

GOD'S POWER TOOL (Romans 1:16, 17)

INTRODUCTION

Our passage this morning mentions POWER. We are all interested in power. The business world use to call many things a power something or other. Power lunch, power walks and I like the power naps! In the political arena power is the whole issue. Some will go to any length to get and keep political power. This seems to be what runs Washington.

One time when an office holder in Washington died, a perennial office seeker hurried to the White House to tell the President that he'd like to "take the deceased man's place." The President answered, "If it's all right with the undertaker, it's all right with me."

The church is not immune from seeing things from the viewpoint of power. Michael Horton wrote a book sometime back titled, "Power Religion." In it he discusses the ways some segments of the church believe that it needs more power. Some speak of practicing "Power evangelism", seeking "Power Politics", being a "Power Preacher." The church needs more power, I agree, but are these the kinds of power we need most?

God has given the church a power tool and we need to use it. God's power tool He has given the church is the Gospel! Paul tells us about it in Romans 1:16, 17:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

What is power? It is the ability or strength to effect something, to cause something to happen. The Gospel is God's ability to effect something. The something that the Gospel can effect is salvation.

The word for power in this passage in the Greek is *dunamis*. This is the word from which we get the word "dynamite." The Gospel is God's dynamite. The Gospel is God's power tool. What does Paul say about this power tool?

NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

First, Paul he boldly says, "**I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.**"

We all know the temptation of being ashamed of the gospel. Now we won't say that we are ashamed of the Gospel, but we show it by the way we don't make it central to our life, by the way we don't trust it's power, by the way we don't share it as the most important message we have.

The word "Gospel" in Greek means as you know "good news," but what is the background of the English word 'Gospel?' It is God's spell probably from the old word 'spiel.' "Spiel" means a speech or talk. The Gospel is to be shared, to be talked about, to be spoken. Are you ashamed to speak the Gospel to someone as the way to solve man's problems?

We are afraid we may offend someone. We know that the gospel is repulsive to the lost man, unattractive, intimidating. Why? Because it exposes his sin, his wickedness, and his depravity. So we are timid about speaking about the Gospel and we turn instead to the health and wealth gospel that is not so intimidating and not so politically incorrect.

Paul could have developed timidity about sharing the gospel. He was imprisoned in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica, smuggled out of Damascus and Berea, laughed at in Athens, considered a fool at Corinth, and declared a blasphemer and lawbreaker in Jerusalem. He was stoned and left for dead at Lystra...He was never intimidated...ready and eager to preach at Rome, the capital of sin and paganism. But he was not ashamed of the Gospel.

To the Corinthians he affirmed:

(1 Cor 1:17-18 NKJV) For Christ sent 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.

The message of the cross, i.e. the Gospel is the power of God!

What else did Paul say about the Gospel in this passage?

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL TO DELIVER US

He said that the Gospel "... **is the power of God unto salvation....**"

The word "salvation" means basically "deliverance." The fundamental idea is that of a removal of someone from any dangers menacing to their life. The Bible talks about being delivered from enemies, from fear, from danger, from death.

The Gospel is God's power to bring change in a person's life by delivering us from the power of sin and spiritual death. We are to see it in salvation of all mankind, Jew and the Greek.

In one of his books Calvin Miller tells about a believer who had been an alcoholic. To test the new believer's Bible knowledge, an unbelieving friend challenged him to tell exactly how Christ had changed water into wine. The believer answered, "I do not know how or why Christ changed the water to wine. I only know that in my case He did something more useful: He changed my beer into furniture, my whiskey into food, my drunkenness into soberness."

The Gospel is God's power to salvation, to deliver from the grip which sin has on my life and frees me to be able to receive all the love which God has for me. It is the power to change my life into something more useful than my life being an instrument for sin. And this is the power that counts. And this is the power we are not to be ashamed of. This is the power that is the basic solution to man's problems.

THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL

Paul also says that the gospel is **“for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”** **for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”** Jesus was a Jew so some may think that the Gospel is just a Jewish thing. The Gospel did go to the Jews first because they were the people chosen by God to bring forth the Messiah. They were the ones who had received the word of God. They were familiar with the promises of God so they should have been the first to believe. But the Gospel is for the world. It is for all mankind, because all mankind needs the gospel.

Our nation was founded on the desire for freedom to preach the Gospel and to worship God according to our conscience. God has blessed us because of this testimony to the importance of the Gospel. But as a nation we are losing our commitment this Gospel. Many in our nation today do not even want to identify ourselves as a Christian nation. This is sad. This is more than sad, this is turning our backs on the God who brought us into being as a result of preaching the Gospel.

The Gospel is the power of God for all people, no matter whether you are Jews, Gentiles, Arab, African or American. The Gospel is for you

THE GOSPEL REVEALS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Next we see that the Gospel has the ability to reveal the righteousness of God to us.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

The righteousness of God is one of the themes in Romans. It is spoken of in at least four different ways. :

1. In Chapter 2 God's righteousness is seen in the judgment on sin, especially at the great final day of Wrath. Romans 2:5 **"...in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."** Wrath is the reaction of Divine righteousness which it comes into collision with sin. The Gospel reveals the seriousness of facing the righteous wrath of God on the Day of Judgment.

2. In chapter 3 righteousness is seen in God's faithfulness to fulfil His promises. **"Let God be true but every man a liar"** Paul says in light of God keeping his promises even when man doesn't. (Rom 3:4). God's righteousness is his fidelity to his word. God is faithful to His gospel.

3. Further in chapter 3 the righteousness of God is revealed in the atonement provided by Christ. This is explained more fully in Romans 3:25, 26. **"whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed."** Christ's death is the way God's righteousness is vindicated in light of being moved by his love to forgive unrighteousness people. It is through Christ's death or atonement that we can be saved!

4. Finally in chapter 4 it speaks of God's righteousness which is imputed to believers. Romans 4:6 **"blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works."** This is the righteousness of Christ which is given to us through faith. Phil 3:9 expresses it this way:

and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith

The Gospel reveals God's righteousness as nothing else does. We get to know the true nature of God through getting to know the Gospel. If we don't believe the Gospel, we will never know God nor his righteousness. This is why we should never be ashamed of it, nor why we should be hesitant to say that all the world must come to know God through the Gospel. The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to those who believe.

THE GOSPEL IS EXPERIENCED BY FAITH

Next we see that the Gospel is received from faith to faith. Verse 17

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

“Faith to faith” could mean from individual to individual. Whenever a person believes the Gospel God’s righteousness is revealed to that person and to the church at large. Or it could mean that God’s righteousness is revealed through the historical progression from Old Testament faith to New Testament faith. In the Old Testament, the righteousness of God’s wrath and judgment against sins was the focus, although His righteousness in his fidelity to His promises was certainly revealed and through the symbolism and typology of the Mosaic sacrificial system the righteousness of God was also revealed. But now that Christ has come and the full explanation of the Gospel has been given, the righteousness of God is revealed even more clearly through the Gospel. But the phrase “from faith to faith” probably means by faith alone from beginning to end of our life. The Gospel is received by faith, it is applied by faith, it is lived out by faith. It is from “faith to faith.”

Paul summarizes it by quoting Habakkuk 2:4, "**The just shall live by faith.**" Faith is the essential ingredient for experiencing the power of God.

As I said the word for power in this passage is *dunamis*, from which we get the word "dynamite." The Gospel is God's dynamite. But for dynamite to explode there must be something to ignite it. For God's power to be operative, there must be something to ignite it. What is that something? It is our faith.

In the Bible the key element of faith is ‘trust.’ ‘Trust’ is putting all the weight of your life on something. That something should be Christ. ‘Trust’ is putting all your hope in a person. That person should be Christ.

“Faith is the hand of the heart receiving what God has for us in Christ.” To reach out your hand is to make a choice. Faith is choosing to believe what God has said is true, just because He is worthy and trustworthy and choosing to commit your destiny into the hand of this Person.

Faith activates the power of God that brings salvation and in that sovereign act, the righteousness of God is revealed. In addition, He imparts His righteousness to those who believe. Not only is righteousness revealed but also reckoned to those who believe in Christ.

CONCLUSION:

Now that’s power and that’s a message to not be ashamed of! The Gospel is God’s power tool

Philip Henry, brother of the well-known Puritan Matthew Henry, calling one day upon a tanner, found him so absorbed in tanning a hide, that

he did not notice his pastor's approach until he tapped him on the shoulder. In confusion the man said, "Sir, I am ashamed you found me thus."

"Nay," replied Philip Henry. "May the Lord Jesus, when He comes, find me discharging with the same faithfulness, the duties of my calling."

Brothers and sisters, like Philip Henry, and like the Apostle Paul, let us not be ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for everyone who believes. Let's receive it, believe it, share it, use it.

Amen? Amen!