

Romans 1:14-17 "Feeling sheepish?"

4th & last in Unashamed series. Here's where title from: V16

- I can picture it years later....
 - I was about 14 years old.
 - I'd become a Christian just before going to 2ndary school.
 - And at senior school we had a little Christian Union.
 - Young guys came to encourage us to share our faith.
 - Said "pray for opportunities to speak about Jesus".
 - As I walked between buildings at school.
 - Friend called James. James Radcliffe.
 - I can remember exactly where. Walking back together.
 - Here was the moment we prayed about. But bit sheepish.
- I've called this sermon "feeling sheepish"?
 - Maybe can relate. Similar experience.
 - Bottled it. Bit scared like this sheep.
 - Work. Something Christian comes up.
 - Conversation turns to religion.
 - Or Opportunity handed on a plate.
 - Why do you go to church?
 -
 - Or bit uncomfortable- faith is a private thing. Ppl don't know.
 - Or hear about church initiatives to help share good news.
 - Quietly melt away into background.
- Well here's Q today: how can I be less sheepish in gospel outreach.
- how go from **I should** talk about Jesus to **I want to** to I'm **proud to**.
 - Those are the 3 stages in v14-16: verses
 - **Last week** seeing how need to share gospel with *believers*
 - **This week**: how believers need to share gospel with *unbelievers*.
- Not all capital E evangelists, but all followers called to be witnesses.
 - So Q: how can be less sheepish
 - Move along the arrow.

Answer comes very clearly from Paul in these verses, and it has to do with understanding the message itself more.

An increasing understanding of the wonder of the gospel
Let's look at 3 things in verses 16-17.

1) POWERFUL

V16

Question: Paul why are you not ashamed...

Ans: because the gospel is **powerful**.

- What Paul is saying is that the **actual message** is powerful.
 - Words about Jesus to a friend or neighbour explaining what he has done are powerful.
- ▲ Last Sunday when we were in church a light aircraft crashed into a road in Abergavenny. 3 people were in it, and were crushed upside down inside the plane as it caught fire.
- Just nearby were 2 motorists Daniel Nicholson and Joel Snarr. Joel is a former bomb disposal officer, and he helped get all 3 out to safety.
- Rescue required. Power located in the skills/**arms** of Daniel & Joel.
- Where is the power located?
 - In God himself of course- he is powerful.
- But where does he focus his power to save
- In the gospel.
- It's in the message that God saves people.
 - Even the miracles which accompanied the preaching of the gospel *in Paul's day* and missionaries will testify *in our day* are not where the power are.
 - But in the gospel.
That's where God locates the power to save someone.
- The word used is the word from which we get dynamite.
- It's incredibly powerful
 - You can cut through a mountain with dynamite.

- But if too negative a picture, how about defibrillator.
 - We have one at the park run.
 - Can kickstart someone's heart and save their lives.
 - But gospel doesn't take someone from **life to life**.
 - It takes them from **death to life**.
- How powerful is the gospel.
- Rest of Romans will spell out that we are all in desperate need of saving.
 - Due to our selfish rebellion against God
 - And the wrath that even now is against us (v18).
 - We need saving from God's anger at our wrongdoing.
 - And you can share this message of Jesus
 - And if the person puts trust in it. **SAVED**.
 - (They may not! Not up to us!) But they may!

▲ A friend of mine chatted with an elderly friend in a hospice about the gospel. (he was probably talking about Jesus death and resurrection to encourage the the Christian and make him strong- like we learned last week we need). But The man in the next door bed who wasn't a Christian overheard and wanted to become a Christian. He prayed asking Jesus to forgive him, a great joy came over his life, and 2 days later he died.

He would have gone to heaven forgiven, rather than facing hell for a lifetime of rebellion against God.

Just the power of the gospel- just the words about Jesus!

- Feeling a bit sheepish?
 - Doesn't this help?
 - Doesn't this help us to be unashamed.
 - If you have a friend who isn't a Christian, then they are just like we were before Jesus. BC.
 - Facing eternity without God for our sins.
 - But message of gospel itself can bring them salvation (I'll explain why in a minute).

2) UNIVERSAL

V16b

- How would you divide the world?
 - Rich & Poor
 - Black & white
 - Leave & Remain (certainly v divided today).
 - For them Jew & non- Jew (v16)
 - Cultured and non-cultured (v14)- Gk & barbarian
 - Radio 4, HCRfm.
 - The Telegraph, the Sun.
 - Wise & foolish-
 - University educated, no GCSES to my name.
- Here's the big thing. Jesus is for everyone.
- In my last church I knew...
 - Professor of Astrophysics at Cambridge University. He worked with Stephen Hawking.
 - A sex offender who had been on the streets.
- BOTH need the good news.
- It's the same message for everyone.
- And why is that?
- Because the way for Jew and Gentile,
 - Rich and Poor
 - Black and White
 - Oxmoor and Great Stukeley
 - Polish and English
 - Pro Brexit / Hate Brexit.
 - IS THE SAME! To believe.
- And this brings us onto our final, and most important point.

3) It's FREE

V17.

- ▲ Imagine you are in court.
 - You know that you have done wrong.
 - There is clear evidence
 - The judge knows. The jury knows. You know.
 - You are guilty.
 - And the punishment will be a very long time behind bars.
 - And then the court declares you “not guilty”.
 - Well how can that happen. How can you be declared righteous.
 - And how can the Judge be righteous (straight) to declare you righteous?
 - You’ve got 2 problems- the righteousness of YOU, and the righteousness of the Judge!
- Let me tell you how.
 - Imagine if by some miraculous time machine, the judge himself just before he brings down his hammer, could step in and take your penalty in your place.
 - So he pays your punishment fully, and justly in your place.
 - Well it’s impossible.
 - But with God it’s not.
- The book of Romans will go on to explain (in ch3)
 - That when Jesus died on the cross it was in a rescue.
 - Like rescuing those guys out of the plane
 - But more amazing- rescuing us out of the wrath of God.
 - By Jesus stepping in in our place
 - As Ro puts it “sacrifice of atonement”
 - That is to say one who takes God’s anger away from you but onto themselves.
- In Christ, God himself steps into your shoes and takes the penalty that should come to you in your place.
- He swaps places with you so that the punishment is fully paid by you.
- And as a result you are declared “NOT GUILTY” or justified.
- It’s not a perfect illustration, but it’s what Jesus did
 - God in the flesh, Jesus, stepped in and took your and my punishment for all our sins in our place.
 - And he clothes us with a pure white robe of righteousness, a cloak that says “NOT GUILTY”.
- Without this robe you can’t get into heaven?
- And how do you get this robe?
 - By voting the right way?
 - By coming from the right background?
 - By being good?
 - NO- because no-one is good not even one (chapter 3).
 - But - by faith.
- **NOT by ACTIVE ACHIEVING.**
- **But by PASSIVE RECEIVING.**
 - You turn to Jesus and you say, “have mercy on me a sinner”.
 - And he loves to save.
 - You don’t rely on your efforts.
 - You rely on Jesus’ efforts.
 - That’s why it’s universal, because the qualification doesn’t really have anything to do with you or your ability or ethnicity. It has to do with Jesus, and TRUSTING WHAT HE HAS DONE!
- Jo’s kids spot- what must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus!
- Let’s look at the verses in detail.
 - Why is Paul so unashamed of the gospel.
 - V16 Because it’s so powerful to save...
 - **Who?** Everyone. Anyone. It’s universal.
 - **WHY?** Because the message shows us the FREE salvation of God.
- You don’t earn your way to Heaven by good works.
- You receive the righteousness of God. That robe as a free gift.

- For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed
 - That's to say, you can be declared NOT GUILTY- right with God. Righteousness FROM God.
 - And what's more God is righteous- he's right to to say that/
 - Because his son has died in your place.
 - No injustice has occurred.
 - The innocent has died for the guilty. Righteousness OF God.
- It's by FAITH. From first to last. From start to finish.
- AND v17 Just as it was always meant to be- as written in the Old Testament. "Just as it was written.... V17".
- Where? In a funny book called Habakkuk, Habakkuk was told that in the midst of great difficulty, he would have to patiently trust God. That's the way to life.
- "The righteous will live by faith".
- Stop trying to earn your way to God.
Just trust him and wait for his salvation.
It will change your life, and you will never be the same again.
- **The Gospel is powerful, because it's for everyone.**
- **And it's for everyone because it's free.**
- Not everyone can pay for a birthday present. You have to have resources.
- But everyone can receive a birthday present. You just have to receive it like a little child.

▲ Luther. Monk. Tried so hard to please God. Always felt angry. Then he had to teach the Bible at Wittenberg University. And he discovered this verse.

Here's what he discovered:

"I greatly longed to understand Paul's letter 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 acts 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 message of Paul became to me a gateway into heaven."

Don't worry about all the details, I didn't get all of that.

But do you see what Luther discovered?

Free Grace. Wonderful good news. A free gift of rescue from a KIND God.

Doesn't that make you want to be unashamed?

We won't ever share the good news until we see that it's good news

▲ Remember my friend James. I was sheepish.

Well it wasn't the end of the story.

It turned out although I had been sheepish, God had a plan. It doesn't rely on us.

His friend Nick was beginning to share the good news with him. And through a team effort, James came to hear the good news.

And James became a Christian.

And now he's a vicar in Lincoln.

And I looked at his website, and I see he has a special responsibility in his church for evangelism- for helping others share their faith.

Who will you share the good news with? Let's pray.