

will see a man, small in stature but great in mind and greater in soul, with pen in hand, writing a letter to a people of the most cultured city under heaven. This man is the world's greatest missionary. For years he has been travelling and preaching the Gospel in Asia and parts of Europe. His efforts have been crowned with success; and now, feeling that a great work might be done in the city of Rome, he writes to the people there, expressing his interest in them, and declaring his intention of visiting them at his earliest convenience.

It would seem, from the opening sentences of his letter, that it had been meanly insinuated, if not publicly affirmed, that Paul was afraid to teach in Rome. And, that such insinuations or affirmations would be made, we may readily believe. Without much stretch of imagination, we may fancy we hear the worldly wise men of Rome declaring: "Oh, it is all very well for Paul to preach his doctrines to the ignorant and uneducated, but he will never venture to palm off his crude ideas upon us"; while Paul, resenting such a charge, declares that oftentimes he had purposed to come to Rome, and that he would have come, had circumstances permitted. "I am ready," he writes, "to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."

And in our text he gives his reasons for his readiness to preach. In this short sentence he defends himself for preaching, and defends the gospel which he ever delighted to proclaim.

Let us consider then this defence of Paul's. Like him, we need to be able to defend ourselves for preaching as well as to defend the gospel we preach. It will be well for us, therefore, to consider his defence, and to ascertain whether we can meet and successfully contend with the opponents of Christianity by using the weapons he employed.

You will notice he opens his defence with a direct statement. He wastes none of his energies in preliminaries. He says: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." This is his reason for being ready to preach even to the elite of Rome. Is the