

Compelled  
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Romans 1:1-7,13-17

Think about “milestones” in life. What was your latest “milestone?” How did you celebrate it? Where do we learn about them today? Are you ever amazed at how much some people share? (Lewis Grizzard: *“I don’t believe I’d a tol’ that!”*) Some things we might be ashamed to share, but other milestones we just MUST share.

When the big things in life (both joyous and sad) happen, the news winds up in almost every conversation or communication. We just have to tell it! The most significant news in the life of the Apostle Paul happened on the road to Damascus and he was not only excited, but also compelled and called to tell it.

Big Idea: Christ’s transforming power is so great we HAVE to share it with others!

- Paul’s letter to the Christ-followers in Rome has been called his “magnum opus.” Though in the form of a letter, it’s more of a “closing argument” for the gospel and how to live the Christian life. Let’s start with verses 1-7:

**1** Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>5</sup> through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, <sup>6</sup> including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, <sup>7</sup> To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- No one has ever packed more important information into the “greeting” of a letter than Paul did in this “run on” sentence, verses one through seven.
- Ancient letters began with the name of the sender. Today we have letterhead. **What is purpose of both? Who? Why? Should I?**
- **Based on verse one, what were Paul’s credentials? Who was he?**
- **The ESV says Paul was a servant. What does your version say?**
- Doulos – “means slave, a person owned by another. Paul wore this title gladly (Gal. 1:10; Titus 1:1), reveling in the Old Testament picture of a slave who in love binds himself to his master for life (Ex. 21:2–6).”<sup>i</sup>
- Apostle – “**apostolos**; from 649; *a messenger, one sent on a mission*”<sup>ii</sup>
- Paul, a slave and messenger, set apart for the “good news” of the gospel.
- Even in stating his credentials, Paul couldn’t help but preach the gospel!
- God’s plan to send Jesus Christ (the anointed one/Messiah) was put in motion before history began and told of by God’s prophets in scripture.
- Verses 3-5: **What do we learn about Jesus and what He does for all mankind? What mission did Jesus give to Paul? What equipping?**
- Finally, in verses six and seven Paul states “to whom” this is written.
- In those verses, **what was special about them that also applies to us?**
- Saints – “sanctified one,” set apart by the Holy Spirit at salvation.
- J. Vernon McGee- *“There are two types of people: saints and ain’ts!”*
- As was typical of Paul’s letters, he prayed for them to have the “grace and peace” that only comes from God the Father and Jesus, His Son.
- Paul wasn’t just being polite or charming; he was rounding out the gospel message. Peace can only come through salvation

and salvation only comes through grace (the undeserved favor of God) through faith.

- Apparently none of the apostles in Jerusalem had yet visited the Roman church (likely a collection of “home churches”) and from verses eight to twelve Paul explained how he longed to visit them.

Romans 1:13–17 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. <sup>14</sup> I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. <sup>15</sup> So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

- He had heard about their faith, was praying for them, and wanted to have face to face fruitful ministry with these followers of Christ in the capital city.
- Now we come to two of the most powerful verses in all of scripture.
- Paul has just stated that he was called and eager to share the good news of the saving grace of Christ with both Jews and Gentiles (all people.)
- Now he gives his most compelling reason for his evangelistic zeal:

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

- Isn't verse sixteen a convicting verse? In my mind Paul's unwritten challenge is: “I'm not ashamed of the gospel, are you?”
- Now I don't believe a truly saved saint would really be ashamed of the gospel, it's really another “a” word: “a-fraid.” **What are we afraid of?**
- A truly saved saint isn't ashamed of the gospel but we might be ashamed of being afraid to share it. Assuming you didn't “pack

for a guilt trip” today, rest assured that those fears are very real for most Christ-followers.

- Surveys by George Barna and others confirm that struggling with sharing our faith is a common problem. (Stats below if you'd like to read them)
- Many Christians struggle with sharing, but that can't be a “free pass.”
- So how can we get better at sharing our faith? There are many great resources and training available for us including right here at FBCW.
- First we must let our “lights shine” (Mt. 5:16) living in a way that invites and intrigues people to be open to hearing what Christ has done for us.
- Ever seen someone attempt to shine their light but their approach was so “hot” it burned the “prospect?” **How can we avoid that? Dos/don'ts?**
- Here's a great suggestion from an article on this topic: *“A study of the Gospel of John will show that the key to successful witnessing is love. Jesus loved people to the point of accepting the cross and separation from the Father. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can learn to love people more. When we do, we will be more motivated to share the gospel, since our desire to save people from eternal punishment will grow. Love compels us to communicate the good news. The Holy Spirit will open doors for us by convicting people of their sin and stirring up a desire for salvation, and He will arrange for our paths to cross. Our job is simply to speak with people and explain that salvation is available to every sinner, and to present the good news of salvation.”*<sup>iii</sup> (Link to full article below)
- Living a godly life is fundamental, but we have to actually speak to people about what Christ has done in our lives and what scripture promises for them too. Writing and memorizing a short testimony can really help. (More links to articles below)
- Back to verse sixteen, Paul gives us the most compelling reason to share the gospel: “...it is the power of God for salvation.” This isn't about our persuasiveness, but God's power. The gospel has supernatural power!
- Verse seventeen is the other key verse in Romans. Regarding the gospel message Paul wrote: <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of

God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

- Paul was quoting the prophet Habakkuk (2:4) and making the point that the only way to be covered by the righteousness of God is by FAITH!
- “From faith to faith” means from start to finish. Salvation starts with faith, ends in faith, and is all about faith everywhere in between.
- The NLT restates it: <sup>17</sup> This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”<sup>iv</sup>
- This verse gripped the heart of Martin Luther and crystalized his understanding of salvation. Luther was an angry Catholic priest and monk all about keeping rules and trying to be good enough to win God’s favor.
- One writer recounts: *“To find peace with God, Luther zealously confessed every sin he could think of. He would confess every day, sometimes up to six hours a day...Luther was never certain that he had been fully forgiven. Always present was the fear: Have I confessed every sin?”*
- Luther *“was teaching a course on the Psalms [and] he came to Psalm 71, and was struck by the psalmist’s cry in verse two, “Deliver me in your righteousness, and cause me to escape.” Now, for Luther, the righteousness of God spoke of God’s awesome holiness and his judgment of sinners, not deliverance.”<sup>x</sup>*
- Trying to understand the verse in Psalm 71, Luther came upon Romans 1:17. Luther wrote: *“The righteousness of God which is revealed by the gospel, is a passive righteousness with which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.”*
- *“Luther realized that salvation was not at all a matter of his attaining the perfect standard of righteousness which God demanded, but simply, by faith, relying upon Christ’s righteousness.”<sup>vi</sup>*
- What a discovery! Luther finally got it! I don’t have to earn my salvation I simply have to trust that Jesus paid the price on the

cross! It's not about my efforts it's all about FAITH. Through faith anyone can be IN CHRIST.

- Luther said, "*Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.*"<sup>vi</sup> Luther was born again and the Protestant reformation was born in his heart. Talk about a milestone to tell everyone about. Luther had one!
- Do we all truly embrace what Luther embraced? Do we really believe that salvation isn't about performance but faith? That we can be covered with Christ's righteousness simply by faith in Him?
- **Any thoughts on that story about Martin Luther's discovery in Romans 1:17? How does it speak to you? How does it encourage you? How about the challenge in verse 16 not to be ashamed? What steps can we all take to help with sharing in spite of fear?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Christ's transforming power is so great we HAVE to share it with others!
- If we're truly saved we won't be ashamed to share how others can be too, but we might be afraid.
- In 2020 let's challenge ourselves to commit to learning about how to have those conversations with those around us.
- Let's ask God to make us winsome and loving, not harsh and repulsive.
- Let's compose and memorize our story to share but always with the message of the gospel from scripture.
- Let's remind ourselves that the gospel message contains the "power of God for salvation for everyone who believes."

Articles on sharing our faith:

<https://billygraham.org/story/sharing-your-faith-101/>

<https://unlockingthebible.org/2018/08/how-to-get-over-your-fear-of-sharing-the-gospel/>

<https://www.cru.org/us/en/blog/share-the-gospel/evangelism/overcoming-fears-excuses.html>

- George Barna updated a survey on this in 2018. Regarding the statement, *“Every Christian has a responsibility to share their faith.” In 1993, nine out of 10 Christians who had shared their faith agreed (89%). Today, just two-thirds say so (64%)—a 25-point drop.*<sup>viii</sup>
- What about barriers to sharing? *“Christians today, more than 25 years ago, perceive social barriers to sharing their faith. They are more likely to agree that faith-sharing is only effective when they already have a relationship with the other person (47% vs. 37% in 1993) and to admit they would avoid a spiritual conversation if they knew their non-Christian friend would reject them (44% vs. 33%).”*<sup>ix</sup>
- Roxanne Stone, Barna’s editor in chief: *“So what’s happening here? Why are Christians so reluctant to talk about their faith? The overarching cultural trends of secularism, relativism, pluralism and the digital age are contributing to a society that is less interested in religion and that has marginalized the place of spirituality in everyday life,”* continues Stone. *“As a result, Christians in America today have to live in the tension between Jesus’ commands to tell others the good news and growing cultural taboos against proselytizing.”*<sup>x</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Witmer, J. A. (1985). [Romans](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible*

<sup>ii</sup> Thomas, R. L. (1998). [New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition](#). Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-witnessing.html>

<sup>iv</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ro 1:17). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>v</sup> <https://equip.sbts.edu/publications/towers/luthers-timely-discovery-merciful-god/>

<sup>vi</sup> *ibid*

<sup>vii</sup> *ibid*

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.barna.com/research/sharing-faith-increasingly-optional-christians/>

<sup>ix</sup> *ibid*

<sup>x</sup> *ibid*