

Adam Sandiford

The message this week is titled obligated, eager and not ashamed. The scripture reading is Romans 1:8-17.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is being reported all over the world. God whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his son is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times. And I pray that now at last, by God's will, the way may be opened for me to come to you. I longed to see so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong. That is that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware brothers and sisters that I planned many times to come to you, but have been prevented from doing so until now, in order that I might have a harvest among you just as I have had among the other Gentiles. I'm obligated both Greeks and non Greeks both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. 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. For in the Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. A righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith.

Don Smith

Morning, everyone. Happy to have you with us this morning. Not everyone's ministry begins in a blaze of glory. In fact, some almost finished before they started. One of my favorite preachers of all time, is Lynn Anderson. Lynn's been with us a few times in my time being here in Gainesville, wonderful, wonderful preacher of the gospel back in 1972, when he was hired by the church in Highland, I think there were some people here today who were there back in their early 70s. Lynn, a Canadian, begins his ministry at this church. And it just happened at a time when the preaching of the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, which we take for granted today was really controversial. That for many people, especially within the churches of Christ, the teaching was that when the Bible was fully completed, fully written, that the Bible itself is the Holy Spirit. While we've advanced since then, we believe very strongly the personal and indwelling of God's Holy Spirit in our life. The Holy Spirit testifies to our own spirit, Paul says, but at the time, it was very controversial. So the elders fired him. He just started and they fired him. But there was such an uprising within the congregation, people who loved Lynn that within a couple of days the elders re hired Lynn, to be the pulpit minister and he had a long and wonderful prosperous ministry at the Highland church. Thank goodness for that. Not everyone's ministry begins in a blaze of glory. One of my favorite preachers to this day is Dr. Charles Stanley. And you may watch him on Sunday mornings early or other times throughout the week, is a very tall lanky individual, a man in his 80s. But when his ministry first started, he was there with them for a little while and he began to preach. And after a trial period, it came down to making a decision as to whether or not they were going to keep him as their minister. And it came down to three people. One of them said, yes, one of them said no. And the third one said, I don't know. And luckily, there was enough encouragement by the congregation itself. That the said yes. And it's been a fruitful, amazing, wonderful ministry not everyone's ministry begins in a blaze of glory. Chuck Swindoll and other outstanding minister of the gospel was somehow considered a swashbuckling preacher, because he would be invited to churches to preach but he wouldn't arrive in a car he arrived in arrived driving his Harley Davidson motorcycle. And a lot of people didn't think that's what a minister should do. And so his auspicious beginning didn't start very, very well. There were a lot of cancellations. And over the years he sir, preach the gospel in many places throughout the world. Even

my own personal ministry when I first started preaching on a full time basis, was somewhat controversial. I became a preacher not through the ways that it usually was back when I first started 19- Oh, you don't want to know when but a long time ago I didn't go to one of those schools, I went to my own kind of thing with my own teacher that I really enjoyed and several other teachers that I enjoyed just not everyone's ministry begins in a blaze of glory saying all that to say this. Paul's ministry was suspect, right from the beginning.

Think of this. You're in a congregation. And you hear that the Apostle Paul is going to be coming to preach. And instead of being excited, you're very upset. Because you knew this man before he was an apostle. He was Saul, and he was hurting Christians. He was even giving thumbs up to death for Christians. And maybe you have a loved one who was put to death and Paul was responsible for your loved ones death and now he's coming to your church to preach not everyone's ministry begins in a blaze of glory. Paul, I think because of the Holy Spirit because of his love for Jesus and the strength that God gave him, would stand up and preach the gospel. And I was looking at a passage of scripture in Romans chapter one that I never really paid attention to. And its first 14, verse 15 and verse 16. And I'd like to read them to you. Verse 14, this is Paul speaking. He said, I am obligated, both to Greeks, and non Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. In other words, he's saying, I am obligated to preach the gospel to everyone. I even though at one time, I had people thrown into prison and even put to death. Now, I am absolutely obligated to everyone to preach the gospel. And then in verse 15, he says, that is why I am so eager to preach the gospel, also to you at roll, and obviously it's Romans, so that would be wrong. And then verse 16, he said, I am not ashamed of the gospel. I don't care how my beginning started. I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God for salvation to all who believes. First for the Jew, then for the Gentile, for the gospel of righteousness from God is revealed. From first to last, just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith, I'm not ashamed. So I just want to spend a little bit of time talking about this.

Paul's background is mentioned several times in the Bible. I'll look at a brief one in First Timothy one and First Timothy chapter one verses 12 through 14, First Timothy 1: 12 through 14. It's a very brief section. Paul as he writes to his son in the faith, if you will, not a physical son, but an adopted son, Timothy wanted to be a preacher. He's following Paul's footsteps. Paul writes letters to Timothy to encourage him, and he's telling Timothy his own story. And so Paul says this, I think Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. Amazing. After everything that I said, did Paul saying God is appointing me. Verse 13, even though I want was a blasphemer, a blasphemer, we don't use that word today. And it was fun, this week trying to dissect that word. What does that mean? Because we know the word blaspheme. But what does it really mean? It's profane talk, showing contempt to the Lord. Paul is now preaching on behalf of the Lord. He's preaching Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though one time he used to call down curses on Jesus Christ. He blasphemed. I'm a persecutor. I was a violent man, he said, but I was shown mercy, because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. It's almost as if Paul is saying, what else would I do? How could I live my life one second, after I became a Christian, remembering how I treated others, how I treated Christians. Who's ever going to believe me? But Christ believed in me, and that's enough. And I'm just going to tell my story. And people's lives were never the same. Not everyone's ministry begins in a blaze of glory.

But if it blesses others, to God be the praise. I am obligated. He said to Greeks, and non Greeks, I'm obligated to everyone. The first book that Paul writes, is to a number of churches in the province of Galatia. And in Galatians, chapter five verses one through six. It's really interesting how Paul said what he says to a group of Christians in the province of Galatia, knowing that they know his story, and what's he going to say? And the problem that was happening, even right from the beginning of the early church, is that there were people who said, Okay, I'll believe in Christ and become a Christian. But by the way, I need to obey all the ceremonial laws in the Old Testament. I need to keep the holy days, I need to do all these things that were supposed to be done. So I got to keep all the laws, all the commandments, and have Christ as well. And Paul says, No way. You cannot add one thing to the Gospel. The Gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus and putting our faith in him. And we're not obligated to keep ceremonial laws anymore and he writes strongly about this, and he says in Galatians, five verses one through six. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. And I was thinking about that rather early this morning. It sounds good, it's for freedom that Christ has set us free. I don't want you to answer out loud. But here's the question. Do you? Do you feel free? Has Christianity set you free? Has Christ helped you to get rid of all those obligations that you thought you had to keep? Has Christ set you free from the sins that still burden you? Even though Christ has said you're forgiven? Do you feel free to share the gospel to others by your life? And so Paul says things that he himself was experiencing. And now 2000 years later, his message is as relevant today, as back then. We carry a lot of guilt. And Christ comes to say, I've taken care of it. He said, it is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, and do not let yourselves be burdened again, by a yoke of slavery, don't go back to that old way of life. And then he says this, mark my words, exclamation point, I, Paul tell you, that if you let yourselves be and he's just giving one example circumcised was back in the Old Testament, based on the covenant that God had with Abraham Jewish Men were to be circumcised at eight days of eight days old. And that was something that Christians felt like had to continue to this day. Paul says no, mark my words, I tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised thinking this is the right way to get to God, Christ will be of no value to you. Very strong talk.

Again, I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised, that he is obligated to obey the whole law. Well good luck with that. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ, you have fallen away from grace, but by faith, we eagerly await through the Holy Spirit, the righteousness for which we hope for in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcised or any of those old laws has any value, the only thing that counts, and you want to say this out loud with me, the only thing that counts is faith, expressing itself through love. And there's the message for us. Paul said, I was obligated in my own soul to live a certain way, and I was going in the wrong direction. The obligation we have is to be in Christ. And that's why I think John 3:16 is one of our popular scriptures. For God so loved the world, and we put our names there. For God so loved the world, that he gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. And then we got to say, that's right. But we need to do this, this, this, this, this, this, this. Well, maybe there's some things that we need to do, but it's not going to forgive of our sins. Christ has taken care of that, and so we're obligated to receive this and obligated to share it.

The second thing that he says Paul says is, I am eager. I am eager to preach the gospel in Romans chapter 10. If you want to look at that with me, Romans 10, verses 12 through 17. Paul talks about this to this church at Rome, and he says some pretty beautiful things about the gospel. He says this, for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. Let's just stop it right there. If you were of Jewish origin in the

first century, and you kept the laws that you are obligated to keep that even before you left the house in the morning, the way you washed what you had to do in the house, and before you left the house, how you touched the door mantles of the house before you walk out of the house, and all the rules that you kept while you're in the house before you left the house, don't say that Jew and Gentile are like, they had all kinds of traditions, all kinds of laws that were really so far away between Jew and Gentile. It's almost as if God is saying, okay, here's your life, Jewish Christian. Now take a look at the very opposite of yourself. And that person is going to be your brother, because of Christ. And it's almost unfathomable. We don't really get it today, but it would have been just unbelievable. Like, really? There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. And I think if I was either one back in that first century, I'd have to read this 1000 times. Really, really, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Even those people who drive you crazy. Not that we would ever drive anyone crazy. It's this welcome, for all. And I wonder if we take for granted what we have been given? Because he says in verse 14, how then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how could they can believe in the one who whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent and not everyone's ministry begins in a blaze of glory and it's written

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. But not all the Israelites accepted the good news for even Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? So consequently he says, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Jesus Christ. So Paul said, I am obligated to preach, I am eager to preach. And then lastly, he says, I am not ashamed. I'm not ashamed of Jesus. I'm not ashamed of God. I'm not ashamed of the Holy Spirit. I'm not ashamed of teaching. I'm not ashamed of believing. I'm not ashamed of baptism. I'm not ashamed of living a righteous life. I'm not ashamed that even sometimes I've been thrown in prison. And I'm not ashamed for suffering for Christ. In our Wednesday evening small group, we spent some time several months ago talking about suffering because of Christ. And Paul said something unique when he said that it was an incredible experience to suffer for Christ, that somehow, listen, that somehow we were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. They considered it a blessing to suffer for Christ, because it made them feel closer to him. It made them feel closer to him, he suffered for them. So when we suffer, especially for Christ, it gives us the opportunity to move even closer to Him, and Paul talks about this in a profound way. In Second Timothy, chapter one, verses five through 12. He says this. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for the Holy Spirit of God. For the Holy Spirit of God gave what he gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace, this grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death, and is brought to life and immortality to light through the gospel. And of this gospel, I was appointed a herald and an apostle and the teacher. And that's why I'm suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and I'm convinced that he's able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day. What you've heard from me keep as a pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus, guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you, guarded with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you. Then he says, you know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me included, and I know I'm going to try to pronounce their names. And then a verse 16. He says, may the Lord show mercy to the household of

Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. And he was not ashamed of him. Paul's three great I ams: I am obligated. I am eager, and I am not ashamed. So I started the message today with not everyone's ministry begins in a blaze of glory. But if you were to ask Lynn Anderson, if you were to ask Charles Stanley, if you were to ask Chuck Swindoll has it been worth it? All the controversy that surrounded the beginning of your ministry, the many, many years that you've been in ministry, which is not an easy project.

Has it been worth it? Without a doubt, they would stand up and say, I can't imagine any other life. Not ashamed of the gospel, a gospel that welcomes all to come to you. May God bless our faith, that no matter what is happening in our life, God's got our back and he's never gonna let us go. Amen.

Adam Sandiford

Thanks for listening to this week's sermon. The Beamsville Church of Christ meets Sunday mornings at 4900 John Street, Beamsville, Ontario. We have classes for all ages at 9:30 and the worship service begins at 10:30. You can subscribe to podcasts through Apple podcasts, Google Play Music Store or your favorite podcast app. Just search for Beamsville. All our past sermons and more information about our congregation are available and [beamsvillechurchofchrist.ca](https://beamsvillechurchofchrist.ca).

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