

270 *I'm not ashamed of the gospel, but...*

At last, I've got back to Romans, with Tom Wright. Today's passage includes, 'I'm not ashamed of the gospel...', ^[1:16] and Tom says that, sadly, we **are** often ashamed of it because 'it is so often mocked, sneered at and dismissed in newspapers, and on the radio and TV.'

My first reaction was to agree: how often on 'Midsomer Murders' is there a character portrayed as a bigoted Christian, telling people they are awful sinners and that God condemns them... and they probably turn out to be the murderer!

But wait, the logic is wrong. Tom says that *the gospel* is mocked. But they haven't a clue what the gospel actually *is*, so how can they be mocking it?! No, it's Christians that they are mocking, but not without reason, sadly. They may know that Christians do some good works, but they mainly think of Christians who go around, à la Midsomer Murders, condemning people.

But Tom then adds that this 'is just what is wanted by the triumphalist secular world around us.' Really? Why would 'the triumphalist secular world' (whatever that is) want to attack Christians? I know that Richard Dawkins wants to rubbish Christianity, but most people just think we're irrelevant. So, given that Christians are a tiny minority, we need to have the humility to admit that we're simply no longer relevant to most people.

What I've gained most from my 5/6-year journey is that I no longer feel any need to justify what I believe – to anyone. I really am **not** ashamed of the gospel. That's because, for me, gone is the Model A God who demands that *someone* needs to be punished, even if the claim is that Jesus accepted the punishment. That's not the kind of God that Jesus shows us.

The gospel for me is that when Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, he defeated the satan, and cancelled the power of sin and death. Nevertheless, sin is still real in the here and now, but by the Holy Spirit's power we can overcome it. And the ascension sets Jesus as Lord of the universe, so our job – again by the power of the Holy Spirit – is to work to establish that kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven'. That's *really* good news!

So the gospel I'm not ashamed of is a love-centred, non-penal, non-fear-based.

Let me echo John again. 'There is **NO FEAR** in love. But perfect love **drives out fear**, because **fear has to do with punishment**. The one who fears is **not made perfect in love**.' ^[1 Jn 4:18]

Any 'gospel' where the motivation is fear of God's wrath, is simply a non-gospel. But sadly, that's the 'gospel' that we've always been taught – it's incredibly difficult to change one's mind!

(If you feel you'd like to check this out, then try *Healing the Gospel* by Derek Flood, and learn the difference between retributive justice and restorative justice.)