

Romans 1:8-17
“I am not ashamed”

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I. Intro

Rome was a city where Caesar Nero would dress thousands of Christians in the skins of lambs and throw them to the lions taunting them saying, “*Where is your Good Shepherd now?*” He would dip Christians in hot wax and light them in his garden and say, “*Now you are a light of the world.*” Rome was the entertainment capital of the world and was so wicked that even Hollywood would be forced to blush. The acceptable greeting of the day was “Caesar is lord”. **Yet it is to this place that Paul declared that he was not ashamed of the gospel. Faith is not only the starting point of our salvation it is the staying power of our salvation.** Paul wrote in Col. 2:6 “*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him*”. That is why when Paul wrote to the Galatians in 3:3 he said “*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*”

II. Vs. 8-15 Eight characteristics of a transformed heart

Vs. 8-15 Paul writes of his desire to come to Rome and we are told in Act. 2:10 how there were people from Rome among the Jews present at the Day of Pentecostal, apparently when they returned home they started a church. Along with them over time other Christians continually migrated to Rome from all parts of the empire. Paul knew many of the Christians in Rome by name, but he also knew two things about every Christian.

1. He knew they were **beloved of God.**
2. He knew **that they were saints.**

In verses 8-16a we look at Paul's words where he wrote about what he was thankful for in those believers in Rome. In so doing I notice 8 characteristics of a transformed heart:

1. Vs. 8 A thankful heart: Paul didn't say "*I thank my God through Jesus Christ for around 40% of you as the other 60% drive me nuts!*" Nothing speaks louder of the transformation that God has done in our heart than the love we have for one another! Notice that he thanked God for their faith which was spoken throughout the whole world. Such thanksgiving came by way of Jesus, we have the privilege of saying "my God" because we have made God's Son our Lord. The evidence of this was in the fact that Paul gave thanks for "all believers". *Our thankfulness must not rest upon the circumstance turning out the way we intended but on the fact that those circumstances are placed in the care of the Person whose nail scarred hands died for us*. Paul thanks God NOT for their faith unto salvation, he thanks God for His work in them as they lived out that faith! The church in Rome wasn't famous because of: Their pastor, their numeric size, their programs, or their building. They were famous because the way they lived out Who they believed in.
2. Vs. 9-10a A concerned heart: Though *Paul was thankful for what God had been doing, he was prayerful towards God at what still needed to be done*. The word "serve" here is also translated worship. The phrase "*without ceasing*" with regards to prayer speaks of a tickle in the throat is reflexive. That is how we should be in our prayer life, when someone irritates you constantly like a cough then just keep clearing your heart of that irritant by speaking to the Father about them until things have cleared up. Paul concluded two actions as worship:
 - a. Speaking of the "*goodness of His master*" to a world that didn't know Him.

b. Lifting up prayers on behalf of others without ceasing.

Paul's worship of God was best seen not in the songs he sang but in speaking to people about God and speaking to God about people! To Paul most of these Christians whom he had never met were never taken off his prayer chain. Far too often we are committed to prayer for folks when things aren't going well but here Paul's encouragement is to continue in prayer for folks so that things continue to go well.

3. Vs. 10b **A willing heart**: Paul had a heart that was not only willing to prayer for folks he was willing to be the answer to the prayer as well. Yet such eagerness to be used of God never went outside God's plan in doing so. He was ready, willing, and available but only according to the will of his Master. **Paul never thought of "demanding things from God" by his prayers, trying to sway God away from His perfect will to his imperfect plan.**
4. Vs. 11 **A loving heart**: Paul wanted to go to Rome to serve the people not to get something from them. In Col. 1:28 Paul explained what his goal was, "*everywhere we go, we tell everyone about Christ. We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ.*" The gift Paul wanted to give them was "*spiritual*" that would further "*establish*" them.
5. Vs. 12 **A humble heart**: Paul realized that those believers had spiritual gifts that would help establish him as well. *The greatest teachers are always the ones that desire to learn more than they desire to teach!* Consider this; Paul was one of the greatest theologians but was willing to learn and receive from Roman Christian's who were novices in their faith. *A teachable heart is that is willing to receive teaching regardless of who God chooses as the instrument of instruction is the key to spiritual growth.*

6. Vs. 13 **A optimistic heart**: Paul tells the Roman Church of his desire and plans to visit them, but this was not a social call it was a call to bear fruit. He was a big proponent of “*Where God guides, God provides*” and believed that God was going to do a work there in Rome. According to Phillip. 4:22 the outcome of that optimism included those from Caesars household. ***We will never accomplish great works for God’s kingdom if we don’t believe that God will enable us to accomplish what He has called us to do.***
7. Vs. 14 **A committed heart**: Prior to Paul’s conversion he was committed to destroying the gospel and anyone that promoted it but after having personally been transformed by the Love of God Paul saw himself a debtor to every person who like him ignorantly or willfully hadn’t encountered the transforming power of the Love of God.
8. Vs. 15 **A ready heart**: Paul was not only willing he was eager to fulfill what God had called him too. Life had but one value, “*to do God’s work*” and this value consumed him. In this letter Paul loves the phrase “***I am ready*”; **it served as his motto in life. In Acts 9:6 the 2nd words out of Paul’s mouth after his conversion was “*Lord, what do you want me to do?*”** In**
- Rom. 1:15 Paul said he was ready to preach and to serve
 - Act. 21:13 Paul said he was ready to suffer
 - 2 Cor. 10:6 Paul said he was ready to do unpleasant work
 - 2 Tim. 4:6 Paul said he was ready to die

Paul would have never guessed that when he would be sent to Rome it would be at the governments expense. *When we pray for something, God may grant us the blessing; but it may be in a way that we never looked for. You shall go to Rome, Paul; but you shall go in chains.*

III. Vs. 16-17 A debtor, ready to preach, not ashamed

Vs. 16-17 *In a sophisticated city like Rome, some might be embarrassed by a gospel centered on a crucified Jewish savior, embraced by the lowest classes of people - but Paul is not ashamed, “For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes”. **Here was this little Jewish tent maker telling the world about a peasant Jewish man who had died in a manor reserved for the worst of criminals, yet to this Paul says boldly, “I am: a debtor, ready to preach, not ashamed!”*** And in verse 16 Paul gives his readers **four reasons why he felt that way about the message:**

1. **Its origin:** *It was the gospel of Christ!* Any message that was given by Caesar would have the immediate attention of all Romans. But Paul says that this message isn't just from Christ it is about Christ, who in the very first sentence called the message the gospel of God. Why would anyone be ashamed of a message that originates from God and is about God?
2. **Its operation:** *It is the power of God!* The word “power” is the word in which we get our English word dynamite. *Paul says that the gospel carries enough power to break through the walls of a harden heart.* But this power is not destructive it is constructive as it saves people from the bondage of their own passions and past! As powerful as Rome was one writer of that time described it as “*a cesspool of iniquity*”. **Rome had the power to destroy every nation it encountered but it couldn't defeat their own sinful passions which were destroying them like a cancer.** Paul had seen the gospel work in the darkest reaches of the human soul, and he would write in Col. 1:13 saying that “*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.*”
3. **Its outcome:** *Unto Salvation!* The word “salvation” had a meaning of personal and national deliverance as the Roman emperor was looked upon as a savior from captivity as

was a doctor was from illness. But here we see that those two areas are limited as Paul declares that this salvation everyone.

4. **Its outreach: To everyone that believes! Faith is the acknowledgment of our own inability and God's ability!** As a Christian we can say:

- Of the past, "I was saved"
- Of the present, "I'm being saved"
- Of the future, "I will be saved"

This salvation is from the **penalty, power, and presence** of sin! If you trusted God than you would be saved ill regardless of whom you were and what you had done. **God doesn't ask people to "behave" He asks them to "believe" as it is trust in Jesus finished work on the cross that saves the sinner like me.**

Vs. 17 This is the key verse in all of Paul's letter, the "***righteousness of God revealed***". The word "***righteousness***" is a favorite of Paul's it is **used over 60 times**.

- In the death of Jesus, God revealed His righteousness by punishing sin.
- In the resurrection of Jesus, God revealed His righteousness by making salvation available to the believing sinner.

This truth is the answer to the question of, "***How a Holy God can forgive sinful people and still be holy?***" In the law the Jews thought that righteous was by "works" but as Paul will teach all the law did was reveal that God is Holy and God and we are incapable of working out our salvation by being good.