Romans 1:16-17

16 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. 17 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.”

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YOU HAVE NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF!!

My dear friends in the faith, and especially this year’s Confirmands – Holly, Holly, and Jake!!!

How are you guys feeling? Are you glad that examination is over? Is that a pretty big relief? I have to tell you a story about one of the 3 young people up here today. To protect her identity we’ll call her Holly. Holly walked out of church on examination Sunday last year with the biggest look of fear you could imagine. She knew that the countdown until she sat in that chair had begun. I told her on that day and several times since that it would be nothing to be afraid of. Was I right, you three?

How was examination - difficult? Nerve racking? Was it embarrassing? That wasn’t embarrassing for you, but there is still time. How would you react if I told you that I interviewed your parents trying to find funny and cute stories from when you were little so that I could share them in this sermon? Are there some stories from your childhood that might make you blush? How about if I told you that collected pictures from little on that I plan on passing around – pictures from bathtime, helping mom sort laundry with underwear on your head, pictures of you sporting the best in 2nd grade fashion? Would you be a little embarrassed or ashamed? Maybe!!!

What if I planned to share with the congregation how you have spent the last 2 years diligently studying God’s Word with me and confessing a faith in Christ as your Savior from sin? Would you be embarrassed about that? If I told them that the faith that you have been confessing to me for years in the faith that you will confess to them in just a few minutes, would that be embarrassing? No!! Not in the least because you know that God is yours and that you are his.

You would not be ashamed to have me tell others of your faith, and in a few minutes you will not be ashamed to confess your faith, because you have been given that faith as a gift. Faith is not something that you earn like a soccer MVP or a first place finish in track. It’s not given like a JROTC promotion. You don’t get it for doing all the right things or being the best at something, you are given it for free. It’s a gift that God has given to all three of you, and to your brothers and sisters in that faith here at Peace. It’s also a faith that God gave to the man who wrote the words that I read to you before, the Apostle Paul.

He confessed his faith as he penned the words, I am not ashamed of the gospel. Paul lived before the camera was invented, but there were other things that would have caused Paul to be embarrassed, stories that would have brought him shame. Paul often talked about his life before he became a Christian. He told of how he persecuted the church. He was ashamed of the sins of his youth and even called himself the chief of sinners. But one thing he was not ashamed of is how God turned that all around. He was not shy about telling of his roadside conversion. Not embarrassed to say “God chose me!” He was not ashamed to say “Jesus is my Lord!”
Romans 1:16-17

Paul tells us why he’s not ashamed of the gospel, and it has to do with the concept of power. *I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.* Let’s explore the concept of power for just a moment. I’d like to play a game called “Does it have power?”

This game is not very technical – I’ll hold up an object and you tell me if it has power.

(Wii remote, batteries, fire starter, matches, flashlight, battery pack, bowl of water) Some things have power, some need have power added in order for them to be worth anything. Each of these items when put with its partner yields a great amount of power. But where is the partner to the bowl of water? I suppose you need to know where this bowl comes from to get that clue. It is actually the bowl that sits here in the baptismal font. When it is combined with its power source, it does some pretty wonderful things. It creates and nourishes faith. There is not a whole lot of nutritional value in ½ ounce of bread and a ½ shot of wine, but when it is connected with the gospel, it becomes the supper the Lord gives us for the forgiveness of sins. The gospel is God’s power. The gospel is what causes these Means of Grace to forgive sins, to create faith, to offer salvation. It’s the gospel that makes your baptism day a day worth remembering. It’s the gospel that makes the meal we are about to receive a special meal. The gospel is the power of God.

The word that Paul uses for this power of God is a very descriptive one. It’s the Greek word *dynamis,* the word that gives us the English word *dynamite.* If I brought a stick of dynamite in for our game of “Does it have Power?” that would be an easy one right? Dynamite has power. It can blast through a rocky mountain and dig underground mines. If you are not careful, dynamite can even take a life. Dynamite is powerful. God’s Word is dynamite!! God’s Word has the power to what no other thing can – bring salvation. Before God’s Word entered your heart through baptism or the preaching of the Word, you were a sinner through and through. You didn’t know God and didn’t care to know him. Your heart was hard, like a stone, like a mountain. There wasn’t anything that could break you free from that way of life – except dynamite. The gospel news of Jesus as Savior from sin came in like a demolition crew. God’s dynamite blasted away that rock hard heart and made it instead a place where he could live. He blasted away at your sinful heart and replaced the missing pieces with saving faith. Instead of all sin all the time, he made you a believer, one who is capable of pleasing God with your life. God’s spirit put faith in your heart so that you could believe that Jesus saves, so that you could confess his as Lord, like 3 are going to do today. We said before that dynamite can take a person’s life, but God’s dynamite does just the opposite. God uses his dynamite to put life where it was not. He uses his dynamite to create life where only the stench of death had been before. God worked a miracle inside of each of us, and he did it using the power of the gospel.

The Word of God is powerful. He created the world with just the sound of his voice. At his command the light was made and the dry ground appeared, and the trees spouted. It was the voice of his Son that caused demons to scatter, that caused disease to disappear, that caused the storm to cease. It was the voice of Jesus that allowed him to say to the paralyzed man both “Get up and walk” and “your sins are forgiven.” And it was the voice of Jesus that announced forgiveness for the world and absolute victory over sin and death as he proclaimed “It is finished.”

God chose you 3 and he chose each believer that sits in this room today. He chose us using the dynamic power of his gospel. He chose us because of what Jesus had done and the love that he showed to the world. And so today, we can rejoice. We can serve him in gladness and joy knowing that Jesus brings us salvation and everlasting life. You 3 are going to make a confession in a few moments, and
you are going to join those believers behind you in making a life’s worth of faith confessions. And as you do, and as you do, remember the faith inspired confidence of the Apostle Paul. Make his confession yours and say with him, *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.* Thank you Jesus – Amen.