

## Romans #9

There are perhaps no statements more familiar from Paul than Romans 1:14-16 where he wrote, *"I am debtor both to Greek and Barbarians, both to the wise and foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."*

When Paul wrote, *"I am debtor"*, he has reference to his apostolic call from Christ. When he wrote Corinthians he strongly argued for the right of gospel preachers to receive support, capping it with this declaration: *"Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel"* (1 Cor. 9:14). Then he explained WHY he had not asked nor accepted support from them! *"I have used none of these things and I write not these things that it may be so done in my case: for it were good for me rather to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me ... for woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel"* (1 Cor. 9:15-16). When Paul said, *"woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel"*, he did not mean he would be lost if he preached some other gospel (although that is true, Gal. 1:6-9), he meant he had an obligation imposed upon him when God called him to preach and woe would be to him if he did not fulfill that call. So, he was a debtor. Styling himself the *"chief of sinners"* who had *"obtained mercy"* because he had done the things he did in ignorance and unbelief; the mercy God showed him when he had been saved became the message he was to preach to all men, especially to Gentiles. He was a debtor.

And Paul was ready. There was a world of difference between Moses and Paul's attitude when each of them received God's commission. Moses was reluctant: *"They will not believe me"; "I cannot speak well"; "send someone else"* -- all these were utterances from Moses. He was a mighty man of God and deserved to have the place in God's "hall of faith" he has in Hebrews eleven, but he had to be "jump started"! Not Paul! When the blinding light overwhelmed Paul on the Dasmaskan road and Jesus said *"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"* Paul asked, *"Who art thou, Lord?"* And when Jesus responded, *"I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest"*, Paul's response was immediate: *"What wilt thou have me to do, Lord?"* There was no "dilly-dallying" with Paul. He arose and went and kept on going until a Roman executioner severed his head from his body! He was ready. Are we?

*"I am not ashamed!"* Jesus said, *"For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels"* (Mk. 8:38). Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. Well he should not have been for therein has life and immortality been brought to light (2 Tim. 1:1). The gospel of Christ ("*good news*" concerning Christ) is the power of God unto salvation! "*The*" is a definite article, one. One gospel. The gospel is singled out as God's power to save. Nothing else can.

The gospel (equivalents: word, truth, testimony) is something none can be ashamed of and be saved. Paul warned Timothy, *"Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner"* (2 Tim. 1:6). Are we ashamed of Jesus? Let's put it another way. Are we ashamed of anything Jesus teaches? Think hard. If we are ashamed of anything which Jesus teaches, we are ashamed of Christ and he will be ashamed of us when he comes. Remember, Christ does not need us to live, for he is the "*living one*". He can live without us, but we cannot live without him!

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