



## True Enthusiasm

Romans 1:8-17 | Jan 12, 2020

If you're a Christian, you have a calling. "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10). Do you know what it is? Whatever it is, it's going to be glorious. And it's going to be hard. God's purposes are redemptive and eternally weighty, not trivial and easy, so "hard" comes with the territory. But you can pursue your calling with enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm literally means, "in-God-ness," which Paul's words drip with. Where do we get true enthusiasm?

**1. Enthusiasm comes from radical God-centeredness.** Paul opens this section by saying, "I thank my God through Christ Jesus..." He can't even pray without being aware that he's in a covenant relationship with God. He is God's and God is his. Thus he has access to God's throne of grace through Christ, which is true security. Paul prays that he will succeed in coming to Rome "by God's will"—in all likelihood hoping to establish a new base for ministry in the western Mediterranean. But it's up to God. Paul's success in anything is not up to Paul, but up to God. That's double strength and security.

**2. Enthusiasm comes from unashamed gospel eagerness.** Romans 1:16-17 are the thesis of the whole book. The gospel is the power of God for salvation for all who believe. In it the righteousness from God is revealed, which comes to us by faith. We don't have to justify our own lives. Our righteous God found a righteous way, through his Son, to righteously acquit the guilty. That's the gospel. And Paul feels three things about it: (1) I am obligated to share it. (2) I am eager to share it. (3) I am unashamed of it because of its power. This gospel effects real change, unlike the many other messages the world eagerly and unashamedly shares. Every day people send shameless messages about their bodies, sex lives, social causes, and political beliefs. But has anyone been persuaded? Has anyone moved right or left who wasn't there already? These "gospels" are powerless. But the gospel of God opens blind eyes, softens hard hearts, and brings rebels to the obedience of faith.

**3. Enthusiasm comes from humble interdependence.** In verses 11-12 Paul says that he wants the Romans, and himself, to be strengthened and mutually encouraged by each other's faith. Strength and encouragement are pretty much the constituent parts of enthusiasm. If we feel strong and encouraged, we're enthusiastic. If not, we're not. We could define true encouragement as, "Strength and encouragement, in God, for life." And God plans to bring us gospel words of strength and encouragement—along with joy, comfort, peace, and all the rest—through other people. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote,

*"But God has put this Word into the mouth of others. God has willed that we should seek and find His living Word in the witness of a brother, in the mouth of another. Therefore, the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged....The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother's is sure.*

*"And that clarifies the goal of all Christian community: they meet one another as bringers of the message of salvation. God permits them to meet together and gives them community."*

Thus we aim to gain strength through revealing our needs to one another, and praying for one another.

## Discussion Guide

1. The question was posed at the start of the message: *Do you know what God's calling is for you in this year, in this season of life?* Share what you think you're called to. How strong is your sense of calling?
2. We said God's calling is always glorious but hard. Are you naturally inclined to agree? What biblical truths or stories bear this out?
3. Discuss the three sources of enthusiasm from the message:

### Radical God-centeredness

- How hard is it for you to see yourself in covenant relationship with God, as his beloved son or daughter? How easy or hard is it for you to trust in God's will for your success in life?
- Hudson Taylor's life was changed when he read these words in a letter from John McCarthy. How do they speak to you?

*"To let my loving Savior work in me His will is what I would live for by his grace. Abiding, not striving nor struggling; looking unto Him; trusting Him for present power; trusting Him to subdue all inward corruption; resting in the love of an almighty Savior, in the conscious joy of a complete salvation; willing that His will should truly be supreme—this is not new, and yet 'tis new to me. I feel as though the first dawning of a glorious day has risen upon me. I have got to the edge of a boundless sea. I have sipped only, but of that which fully satisfies. Christ literally seems to me now the power, the only power for service; the only ground for unchanging joy. May He lead us into the realization of his unfathomable fullness."*

### Unashamed gospel eagerness

- Paul says in 1:16-17 that the gospel is the power of God for salvation *for* or *because* "in it the righteousness of God is revealed [which comes] by faith." Could you explain that to a friend? How would you explain it? Practice on each other.
- Which of these three statements about the gospel do you resonate with most and least? Explain.
  - \* "I am obligated."
  - \* "I am eager."
  - \* "I am not ashamed."
- Do you feel any conviction that we should stand down on promoting other "unashamed eager" messages—like on social media—for the sake of the gospel? What can we do to share the gospel more and better?

### Humble interdependence

- Discuss the quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Do you agree with it? What does it say to you?
- How have you experienced the weakness in your own heart being by "the Christ in the word of your brother" or sister? How so?
- How do you feel about the idea of end-of-service praying and encouragement being built into our Sundays together? Can you see yourself taking part? How?