

Are you ashamed – for not preaching the gospel?

*That is why I am so eager to **preach the gospel** also to you who are at Rome.*

*I am not **ashamed** of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in **the gospel** a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’ (Romans 1:15-17)*

*If anyone is **ashamed** of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be **ashamed** of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels. (Mark 8:38)*

As I woke early *yet again* this morning (at 4:56), I thought about the two articles I’d been writing and just needed to finish off: the second part of the controversial “What is the Bible?” and the summary article “Journey back to faith” which draws together the lessons I’ve learned since I started writing these articles.

I lay there thinking ‘But is there any point in all this writing I’m doing?!’ As I debated whether or not to get up, my mind drifted, and I thought of Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel” ... **Of course!** “I am not ashamed of **the gospel**” But what did Paul mean by ‘**the gospel**’? I now believe that **the gospel** is simply the story of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, and how it fulfils the Old Testament (see P34).

In a flash I realised that if I’m right, then Martha no longer needs to feel ashamed! Indeed, Martha is **already preaching the gospel!** And I leapt out of bed.

Oh, sorry, let me explain. My great friend Martha (not her real name) appeared in an earlier article, where I explained:

Martha is a superb welcomer; she’s a ‘do anything for anyone’ sort of person, but she’s beating herself up because her church has told her that she has to ‘share the Gospel’ with x-number of her non-Christian friends, and she doesn’t feel she could do that; indeed, she isn’t sure she *wants* to do that.

Martha loves Jesus and loves her friends and family, but understandably she doesn’t want to have to explain to them that, as nice persons as they might be, they are actually **sinners**, and face **God’s wrath** unless they believe in Jesus! Sadly, Martha feels guilty for her silence.

But in that article, I then went on to say (to Martha and to all of us),

So does God actually WANT people to come to know his love? Of course he does!! Then you and I need to do some serious thinking about how we communicate that love in the 21st century.

And as you’ll have seen, I’ve certainly been doing some serious thinking!

So I now want to tell Martha about my theory (P34) that ‘the gospel’ – as preached by Jesus, Paul and Peter – is simply the story of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. And I want to explain to her that the gospel is **not** ‘*The Four Spiritual Laws*’ or ‘*Two Ways to Live*’ or whatever other ‘gospel’ tract you’ve been taught to use in your ‘evangelism’. No, **the gospel IS Jesus**: the person, what he said, what he did, the parables he told.

Martha doesn’t need to be ashamed; she *already* preaches **the gospel**; she preaches it to the mums and toddlers each week – and she **loves** doing that! Of course she does! She loves Jesus and so she enjoys just talking to people about him and what he said and did. And to them, Martha IS the gospel; she radiates the gospel in her love and care for them. **Go Martha, go!**

Paul Bev. 16.2.19

(Interestingly, when I came to look up exactly what I said about Martha, I found her in Episode 1 ‘Rebuilding my faith’, on 18th August – almost exactly six months ago. Has it really taken me six months and 50,000 words to realise this? I really have come ‘full circle’.)