

Living Faith Bible Fellowship
The Gospel: God's Power to Save

Romans 1:16-17

April 3, 2011

Scripture (Romans 1:16-17)

Introduction

- Every parent knows what question immediately follows any instruction given to a small child: why?
 - It's time to go to bed, Johnny...why? You need to eat your broccoli, Suzy...why?
 - When many of us were kids, the response from our parents was most often: because I told you so!
 - The kids were on to something. There's something about "why" that motivates behavior much better than simply knowing "what" I should do. OK, I know what I am supposed to do, but why?
 - Parents could say...
 - Johnny, if you stay up late, you'll be tired tomorrow and you won't be able to do well in school.
 - Suzy, if you eat your broccoli, you will be healthier and stronger, you will grow up to be a beautiful young lady.
 - Of course, our parents that wouldn't work, so they would simply say: if you don't go to bed I will beat your butt! And that would be sufficient motivation for us to get in the bed and turn out the light.
 - The bottom line is that knowing what to do just is motivating enough, I need to know why, especially when doing what I am supposed to do is not easy or its uncomfortable.
- Paul's why for his what.
 - When I see the apostle Paul, it's real easy to see what he is, but it's not as obvious to us as to why he does it...Paul is an apostle with great missionary zeal...
 - We already saw
 - He's a slave of Christ
 - He's sent by Christ
 - He's set apart for the gospel

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- But this is not just Paul's job, this is his passion...he shows us his heart in the introduction to this letter to the Roman church
 - He's thankful and joyous about the gospel's success in Rome (v.8)
 - He preaches the gospel with his entire heart (v.9)
 - All of this is further seen in his concerns for this church
 - He prays regularly for them
 - He wants to see them strong in the Lord
 - He wants a mutually encouraging relationship with them (he gives and they give, which also good for them: we grow when we serve, not just when we are served)
 - He wants to go to them he might minister productively: the harvest he wants among them is not for Paul, it is for them, that they might be fruitful and benefit from his serving them
 - And if all this seems a bit out of nowhere, he reminds them he is obligated, because of his calling, to preach the gospel to everyone (Greeks and Non-Greeks, i.e. cultured and non-cultured (the word used here is barbaros, from which we get barbarian) and the wise and foolish (unlearned), in other words, I don't care about your background, Paul says I am obligated to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to everyone and anyone!
 - This is the mark of a true evangel, or a witness of the good news of Christ, they want to reach everyone and anyone: men and women, young and old, all races and cultures, they don't care, are they human beings? Are they in need of our Lord Jesus, then I want to reach them with the gospel!
 - This is why Paul could so definitively say what he says in I Cor. 9:22 "I have become all things to all men"...i.e. anything needed for anyone, where they are..."so that by all possible means I might save some." Paul will do anything he has to do that he might save some or any of those he's reaching!

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- I want this zeal! I want this kind of urgency and passion and willingness to do any and everything to see even one saved. Not for me, but to see them saved...don't you want this as well? I know many of you do, you look at this and you want to be used on a moment's notice to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, to share with a friend who doesn't know, you don't want to shake your head because you chose not to witness or because you were afraid or felt inadequate...you want to be a witness for Jesus Christ, you know he's redeemed you...what is the secret?

- So, we turn to Paul: Paul we know what you are, that you are a slave, that you were sent, that you were set apart, we see your heart for God's people, we even see your obligation Paul, but here you are so eager to preach the gospel to these believers in Rome, and you don't even know them! Paul, why are you bold, why are you so confident, why do you risk so much, why do you do all that you do for the gospel?

- Textual comment
 - The "why" that we see in v.15 in the NIV is not in the Greek, the reason he is so eager to preach to those in Rome is not because he is obligated to do so, that is not a heart-felt reason, that would be a duty, he is already revealed his eagerness and passion for their gospel welfare; why?
 - There is the little Greek word in verses 16 and 17 which connects what Paul is saying in verses 8-15, what he wants to do to why he wants to...the Greek word is **gar**, it literally means "for" which really gives us a because or a why!

- Even at the beginning of verse 16, Paul restates his mindset about the gospel with a great emphasis: ***I am not ashamed of the gospel...***

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- Ashamed of the gospel and of the Lord typically means fear because of the likelihood of suffering, e.g. Paul says to Timothy
 - 2 Tim 1:8 - **...do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel**
 - 2 Tim 1:12 - **That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed**

- Instead, Paul essentially says to the Romans, I am willing to suffer for the gospel, I will not shrink back but will embrace all of its fullness, my bondage and service to it...my being reserved for it, even my esurient desire (hungry or greedy desire) to preach it to you in Rome, I embrace this fully with all of its consequences...because...

- Paul gives us two reasons, the gospel is
 - The **power of God to save**
 - The **righteousness of God revealed**

- We want to flesh these out, so we can get Paul's reasons in our heads but mainly in our heart. Let me also say now that these two are connected together
 - For...the gospel is the power of God for salvation, v. 17...
 - For it [the gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed...

Please note these two very carefully, they are essential for us...

I. The Gospel is the Power of God to Save

- Read v.16b...
- The power of God for salvation...
 - Paul is not saying that the gospel makes salvation possible, that in the words of the gospel is **potential**, within which God **might** save

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- He is saying that the gospel is the power of God to save, that the gospel itself, preached and proclaimed, shared, even read, is the hammer of God's power on the unregenerate heart. It is the gospel that breaks down unbelief and makes it faith
- We might preach or proclaim something else, whatever else it does, it does not and cannot save...however helpful it might seem or desired it is by its hearers!
 - You want to hear messages about how desperately we need to mentor troubled teens, that's fine and good, you might turn a few lives around, but if the heart of your message is simply “stop what you're doing and do right,” that will not save
 - Preaching on various social and personal topics might
 - Make you a better husband
 - Make you a better neighbor
 - Make you a better student or business person or whatever
 - I don't see how Joel Osteen can preach an entire message on overcoming setbacks with a positive outlook for 30 minutes and then give a 45 second wrap-up that poses as the gospel and expect to see people saved
- Again, the gospel doesn't just bring potential, it is God's power for the salvation of everyone who believes, i.e. no one is saved apart from the power of God's gospel
 - Paul explains to the Corinthian church that the preaching of Christ crucified, another way of saying the gospel, is to those whom God has called the power of God...
 - I love Paul's word to the Thessalonians in I Th 1:4-5, this was the evidence of their faith...
 - v.4...

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- v.5...
 - This is the expression of the presence of God, his power that brings the Holy Spirit and his work in the soul of his people: deep conviction
- The proclamation of the gospel is so powerful that it affects salvation in those who believe
- There's another aspect here that must not be lost: **the scope of salvation** that Paul is speaking of what. When we say the gospel saves, what's meant by that?
 - When we most often speak of salvation, we mean "saved" and so we mean conversion, something that happened in the past...or that simply happens at one point in your life, e.g. Rom 8:24, Eph 2:5,8, 2 Tim 1:8b-9a...this is the **already** aspect of our salvation...
 - But more often than not, Paul looks ahead to a not-yet or future aspect of our salvation, e.g. Rom 5:9-10, 13:11, 2 Tim 2:10...this is often called final salvation
 - Both of these come together
 - The proclamation of the gospel saves us, that is the gospel calls me to faith in Christ and I am born again from above...
 - The proclamation of the gospel keeps me in faith in Christ, and takes me all the way to home
 - Aside:
 - Question: what is the gospel and how might we see it used by God to powerfully break unbelief? Let's turn to my favorite summary of it in Colossians 1:21-23
 - v.21 - Bad news, dog: we are alienated, enemies and evil...confronting people with the reality of their sin and its consequences (Linda covered this very well on Wednesday in her training session...)

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- v.22 - Good news: Christ has died to make us holy in God's sight and to reconcile you to him!
 - v.23 - You must stay in this
- Illustration of a trip...
- Connecting back to Paul's claim back in v.16, he is unashamed, willing to suffer not shrinking back from his calling because he knows that the gospel is effective, that God has determined to save his people through the proclamation of the gospel, so I can have confidence that one, my witness will be achieve its purpose, God will save by his gospel because it is his power to save. I can boldly go out and minister and serve, knowing that it is not my readiness that's the issue, as important as that is, but it's the power of God in his gospel.

2. The Gospel is the Righteousness of God Revealed

- Other than in the gospel, there is another way that God's righteousness is revealed, and that's in his justice
 - We see that in v.18!
 - We also see God's justice in the cross, 3:25
 - But that's not what's in view here...what's in view here is God's saving righteousness

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- OT context
 - Really righteousness of God instead of "from God"...
 - Isaiah 46:13
 - ¹³ I am bringing my righteousness near,
it is not far away;
and my salvation will not be delayed.
I will grant salvation to Zion,
my splendor to Israel.
 - Isaiah 51:5-8
 - ⁵ My **righteousness** draws near speedily,
my **salvation** is on the way,
and my arm will bring justice to the nations.
...
But my **salvation** will last forever,
my **righteousness** will never fail.
 - ⁷ "Hear me, you who know what is right,
you people who have my law in your hearts:
Do not fear the reproach of men
or be terrified by their insults.
⁸ For the moth will eat them up like a garment;
the worm will devour them like wool.
But my **righteousness** will last forever,
my **salvation** through all generations."
- God has promised that his righteousness will come when he will bring salvation to his people, delivering them from their distresses
- In our case, our distress is our sin, the gospel is that God's righteousness is now being revealed (manifest)
 - We have been victimized by sin for so long and we are weighed down by it...
 - God has promised that he will remove us from its bondage
 - The gospel reveals the coming of God's righteousness to do this

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- How does do this, how does he reveal his righteousness in the gospel
 - First, it excludes our efforts or works
 - It is by faith, faith is the venue for the revelation or the coming of God's righteousness to his people...they would perform no works to receive it, it simply comes upon within the agency of faith, or simple heart-felt belief
 - Paul makes it very clear that works has nothing to do with in 3:21
 - Apart from Law, i.e. works
 - Yet, the Law and Prophets testify, i.e. endorse and support
- He declares us righteous [look at these passages...]
 - Rom 3:20, works will not lead to our being declared righteous
 - Rom 3:22, implies that those who trust in Christ will be declared righteous
- He makes us righteous: Rom 5:19

Conclusion

- The divine work of salvation leaves no room for marginal commitment
 - The gospel saves completely and forever...
 - The gospel brings the righteous salvation of God...
- What is to be our response? Note Paul's!