

The Power of the Gospel

By Steven Shepard

Introduction

A. Back to basics

Rom 16:25a Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ...

B. The need of the Gospel

All of us were born spiritually dead, cut off from God's presence, and having a sin nature. Apart from Christ all live in blindness and ignorance, are prone to deception, are morally corrupt, enemies of God, under Satan's power, unable to do a single work pleasing to God, unable even to come to God or believe on our own, and, apart from Christ; all are under God's righteous judgment. In a word the condition of man apart from Christ is hopeless.

C. Now comes the good news!

Rom 1:16-17 "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." (NIV)

I. I am not ashamed of the Gospel

A. Not ashamed

1 Cor 4:9-13 (NIV) For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. 10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! 11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. 12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we

answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

B. Are you ashamed of the Gospel? Do you fear the rejection of men?

C. What is the Gospel? There are many false gospels. The Gospel is a very specific message.

D. Gospel means a good message, a good report, an announcement of good news.

E. The Gospel of Christ, the message of the person and work of Christ.

1 Cor 15:1 (NIV) Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. **2** By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. **3** For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. **6** After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, **8** and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

F. The importance of the Gospel to Paul and in the New Testament.

- 1. There are many other things that become the emphasis in Christianity.** (Tongues, deliverance, inner healing, positive mental attitude, seminars, etc.)
- 2. But the Gospel is the central message of the Bible.** It is the unifying truth of the whole of Scripture. It is the lens by which we are able to interpret Biblical truth and apply it to our lives. All other Biblical teachings should relate back to the Gospel.
- 3. The Gospel is also the key to power in the Christian life.** There is real power in the Christian life, and it is found only in the Gospel. It will not be found in religion, an experience, or in any other teaching that is not directly related to the Gospel, (whether about gifts, the five fold ministry, the end times, healing, or deliverance). These teachings apart from the Gospel do not bring life and can even cause great harm. The Gospel is the most important message and the only essential message in all of history.

1 Tim 1:11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

Rom 1:1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Gal 1:6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

1 Cor 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. ¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Cor 2:2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Gal 6:14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

II. For it is the power of God unto salvation

A. For that reason I am not ashamed.

B. Power: divine, supernatural, miraculous ability, - dunamis

C. Salvation: preservation, liberation from sin and the wrath of God.

D. Salvation is all we need. It is perfect. It is transforming. It is secure.

E. The Gospel is power because it connects us to the all powerful God who saves us and gives us all we need.

III. For everyone who believes – by faith alone

A. Believe: to surrender, trust completely, have confidence, be persuaded.

B. Believing is the result of the work of God and is God's gift to us.

John 6:29 ...The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent.

Rom 4:5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Philip 1: 29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Heb 12:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,

Acts 18:27 And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace;

IV. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed

A. This is the reason why the Gospel is the power of God.

B. To have righteousness is to be made acceptable to God, to be counted as having fulfilled all His requirements, to be placed in a right relationship with God, without any condemnation.

C. Righteousness is the most urgent need of mankind. It means eternal life or death.

1. God requires and demands a perfect righteousness.
2. Because of sin every person is under God's righteous judgment. One little sin would be sufficient to condemn us for eternity, yet we have a nature that is completely sinful, contaminated, and corrupt.
3. There is no hope for anyone outside of Christ, no escape from the wrath of God.

Rev 14:9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Matt 13:41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴²and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

"I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in my way but that one expression, "the justice of God," because I took it to mean that justice

*whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against Him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant. Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by his faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the "justice of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven..." – **Martin Luther***

*"To that righteousness is the eye of the believer ever to be directed; on that righteousness must he rest; on that righteousness must he live; on that righteousness must he die; in that righteousness must he appear before the judgment seat; in that righteousness must he stand forever in the presence of a righteous God." – **Robert Haldane***

D. What is this righteousness like?

1. Perfect – It gives us a relationship with God which is perfect, complete, and blameless before God whereby we have His acceptance and favor. Through propitiation - satisfaction of justice.

Romans 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood...

Col 1:21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²²in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight-- ²³if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Heb 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

2. Permanent – Once given it is never taken away.

Rom 8: 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom

He justified, these He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

3. Powerful

a. Powerful over sin, both the guilt and the power of sin, over Satan, death, and over the fear of death. Everything is accomplished by Christ's finished work and the Gospel is the message of the finished work of Christ.

Power over sin – Rom 6:6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Power over Satan Heb 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Power over death 2 Tim 1:10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

b. Righteousness (justification) always produces transformation and sanctification. The entire New Testament describes the new life of believers, of the truly saved in this light.

1 John 3:9-10 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

c. Not emotions, subjective experiences, gifts, or manifestations. Power is not in being slain in the Spirit or in prophesying, but **power is being persuaded of truth**, that we are accepted by God, our sins are forgiven, we are His forever, and will be with Him forever. We have power because we know that our salvation is irrevocable, that God will keep us forever, all of which does not depend upon our own works but upon His faithfulness to complete the work of His grace that He started.

V. Conclusion

Not only unbelievers, but Christians need the Gospel. God uses the truth of the Gospel to change our hearts, to penetrate our innermost being, and transform our motivations. As this happens, as the light of the Gospel shines within us, our hearts are filled with gratitude, humility, joy, and love for God and others, and we are empowered to live a holy life.

How should we respond?

1. Make the Gospel the most important truth in your life. The Gospel was the emphasis of Paul, the emphasis of the Bible, and should be your emphasis as well.

"There is certainly enough in the Gospel for any one man, enough to fill any one life, to absorb all thought, emotion, desire, and energy; yes, infinitely more than the most experienced Christian and the most intelligent teacher will ever be able to bring forth... If anyone denounces us as being cramped in our ideas and being confined to one set of truths, let us rejoice to be confined with Christ and consider it the truest enlargement of our minds."

– Charles Spurgeon

2. Renew your mind in the truth of the Gospel. Preach the Gospel to yourself! What do I mean when I say preach the Gospel to yourself? As you walk with the Lord and He reveals sin in your life - which He will - or when you have doubts - which you will - then remember the finished work of Christ. Remember that when you were dead in sin, when you were God's enemy Jesus died for you. He took your punishment. He received your judgment. Then rest upon the perfect righteousness of Christ which has been credited to your account.

3. Encourage one another in the Gospel. As Paul said in Philip 1:27, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." Take your stand as a church in the Gospel.

4. Preach the Gospel to the unsaved. Mark 16:15 says, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

5. Rejoice! Rejoice in the truth of the Gospel. Rejoice in the Gospel of the saving grace of God. This grace is a triumphant grace, a grace which cannot fail. It sets free from the guilt of sin. It sets free from the power of sin. It sets free from the dominion of Satan. It sets free from death. It sets free from your own dead works. So as the apostle Paul said in Gal 5:1 "It was for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."