

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

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Scripture: Romans 1:14-17

***"Are You Sold Out for the Gospel?" (part 2)***

**MOTIVATION FOR FUFILLING OUR VISION AND MISSION**

Last week we again looked at the vision and mission of our church. We say it every week for the same reason we say the Lord's Prayer and Nicene Creed every week. Rather than falling into the trap of just saying it for the sake of saying it, we must not take the lazy way out but we need to focus on what we are saying and praying in service.

Knowing the vision and mission of a church is important. But equally important is to find ways to make that vision and mission a reality in our own personal lives. Can we answer the questions, "What am I doing to fulfill the mission of the church God has ordained that I be a part of?" and "What am I doing to make a difference for the Kingdom?" One of the most important things that must be true of the believer is that the believer stay motivated. And the only way for that to happen is be motivated for good reasons.

There was perhaps no greater Apostle than the Apostle Paul. He had an impact on growing the church throughout the Roman Empire like no one else. Even though Paul was a pharisaical Jew, he came to Christ and saw the need for the early Church to be more than just a Jewish church; the gospel was for all men, women, and children. It was for the Gentiles, also. Even the Apostle Peter did not grasp this until Paul came on the scene.

And what motivated Paul to endure beatings and incarceration, shipwrecks, imprisonment, and abandonment? We find that motivation in **Romans 1:14-17**. The motivation that Paul describes is the same motivation that will makes us aware of God's reconciling love and truth. So let's turn there again. We looked at the first part of the passage last week after a brief review we will look at the rest and then close with what does that mean for us as we move forward as Christ's church here in WNY?

**Romans 1:14-16: *I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.***

***16For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***

**THREE "I AM" STATEMENTS**

Recall we saw that Paul used three "I am" statements. They all concern his relationship to the Gospel, the good news of Christ. First, he says, "I am under obligation;" literally, "I am debtor." Then he says "I am eager;" it can be translated "I am ready" and we will use that translation for our message today. Finally, he writes, "I am not ashamed."

So that tells us that Paul was *faithful to the obligations of the gospel* and that Paul was flexible for the opportunities of the gospel. But Paul was also fearless to the opposition of the Gospel. There was so

much opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But He says in verse 16, "***I am not ashamed...***" You see, Paul wasn't fearful about the gospel

### **THE PERSON OF THE GOSPEL**

Now there were many reason why he could have been fearful, intimidated, and ashamed. In the first place, the gospel of Jesus Christ was identified with a poor Jewish carpenter who was crucified. Can you imagine going to Rome, to that imperial city with its might and its power, with its generals and armies, to say "I want to tell you about a Jew"? And not just a Jew but a Jew who was crucified? The Romans had no appreciation for the Jews. Who would put faith in a Jew who was crucified? The proud city of Rome? They had subjugated the land of Judea. They had put down the Jewish people. And here is a gospel coming out of Jerusalem not out of Rome? Why should Rome listen to anything that came out of such a conquered place? And the Christians of that day weren't the big shots. They didn't have a lot of philosophers, generals, or wealthy people. The Christians were the dregs of society, the scum of the earth. Paul understood this. It is why he wrote about the new church with these words in **I Cor. 1:26**, "***Not many mighty or bold are called.***"

And even Paul himself went to Rome as a prisoner and yet he did not hang his head in shame. For He knew WHO he represented. He knew that the God of heaven and earth was taking care of him. He knew the Lord Jesus Christ. And He was bold for the Lord Jesus.

Now I want to ask you a question. Are you ashamed of the gospel? Are you ashamed to put a Bible on your desk at work? Are you ashamed to bow your head in the cafeteria or the restaurant? Are you ashamed to invite people to Jesus Christ? Are you ashamed of the One who died for you?

You say, Fr. Ward, I just don't believe in wearing my faith on my sleeve. Well, I am told that there was a little boy who had a dog and somebody asked him what kind of dog he was. And the little fella said, "He's a police dog." But he was just a mongrel, but the little boy said he is a police dog. His friend said, "He doesn't look like a police dog." The little guy said, "Well, he's in the secret service."

I am afraid there are many in the Church who are in the secret service. God did not call us to be in the secret service. He called us to shout the good news of Jesus Christ from the housetops! We ought to be open and bold for the gospel for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I mean, who can be ashamed of the PERSON of the Gospel? Who can be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ? For there is no other name given by which men are saved (Acts 4:12). There is only one name that stands above every other name, and that is the name of Jesus. And did you know that right now while I am speaking to you, there are millions who are literally worshipping and seeking to follow the One who bears that name? That one name - that name that is above all names. Are you ashamed of Jesus Christ? Paul wasn't. No, he wasn't ashamed of the Person of the gospel Jesus Christ. We have to be open and bold for the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL**

But Paul was not only not ashamed of the Person of the Gospel, He was not ashamed of the Purpose of the Gospel – look again at v. 16. He writes, ***“For it, the gospel is power of the God for salvation.”*** There is no greater business or occupation than sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let Wall Street handle the finances, let Hollywood have the fame, let the military figure out what to do in the middle east, but let us get out the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Folks, let me tell you something, the gospel is not intended to save civilization from wreckage. The gospel is intended to save people from the wreckage of civilization. Jesus did not come as a social engineer. Jesus came to seek and save that which lost! **(Luke 19:10)**

Think about it, there are lots of kind of losses. It is tragic to lose your health, to lose your wealth, to lose your friends, your loved ones, to lose your life. But how tragic to lose your soul? It’s why Jesus said, ***“What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his own soul?”***

Listen, how can we be ashamed of the gospel when the power of Gospel the only thing that can help this world today? The gospel is the only thing that can break the chains of addiction, put marriages back together, and make families whole. The gospel is the only thing that can make adulterers pure and drunkards sober. And the gospel is the only thing that can give a hope that is steadfast and true to rescue the perishing and care for the dying and snatch them from sin and the grave. Without the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is no hope!

No, Paul was not ashamed of the person or the purpose of the gospel, but he was also not ashamed of the power of the gospel.

## **THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL**

The word he uses for power is the word in Greek from where we get our English word dynamite. This world is enamored with power. We have harnessed the power of the atom. But if you took that power and put it on your chest and detonated it, there wouldn’t be anything left of you. It would be enough to vaporize you, but it could not take the sin out of your heart. There is only one power that can wash and make you whiter than snow and that is the power of God.

We not only get the word dynamite from this Greek word, but we get the word *dynamo*. You see, when you are born again, there is a dynamo that enters you. This dynamo of the Holy Spirit enables us to live the Christian life in power. And I can attest to you that if it were not for that power, that dynamo in my heart, I would not be able to persevere in this life the way Christ wants me to at all.

## THE PLAN OF THE GOSPEL

Paul is not ashamed of the gospel because of the Person of the Gospel - *Jesus*, the purpose of the Gospel – *for salvation*, the power of the gospel - *it is by grace through faith*. But He is also not ashamed of the plan of the gospel. What is the plan? Look at v. 16 again – ***“to everyone that believes.”*** That’s it. That’s the plan. You say that is so simple. Yes, that is the beauty of God’s plan. To everyone who believes!

Aren’t you glad that the gospel doesn’t say if you want to save read so many chapters in the bible? The truth is some people don’t have a bible and some can’t read. Aren’t you glad the gospel doesn’t say that everyone who wants to be saved, take a walk around the block. You say that would be simple enough but some people can’t walk. Aren’t you glad the gospel doesn’t say, “Everybody give \$150; that is cheap for eternal salvation, yes, but some people don’t have \$150.” The plan of the Gospel is simple to everyone who believes. That’s it.

And yet there are always people who want to tell you, you got to believe and... They say you got to believe AND be baptized. Well the minute you put baptism, on you take ***“everyone that believes”*** out. That means nobody in a desert can be saved, nobody on a plane can be saved, nobody in a submarine can be saved with water all around. That means that nobody by himself can be saved because there is no one around you to baptize you. Do you see how silly that is?

I believe in baptism. But no amount of water, whether a teaspoonful or a tankful, can take away sin! Baptism doesn’t save! It is faith from dead works in the living God who works for us that saves! God’s wonderful plan is that anyone, anytime, and anywhere can be saved! It is why Paul writes, ***“to everyone that believes.”***

And Paul emphasis this point when he then says in v. 17, ***“for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, for the righteous shall live by faith.”*** God’s righteousness cannot be earned or attained by human effort. It must be received by faith. And just as we are born to a living hope in Christ through repentance and faith, so too the entire Christian walk is about repentance and faith. That’s why Paul says from faith to faith. Do you see why Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel? Do you see why we should never be ashamed of the Gospel? It is because of the Person, purpose, power and plan that is revealed to us by it!

You see, Paul said “Do you want to know what motivates me? Do you want to know what sends me? Three things - I am debtor, I am ready and I am not ashamed.” He was faithful to the obligations of the gospel, he was flexible for the opportunities of the gospel, and he was fearless at the opposition to the gospel.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel, are you?

4th Sunday After Epiphany, January 29, 2017, Liturgical Year "A"

You know, I was looking back into the circumstances of the sinking of the Titanic some 105 years ago. There came a point on that ship that everyone from the captain down to the rats knew that there was nothing anyone could do to save the ship from sinking. And then it came time when for most there was nothing one could do to be saved from a watery grave. Everyone was powerless - totally helpless - nothing anyone could do. And that is true about death itself and separation from the Life giver – Almighty God.

This world looks at science and says, "Science can't you save me?" and science says, "I can tell you how far it is from the earth to the sun but I can't save you."

This world looks at culture and says "Culture can't you save me?" and culture says, "I can tell you how to dress and hold your teacup just right. All I can do is to make this a better place to go to hell from but I can't save you."

This world looks at finance, and says "Finance, business, can't you save me?" And finance says, "I can tell you how to gather money and leave it all behind, but I can't save you."

The world looks to philosophy and says, "Can't you save me?" Philosophy says "I can tell you more and more about less and less until you know everything about nothing, but I can't save you."

Brothers and sisters, I can tell you there is only one who can save. His name is Jesus. Jesus saves! That's why we can "sing above the battle strife." I have given my life to declare the gloriousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And like Paul I can say, ***"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus for it is power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."***

Do you believe? Have you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If you never have today is the day! Please pray with me...

"Dear God, Heavenly Father, I know that you love me and I know you want to save me. Your Son Jesus died to save me. He promised to save me if I trust in Him. I do trust you, Lord. I believe you are the Son of God. I believe that you paid for my sin with your blood on the cross. I believe that you rose from the dead. I believe that salvation is a gift and I receive it right now. I don't look for feeling, I don't ask for a sign, but I stand on your word. Lord Jesus, I trust you to save me, and I will not be ashamed of you. I will not be ashamed of the gospel. Jesus, give me the courage to openly and publicly confess you; don't let me be intimidated by the devil or this world. Help me Lord Jesus. In your name, I pray." AMEN!