonize, waiting for specific direction about the *exact location* & work they're to do.
  - c. The result is they end up doing *nothing*.
  - d. If you sense God is calling you to serve, then begin – do something, anything!
  - e. Start moving & watch how God can then direct your steps.
  - f. You can't steer a parked car. Get moving.
7. What kept Paul moving was his *sense of obligation*. As he says in v. 14, he saw himself as a *debtor* to Greeks & barbarians; to the wise & unwise.
  - a. In contemporary terms we'd say, the couth & the uncouth – the civilized & uncivilized, the educated & the unlettered.
  - b. Paul looks *beyond the ethnic distinctions* that prevail *today* but didn't mean a whole lot in the Roman Empire, to what was a far more *polarizing* difference in that time: *Social status*.
    - 1) The distinctions they thought were important were between the wealthy & the poor, the educated & the uneducated, freemen & slaves.

- 2) *These* were the lines that divided people into warring camps.
- c. Paul said his calling recognized no distinctions between the things that divide people into groups.
  - e. In Christ the only line dividing people separates them into the lost & the saved.
  - f. Paul's calling placed on him a debt he owed to *all*.
  - g. He owed something to *everyone* he met. *What* he owed was The Gospel. It *saves* the lost & *grows* the saved.
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8. No one likes being in debt. It's just not a good place to be.
    - a. But as uncomfortable as it is owing someone something,
    - b. It sure feels good when you make the *final payment*.
  9. Believers have an *obligation* to share the Gospel with the lost.
    - a. Regardless of who they are, we *owe* them the good news of God's saving grace.
    - b. In Romans 13:8, Paul says –
 

**Owe no one anything except to love one another.**
    - c. The way we *discharge* the debt we owe others is by sharing the Gospel with them.
    - d. The greatest love we can give others is the Good News of Christ.
  10. Like hundreds of thousands of other young American men, the day after Pearl Harbor, Allan Emery enlisted in the military.
    - a. He signed up for the Coast Guard & was put to work as a quartermaster in Boston.
    - b. One Friday night as he was getting ready to start guard duty his buddy Joe Olzewski stopped by.
    - c. He wore his dress blues & was squared away; Joe looked sharp!
    - d. Emery asked where Olzewski was headed looking so snazzy.
    - e. Joe replied that the night before he'd met a wealthy girl at the USO who'd invited him to her house for the weekend. Her parents were gone, the liquor cabinet was full, & they'd have the house to themselves. Olzewski had a w/e pass & said he'd be back Monday.
    - f. He said, "This is going to be the best weekend of my life."
    - g. Emery, a believer, said, "Well Joe, I'll be praying for you."
    - h. Olzewski said, "What did you say?"
    - i. Allan replied, "I said I'd be praying for you."
    - j. Joe asked, "Why will you be praying for me when I'm going to have the first great weekend of my life?"
    - k. Emery said, "Because Joe, Monday morning you'll be back aboard ship & you will not be the same person you are tonight. Sin leaves its mark."
    - l. Joe cursed Allan & left. Allan began praying for Joe.
    - m. A couple hours later as Emery was on guard duty, an unsmiling & agitated Joe Olzewski appeared in the floodlights of the guard post.
    - n. He said, "How can you have a good time when someone's praying for you? You've ruined my weekend. I stood up my date & I've been wandering around till now thinking about what you said. Tell me Em – how do I find God?"
    - o. Olzewski became a follower of Jesus that night & was so earnest in his faith he immediately joined a church & began sharing the gospel with other servicemen, many of whom came to faith in Christ.
    - p. Not much later, on Feb. 1, 1943 he volunteered to serve on a mine-sweeper & 2 days later as they steamed out of New York Harbor, a German torpedo sunk his ship.
  11. Allan Emery saw in Joe Olzewski someone to whom he owed a debt. He paid it in sharing the Gospel, & just in time, it became the means of Joe's eternal life.

### E. Vs. 15-17

<sup>15</sup> So, as much as is in me, *I am* ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "*The just shall live by faith.*"

1. Paul's **3rd reason** for wanting to visit Rome was because of his **absolute confidence in the Power of the Gospel**.
2. Paul was never reluctant to share the Gospel. He never hesitated. He was always eager to tell others about what Jesus had done for them.
3. As he says in v. 15, he was **itching** to get to Rome so he could preach the gospel.
4. This excitement came because of his complete conviction the Gospel was nothing less than the very power of God at work to affect salvation in those who believe it.

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5. Listen—these aren't just words: This is Paul's most firmly held knowledge & experience.
  - a. He knew the truth of what he says here because **he'd seen it first hand time & again**.
  - b. He **knew** how the power of God was contained in the Gospel of Christ.
  - c. It had saved him & he'd seen it save thousands of others.
  - d. He well knew the Gospel's power to transform a sin-ravaged, hate-filled life into a loving, holy saint.
6. So he wasn't ashamed of it. He spoke it **boldly**, even when skeptics, critics, scoffers & hecklers made fun of him. And that was often!
  - a. To most of the world at that time, the Gospel was a sad joke & the followers of Christ were deemed to be **fools**.
  - b. Pagans considered Christians to be **atheists** because they believed in **only 1 God** instead of the plethora of deities they worshiped.
  - c. The followers of Christ were despised as **weak** because they **valued** love over revenge & humble service over cruel ambition.
  - d. The worshiped a God who'd become a man who died an **ignominious death** on a Roman cross.
    - 1) Crucifixion was so heinous & shameful, it was illegal for Roman citizens to be crucified.
    - 2) No matter how disgusting the crime, the glory of Rome was not to be tarnished by the shame of crucifixion.
    - 3) Yet Christians worshiped a **crucified God!**
    - 4) In excavating Roman ruins, archaeologists discovered a wall painting showing a slave bowing down before a cross on which was hung a mule. The inscription said, "Alexamenos worships his god."
  - e. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century a critic named Celsus wrote a bitter attack on Christianity.
    - 1) "Let no cultured person draw near, none wise, none sensible, for all that kind of thing we count evil; 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."
    - 2) He likened Christians to a swarm of bats, to ants crawling out of their nests, to frogs holding a symposium around a swamp, & to worms cowering in the muck.<sup>1</sup>
7. From an **earthly** perspective, Paul had **every reason** to be hesitant & cautious in sharing the Gospel.
  - a. He'd been imprisoned in Philippi & chased out of Thessalonica for it.
  - b. He had to be smuggled out of Damascus & Berea because of it.
  - c. He was laughed at & called insane in Athens when he shared it.
  - d. At Corinth he was called a fool.
  - e. In Jerusalem they declared him a blasphemer & tried to kill him.
  - f. And in Lystra, he was stoned & left for dead – all because of the Gospel.
8. Yet here he says he's **not ashamed**. The reason why he could find no shame in the Gospel was because of what he knew it was – the very power of God to affect salvation.

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9. How great is God's power? Well let's see – He **spoke** & the entire universe leapt into existence.
  - a. He said, "Light be" & light was.
  - b. He created the Sun, moon, & stars at a word.
  - c. Today, our best astronomical telescopes are still finding vast galaxies out there.

<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, John *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Romans 1-8* pg. 53

- d. We've still not found the *edge* of the universe.
  - e. As we look *down* at the atom rather than *out* into space we find a whole universe in miniature.
  - f. Physicists still don't know what the tiniest particles or units of energy are or what laws govern them.
  - g. The current state of science is filled with *more mystery* than knowledge.
  - h. The more humanity learns, the more we realize how much we *don't* know.
10. God not only created it all, He holds it together & has left His fingerprints all over it in the incredible complexity & design of it all.
11. And yet, as mind-bending as God's power is as we consider the cosmos, the universe is nothing but a stage on which a *more important story* is being played out.
- a. It's a Love Story, a great drama filled with both glory & tragedy.
  - b. It's a Romance in which Paradise Lost is regained through the Hero's death & resurrection.
  - c. It's a plot where the loyal followers of the Hero overcome their archenemy & are restored to their destiny & relationship with their Loving Father.
12. The Gospel, the Good News is nothing less than the very POWER of God, a power which brings about SALVATION –
- a. The word means to be *rescued from danger* & made *WHOLE!*
  - b. The *salvation* Paul refers to here is more than just the *religious* word it's become to the modern ear.
  - c. Salvation is the setting right of everything that's wrong with this fallen world.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Stop Here

- 1. We'll pick it up right here next week. There are some incredible things to draw from this & v. 17 that will revolutionize our lives. We'll look them at next week.
- 2. But I want to end today with Paul's *amazing confidence* in the Power of the Gospel to save.
- 3. He was willing to risk rejection, insult, being judged, even persecution because of his utter confidence in the Gospel's ability to save the lost.
- 4. Christian – you know the Gospel's power to save no less than Paul – *it saved you!*
- 5. It's time consider whether or not we can echo Paul's words,  
“I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation.”
- 6. If we can in truth say that, then we'll be *on the look out for opportunities* to *share* the Gospel, *not dreading them.*

#### B. “John 3:16”

Story of young believer – “John 3:16” → Unbeliever.