

Memory Verse:

2 Timothy 1:7

for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Homework

1. Search for the free sermon, "Overcoming the Fear of Man" at www. SovereignGraceStore.com by C.J. Mahaney (The outline is included in handouts or can be accessed on www. UnitedForTheGospel.org/manual.html)
2. Read the attached sermon by John Piper, "The Gospel is the Power of God unto Salvation" (You could also listen to it online at www. desiringGod.org)
3. Watch the interview with an atheist at <http://www. markcahill.org/news/0209news.html>
4. Complete the questions from the homework

I. *What Is The Fear of Man?*



Definition: *The Fear of Man*

C.J. Mahaney says that the fear of man is:

1. An excessive (sinful) concern about what others think of us
2. An inordinate desire for human approval or an intense fear of being rejected.

Ken Sande, the author of the book *The Peacemaker*, says this about the fear of man:

“Fear of Man. This can take many forms. Sometimes it involves an actual fear of what others can do to us (Prov. 29:25; Luke 12:4-5), but it is most commonly seen as an excessive concern about what others think about us. This can lead to a preoccupation with acceptance, approval, popularity, personal comparisons, self-image, or pleasing others (John 9:22; 12:42-43; Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4). This idol can make us reluctant to confront serious sin. The constant desire for approval and acceptance can cause us to gossip or keep us from speaking out on moral issues. It can also make us do things we really know are not right, eventually leading to guilt and resentment. Furthermore, if we fear what others may think of us, we may also be reluctant to admit our wrongs or ask for help, which often prolongs conflict.”
(from a sermon outline by C.J. Mahaney located at www.sovereigngracestore.com)

John 2:42-43

many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue;

⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.



List some of the implications that could have happened to the Pharisees if they confessed Christ? Do you see any similar sins in your life?



What was the ultimate reason for why they wouldn't confess Christ?

The Fear of Man Test

Your Fear Factor

As you answer the following questions give yourself the appropriate number of points: Never or hardly ever (5 pts), seldom (4 pts), frequently (2 pts) always or almost always (1 pt) true of you

1. I listen with anxious attentiveness when others discuss that which pleases or displeases them.
2. I strive to be politically correct more than biblically correct.
3. I go fishing for compliments.
4. I gossip about others to people whom I believe will be pleased with me for giving them such luscious tidbits of information.
5. My desire for a good reputation is based predominantly on how such a reputation will benefit me in some way, rather than on how such a good reputation will serve as a means to a greater end such as the glory of God, the good of others, or some other similar unselfish objective or motive.
6. I value the approval of certain individuals from whom I expect to receive certain honors more than the approval of others from whom I expect not to receive such honors.
7. I worry about what people think of me.
8. I am willing to sin rather than face the rejection of certain individuals.
9. I struggle with being a respecter of persons.

10. I believe that being rejected is one of the worst things that could possibly happen to a person, one of the worst things that a person could possibly experience.
11. I avoid conflicts rather than trying to resolve them.
12. I take unnecessary precautions in order to protect my good name.
13. I become angry when I am contradicted by others, especially when publicly contradicted.
14. When meeting a new person, I spend more time thinking about how to impress him or her than how to minister to him or her.
15. My fear of being rejected paralyzes me to the extent that it keeps me from getting close to others.
16. I forget that being rejected by others is a part of the suffering for righteousness sake that is my reasonable service to God and a part of my calling as a Christian.
17. I long to be noticed more than I long to be godly.
18. I give in to peer pressure rather than standing up to what is right.
19. I do not witness to others as I should due to my fear of being criticized or rejected.
20. I over react to criticism by dwelling too long on it or allowing it to depress me unnecessarily.

Rating scale:

96-100 no problem with man pleasing

90-95 free from the inordinate love of approval

80-89 too concerned with the approval of others

70-79 probably a man pleaser

69 or below probably a besetting sin

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If you desire, discuss your answers with the class

II. *How Do We Overcome the Fear of Man?*

1. Knowing our Position in Christ

Romans 8:15-17

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

¹⁷ and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.



Look at the context of Romans 8. What is the "spirit of slavery" and what does the "fear" refer to?



What is the Spirit witness to us and why is this important in overcoming the fear of man?



Application: What Can Man Do To Me?

At the heart of the Christian faith is adoption. We were once children of wrath (Eph. 2:1-3), but now we are children of God (1st John 3:1). Nothing can separate us from Christ's love (Rom. 8:31-39). We are forever freed from the fear of man, death, condemnation, demons and Satan. Forever!

J.I. Packer says this about adoption: "If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. 'Father' is the Christian name for God." (J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*)

Receiving a deep revelation of who we are in Christ will free us up to witness, even to the death. Knowing our eternal position in Christ will bring security to our souls. We will say with the Psalmist, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me (Psalm 118:6)?"

Do you have a deep revelation of your position in Christ? God desires to set you free from the fear of man by coming into a deep revelation that you are His child and that nothing can separate you from Him. This is the power that we need in our evangelism witness!

Romans 8:31-39

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.



In Romans 8:31-39, list all of the ways that God displays that He is for us and not against us?



What does it mean to be "more than a conqueror"?



Application: Assurance of Salvation Stirs Revival

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says:

"The greatest need at the present time is for Christian people who are assured of their salvation. If we confront the world saying, 'Well, I hope I am saved, I am not sure, but I hope', we will be depressed and we will depress others and we shall not attract. The thing that was so obvious about the New Testament Christians, as seen in Acts 2 or anywhere else, was their spirit of joy and of happiness and assurance, their confidence; they were so certain, that they were ready to be thrown to the lions in the arena or put to death. And this has always characterized every great period of reformation and revival in the history of the church."

(Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*, pg.39)

2. A Revelation of the Holiness of God

A. Isaiah's Encounter with the Holy

Isaiah 6:1

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."



In Isaiah 6:1-3, what is the one word that describes the LORD?



What was Isaiah's response to what he witnessed?



Before Isaiah could say, "Here am I! Send me", what needed to happen?



Application: Have You Encountered the Holy?

Isaiah had a life-changing encounter with the Holy. He witnessed that the LORD is altogether separate from sinful people. Even the sinless angels couldn't look on Him without covering their faces. Just as Moses couldn't look on the face of the LORD without dying (Exodus 33:20), so these sinless angels couldn't see the LORD'S unveiled glory without being incinerated. Even the temple shook and was filled with smoke, just as Mount Sinai was "wrapped in smoke" and "trembled greatly" (Exodus 19:18). If the material world shakes and trembles before the LORD, how much more should we as sinful people tremble at His presence? When we truly encounter the Holy, the only response is to cry out "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5).

Thankfully, God doesn't leave us in our state of having our hearts rent by the holiness of God. God, in His mercy, reaches out and cleanses our sinful conscience by atoning for our sin. On the cross of Christ, God's infinite holiness kissed His infinite love. Jesus Christ took our punishment, guilt, shame, and wretchedness upon Himself. And now, we are freed by Christ's precious blood. We are free to serve Him and to come into His presence with boldness (Hebrews 4:14-16) because we have encountered the Holy.

Now God says to us, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" If you have truly encountered the Holy, there is only one response you can make. "Here am I! Send me."

Are you daily encountering the Holy? Today, have you encountered God's infinite holiness kiss His infinite love in Christ crucified for you? Like Isaiah, we need a deeper revelation of this life-changing truth so that we are stripped of the fear of man and empowered to proclaim Christ's excellencies.

B. The Example of Jesus' Holiness (cf. Matthew 7:29)

Isaiah 11:1

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.



According to vv.3-5, what should be the result if we delight in the fear of the LORD?

3. The Empowerment of the Holy Spirit

Act 1:4-9

⁴ And while staying with them he (Jesus) ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49), which, he said, "you heard from me;

⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses (martus) in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.



What is the first command in this passage that Jesus gave to His disciples?
How can we apply this to our lives?



According to verse 8, what is the purpose of receiving “power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you?”



Word Study: “Witness”

It is interesting that the word “witness” comes from the Greek word “martus.” This is the Greek word that is also translated as “martyr” (cf. Revelation 17:6). The Freeburg Lexicon defines this word in this way:

“witness, martyr: as one who tells what he believes, *even though it results in his being killed for it*”

If we are to be a witness for Jesus, we must be willing to be a martyr for Jesus. God empowers us with His Holy Spirit to not only proclaim Christ’s name, but to suffer and even die for Christ’s name. May we be “witnesses” for Jesus’ name and if God wills, may we be “martyrs” for His name.



Application: Asking For the Holy Spirit When Witnessing

Witnessing can be intimidating and even frightening. For this reason, many Christians are forfeiting deep joy and are being disobedient to Christ's calling to "go and make disciples (Matt. 28:18)." But God desires to give us power, not fear, in our evangelistic encounters. Jesus promised us that He would not leave us as orphans (John 14:16-18). Acts 1:4-8 tells us that we need to wait for the promise of the Father; the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we receive this "baptism" we will be empowered to tell others about Christ.

Do you have fear when you are about to tell someone about the Good News? We need to ask God the Father to give us His promise. It's a promise. He will fulfill it. Ask God, today, if He will fill you with His Holy Spirit. Ask Him for power to tell others about His Son, Jesus Christ. I've found that God honors this prayer and that He has never left me as an orphan. He promises us that He will "be with us until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20)." Bank on it and then open your mouth with Gospel proclamation!

4. There is Joy in Suffering for Jesus

1 **Thessalonians 1:1** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.
² We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,
³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,
⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.
⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,
⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.
⁸ For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.
⁹ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,
¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.



Paul says in 1:4 that he is confident that God has chosen them. Why?



According to 1:6, how did these believers receive the Word (Gospel)?

1.

2.



According to 1:8, what were the Thessalonian believers doing throughout Macedonia and Achaia?



Application: The Path of Paul and Jesus

The Church in Thessalonica was facing severe persecution. Paul says that they became imitators of him and of Jesus in their sufferings. They walked the same path of Paul and Jesus. They walked the path of suffering. But this suffering wasn't a killjoy. Though the Thessalonians faced severe suffering, they still received the word (i.e. Gospel) "with the joy of the Holy Spirit." This was the same joyful path that led Jesus up Calvary Hill. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross."

When we enter into suffering for the Gospel, we enter into the sufferings of Christ. We become partakers with Him in His death (Colossians 1:24). This is not a curse, but a blessing because God the Holy Spirit strengthens us, fills us and empowers us with resurrection power to suffer for Christ's name. The result is overflowing "joy in the Holy Spirit."

God desires to give us fullness of joy. He desires to fill us with strength and resolve to suffer for Christ. Will you resolve to tell others about Christ no matter what the cost? If you will, God promises that He will fill you with His abounding joy.

5. Treasuring the Gospel above all else

1 Thessalonians 2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain.
² But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.
³ For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,
⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.
⁵ For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness.
⁶ Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.
⁷ But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.
⁸ So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.



According to 2:2, what gave Paul strength to “declare the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict”?



Paul says that he has been “entrusted with the gospel (v.4).” This is the highest responsibility a person can have. List all of the implications of being “entrusted with the gospel”:



According to 2:8, when Paul came to them he shared two things with them:

- 1.
- 2.

How can we do the same?



The Gospel: The Diamond in the Rough

We see from these verses that Paul wasn't concerned about gold from their pockets or glory from their mouths. He had something far more precious: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul knew that God had "entrusted" him with the Gospel. God had given him the precious diamond of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Nothing can compare to this. There is no greater gift to man, and therefore no greater responsibility. Paul knew this and it radically affected the way he lived.

Beloved, when we come to a deep revelation of how precious this Good News of God's grace is, we will stand in awe that God has chosen us to be "entrusted" with it. **The deeper it sinks into your heart, the more powerfully it will come out of your mouth.** The fear of man will fade away when we understand the seriousness of being "entrusted" with this message. Gold, glory and glitz will fade away when we peer into this precious diamond in the rough.

Have you come to a place of realizing that you have been "entrusted with the Gospel?" Are you willing to turn away from the glory of man for the sake of the glory of Christ? Would be willing to suffer financial loss for the sake of gaining Holy Spirit joy? God desires to give it to you, today. There is freedom and joy when we treasure the diamond in the rough above all other things.

4. The Goodness of God

Proverbs 29:25

²⁵ The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.



According to Proverbs 29:25, how do we escape from the "snare" of the fear of man? What does this practically look like before you witness, when you witness, and after you witness?

5. Fear God, Not Man

Luke 12:4-12

⁴ "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

⁵ But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.

⁷ Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

⁸ "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,

⁹ but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

¹⁰ And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

¹¹ And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say,

¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."



What does it mean to "fear God"?



From Luke 4:4-12, list all of reasons why we should fear God?



In verse 8 it says, “everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God.” What does this mean?



What is the promise in verse 12 that Jesus says will help us when we testify about Him to others? What implications does this have on your witness encounters?

6. The Future Reward

Matthew 5:11-12

¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



Why is a person blessed when others revile them and persecute them and utter all kinds of evil against them falsely on Jesus' account?



Do you think about future rewards in heaven when you debating on sharing the gospel with someone?



Application: Seek the Heavenly Reward

Does it surprise you that Jesus enticed His disciples to suffer well for His name by placing their hopes in a future reward? Christianity has often been approached as if seeking a reward is corrupt and selfish. But Jesus didn't seem to think so.

Jonathan Edwards says this in one of his resolutions: "Resolved, To endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can, with all the power, might, vigor, and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of."

Our goal should be to seek rewards in heaven. In fact, Blaise Pascal says that all people will seek a reward in everything that they do. He says, "All men seek happiness without exception. They all aim at this goal however different the means they use to attain it. . . .They will never make the smallest move but with this as its goal. This is the motive of all the actions of all men, even those who contemplate suicide."

God desires for us to seek a greater reward in heaven. So may we live by faith in God's reward and not by fear in man's rejection. For "without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6)."

(Quotations sited from an online article titled "Christian Hedonism" by John Piper. Go to www.desiringGod.org)

"In Christ Alone"

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In Christ alone my hope is found;
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

Handout 1

The Gospel is the Power of God unto Salvation

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By John Piper June 21, 1998

[Romans 1:16](#)

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.

Be Shamed, but not Ashamed

Last week I focused on the first words of [Romans 1:16](#), "For I am not ashamed of the gospel." I tried to make plain that there is a difference between being shamed for the gospel and being ashamed of the gospel. If you are a faithful Christian, you will be shamed for the gospel. That is, you will be the target of shaming behavior. But there is a very good reason why you do not have to be ashamed when that happens.

I compared Paul's reason with Jesus' reason for not being ashamed when they were shamed for the gospel. [Hebrews 12:2](#) says, "For the joy set before Him [Jesus] endured the cross, despising the shame." The shaming behavior against Jesus was as ugly and cruel and demeaning as it gets. But instead of letting the shame eat him up, or make him ashamed, or turn him into someone as weak and ugly as his shamers, he fixed his heart on the joy set before him. In other words, the assured triumph of his death and resurrection to save sinners and vindicate his righteousness and bring him home to God kept him from being ashamed or disobedient. When he was tempted to feel ashamed, he focused his mind on the joy set before him. He endured short-term pain because of long-term gain.

And Paul was like that. He said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel," - I am not ashamed of the message and the reality of Christ crucified for sinners and raised with power and saving all who trust in him. Why not? Because "[the gospel] is the power of God for [unto] salvation to everyone who believes." This is the same way that Jesus overcame feelings of shame when he was shamed for the gospel. Jesus looked to the joyful triumph of his cross and resurrection; Paul looked to the joyful triumph of the gospel in eternal salvation.

We do not avoid feelings of shame by altering the gospel to make it popular and inoffensive (see [1 Corinthians 1:18](#)). We avoid feelings of shame by remembering that

the gospel is going to be vindicated in the end. We remind ourselves that the gospel alone brings forgiven sinners to final, everlasting joy. Nothing in the world can do this except the gospel of Jesus Christ. Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam - they do not have a Savior who can solve the problem of separation from a holy God through sin, and offer sinners hope by grace and not works. Only one message saves sinners and brings them safely into the presence of God - the gospel of Jesus Christ. It alone is the power of God unto salvation.

Therefore, Paul would say - Jesus himself would say - suffer, yes. Be misunderstood, yes. Be shamed, yes. But do not be ashamed. Because the message of God's saving work in Christ is the only final triumphant message in the world. Short-term pain. Long-term gain. For the joy set before you, for the salvation that only the gospel can gain, take up your cross, follow Jesus and despise the shame.

The Gospel Is the Power of God unto Salvation

Now today I want to dwell on the words, "for it [the gospel] is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." And I will take up only one question: What is this salvation that the gospel so powerfully brings about? We will see in answering this how our faith relates to the gospel in bringing about our salvation.

There are other crucial questions, especially the question of how the gospel becomes the power to save. But that is the point of verse 17, which we will plan to take up on August 9. "The gospel . . . is the power of God unto salvation . . . for [= because] in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" - that's why the gospel is the power of God to salvation.

So the question today is: What is this salvation that the gospel so powerfully brings about? "The gospel is the power of God for [unto] salvation." Does this mean, "The gospel is the power of God to win converts"? Now I do think that is true, but I don't think that is what this statement means.

The reason I think it is true that the gospel converts people - brings them to faith and repentance - is because [Romans 10:17](#) says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." And [1 Peter 1:23-25](#) says, "You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. . . . And this is the word which was preached to you." So it is true that we are born of God and converted by means of hearing the powerful word of God, the gospel.

And it's true that this conversion is called "salvation" in the New Testament. For example, [Ephesians 2:8-9](#): "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." So conversion to Christ by faith is called "being saved." If you are a believer in

Christ this morning, you "have been saved." The book of Romans should be precious beyond words to you, because, like no other book in the Bible, it unfolds for you what has already happened in God's saving you - your election, your predestination, your calling, your justification, your sanctification, and the obedience of faith. These are all part of the salvation that is already true of you through faith.

The Final Triumph of the Gospel

But what is the salvation that Paul has in mind in [Romans 1:16](#) when he says, "For [the gospel] is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes"? I think he has in mind not primarily the first event of conversion, but primarily the final triumph of the gospel in bringing believers to eternal safety and joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God. There are four reasons why I think this is what he means. Looking at these reasons is the best way to unpack the meaning of the verse.

1. The power of the gospel is what frees us from being ashamed of the gospel

The first reason is that the power of the gospel to bring about salvation is what frees us from being ashamed of the gospel. "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation." But if this meant only that the gospel has the power to make converts, why would that solve the shame problem? Lots of religions make converts. Lots of different religious and secular movements win people over to their faith. When Paul said that the gospel has such a powerful effect that you don't have to be ashamed of it, did he simply mean that it does what other religions do: win converts? I don't think so.

Jesus triumphed over shame by looking at the future joy that was set before him as he died. I think this is what Paul, as well, has in mind in [Romans 1:16](#). You don't have to be ashamed of the gospel because it doesn't just make converts; it saves those converts utterly. It brings them to final safety and ever-increasing joy in the presence of a glorious and holy God forever and ever. This is what makes us bold with the gospel - not that it can make converts; any religion can do that - but that it is the only truth in the world that can really save people forever and bring them to everlasting joy with God.

2. "Salvation" is future-oriented elsewhere in Paul and the New Testament

The second reason I think "salvation" in verse 16 refers to the final triumph of the gospel in bringing believers to eternal safety and joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God, is that the phrase "for salvation" or "unto salvation" has this future-oriented meaning elsewhere in Paul and other New Testament writers.

For example, in [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#) Paul says, "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." Now

here, salvation is not just what happens at conversion, which leads to sanctification, but salvation is what comes later "through sanctification," and is in the future. In other words, salvation is the future triumph that brings the saint into God's presence with everlasting joy.

Or again, in [2 Corinthians 7:10](#), Paul speaks to Christians who are already converted and saved, but need fresh repentance for their sins: "The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, unto salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." Here again "unto salvation" refers not to conversion, but to the final, future state of safety and joy in the presence of God. (See also [2 Timothy 3:15](#).)

Similarly, [Hebrews 9:28](#) says, "Christ . . . will appear a second time for salvation . . . to those who eagerly await Him." This final, complete salvation happens at the Second Coming. [1 Peter 1:5](#) says, "[Believers] are protected by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." This salvation is "ready to be revealed in the last time." It is not conversion. It is the last great work of God to rescue us and bring us to safety and joy in his presence forever.

In [Romans 5:9-10](#), Paul talks about this future salvation as rescue from the final wrath of God: "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood [that's the present reality of salvation!], we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son [here again is the present reality of salvation!], much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." In other words, the full experience of salvation, in Paul's thinking, is still future. [Romans 13:11](#): "Salvation is nearer to us than when we believed."

So when Paul says in [Romans 1:16](#) that "[the gospel] is the power of God unto salvation," I take him to mean that the gospel is the only message in the world that powerfully can bring a person not just to conversion, but to everlasting safety and joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God.

3. Ongoing belief is the condition for this salvation

The third reason I think "salvation" in [Romans 1:16](#) is the final triumph of the gospel in bringing believers to eternal safety and joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God is that ongoing belief is the condition for this salvation. Notice that verse 16 does not say, "The gospel . . . is the power of God to bring about faith and salvation." It says, "The gospel is the power of God for [unto] salvation to everyone who is believing [present tense in Greek, signifying continuous action]." In other words, Paul's point here is not that the power of the gospel creates faith, but that, for those who have faith, the gospel brings about salvation. So the point is not that the gospel is the power for conversion to faith; the point is that the gospel is the power to bring about future salvation through a life of faith.

The tense of the verb "believe" here is crucial. It signifies ongoing action, not just the first act of faith when you were converted: "The gospel . . . is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who is believing" - who goes on believing. It's the same as [1 Corinthians 15:1-2](#) where Paul says, "I preached to you [the gospel], which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are being saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." Faith that does not persevere is a vain and empty faith - what James calls "dead faith" ([James 2:17, 26](#)).

So the point of [Romans 1:16](#) is that you don't have to be ashamed of the gospel, because it is the only truth in the world which, if you go on banking on it day after day, will triumph over every obstacle and bring you to eternal safety and joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God.

4. Paul says the gospel is for believers, not just unbelievers

The last reason I think this is what "salvation" means in verse 16 is that the verse is given as the reason Paul wants to preach the gospel to believers (not just unbelievers). We've seen this, but look again. In verse 15 Paul says, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." He is eager to preach the gospel to "you" - you believers - not just unbelievers. Then he gives the reason: "because I am not ashamed of it, because it is the power of God unto salvation to all such believers."

So I conclude that the reason Paul is not ashamed of the gospel is that it is the only truth in all the world that will not let you down when you give your life to it in faith. It will bring you all the way through temptation and persecution and death and judgment into eternal safety and ever-increasing joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God. All the other "gospels" in the world that win so many converts will fail you in the end. Only one saves from the final wrath of God and leads to fullness of joy in his presence and pleasures at his right hand forever. Therefore, there is no need to be ashamed of it, no matter what others say or do. And O how eager we should be to speak this gospel to believer and unbeliever alike.

Do You Feed on the Gospel Day by Day?

I close with one huge implication of what I have said. Do you feed your faith day by day with the promises of this triumphant gospel? Do you, as a believer, go to the gospel day by day and savor its power in verses like [Romans 8:32](#), "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" The gospel is the good news that God gave us his Son, so as to obtain for us everything that would be good for us. Therefore the gospel is the power that gives us victory over temptation to despair and to pride and to greed and to lust. The gospel alone can triumph over every obstacle and bring us to eternal joy. Whatever it costs,

stand in it, hold it fast, believe on it, feed on it, savor it, count it more precious than silver or gold. The gospel will save you. And it alone.

I love to tell the story; for those who know it best
seem hungering and thirsting to hear it, like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
'twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.
I love to tell the story,
'twill be my theme in glory
To tell the old, old story
Of Jesus and his love.

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