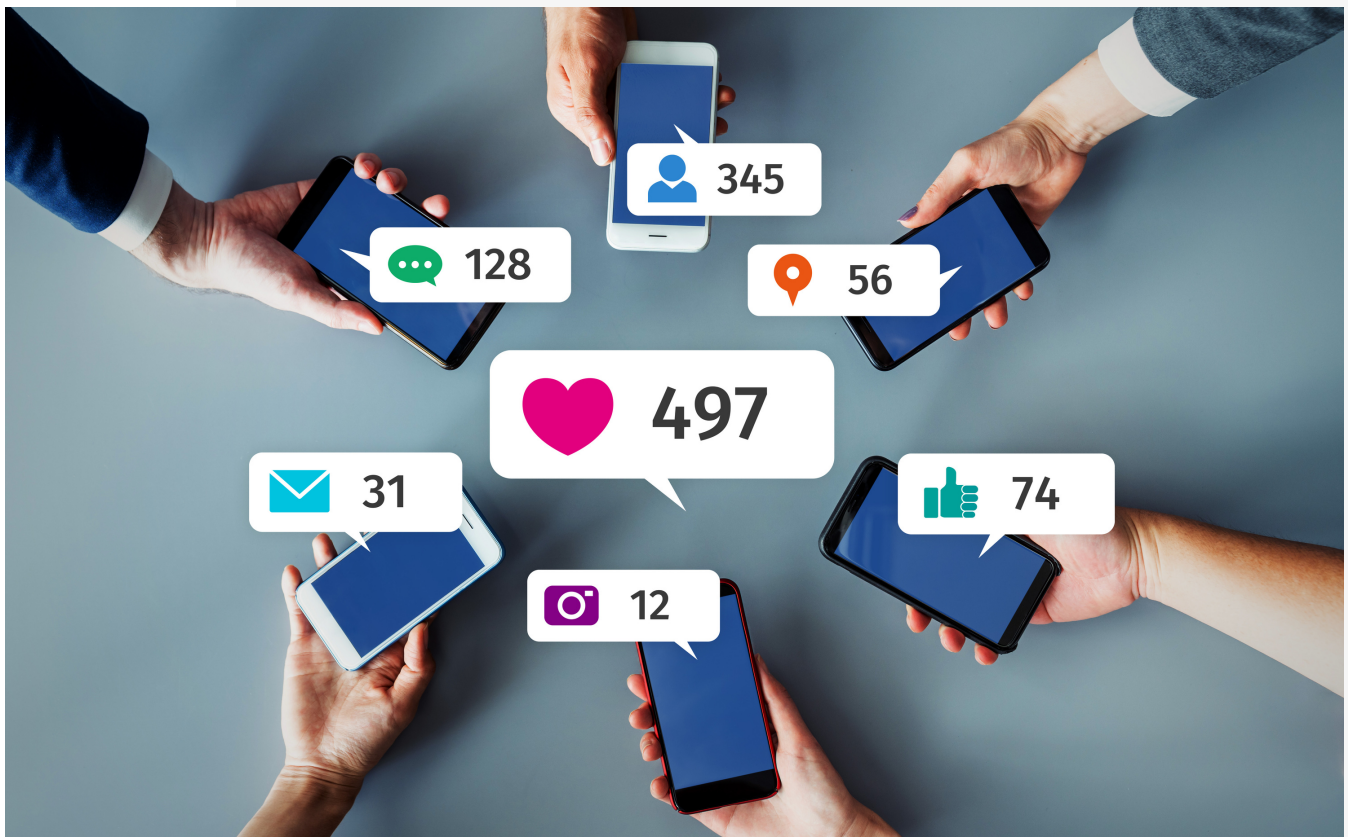


GRACE TO YOU

ROMANS 1:1-17

SAVED FROM PUBLIC OPINION



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

DAVID MURRAY
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INTRODUCTION

We are all influencers and we are all influenced. We all impact and change others and others impact and change us. Some of this is good and part of how God originally made us. However, because of sin and the effect of the fall upon us and our relationships, influence can also be bad and damaging.

When God originally made us, he made us to be primarily influenced by himself. Part of the fall is that we are now primarily influenced by others and God's influence is second, third, fourth, or even non-existent. People become the primary influence in our lives, both individuals and groups of people. It may be a parent, a sibling, a spouse, a friend. It may be a class, a peer group, a friend group, a team, a political party, or any number of other kinds of tribes. It may be real life influences or it may be online influences such as podcasts, social media, YouTube, etc.

Taken together, these influences are often called "public opinion" and comprise individuals or groups outside of ourselves who are influencing the way we think, believe, feel, speak, dress, act, etc. As such, "public opinion" is one of the most dangerous weapons in the devil's arsenal. He marshals it to turn us away from God and the Gospel, to turn us away from biblical truths and morals to falsehoods and sin. Anyone with any self-knowledge will confess they are influenced in this way. **How then can we be saved from public opinion?** The Apostle Paul points the way in Romans 1:1-7.

BACKGROUND

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Romans about AD 57 while living in the Greek city of Corinth. 16-year-old Nero had recently become Emperor of Rome, but his vicious persecution of Christians had not yet begun.

Its overall message is "Grace to you" (Rom. 1:7) Some of the themes covered in the book are:

- The sinfulness of all
- The role of the law of God
- Justification by faith
- The meaning of the cross
- The power of the Holy Spirit
- The sovereignty of God
- The promises of God
- The reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles.
- Christian ethics

I've adapted the ESV outline of the Epistle as follows:

- We lack God's righteousness because of sin (1-3)
- We receive God's righteousness by faith (4-5)
- We demonstrate God's righteousness in our sanctification (6-8)
- We confirm God's righteousness in how and who he saves (9-11)
- We apply God's righteousness in practical Christian living (12-16)



**How can we be saved from public opinion?
We begin by recognizing the influences upon us.**



1. WE HAVE REASONS TO BE ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

After the love of sin, fear of personal shame and embarrassment is the main reason why people reject the Gospel. People want the approval and acceptance of their friends, family, neighbors, colleagues, team-mates, class, etc. They do not want to be laughed at, left out, or belittled for believing the Bible and following its morals. This is not a new problem. The people of Paul's day also had reasons to be ashamed of the Gospel

Religious Reasons

Both the Jewish religion and the Roman religion of Emperor worship were old, well-established, and State-approved. They were characterized by impressive religious ceremonies, impressive religious leaders, and impressive religious works.

In contrast the "new" religion of Christianity was had a barbaric and offensive crucifixion at its center. It was characterized by faith in a crucified man, repentance from sin, the Gospel of grace, simple worship, and unimpressive leaders and followers.

Intellectual Reasons

Greek philosophy was the dominant intellectual influence of the day. It created an educated cultural elite who prized the sophisticated thought of both ancient and modern Greek thinkers.

While Christianity was sufficiently profound to challenge the greatest intellect, its simple central message of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, offended the proudest minds of that culture. Its availability and accessibility to the poorest and least educated was enough reason to reject it as intellectual suicide.

Moral Reasons

Greek and Roman culture were both notorious for their debauchery and depravity. They gloried in sexual deviancy and the triumph of the strong over the weak in both the stadium and the marketplace.

The Christian ethic was an indictment and condemnation of the immorality of the day, demanded moral change, and insisted that the strong use their power to defend the weak rather than oppress them.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Are you ashamed of the Gospel in our day? Maybe you don't actively engage in shaming the Gospel, the Christians who believe it, or the morals they uphold. But you are influenced into silence, dissociation, or even compliance by our culture's approved religions, intellects, and morals. It's understandable and even reasonable because there are many religious, intellectual, and moral reasons to be ashamed of the Gospel today.

Will Christ be ashamed of you in his day? However many reasons you have to be ashamed of the Gospel in our day, there is one big reason why you shouldn't. Because Christ will be ashamed of you in his day (Luke 9:26)

SHAME BEFORE THE CULTURE
OR SHAME BEFORE THE CHRIST



How can I move from shame to unashamed of the Gospel?
By the many reasons to be unashamed of the Gospel.



2. WE HAVE BETTER REASONS TO BE UNASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16-17).

Look at the "fors" in these verses, the many reasons not to be ashamed of the Gospel. There are two explicit "fors" and four implicit "fors"

The Gospel is Good News. "Gospel" literally means "glad tidings." Most published news today is thoroughly shameful. So why should we be ashamed of the best news this world has ever heard or could ever hear? What could be better news than how to be forgiven all our sins by God's grace? Why would we be ashamed of the Gospel's happy news?

The Gospel is Powerful. It's only words, words that describe a historical event that happened 2000 years ago, and yet it's the most powerful force in the world. It can do what no other power can do. As these weak words are published God delivers people from sin - the penalty, power, pleasure, and presence of sin. These little words give people a love for holiness and for communion with God. Why would we be ashamed of the Gospel's power?

The Gospel is Saving. It's not just the power of God to reformation or transformation, but the power of God for salvation. It saves from sin, guilt, condemnation, hell, and death. Not for a time, but forever. Why would we be ashamed of the Gospel's salvation?

The Gospel is Available. It's available "to everyone who believes." As such it is freely available. The Jew says, "Do this and that." The Greek says "Think this or that." The Roman says "Enjoy this or that." The Gospel says "Believe this Christ." It's so simple, and therefore so available, to both Jew and Greek. In other words anyone can believe this Gospel regardless of sex, color, birth, time, place, experience, past, present, or future. Why would we be ashamed of the Gospel's availability?

The Gospel Clothes with Perfection. The "righteousness of God" is not the perfection that God prescribes, but the perfection he provides. The believer stands before God clothed with nothing less than God's own righteousness. Why would we be ashamed of the Gospel wardrobe?

The Gospel is a New Way to Live. Instead of our lives being influenced by others, we are now influenced primarily by faith. Why would we be ashamed of living by faith, rather than fleeting public opinion?

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Believe the Gospel. You've heard it. Now put your faith in it. You've heard the reasons, now use these reasons to move you to faith. Believe it because it is happy news, strong, saving, accessible, perfecting, and freeing.

Be "proud" of the Gospel. If people with wrong beliefs, wrong ideas, and wrong ethics are out and proud, how much more should the Christian be out and proud of the Gospel. However many reasons there are to be ashamed of the Gospel, there are many and better reasons to be unashamed of the Gospel.

BE ASHAMED OF BEING ASHAMED
OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



SUMMARY



A NEW CHAPTER

Gospel. Get a clear grasp of the Gospel for yourself and the many reasons to be unashamed of it in public.

Public opinion. Understand the influence of public opinion on you and consciously fight against it so that you are more an influencer than the influenced.

Speak boldly. Regardless of the religious, intellectual, and moral reasons to be silent, pray for and take one opportunity to overcome shame and speak the Gospel this week.

Prayer. Unashamed God of the Gospel, take away all shame and embarrassment about the Gospel and give me the boldness to speak the Gospel this week.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has your spiritual life, beliefs, morals been influenced by others, for good and bad?
2. What are the greatest influences on Christians today?
3. What religious, intellectual, or moral reasons are there to be ashamed of the Gospel today?
4. What other reasons can you think of not to be ashamed of the Gospel?
5. In what ways can we be rightly "proud" of the Gospel?
6. Who will you speak to about the Gospel this week?

First Byron Christian Reformed Church
8541 Byron Center Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49315
Phone: (616) 878-9768
www.firstbyroncrc.org

Pastor David Murray
www.thestorychanger.life