

HOW DO I GET OVER MY FEAR OF SHARING THE GOSPEL?

Romans 1:15-17

I was trying to remember the first time I shared the Gospel. In 1976, Campus Crusade for Christ launched a nationwide evangelistic campaign called "I Found It". I was a high school sophomore. The campaign included telephone evangelism. I remember several evenings at the church calling through our local telephone directory and sharing the gospel with those willing to listen. I vividly remember how nervous I felt; my heart was racing and my mouth was completely dry I could hardly speak. Truth be told, each time I dialed I hoped nobody would pick up!

I felt bad about myself as a Christian. I believed I should tell others about Jesus but I found it really hard.

Maybe you can relate.

How can we get over our fear of sharing the Gospel?

Please turn with me to Romans 1:15-17.

In 57AD, the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to believers living in the city of Rome, most of whom he had not met; he had never been to Rome (1:13). He wrote in hopes the church family would welcome him, partner with him and serve as his base of operations as he spread the Gospel to the western region of the Roman Empire (15:14-33).

In the opening verses of Romans, Paul introduced himself to the church in Rome. Briefly he shared himself, his gospel and his hope to come to them. In verse 15 Paul shared his eagerness to preach the gospel in Rome.

Romans 1:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

This is an incredible statement in light of Paul's prior experiences preaching the Gospel. On his first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel in a city called Antioch of Pisidia.

Acts 13:49-50 (ESV)

⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

Paul and Barnabas went to a city called Iconium and preached the Gospel.

Acts 14:4-6 (ESV)

⁴ But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. ⁵ When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, ⁶ they learned of it and fled to Lystra...

Paul and Barnabas when to Lystra and preached the Gospel.

Acts 14:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

Do you see a pattern?

This happened also on Paul's second and third missionary journeys yet Paul could still write he was *eager* to preach the gospel in Rome. How was this possible?

Paul continued to be passionate about preaching the Gospel because he witnessed time and again that *God radically transforms people's lives through the Gospel.*

Romans 1:16 (ESV)

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.

The Gospel is not pious theory; it is God's power to deliver men and women from death to life. When a sinner hears the Gospel and lays hold of Jesus by faith, God's power is released into that person's life to forgive, to impute righteousness, to adopt to sonship, to indwell with the Holy Spirit, to renew the mind, to transform to Christlikeness.

Everywhere he preached the Gospel Paul witnessed the power of God at work to radically transform peoples' lives. This is what drove his commitment in spite of the suffering it cost him.

Before being run out of Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas witnessed God's power saving people.

Acts 13:48-49 (ESV)

⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.

Before being driven out of Iconium, Paul and Barnabas witnessed God's power saving people.

Acts 14:1 (ESV)

¹ Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.

Before being stoned in Lystra, Paul witnessed God's power saving people.

Acts 14:20-22 (ESV)

²⁰ But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

What drove Paul to preach the Gospel? Witnessing over and over again the radical transformation God's power produces in peoples' lives through the Gospel.

...it is **the power of God** for salvation to everyone who believes...

We witness it too.

God is still radically transforming people through the Gospel. Ponder the many ways God has transformed your life. Ponder God's power in radically transforming the lives of our brothers and sisters around us. Ponder God's power in radically transforming the lives of our brothers and sisters on Baranganon Island. How do you explain radical changes in character, attitudes, actions, goals and desires? Nothing else in the universe has the power to change lives for the good except the Gospel. Each life was changed by the power of God working through the Gospel. It wasn't self-help. It wasn't self-esteem. It wasn't the power of positive thinking. It is the power of God at work through the Gospel.

Conviction builds courage.

The more convinced we are that *God radically transforms lives through the Gospel* the more courageous we become in sharing the Gospel.

Conviction grows by witnessing the transformation God is so powerfully producing in those who are believing the Gospel.

This truth also has at least one other application.

If the Gospel is the *power of God for salvation* then our job is to share it clearly and lovingly. We don't need to "sell" it or soften it to make it more acceptable to people. We need to trust that when we share the Gospel, God is powerfully at work.

In verse 17, Paul expressed a second reason he was eager to preach the Gospel in Rome.

Romans 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

The Gospel reveals *the righteousness of God*. What does this mean?

The Gospel reveals God's righteousness in His standards of holiness, as revealed by the Law.

The Gospel reveals God's righteousness in that He condemns and punishes sin.

The Gospel reveals God's righteousness by the way in which He saves men, by faith, and by pouring out His wrath on the Lord Jesus, so that sin's penalty is paid.

The Gospel reveals God's righteousness in His gracious act of imputing His righteousness to those who believe on the Lord Jesus.

The Gospel reveals the righteousness of God *from faith to faith* (verse 17). What does this mean?

I understand Paul to be teaching that the righteousness of God is revealed not only when we come to faith in Jesus, but it is also revealed as we live by faith. The Christian life begins with saving faith, and it initiates a life which is characterized by an ever-growing faith. Faith is the means by which we are saved, it is also the means by which, having been saved, we live our lives.

Perhaps an illustration from marriage will help make this clearer. Love is the basis for marriage. Love leads to marriage. Marriage then becomes the context in which a man's love for his wife (and her love for him) grows. Marriage begins with love and continues to grow and express itself in love. Married life is "from love to love," just as the Christian life is "from faith to faith."

This is the point of Paul's quote from Habakkuk 2:4: *The righteous shall live by faith*. The prophet Habakkuk was upset that God was not doing anything about the corruption, violence and wickedness rampant in the Kingdom of Judah in Habakkuk's day. God's response horrified Habakkuk; God was going to discipline His people through the Chaldeans (Babylonians); a people far more wicked and cruel than the Israelites.

Habakkuk was not happy with this plan and "filed" another complaint with God. Despite his displeasure, God assured Habakkuk that His plan was certain and soon in coming. Habakkuk needed to trust that Judah's defeat by the Chaldeans was part of God's good plan and purposes for His people. Habakkuk and every other Old Testament believer, needed to live their daily lives by faith. So also in the New Testament all of us who have been justified by faith must continue to live our daily lives by faith.

Paul continued to be passionate about preaching the Gospel because the Gospel reveals the only way to a right relationship with God.

A right relationship with God is everything. If we don't have a right relationship with God we don't have life, we're slaves to self-centeredness, envy, conflict, gossip, bitterness, hatred etc., and the destruction these things wreak on all our relationships. If we don't have a right relationship with God our ultimate destiny is to experience His wrath in conscious suffering in the Lake of Fire.

Through Jesus, God has made a way for us to be made right with Him. The blessing of being right with God is immediate – peace. And the blessing of being right with God is eternal. There is no other way into a right relationship with God except through Jesus.

Fathers, would you stand idly by as your son fills the crankcase of his car with water? (He heard from a buddy that water works as well as oil and it's a lot cheaper!). Why not? Because you know with certainty that only oil can lubricate an engine and using anything else will destroy the engine.

Certainty builds courage.

The more certain we are that the Gospel reveals the only way to a right relationship with God the more courageous we become in sharing the Gospel.

We grow in certainty as we deepen our understanding of all that God has done through Christ to make us right with Him and as we experience the blessing of being right with God.

Do you find it hard to share the Gospel? In your heart you know you should and you want to, but it's still hard. We're not going to criticize you here at Grace. We want to help each other get over our fear of sharing the Gospel.

Two realities fueled the Apostle Paul's enduring commitment to preach the Gospel:

- **He witnessed time and again that *God radically transforms people's lives through the Gospel.***
- **He knew with certainty that the *Gospel reveals the only way to a right relationship with God.***

Both of these realities apply to us today. Our courage will grow as our conviction and certainty grow.

- **Conviction grows by witnessing the transformation God is so powerfully producing in those who are believing the Gospel.**
- **Certainty grows as we deepen our understanding of all that God has done through Christ to make us right with Him and as we experience the blessing of being right with God.**

QUESTION:

Who do you know up close and personal whose life has been radically transformed by the power of God at work through the Gospel and in what ways has their life changed?

NEXT WEEK: Romans 1:18-32