

I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL!

The great Apostle Paul said, *“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Romans 1: 15,16). This man of God was saying, with everything that is in me, I am ready to preach and my subject is the Gospel. For clarification sake, allow us to give the biblical definition of the Gospel: Paul said, *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”* (I Corinthians 15: 1-4). The apostle was saying I am not ashamed to boldly, without apology, without embarrassment, without humiliation to proclaim and be devoutly dedicated to this message: the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Are you ashamed? If so, today would be a good day to rededicate yourself to the Lord and His message.

1. I am not ashamed of the inexplicable power of the Gospel to change lives.

A couple of Sundays ago, I had the privilege of leading a young man to Christ after the morning service. I met with him again on the following Wednesday and he told me, “I’ve been doing some things that, until Sunday, didn’t really bother me. Now I am beginning to think these things could be wrong. Is that normal?” I laughed and said, “You’d better believe it is!” I went on to explain that from the Scripture we are told, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”*(II Corinthians 5:17).

I was honored through my college years to be in charge of the once a month Friday night service at the Pacific Garden Rescue Mission in Chicago where thousands of people have had their life changed by the saving power of the Gospel. Every night gentlemen who gave their hearts to Christ had testimonies like this: “I was down in the gutter; I was a drunken sot; I was a one hundred dollar a day dope addict; everything I did was wrong, until I prayed and asked the Lord to save me.” What a thrill it was to hear those testimonies before I preached! Many years ago Billy Sunday was a famous baseball player, playing for the Chicago White Stockings, later to be named White Sox. In the early part of the twentieth century, he gave this personal testimony in one of his sermons: “Twenty-seven years ago I walked down a street in Chicago in company with some ball players who were famous in this world - some of them are dead now - and we went into a saloon. It was Sunday afternoon and we got tanked up and

then went and sat down on a corner. I never go by that street without thanking God for saving me. It was a vacant lot at that time. We sat down on a curbing. Across the street a company of men and women were playing on instruments - horns, flutes and slide trombones -and the others were singing the gospel hymns that I used to hear my mother sing back in the log cabin in Iowa and back in the old church where I used to go to Sunday school. And God painted on the canvas of my recollection and memory a vivid picture of the scenes of other days and other faces. Many have long since turned to dust. I sobbed and sobbed and a young man stepped out and said, 'We are going down to the Pacific Garden Mission. Won't you come down to the mission? I am sure you will enjoy it. You can hear drunkards tell how they have been saved and girls tell how they have been saved from the red-light district.' I arose and said to the boys, 'I'm through. I am going to Jesus Christ. We've come to the parting of the ways,' and I turned my back on them. Some of them laughed and some of them mocked me; one of them gave me encouragement; others never said a word."

Although Billy Sunday still holds the record for running the bases faster than any man in history, his history as a Bible believing evangelist is even more awesome. He was good at stealing bases, but he became better at stealing souls from the stronghold of Satan. Paul said the Gospel is "...*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth...*" (Romans 1:16b). The word "power" is translated from the Greek word "dunamis" meaning force, power, (implying miraculous) ability, abundance, and might. It is the same root for the English word "dynamite." Billy Sunday exemplified that power which is beyond human explanation.

2. I am not ashamed of the unending effect of the Gospel.

Here's the plain, simple and glorious truth of the Gospel: if you embrace it, you are saved forever! Jesus said, "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37). Again Jesus said, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (future judgment); but is passed from death unto life*" (John 5:24). Paul affirmed this promise of eternal life to the believer when he wrote: "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*" (Philippians 1:6).

The things this world promises and gives are temporary, but if someone comes to Jesus through the Gospel, they have the promise that when this world is being purged by fire, they will live on through eternity with Christ. With two little words at the marriage altar, "I do," I have been committed to my wife for thirty-nine years. Yet, I prayed one simple prayer and have been committed to Jesus Christ and even better, He is committed to me for all eternity! "*That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians 2:7).

3. I am not ashamed of the inescapable command to proclaim the Gospel.

Jesus said, “...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). This is a command, not a suggestion. The Bible says, “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so...” (Psalm 107:2).

Jesus appreciated the unashamed way in which a child has the capacity to express their love for Him, so much so that He said, “*Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein*” (Luke 18:17). When my girls were little they were totally unashamed of Jesus. I still recall Heather swinging as high as she could on the swing set as a pre-schooler singing a song that she made up. Some of the words were: “When Jesus says to you to be good, say yes, yes, yes to Jesus.” She sang loud enough for all of our neighbors to hear. When Juliana was barely able to talk, she sang. When her mom went to the grocery store, she rode in the front of the grocery cart and would sing, “Jesus loves me, this I know” at the top of her voice. She didn’t mind at all that everybody on aisle two heard what she thought of the Lord Jesus. May we remember the admonition of the prophet Isaiah who said, “...and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6). Oh, how we need the uninhibitedness of a child caught up in the wonder of it all! My prayer is that we would never be ashamed and speak up with abandonment of the unreachable riches of Jesus Christ.

-Pastor Pope-