

I am not Ashamed... of the Gospel – Romans 1:16

This week has been an interesting week for me as I have been pondering scripture. In doing so it has become apparent to me that I am not Ashamed of being a male of European extraction who's struggled with the heat and its associated tiredness, even grumpiness. God didn't just make me a Pakeha male who is a husband, father, uncle, Pastor and friend, but he also made me in his image to primarily enjoy, I believe, worshipping him in a temperature range of about 12 to 22⁰ Celsius where the overnight temperate never rises above 18⁰ Celsius. Because I know who I am and how God made me, which includes being a little tired, listless and grumpy in this kind of overly humid climate.

Because it's been so hot this week I've been dressing in light summer clothes including shorts and sandals. So the other day when I went visiting at Possum Bourne Village I was dressed for the temperature. When I arrived there it was a halleluah moment because I found a park reasonable easy. Followed by an 'Oh No' moment because I had forgotten my work sandals. I don't wear them when driving and usually have them at my feet to put on, but this day I look down and they weren't there because I'd left them in the garage and for some reason didn't put them in. I've got nothing to wear on my feet. I'll have to drive home to get them to dress decently and avoid the shame and embarrassment. But then I thought there's not enough time, and hey it's summer, what the heck I'm OK with this I'll just act like everything's normal, and so I did. I'm pretty sure only about three people noticed and it didn't bother me. I am not ashamed visiting barefoot, I mean you normally take you footwear off at people's doors anyway.

Another thing that happened this week was my continued sharing the enjoyment of the Waikato Police Posts with my wife. Three weeks ago I saw this post of a picture with four signs on a power pole top to bottom, Police Station, Bail Street, then No exit, under that the accommodation sign with a bed on it. The following week they posted this item that made the national news –

Three Tips to always Prevent a Speeding Fine

1. **Look closely at the signs on the road that show you the speed limit.** The number indicated is the maximum speed you can travel at whether you're on foot, bike or in a car.
2. **Try to locate your car's speedometer.**

You normally find it somewhere in front of the driver's seat, on the dashboard. It has an arrow pointing to the number that reflects the car's speed. On newer cars, the speed is sometimes displayed digitally, with numbers.

3. This last point is also the hardest. **Adjust your speed according to the number shown on the road sign.**

The police cannot fine you if you do not drive over this number. "Strangely, there seem to be surprisingly too few who are aware of this simple yet genius trick. And best of all, if you stick to it, you'll never have to pay a speeding fine ever again."

There was a lot of mixed reaction to this facebook post. I love it and shared it with KJ because I am one driver who is constantly voicing, "What speed zone am I in now?" It appealed to me because it was a really good humorous reminder that I will not forget. So this week after sharing this post and learning from it I receive a letter in the post or I should say my first ever speed camera infringement notice for travelling 56km's hour in a 50km zone. Which I must say has served to cement my learning. It was on Sylvia Road on a dark wet day when I was asking the question, "What speed zone am I in now?" The thing was, although I felt like "Oh no I have broken the law and as a result I will now have to pay my fine of \$30". Having already discussed with KJ previously about my driving habits and the need for improvement, I actually did not feel ashamed. I was encouraged to continue to work further on changing my driving habits so that I never receive another speeding fine again. But it is more than that. I have transgressed the law, I have confessed my sin to you and can happily say, I am not above redemption. I am repentant but not ashamed. For when the God of the universe broke into my life revealing himself to me and introducing me to his son Jesus Christ who has come to earth to live, die and rise again so that he might save me from my sin. And since confessing Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord, the Boss of my life, things have changed.

Earlier in my ministry I would have been crippled by the fact that I'd received a speeding fine and would not wanted to show my face in the church but now, like walking into a resthome home complex in bare feet, the power of God's love and forgiveness has helped me to be able to let things go so that shame does not overwhelm, let alone cripple me.

It is a bit like that when I was brought up as the Youngest child in my extended family where I was constantly told that “little boys are seen but not heard” it was a huge thing for me as a new born again Christian to begin witnessing to my faith with any one who asked a question or wanted to listen, let alone voice my concerns in a public form on an issue such as, for the first time making a public submission against Government MP David Seymour’s proposed Euthanasia Bill. As a follower of Christ I am not ashamed to speak against such evil that craves death rather than life. Life, which is what God, Jesus and our relationship with them is all about. So all these are things that I’m not ashamed of, but then there is the other side, the things that I am ashamed of.

This week with the thought of launching back into my work here for 2018 I must confess, later one evening I began eating for comfort, and not the best food either. Even though the LORD by the Holy Spirit has constantly told me, if your burdened, feeling stressed or overwhelmed, come to me. And in my case there has been the regular encouragement/admonishment, “Man does not live on bread, cake, biscuits, chips, chocolate, lollies and sugary drinks **alone**, but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God” This habit coupled with a tendency when if I receive a sudden surprise, that comes as a shock and includes intense physical pain I have been known to swear. Got it down to about 50-50 and mostly I swear at home and not in public. But these two things remain weaknesses that I am ashamed of. This takes me back to the second week that I preached here after arriving at Drury. I spoke on Paul’s words ‘I am the worst of sinners’ and my position has not changed. I am still the worst sinner I know - Gluttony, swearing, nothing to be proud of, but instead ashamed.

Apart from the fact that each and everyone of you can continue to encourage people to join us no matter who they are or what they’ve done or continue to do, they should not feel judged and in fact be more than at home at DPC “because the guy up front has confirmed in 2018 that he is still the worst sinner he knows, so you’ve got nothing to worry about. Come along and join in with us and learn from this guy who is as desperate as anyone to be the recipient of God’s grace and mercy as we live and worship together.” ...God’s love which convicts of right and wrong, allowing me to turn to and confess my sins to the Lord and experience the power of God that the Spirit of salvation brings –the peace and the joy.

So, in spite of these things, along with Paul who declared himself as the worst sinner I too can declare... *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.*

Paul when he wrote to the Roman Christians had not yet visited Rome. He's on his third missionary Journey and already thinking and planning for number four. In the opening verses of Romans Paul has confessed to the church there his fervent desire to come and preach in person the Gospel in the capital city of the Roman Empire. In our verse today Paul, although an imperfect follower of Christ, is giving his reason for this overwhelming zeal, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

Think about his 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.

So Paul, how can you even dare to come to Rome with a record like that? Rome: The heart of the empire; built on war; Rome-Home to every conceivable idol and the seat of the emperor ping as God; Rome the Centre of intellectual arrogance and revered as the Greatest city in the world.

Paul, what makes you think you can survive in such a place? The answer to that question is wrapped up in the Greek Words for *I am not ashamed*, and the Word of God himself. Paul has learnt a lot from his Lord Jesus since that first encounter on the road to Damascus. He has come a long way. He knows what to do with the shame put on him by others... Romans, cultured Greeks who mocked him for preaching foolishness and all the unbelieving Jews who ridiculed him as preaching a false Christ, and everyone else.

What did Jesus do with all shame from others shaming behaviour? What did Paul do with it? What would you do with it? Hebrews 12:2b tells us what Jesus did with it: "For the joy set before Him he endured the cross, *despising the shame*, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus despised the shame.

What does that mean? It means that when shame began to threaten his heart and to tempt him to abandon a clear and obedient witness to God and to the gospel, he said to shame, "Shame, I despise you. I will not give way to you. I will not yield to you any satisfaction. You may do with me whatever you please, in

the short run **but** I will not obey you or follow you or give in to you. I despise you, shame and you will not rule me."

How could Jesus do that and how can you and I like Paul do that? Hebrews says Jesus did it "for the joy that was set before him." Shame was stripping away every earthly support that Jesus had: his friends gave way in shaming abandonment; his reputation gave way in shaming slander; his decency gave way in shaming nakedness; his comfort gave way in shaming torture. So, if his present supports were all being stripped away in shaming persecution, how did he not give up and give in to shame? Hebrews 12 says... he set his heart not on the supports of the present, but on the joy of the future where very soon he would "sit down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Though he was being shamed, Jesus was not ashamed of his God and Father. Why? Because God had power to save him from death and give him the all-satisfying glory at his right hand forever! And this is the same power of God that brings salvation to all who believe. To Paul, to me, to you, to everyone who will believe.

In truth, when we apply this to our own lives, sadly for too many of us Christ followers the reality is that we are ashamed of something. So, if anything: 1. What are you ashamed of? You fill in the gap... Now, I have good news, whatever it is Jesus is here and can help you in this area of your life... if you'll let him. He wants in!

2. The bigger question remains, in any way shape or form, are you ashamed of the Gospel? ...If you are, it is something to repent of and ask the LORD's help, believing through the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes that God will work afresh in your life today. God did not give you a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind/self-discipline. God gives us the good things we ask for, even boldness to share. As you get older maturing in the faith boldness combined with wisdom should be well cultivated in your daily walk with the LORD. You and I may not have to die for our faith but with a little touch of the power of God as Paul believed and received we can zealously proclaim the gospel anywhere, anytime that we're lead to.

Closing Story: Rachel Joy Scott the first student killed in the Columbine High School Shooting on April 20, 1999 has had a movie made about her called 'I am not ashamed' that tells her

inspiring true story. Apart from the movie what was the fruit of her belief, action and not being ashamed of the gospel that fateful day? Well, the two killers did not come to the LORD, they died and went straight to hell, but, a whole bunch of people have, as a result of her Father's ministry, turned to the LORD, even preventing some from such action as the two teenage gunmen. And I am sure more are destined to be lead to follow Christ after watching the movie and hearing Racheal's testimony.

She was not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: As a martyred witness Rachel's story is a moving example of the difference just one committed Christian can make in the lives of people around her. Not just while alive but also in death, for her which was not in vain.

What would the Church look like, what would DPC look like and become if everyone of us could wholeheartedly proclaim like Paul, like Racheal- 'I am Not Ashamed of the Gospel? To finish: From a believing heart can you say this with your mouth? If you can join me now...

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes"

So let's go out into the world and live this and just see what God will do in our lives, the lives of others and the life of this fellowship in 2018!