

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Are You Ashamed of the Gospel?

One of the greatest statements in all of the Bible is found in Romans 1:16 where Paul stated, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” When you pause to consider what Paul was saying, it is very impressive. He was stating he was not afraid of the gospel. He was not afraid of being associated as a preacher and apostle of the gospel. He was not afraid of being associated with Christ. He was not ashamed of the salvation that is availed to everyone. He was not afraid to tell others about his confidence in the gospel. This is an impressive list because too many times we find ourselves acting ashamed of many of these things. I know many of us will quote this verse and say that we are not ashamed of the gospel. However, do we show this by our actions? That is an entirely different question.

You are ashamed of the gospel if you are not ready to teach the gospel. Paul said he was “ready to preach the gospel” to the Romans (Romans 1:15). Sadly, we want to say we are unashamed of the gospel when we assemble with the brethren at the church building, but throughout the week we will not speak to our friends, neighbors, or closest family members about the gospel and the need to be obedient to the truth found in God’s word. We are not ready to teach. We fear being rejected, or we fear that we will mislead them—but honestly, we are ashamed. If we refuse to carry the message of Christ and share it with others then who will? And how will someone be saved if we refuse to teach them? Sometimes, even preachers are ashamed of the gospel. They would rather be known as a “facilitator” of discussions rather than a preacher (Romans 10:14) or evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). Have we become ashamed of such religious terms like “preacher” and “evangelist”? Imagine if Paul was ashamed to call himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul confidently and unashamedly identified himself as a preacher, minister and apostle of our Lord (Romans 1:1, 5).

You are ashamed of the gospel if you are not living by the gospel. So much of the Roman epistle is about salvation and God’s scheme of redemption. Paul writes about

faith, repentance, confession of faith and baptism (Romans 6:3-6). Furthermore, we are called to not be like this world, but to be changed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:1, 2). Our behavior and conduct is supposed to be different; we are to be conformed to the image and behavior of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). Yet, when we allow sin to linger on in our lives and we willingly compromise in areas of our conduct such as immodest dress, corrupt speech, social drinking and fornication then we are really ashamed of the gospel. Our actions prove that we are ashamed of the gospel. When we do not live according to the gospel and its principles then we are hiding the gospel and the power of salvation.

You are ashamed of the gospel if you distance yourself from the gospel. Those who are Christians are “called Christians” (Acts 11:26). They are saints (1 Corinthians 1:2). They are the children of God (Romans 8:14). But sometimes we do not want people to know that we are Christians. We are afraid of the stigma attached with that name. We think people will judge us for being “conservative” and for being a “freak.” Let them believe what they want to believe and think what they want to think. Never be ashamed of the name of Christ. He was unashamed of us and went to the cross, enduring the shameful death on the cross, to die for our sins (Hebrews 12:2).

You are ashamed of the gospel if you separate yourself from the church of Christ. Sadly, many people do not want to be called a Christian or even recognized as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. But what is also sad, is that people do not want to be associated with the church of Christ. The apostle Paul closed his epistle with the statement “...the churches of Christ salute you” (Romans 16:16). If the churches (in the plural form) were called “churches of Christ” then what was one (singular) congregation called? Identifying ourselves as the church of Christ is important. “Church of Christ” is not the only Scriptural name we could call ourselves. The church at Corinth was recognized as the church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2). Paul called the church, “the church of God” in Acts 20:28, but interestingly Paul contends that God purchased the church with His own blood. Whose blood was shed? The blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore the church of God is the church of Christ. Let’s not be ashamed of Christ and His church.

Why do we act so ashamed of the gospel? If we are afraid of ridicule, we need to understand that Christ and the gospel are never going to be the popular thought in society. Jesus taught that many will follow the path that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13). If we are afraid others will reject us, are we more concerned about being accepted of men than being accepted of God (cf. Matthew 10:33-35; Romans 12:2)?

Be of good courage, dear brethren. Do not be afraid and ashamed of the Lord and His wondrous gospel. It is the way of salvation and we ought to be teaching the gospel, living

by the gospel, identifying ourselves with the gospel of Christ and unashamed of the church that Jesus built.

- Sean P. Cavender, Limestone church of Christ, Kingston, Ontario

CAN YOU TRUST YOUR BIBLE?

The evidence that the Bible is the word of God is overwhelming. Consider:

1. Claims Inspiration: Any claim of inspiration must be tested. However, an inspired book would acknowledge its source (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

2. Unity: The Bible contains 66 separate books written in three languages by approximately 40 authors from different locations and diverse backgrounds over a period of 1,500 years, yet there are no contradictions. The theme is consistent resulting in a rich harmony lacking in works by mortal man.

3. Scientific Understanding: While atheists attempt to pit science against religion, true science is the Christian's friend. The Bible demonstrates inspiration both by what it omits and what it includes. The Bible avoids errors about astrology, false medical cures, divination, omens, the Earth's shape and position, which contemporary literature and culture contain. Yet it includes scientific information unknown at that time such as ocean currents, logical dietary laws, the water cycle, seabed topography, and quarantine.

4. Fulfilled Prophecy: The Bible contains verifiable prophecies about nations (Daniel 2:37-45) as well as 300 prophecies regarding the Messiah, including predictions about His birth, death, and resurrection, which were fulfilled in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. One man could not have accidentally fulfilled all these prophecies (Luke 18:31-34).

5. Historical Reliability: The Bible's historical accuracy has been proven. In Acts, Luke mentions 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 Mediterranean islands. He also names 95 people. These citations contain no mistakes. Sir William Ramsey was a skeptic, but after an on-site study of Luke's accounts, he concluded that Luke was "the very greatest of historians." A book may be historically accurate without being inspired, but an inspired book must be historically accurate.

Despite the evidence, critics will claim, "Yes, but the Bible has been mishandled and corrupted through the years. Today's Bible is not anything like the ancient writing." Centuries of accumulated evidence dispute this claim. The Bible is the best-preserved book in history, with compelling manuscript evidence. Besides the Bible, the best

preserved ancient work is Homer's The Iliad. Written around 900 B.C., only 643 known ancient copies exist. The earliest is from approximately 400 B.C., a full 500 years after it was written.

Compare this example to the Bible. More than 5,000 manuscripts of the New Testament exist. The earliest fragments are from a mere 35 years after the books were written.

In addition, many early Christians wrote defenses, sermons, and commentaries that contain more than 86,000 direct quotations from the scriptures. In fact, 99.86 percent of the New Testament could be reconstructed from these quotations alone.

This conclusive evidence proves that the Bible is trustworthy. New finds and continuing research show that our Bible is identical to the text of the earliest days of Christianity.

- Luke Griffin

"For All Eternity"

*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see!
O, Thou who changest not, abide with me.*

How the words of this grand old hymn have sustained and comforted us in many a dark and lonely hour. For God does abide with all the faithful.

When many a heart is heavy with dread forebodings of fear, when many an eye is dimmed with anguished tears of sorrow, when all the world seems drear and desolate -- God is still there. And even our tears can sometimes serve to wash away the things that have hid Him, and show us His ever present nearness and compassion.

All our petty ambitions and earthly hopes may crumble into nothingness; the toil and tears and love of a lifetime may be sacrificed in one terrible moment by the swift and irrevocable scythe of death.

But God is still there.

For all eternity He abides. "Neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

If the days of our years be few and full of trouble, or if they be long and peaceful, God is with us to the end! Earthly friends may forget and forsake; but God never forgets and never forsakes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

- Fanning Yater Tant, 1954

- > "The Bible is like a compass — it always points the believer in the right direction!"
 - > "When life knocks you on your knees, you are in a perfect position to rise again following prayer!"
 - > "Don't lose your temper, some poor soul might find it!"
 - > "A person can't keep others from having a bad opinion of him, but he can keep them from being right!"
 - > "God has two thrones: one in the highest heaven and the other in the lowliest heart!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"How's Your Level of Discernment?"* (Text: Heb. 5:11-14); Sunday evening: *"Safe In The Shepherd's Hands!"* (John 10:22-42).