

## LESSON 2

- I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel \*

In Romans 1:15-17, Paul writes:

I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For 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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith'."

We all know what it is to be embarrassed or ashamed. In 2 Corinthians 11:21-30, Paul addresses those who "boast according to the flesh" and concedes, "I too will boast," But he does not boast of things we might naturally expect. But whatever anyone else dares to boast of – I am speaking as a fool-I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am better one-I am talking like a madman with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul continues to "boast" and reveals the "thorn given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me" (12:7). Three times he pleaded with the Lord about the thorn, that it would be taken away.

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:9-10)

Don't miss what Paul is revealing concerning real power.

\* The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom 1:16)

\* Christ's power is made perfect in the weakness of dependent, trusting disciples (2 Cor 12:9)

This is why the writer of Hebrews encourages Christians to be "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:2).

Disciples of Jesus may be shamed in this world, but we don't have to be ashamed! the righteousness of God has been revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. He is willing to heal us, transform our lives, and perfect us (Rom 1:17;12:1-2). This is news of which we should not, must not, be ashamed.

CLOSING THOUGHT: Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, the power of God for salvation is available in his gospel. Our heavenly Father has revealed his righteousness to us and provided a means whereby we also can be made righteous (Rom 5:18-19; 2 Cor 5:17-21).

Questions?

1. When Paul referred to "the gospel" in his writings, what did he have in mind?
2. Can you think of other passages from the writings of Paul that enhance our understanding of what he means by "the gospel"?
3. How might the things Paul mentions in 2 Cor 11:21-30 have caused shame-the sort of shame that would compel him to forsake Christ and stop proclaiming the gospel?
4. How is Christ's power made perfect in human weakness?
5. What does Paul mean in Romans 1:17 by "from faith for faith"?
6. Practically speaking, what does it mean to "live by faith"?