

READING

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.' Romans 1:16-17

THE GOSPEL / GOOD NEWS

6 times in these opening verses – undergirds the entire epistle

Its character

- the power of God for salvation (16)
- God's initiative (1, 2)
- God's gift of right standing (16)

Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?

Who may stand in his holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart ... (Psalm 24:3,4)

- 'by faith from first to last' (16)
- 'your faith' (8) – faith in a different kingdom; need strong faith to survive as a Christian in this world, whether 1st or 21st century
- not new ('promised beforehand' – 2; quotation from Hab 2:4 – 16)
- Paul here uses one strand of Jewish imagery; that of the coming King who would be God's Son (2 Sam 7:14; Psalm 2:7) – God has finally done it – the King has come!

centered on the person of Jesus Christ (9 times in this passage)

- 'the gospel ... regarding his son' (2, 3)
- Jesus fully human and fully God (3, 4)
- all hinges on his resurrection (4)

Its scope

Universal – the gospel claims the whole world for King Jesus (5, 6)

- 'everyone who believes' (16)
- Jews & Gentiles (16), Greeks and non-Greeks (14), wise and foolish (14), men and women (ch. 16), poor & rich (16:23) – **radical**

Political – quite a claim to make in the very heart of the Roman Empire

- home of Caesar, most powerful man on earth, whose official titles included 'son of the gods', whose birthday was celebrated as 'good news'
- but Paul knows Jesus is the **true** king, the true Son of the true God; his royal house far older than any Caesar's
- resurrection trumps the last weapon of the tyrant and bully – death has been broken, defeated

Personal

- you also are called! (6)
- the gospel is about something which has happened, about what God has done in Jesus ('while we were still sinners, Christ died for us' – 5:8)
- the gospel is not an advertisement for a product we may or may not wish to purchase – it's a matter of call (5, 6) 'to the obedience of faith'; a call from an authority it is foolish to resist
- what place 'obedience' in our modern world?

Its proclamation

- God is sending out ambassadors, apostles (sent ones) (1, 5)
- Prayer (8-10)
- Personal ministry / mutual encouragement (11, 12)
- Fruitful – leading to 'harvest' (13, cf John 4:35 'fields are ripe for harvest')
- Emotional ('I long' – 11; 'I am bound' – 14; 'I am so eager' – 15)

OUR RESPONSE

- 'I am not ashamed of the gospel' (16)
- believe in the gospel as power (16) which continues to work – when the gospel is pronounced, something happens, things change
- the result is salvation – individual, corporate, cosmic; a present reality as well as a future hope
- needs to be believed (4:24, 10:9)
- those who believe are set right with God (17) – Jesus (& faith in him) is how God intends to establish his justice once and for all; eternally in the new creation, but presently through us – 'if you are in Christ, you are a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 Cor 5:17)

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

- 'I am not ashamed of the gospel' – how true is this of you? To the extent that it could be more true of all of us, why is this? What makes us ashamed?
- We call ourselves **Christians** – how Christ-centered are we?
- How Universal and Political is our gospel? Or is it really an individualised gospel – just another way of focusing on 'me?'
- If death is defeated, how should we then live?
- The gospel can only spread through proclamation (life as well as speech) – how good an ambassador are you?
- What does the call 'to the obedience of faith' mean in this individualistic, 'my rights matter' world?
- How firm is your understanding that your right standing before God is a matter of 'faith from first to last?'