

## God Speaks...and His Words Make Us Unashamed

The significance of these two verses cannot be overstated. This text, changed the world. And I'm not exaggerating. It first changed a man, and that man changed the world.

See, 500 years ago a young German monk was ordained into the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. Shortly thereafter he led his first church service. Now I'll tell you there are certainly some nerves in conducting your first worship service. But this young German monk, failed miserably. As he approached the altar he froze in terror, literally paralyzed because he felt so unworthy of such a task. Later on he recalled that he wanted to run away from the altar because he was terrified he'd be judged by God.

Martin Luther feared God but not in a healthy way—indeed he came to hate God, because God in His law demanded a righteousness Luther knew he could not produce. Luther was ashamed. Ashamed of himself. Ashamed of the Word he represented which condemned him. Consequently, although a priest, he lived a life of quiet desperation and growing resentment against the God he was supposed to be serving.

It was not until Luther was led by the Spirit to actually study and read this Word for himself, that he considered the words of St. Paul and found relief. As Luther pondered these words today, that *“the gospel of Jesus”* was indeed *“the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes,”* his life was completely changed. Reflecting back on what this text meant in his life, Luther said this:

***“When by the Spirit of God, I understood these words—‘The just shall live by faith’—then I felt born again like a new man. I entered through the open doors into the very paradise of God.”***

When Martin Luther found this text—or more accurately—when this text found him, it brought him an incredible sense of confidence and peace. God spoke to Luther from the same word with which he speaks to us this morning, and from that time on Luther was unashamed. This is the text that launched a Reformation needed so badly by the world at that time.

You see there was a storm brewing in Luther's day. The authority of the Word of God had been nullified by the authority of men, men who were supposed to be the leaders of the church. They hid the Word of God behind church authority and man-made traditions. They put pressure on people to give up the Word of God and simply accept the teachings of man.

And this bred fear, caused division, it created rebellion. People called for a reformation, called for change. But there were seemingly no answers. There was no unity, only division. Doesn't seem to often be the case, when the Word of God is absent?

The saying goes, “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” If you've been watching the news at all in the past weeks and months, it's pretty hard to ignore what's going on around our country. Division, fear, anger, and protest. People send out a tweet. They kneel before a football game. Many, are seemingly willing to say and do whatever they deem necessary, in order to get their opinions across, and receive what they feel they're entitled to.

It's all a reminder that Satan seeks to exploit every difference in man to drive us apart when we stray from the Word of God and instead look to ourselves for answers.

We have such a good example right before our eyes today of the fact that when a nation is no longer “under God,” and has very little regard for the Word of God, there is nothing to unite it

but selfish motives. And the question that keeps on being asked is what is going to change the division in our country.

There was a storm brewing in Luther's day between different groups of people. There is clearly a storm brewing in our country today as well. And the solution is strikingly similar and simple: **people then needed to hear the Word of God instead of the opinions of man, and they still do today.**

God's Word is powerful. It is a truth which brings calming confidence to Christians whether you're living in a country unified, or a country divided. A country safe from war, or a country resting on the brink of nuclear war.

God's Word, and God's Word alone, takes precedent over all other ideals and principles. God's Word doesn't change, it doesn't lie, and though it is attacked by whatever is culturally current and socially attractive, it does not fail. At a time when the future looks frightening and leadership is struggling, God speaks, and suddenly the storm grows still for those who listen. God speaks and brings a confidence that nothing else can. **God speaks, and his Word makes us unashamed.** So listen to God speaking to you this morning through the apostle Paul:

*<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,<sup>1</sup> just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

Ever heard of a man by the name of Jan Hus? Jan Hus lived in the early 1400's. Like Luther Jan Hus lived under the power of the Catholic Church. Like Luther Jan Hus studied the Word of God for himself and found that only Christ, could remove his shame, only Christ had true authority, only Christ was the head of God's people, the Church. For his believes Jan Hus was arrested, he was tied to a stake and when asked to recant he replied: “I shall die today in the faith of the Gospel I have preached!” Jan Hus knew what Paul meant when he said, ***“I am not ashamed of the Gospel.”***

Consider Paul's past. He had been imprisoned in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica, smuggled out of Berea, ignored in Athens, laughed at in Corinth, stoned and left for dead in Lystra. How does Paul still have motivation to write to Rome? Rome! The heart of the empire. Rome! City of philosophers and poets. Rome! Home to every conceivable idol. Rome! Seat of emperor-worship. Rome! Where they put Christians to death. How is Paul not completely discouraged? The answer to that question is wrapped up in this verse. In the one word: Gospel.

The greek word for Gospel is “*Oingelion*” – translated “*Good news.*” “*Oingelion*” was a word the Romans used to use mostly in relation to the emperor. Supposedly the emperor was the embodiment of divinity, good fortune, and salvation in and of himself! Thus the proclamation of his birth, his coming of age, and especially his decrees and deeds were all heralded by those in Rome as “*Oingelion*,” “good news.” He was the gospel to the Romans...or so they thought.

What's amazing is that Paul is addressing this letter to those in the capital of the empire, beginning by boldly proclaiming another source of “*oingelion*.” But for Paul it was the one and only true source of good news which far surpasses the emperor, in all his might and power. **Because to Paul this “good news” was the “power of God.”**

Christians, this statement and the history behind it is a reminder to us today that there is no human doctrine, or philosophy, or science that can accomplish what the simple message of Christ can do. That's a really important thing to remember when we turn on the news, when we talk to

people we work with, when we discuss the things going on around us in our country with our families, with our children. To a world of hurt, seemingly separated by racial, social, and political divide, there can be unity in the Word and its Savior. God's Word is capable of making that kind of change in the human heart! Because this Word is God's power.

The greek word Paul uses for power here is "*dinamis*," from which we get the English word "dynamic." But the literal translation is the "capability" to do something. The Gospel contains the dynamic power and capability of God. And that's why, my friends, this Gospel made Paul unashamed even as he faced rejection, stoning, beating, and an entire empire of heathens who would eventually imprison and kill him. He was unashamed because he knew God's power in the Gospel was far more capable than any of his enemies.

And it's that same power which makes you unashamed today Christians. God speaks to you in his Word. Where the world tells you not share anything that might not be culturally attractive or socially acceptable, God tells you not to be ashamed of his Word, even if it might offend others. Where the world tells you it is equality of race that will make you free at last, God reminds you that it is the blood of his son which is for all people, Jew and Gentile, slave and free. Where the world causes a storm, God's Word alone has the power to calm it, especially in the lives of his people.

The reformation, as we celebrate it, as we study it over the next couple weeks, isn't really about Catholic church or bashing their teachings. It's about exposing a people who were unwilling to take God's Word for what it was, for what it says. It's about making sure we do not succumb to the same errors which took place 500 years ago when one group of people put pressure on another to give up God's Word, to be ashamed of it, and to accept the opinions of man instead.

Although Luther had been ashamed, it was this final verse in this morning's text which changed that. <sup>17</sup>***For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,<sup>1</sup> just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*** It was this verse, written by Paul, which ultimately shook Martin Luther to the core and brought him to saving faith in Jesus his Savior.

God spoke to Martin Luther, and he made a man unashamed to start a storm which would bring peace to souls throughout the world for 500 years.

God still speaks. Listen to him. Never be ashamed of His gospel. Don't be ashamed to share it with those you meet. And maybe most important of all, don't be ashamed to bring up in your own homes with your own families, spouses, and children. God's Word alone has the power to meet the deepest needs of mankind, even though mankind often doesn't realize it. It can do what politics, social protests, and racial equality can never do. It has the power to wipe away the darkest stain of sin. It has the power to make us realize we're not all that great, that we're entitled to everything. But it also has the power to pick us up, and wrap us in the arms of the Savior our Jesus who washed us clean.

Friends, those who trust in the righteousness that comes by faith will never be put to shame, not in this life or in the life to come. God still speaks, and his Words calm us, even in the darkest storms. Don't be ashamed to listen, don't be ashamed to speak. Amen.

