

## Are You Ashamed? Rom 1:8-17

We are starting a new series today and for the next 3 months or so, we will go through the book of Romans. I encourage you to read through the book as we study and fill in the gaps of what I cover in this deeply theological book. The theme of the Lectureship this year at Harding was the book of Romans. There was so much you could cover. One of the professors said one preacher spent 13 years preaching through Romans and only stopped then...because he died! Another preacher, Lloyd Jones, preached 134 sermons from Romans 8 alone! So, my measly 15-20 lessons will only scratch the surface of what could be preached from in this letter.

When I went to Africa for the first time, we flew into the country of Zambia. I had never been in 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries before and was still getting used to seeing large, stern men with machine guns standing around everywhere. As I got to the official who allows us entry, he takes my passport, looks at it and then looks at me. "You have a famous name. Are you related to the gangster John Dillinger?" How do you answer that question with men standing near you with machine guns, in a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country that probably doesn't have very nice prisons? Nervously, I gulped and cautiously said yes. He replied "cool!" and waved me through. I about had a heart attack.

My family name is well known because we are related to John Dillinger the famous gangster of the 30's. Today, it is a great conversation starter and people think it's cool to be related to him. However, my grandmother applied for a job in the 40's and when they found out she was related to John, they refused to hire her. I talked with some people who said their family changed their name from Dillinger to Dellinger because of what people thought of John. They were ashamed of their name.

For many people, shame is a part of their life. They may be ashamed of their past, they might be ashamed of a relative, they might be ashamed of their racial background, they might be ashamed of their circumstances. Sometimes we are ashamed of things that we should actually be proud of. Sometimes we are proud of things we should be ashamed of.

For a great many Christians, we live under a cloud of shame. We are ashamed of our heritage. Oh, we're not ashamed of the general title of Christian, we are ashamed of the personal aspect of Christian. We don't mind people knowing we are Christians; we just don't want them to think we take our faith too seriously. Too many of us are ashamed of the gospel of Christ on a personal level.

PRAYER

## I. How We Show Our Shame

### A. My Faith is a personal Thing

1. This year, one of our focus areas is to work more on sharing our faith.
2. Too often Christians show their shame rather than share their faith.
3. One thing I have heard over and over again by professed Christians is the new catch phrase, “My faith is a personal thing.”
4. Somehow, we have convinced ourselves that if we say this little magical phrase, it excuses us from sharing our faith with those around us.
  - a) We’re not selling out our faith.
  - b) We’re not denying Jesus.
  - c) We aren’t abandoning God.
  - d) We’re just keeping it to ourselves.
5. If it’s personal it frees us up to live a good life and watch complacently while the world around us goes to Hell.
6. If it’s personal, we don’t have to leave the sanctuary of the sanctuary.
7. If it’s personal I don’t have to risk ridicule or rejection by sharing the gospel with those around me.
8. Another way people hide from sharing faith is the flip side.
9. I don’t believe it’s right to tell others about your faith.
  - a) Not long ago I ran into this thinking again as we were inviting people to our VBS. A person said to me that faith was a personal thing and we were wrong for trying to tell people about our faith. That wasn’t the first time, and I guarantee it won’t be the last time I hear similar words.
  - b) In my daily reading last week, I came across a couple of verses that really fit our discussion.
  - c) 2 Corinthians 5:10–11 (NLT) — 10 For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. 11 Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to

persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too.

d) “We work hard to persuade others.” That sounds an awful lot like sharing our faith with others, doesn’t it?

## B. Bible’s view of a personal faith

1. Let’s see if those concepts match to what the Bible has to say about personal faith.

a) Matthew 5:14–16 (ESV) <sup>14</sup>“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

b) Hmm, that’s cutting a pretty big hole in my argument.

2. Acts 8:1–4 (ESV) — 1 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. 3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them

to prison. 4 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

a) Even under great persecution they shared their faith.

b) It wasn't just the apostles; it was EVERYONE who had been scattered.

3. Philippians 4:9 (NLT) — 9 Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

a) What did Paul tell them to do with what he had taught them?

b) Put it into practice.

4. A personal faith is meant to be shared with those around you. Not to insulate you from everyone.

5. A personal faith is to be lived out among those who don't yet believe.

6. I think the Bible makes it clear that our "personal faith" better not be so personal that we don't share it with those around us.

C. "I love Jesus, I just don't want to get involved in the church"

1. Many want a relationship with Jesus without the responsibility and commitment.

2. Most are even sincere in that profession of love. But in my mind, that's like saying I love Helene, I just don't want to be involved in the marriage and home.

3. Then there are people who claim to be a Christian, but just want to come to church once in a while and that's it.

a) Don't ask me to do anything.

b) Don't call on me for leading in worship.

c) I just want to come and not be hassled.

4. I can't begin to count the number of people who have left a church when the church leaders stressed that service to each other is a mandatory part of Christianity.

5. Romans 1:8 (ESV) — 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

a) They actually had to make their faith visible to be reported all over the world, right?

b) It couldn't be a purely personal faith.

6. James 2 reminds us that you can't claim to have a faith and do nothing to show it by your deeds.

7. Faith and deeds go hand in hand.

8. Jesus reminds us we will be known by our fruit – Matt 7:16

## II. I Am Not Ashamed

### A. Living Lives for Jesus

1. Paul writes, "I am not ashamed of the gospel..." in vs 16

2. The book "Jesus Freaks" is about modern Christians who have been willing to take a stand for their faith in the face of ridicule and even death. One such story was about a converted Russian gangster, Nickolai Kharma. He was converted in a Russian prison and really changed his life around. Sometime later, his minister was arrested for preaching Christianity. They told the preacher that if he didn't turn in the names of all the members of his church he would be executed. He refused. Then the Russian secret police brought in Nickolai. If you don't tell us we'll torture him to death. Just as the minister was about to give in Nickolai to him not to say anything. The policeman threatened to gouge out Nickolai's eyes if the preacher didn't tell. Nickolai looked at him and said, "When they take my eyes, I will see more beauty than any earthly beauty." They gouged out his eyes. Then they said, next we will cut out his tongue. Again Nickolia spoke for the preacher. "Praise the Lord Jesus Christ. I have said the highest words that can be said. Now, if you wish, you can cut out my tongue." Nickolai eventually died a martyr's death.

3. Most of us will never be called on to stand up for our faith with such dire consequences.

4. Our challenge to stand up for our faith will be much less extreme but just as important.

5. Over the last week or so, we have seen and heard a lot about NFL players taking a knee during the national Anthem. Now, I don't want to get into the politics of this, I want to look at the decision one has to make. Would you be willing to take a knee for your faith when everyone else is

standing? Would you be willing to stand alone when everyone else takes a knee or doesn't come out of the locker room?

6. Look at what happened with Tim Tiebow when he took a knee for his faith. He became the butt of ridicule all over the media. Would you be willing to risk your career for your faith?

7. Some will be like Matt, a student at Lipscomb University that was on Survivor several years ago. When he got voted off it was because he went and congratulated the other team for winning. That really ticked off the leader of his tribe. Roughly quoting the leader, "he can do the whole I'm a Christian thing, but when he is nice to the other tribe...not gonna cut it." Later, he said that the nice Christian thing made Matt a dangerous

player because people would respect him too much! I applaud Matt for getting voted out for living his faith in a game of deceit.

8. Some will be like a very few Christians in Hollywood that risk their entire careers because they admit out loud that they want to live for God. It's a stance that makes them an anathema to Hollywood.

9. Some will be like our teens who often take flak for being Christians and actually living up to what they profess.

10. Some will be like Adam, who had to take a stand with his parents while dating Rhyann by saying, "I'm going to church on Sundays." When they wanted him to do other things with them on Sundays.

11. Some are like Anna, who has changed so much over the last few years and admits it's because she is trying to be a better Christian every day.

12. I could go on and on with that type of list, but I think you get the point of how we can live the phrase, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

#### B. Power in the gospel

1. The last half of that verse says, "for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes"

2. I think we sell the gospel short.

3. I know I have said too many times, "oh, that person will never be open to the gospel."

4. How do we know that?

5. Paul tells us it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, not just the ones I think will believe.

6. When I lived in Indianapolis, we ran a bus ministry to the projects next to our church building. One of the families we picked up were 4 kids who had the same mom, but different dads. Our bus driver and wife wanted to study with her and I thought to myself, "Now there's a wasted effort." Wow, was I wrong. God's message of hope and forgiveness rang deep in her heart and she soon gave her life to Christ. As long as I knew her, she remained a faithful growing Christian.

7. Another woman out of the projects was a prostitute that I was studying with. In my heart, I really didn't believe she would become a Christian, but shortly after I moved away she made that final step of giving her life to

Christ. Why? Because she finally realized He had the power to forgive ALL her sins.

8. The power of the gospel can do incredible things as long as we don't make it a "personal faith."

9. Paul ends this thought with verse 17. It ties the righteousness of God to how we live our faith. 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."

10. When we are ashamed of the Gospel, we are ashamed of God.

11. When we live by our faith, we help reveal the righteousness of God.

12. Are you ashamed or proud of your heritage?