

If Only We All Felt This Way

by Bryan Gibson

Here is a question for all those who preach the gospel. Do you feel the same way about it that Paul did? Read closely: “I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:14-16).

His attitude is revealed in the three “I am” statements—let’s take a closer look.

“I am a debtor...” or, “I am under obligation...” (NAS). Why did he feel such an obligation? For one, he was commissioned by the Lord to preach the gospel (Acts 26:16-18). It was his duty (and ours) to take the gospel to a lost and dying world. But don’t think for a minute that he was merely “doing his duty.” It was a labor of love—for the Lord and for the souls of men (Romans 9:1-3; 10:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:8). Too, Paul felt like he owed people the chance to experience the same blessings in Christ he did (Philippians 3:7-8). When King Agrippa said, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian,” Paul replied, “I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains” (Acts 26:28-29).

“I am ready...” or, “I am eager...” (NAS). Paul was eager to pay off his debt. Rome was one place he had been hindered from going (Romans 1:10-13), so he was very anxious to go there and preach the gospel. Now, before we declare ourselves ready, let’s think about a couple things. First, we can’t say, “I am ready to preach the gospel,” unless we are ready to study. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Secondly, we can’t declare ourselves ready to preach until we’re ready to preach “in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2). Ask Jeremiah and Ezekiel what that means—they can tell you. They kept right on preaching, even when hardly anyone was listening.

“I am not ashamed...” Paul was not ashamed of the gospel, “for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...” (Romans 1:16). How could we ever be ashamed of such a message? And yet there is that temptation, especially when there is opposition to what we’re preaching. There is that ever present temptation to water down the truth just to make sure we don’t offend anyone (2 Timothy 4:2-4). Here’s what Paul wrote to Timothy: “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Timothy 1:8). Paul then offered himself as encouragement to Timothy: “For this reason I suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Timothy 1:12). Listen carefully to Jesus on this point: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

“I am a debtor...I am ready...I am not ashamed”—if only we all felt this way.