

Power to Save

Apostle Paul

God had mightily used the apostle Paul to carry the message of the gospel. We have seen how he brought the gospel to a whole household after midnight in Philippi, a city of Macedonia. The Spirit of Christ filled him with the gospel message wherever he went. Those who were saved through his preaching carried the gospel message as far as Rome.

Paul himself longed to go to Rome to build them up in faith (Acts 19:21; Romans 15:18-20; 1:10-12). He wrote, "From Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" and for many years he had a great desire to go to the church in Rome also (Romans 15:19,23).

Chief of Sinners

Before his conversion, Paul had persecuted the church at Jerusalem, at Damascus, and wherever he found disciples of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:13; 7:58-60;

8:1; 9:1-12; 26:9-11). After his salvation, he was full of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ for having mercy on him.

He wrote, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief ... This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:12-15).

I am a Debtor to Preach the Gospel

Because he was so grateful for the grace of God toward him, Paul considered himself to be under obligation to bring the message of the gospel to others. He said, "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as

in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also ... for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:14-16).

To Paul, all men were the same and needed to be saved, whatever their nationality, their culture or education. Paul was not seeking for the glory and honour of men, but the salvation of their souls. "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

Nor did he take a salary for preaching the gospel. He said, "What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge" (1 Corinthians 9:16,18). It was the love of Christ that compelled him to preach the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:14).

The apostle did not count decision cards or hands raised in a gospel campaign. He never depended on advertising and photographs. He did not use entertainment, concerts and film shows to bring the gospel message. He used the one way that pleases God: "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Paul Not Ashamed of the Gospel

To those who had believed the gospel in Rome, Paul wrote: "I am

not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ... For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith" (Romans 1:16-17).

The fruit of believing the gospel is a righteous life. The change is not a reformation. It is a transformation. The gospel of Christ is the power of God, the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead. When the Holy Spirit comes into those who believe, He gives them the power of resurrection.

This is God's work in you when you believe the gospel. Others see what He has done in you and God is glorified. You are a new creation. Old things are passed away and all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). In this way the righteousness of God is revealed in your life as you grow in grace and your faith increases.

A False Profession

However, there were many in Rome who believed but did not show the fruit of the gospel, which is a righteous life.

Instead of bringing glory to Christ, their lives were bringing shame to His name. How many profess to believe the gospel and yet their lives are full of lust, lasciviousness, uncleanness, rebellion, revelling, drinking liquor, chambering, wantonness, strife and jealousy! (Romans 13:13).

They 'go to church' on Sunday and 'take communion' but also waste their time on worldly entertainment, watching movies either in the cinema or at home. They are found in the parties or discos when God warns us against the works of the flesh including banquetings, revellings and drunkenness (1 Peter 4:3; Galatians 5:19-21).

They bare themselves nearly naked on the beaches when God requires modest clothing (1 Timothy 2:8-10).

Loose living women take the name of Christ and yet dress as the heathen in shameful attire; flaunting themselves among the young men, who are full of lust and have hair like women (Proverbs 7:10; Revelation 9:8; 1 Corinthians 11:14).

The fornicator and idolater, as well as the adulterer and the effeminate shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Though such people profess to believe the gospel, their lives manifest ungodliness and uncleanness instead of righteousness and holiness.

No Power in Lives

How is it that many who profess to believe the gospel do not show the power of God in their lives when it is written, "the gospel of Christ ... is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth"?

The reason is that they have not seen the glory and righteousness of

God, the wondrous work that Christ has done to put away sin, nor the wrath of God against sin. They have only heard entertaining preachers who cause God's people to err by their lightness (Jeremiah 23:32). They have made a decision in a gospel meeting and think they are saved, but their lives are ungodly. They have not been transformed by the power of God.

To those who profess to believe, who say they are saved and yet continue in sin, Paul writes, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).

Though they know the truth, they continue living lives of sin. Instead of bringing glory to God, they are living in darkness. While they profess themselves to be wise and may even have much Bible knowledge, they become fools (Romans 1:21-22).

Continuing in Sin

As long as they continue in sin, though they profess to be saved, they are under the wrath of God. He gives them up to their uncleanness: shameless uncovering of bodies, and fornication; men working with men that which is unseemly, then taking the 'communion' on Sunday morning.

"Thinkest thou this ... that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"

... But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:3,5-6).

Such people will not be able to stand before God on the day of judgment and say, 'I am saved.'

True Repentance

Why is the power of God not manifested in their lives? Because they have not repented. They know the gospel and profess to believe it, but they love unrighteousness and sin. They may reform their lives and cease from gambling, drunkenness or other sins that bring shame to their lives, yet continue in other sins that are acceptable in their own eyes.

Of the Lord Jesus Christ it is written, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness" (Hebrews 1:9).

You will never have the oil of gladness, which is the Holy Spirit, if you still love sin. Jesus Christ commands you to repent before He will forgive all your sins and give

you the Holy Spirit. He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13). He came to save you from sin, not to leave you in sin.

What Must You Do to be Saved

What must you do to be saved? "Repent ... and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). "Repent ... and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

Repentance must come first. Paul preached "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). He testified to all men that "they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20).

This is the doctrine of Christ: "Repentance from dead works, and faith toward God" (Hebrews 6:1). "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5).

May God grant you a godly sorrow which "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Corinthians 7:10). May you find grace in the eyes of the Lord Jesus through faith in His Blood shed for the remission of your sins (Ephesians 1:7).