



Romans 1:14-17

The Power of God

Evangelical Christianity has as its major theme salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. It rings with the heartbeat that God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. It proclaims a message that Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and it sings a song of praise, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

The heart and soul of Biblical Christianity is, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Therefore, we proclaim with all of our soul the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation. Indeed, there is no other gospel. There is no other song. There is no other message of salvation. There is no other name given under heaven whereby we may be saved.

How may we be sure that it is the power of God unto salvation? It is simply by submitting ourselves continually to its cleansing and renewing influence in our lives. It is God's kind of life as we enjoy the deep communion with the living God. The Lord Jesus Christ is with us, our Friend, our Savior, our Sanctifier, or Lord and Master. From the depths of our conscience we can witness, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. He gives power that nothing else or anyone else can ever bestow.

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to *everyone who believes*, without any distinction of sex, age, condition of birth, country of residence, etc. Without exception anyone who believes on Christ will be saved. What a mighty Gospel we preach. It is universal in its scope, though its saving power is limited only to those who believe on Christ.

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Eager to preach the gospel

When you are in love you can't keep to yourself the joy of your heart. You want to tell others about the love of your life. When God comes into your life through the person of His Son Jesus Christ you can't keep it to yourself. You want to tell everyone about Him.

I am debtor to the world. I am under obligation to the lost world (v. 14). Literally, Paul says, "I am a debtor." We have a debt of love. We are

Literally, Paul says, "I am a debtor. We have a debt of love. We are constrained by the love of God. We want to serve Christ because of what He has done for us. We can never pay back a debt of grace. We serve out of the goodness that God has placed in our hearts. Because of His work of grace in our hearts we want to take the gospel out of the realm of self-edification and share it with the world."

Robert Haldane reminds us, "The Gospel, which is the word of God, is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. By it, as the word of truth, men are begotten by the will of God, and through the faith of the Gospel they are kept by His power unto salvation. The exceeding greatness of the power of God exerted in the Gospel toward those who believe, is compared to His mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand, Eph. 1:19. Thus, while the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, to those who are saved it is the power of God" (*Romans*, p. 47).

The joy of preaching is the joy of sharing from the overflow of your study of God's Word and your encounter with the living Christ. The preaching of the Gospel is like the inexhaustible experience of deep-sea pearl divers who dive into the ocean and come up with hands full of big beautiful pearls. Every time they come up they know there are many more where they have come from. So it is with the Word of God each time we go down we come up with an inexhaustible supply of radiant gems from God's Word. I firmly believe that when a person is truly saved God puts in their hearts a hunger for the deep things of God, and you can find it only in the study of His Word.

Christianity is Christ

1 Corinthians 15:1-5 defines the gospel of Christ as the proclamation of His death, burial and resurrection.

Everything God does is based upon the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus Christ died for our sins. Who is Jesus? He is the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the eternal Bright and Morning Star; He is our substitute who died in our place on the cross. Romans 5: 6, 8 says, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly . . . But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. "

How can God justify the person who believes on Christ? Romans 3:24, says by "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The apostle Paul uses figure of a prisoner who has been taken captive and a ransom price has to be paid before he can be set free."

Because of the fall of Adam we are bankrupt spiritually. All we had was sold and we were left naked, and poor, and miserable. We had no means of ransoming ourselves. It was just then that Jesus Christ stepped in, stood sponsor for us, and in the place of all believers, paid the ransom price that from that hour we might be delivered from the curse of the law and the

from that hour we might be delivered from the curse of the law and the vengeance of the wrath of God and go free, justified by His blood.

Jesus paid our ransom payment in full, and He paid it all at once. No debt remains. When Christ redeemed His people, He did it thoroughly. He left nothing lacking. Not a single debt was left unpaid. Not one penny would be left to be settled later. C. H. Spurgeon said it best:

God demanded of Christ the payment of the sins of all His people; Christ stood forward, and to the utmost penny paid whatever His people owed. The sacrifice of Calvary was not a part payment; it was not a partial exoneration it was a complete and perfect payment, and a complete and perfect remittal of all the debts of all believers that have lived, do live, or shall live, to the very end of time. On that day when Christ hung on the cross, He did not leave a single penny for us to pay as a satisfaction to God; He did not leave, from a thread . . . that He had not satisfied. The whole of the demands of the law were paid down there and then by Jehovah Jesus, the great high priest of all His people. And blessed be His name, He paid it all at once too.

Christ did not take out installments at the awesome debt. He paid it in full. Once and for all Jesus Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice. He counted down the price of our redemption and paid it in full and said, 'It's finished!' Christ suffered all that we ought to have suffered as a payment for our sin debt. Because it is paid in full, all who believe on Him are set free. The work of ransom was done completely by Christ and without a helper.

Because Jesus Christ paid the ransom in full, He left nothing for Himself to do, or for us to complete. He did not put us on installment plans to earn our salvation. He did not have to come again and die over and over again like the lambs of Israel's sacrifices. The ransom of all His people was paid in full and a receipt was given to them and Christ nailed that receipt to His cross and said, 'It's done. It is done. It is paid in full. They are nailed to the cross.' "

God was satisfied with that payment and proved it by raising Jesus from the dead.

Jesus was satisfied with the payment and ascended into heaven.

You and I are satisfied with the payment when we put our personal faith in the death of Jesus Christ to make us right with God.

Can you imagine for a moment what it must have been like when the mighty Conqueror entered into the gates of heaven at His ascension? I can see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and all the redeemed saints, come to behold the Savior and Lord! They were redeemed on credit waiting for that day when their payment would be paid in full. By faith they proclaimed the message of eternal hope in the coming of the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. What a sight that must have been! No Roman general ever had such a great triumph. No one ever saw such a majestic sight as when Christ returned to heaven.

Imagine the pageantry of a whole universe, the sovereigns of the entire creation gathered together, heavenly creatures such as cherubim and seraphim, all heavenly powers of creation, and God the Everlasting One pressed His Son to His bosom, and said, 'Well done, well done! You hast finished the work which I gave You to do.' "

No wonder the apostle Paul shouted, 'But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things' (2

from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

Praise God for the opportunity to preach the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

The Gospel is *power* in the hand of God, said Haldane. It is power . . . which God employs to accomplish a certain end. ”

The Good News of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation (1 Cor. 1:22-25). Some people still think it is nonsense and foolishness, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God unto salvation. That is why I don't stop and argue with people about it; I just preach it. God the Holy Spirit is the greatest apologist; He can take care of Himself. Everyone is dead spiritually and mentally and personally, until He awakens the spirit and brings man to believe on Christ and receive His new life.

Salvation is a comprehensive term. In this passage the words life, especially eternal life and salvation has the same meaning. The sinner who is justified by faith will live. He alone is righteous in God's sight. The sinner who is declared by God to be righteous or justified will be saved. Eternal life begins with justification and continues throughout eternity. Salvation includes sanctification and reaches its consummation in final glory when we stand before God in Christ Jesus.

It is the power to change people's lives

We were dead in trespasses and sins. The wages of sin is death. Sin and depravity paints an ugly picture in the Bible and in real life. Read for yourself the first three chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans.

Sinners need the Savior who can deliver us from our sins. I do not want to be reincarnated into a future life of sin and depravity. I want the power of the Gospel to change my life right now and be found with new life in Christ for now and eternity.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ reveals God's way of righteousness. It is not a way determined by man, or by an external consideration, but by God. It is what is right, conformable to right, pertaining to right as God determines it to be right. God is the standard. Paul uses the concept of righteousness in the Old Testament, and it is a key word in Romans.

The Hebrew idea of right and wrong was put in forensic terms. In the Hebrew mind the right and wrong is settled before a judge. It is not in the sense of a moral excellence as much as a legal standing before God. The Hebrew word righteous (*saddiq*) means simply *in* the right. The word wicked (*rasha*) means *in* the wrong. Therefore, for the Hebrew Jehovah is always in the right because He is not only sovereign but self-consistent. He can never contradict Himself. He is the source of righteousness.

God is the goal and standard of integrity. It is His norm that man must live up to. God is always righteous, and we are righteous only when we are in the right relationship to God.

How does a person stand right in the sight of a holy God? God vindicates His own righteousness when He declares the believing sinner righteous based on the atoning work of Jesus Christ. God has revealed His personal righteousness in the Law and in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is a declared righteousness. God declares the believing sinner to be in a right relationship with Himself. God acquits the believing sinner

God declares the believing sinner to be in a right relationship with Himself. God acquits the believing sinner based on the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus Christ for that sinner.

It is good to remind ourselves the distinction Paul places on justification, sanctification and glorification in his understanding of salvation. Failure to do so leads to confusion in the Christian life. By justification by faith Paul means the initial act of God's saving grace when we put our faith in Christ as our Savior. God puts the person who believes in a right relationship with Himself. Sanctification follows and continuously works in our lives. Glorification is that final day when we stand complete in Christ before God the Father. Justification by faith is the simple response of the believing heart to the Word of God in Jesus Christ. Salvation depends not on sacraments, not what is done by any priest, or individual, but on what Christ has done for the believing sinner. This teaching in God's Word sets every individual face to face before a holy God and forces us to deal with our sin and depravity God's way.

Omnipotent power of God

The apostle Paul teaches us the gospel is the inherent, omnipotent power of God operating in the salvation of the sinner who believes on Christ. The gospel is God's power resulting in salvation to the one who believes on the saving work of Christ. The gospel is the power of God. This power of God is demonstrated by what it does. It is divine energy in itself. It is the work of God in the sinner. The good news of salvation is energized by the Holy Spirit. The gospel is the message which the Holy Spirit in sovereign grace makes operative in the heart of the believing sinner who is elected to salvation before the foundation of the universe.

Take a few moments and look back over your life. Draw a mental time line from the day you were born up until today. Can you pick a time when God came into your life and changed you? Was there a time when He put a hunger in your heart for more of Him? Was there a time when the Holy Spirit put a hungering and thirsting in your heart for God's righteousness? Was there a time when you became acutely aware that one day you would have to stand before a holy and righteous God who will not tolerate sin in His presence? Did it make you so unbearably uncomfortable that a Godly fear grasped your soul? Is there a time and place where you know beyond a shadow of doubt that the Holy Spirit brought you to a sense of spiritual life and birth? Have you been born spiritually? Have you been born a second time?

What was your life like before you put your faith in Him? What changes have taken place in your life since that day? Is there a difference between your life before you believed on Christ and since then? Has the Holy Spirit put a hunger in your heart to become more like Jesus Christ? What was your life like before Christ came into your life? What changes has He brought into your personal life since then?

Humanism doesn't have the power to change a depraved life

Philosophy of the new age movements, humanism and socialism cannot change a depraved heart. Only God can raise the dead!

The gospel is not advice to good people. It is not a message to sinners suggesting that they lift themselves up by their bootstraps. It is power that lifts them up out of the condemnation and guilt of sin by giving them spiritual life. Paul does not say that the gospel brings power but that it is God's power to save sinners. It is the power of God at work in the believing sinner energizing and giving God's kind of life. When the gospel enters the sinner's life, it is as though the very fire of God had come upon him and He gives eternal life. The result of the power of God in a sinner's life is salvation. It is altogether God's work, not something man does.

The apostle Paul makes it absolutely clear the message of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Faith comes by hearing. God saves the sinner through the message of the gospel. God's power is operative

Faith comes by hearing. God saves the sinner through the message of the gospel. God's power is operative unto salvation through the gospel alone. It is the *gospel* that is God's power unto salvation.

The writer of Hebrews tells us the word of God is living and powerful (cf. Heb. 4:12). Use the Word in the presentation of the Gospel because it is the omnipotence of God working unto salvation.

THE PLAN OF THE GOSPEL

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, But the righteous *man* shall live by faith (Romans 1:16-17).

Salvation is for everyone who believes

The gospel is universal, but it is not universalism. It is available to everyone who will call upon His name and believe on Jesus Christ for salvation. However, it does not teach that everyone will be saved regardless of what they believe. All religious roads do not lead to heaven. Some will take you to hell. The restriction is indicated by the words *who believe*. Salvation is not the possession of any unbeliever, or someone who believes in a false god. Each person must make it his own by an act of faith.

However, it is not man's faith that gives the gospel its power. The apostle Paul makes it clear that it is the power of the gospel that makes it possible for the sinner to believe. It is the power of God that is at work in the saving gospel.

The power of God unto salvation is applied through faith. It is *to* everyone that believes. This is the foundation-principle in Paul's life. *The just shall live by faith*. It is the person who is righteous by faith that will live.

The only kind of righteousness God offers to the sinner is His own righteousness. When the sinner accepts God's righteousness he is assured that God will stand behind it for all eternity. Therefore the sinner will stand in a right relationship with God forever. The sinner's guilt has been taken away for all eternity because of the work of Christ on the cross. But the saved sinner also is clothed with the positive righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is his new standing with God. It is an eternal relationship with God in grace. The work of Christ saves and keeps the sinner saved for all eternity.

However, we must keep clearly in mind that the same righteousness of God that saves the believing sinner also condemns the unbelieving sinner for all eternity who rejects God's grace and mercy.

The source of our righteousness is the grace of God, and the means is by faith in Jesus Christ.

Salvation is only to those who believe on Christ

The gospel is the power of God because it leads you to Jesus Christ. The plan of God is *there is salvation in no one else*; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus said, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me* (John 14:6).

The reason for such a plan is very simple. Jesus Christ is the only person who was ever qualified to die as a substitute in the place of another person. If you and I died for sins we would only be paying the price for our own sinfulness. It would be impossible for us to die in the place of another to pay for their sin debt. We do

own sinfulness. It would be impossible for us to die in the place of another to pay for their sin debt. We do not have the righteousness to ransom anyone, including ourselves. He [God] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin *to be* sin [a sin-offering] on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was the only person qualified to die in your place, and pay to redeem you.

The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 1:17, For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, But the righteous *man* shall live by faith. ”

There is only one way we as sinful persons can ever stand just before a righteous and holy God. Paul uses the figure of the judgment bar of God. Justification is a forensic term. It is employed always in a legal sense. A prisoner is brought to the court of justice to be tried. In God's Supreme Court we are all tried and found guilty. No other appeal can be made. In human courts the King or Queen, or President can grant a pardon, but they cannot justify the guilty sinner. We can be pardoned, but not even royalty or the highest legal authority can wash our character clean. The criminal is just as much a criminal when he is pardoned as he was before.

But before the Lord God we who are proven guilty can be justified. Even though the verdict has been brought against us, guilty as charged, yet God can justify us.

How can a just God continue to be just and justify the believing sinner? There is only one way and that is what the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about. Jesus Christ, our substitute took all our guilt upon Himself and died for us. He changed places with us. Remember, He paid our sin debt. He ransomed us. Because the penalty has been paid in full God can declare us acquitted. Justified! Set free! The wages of sin is death. ” But Jesus Christ put me aside, and stands in my place. When the guilty plea is entered, Jesus Christ says, Guilty, Your Honor. He takes my guilt to be His own guilt. The One who was without sin became my representative for sin and died in my place. Jesus Christ was executed in my place at the cross.

Jesus says, Punish Me. I have placed My righteousness on that person, and I have taken that person's sin on Myself. Father, punish Me, and consider that person to have been Me. Let Him reign in heaven; let Me suffer for Him. Now God can save us because the penalty has been paid in full. Christ says, I'm his substitute. The believing sinner shall take My place; I will take his or hers. ”

The moment you believe on Christ God the Father looks at you as if you were Christ. He accepts you and me as if we were His only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth. He gives to us the crown of life in heaven. He takes us to His bosom forever and ever. We are being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. ”

The moment you believe on Christ you are pardoned at once. The believing sinner stands a guiltless man or woman in the sight of God. He ceases to be guilty in God's esteem. To be justified by faith does not mean to be made righteous, but to be declared righteous. God declares the believing sinner acquitted on the basis of the substitutionary death of Jesus. God changes people in the crucial point of their relationship with Him. He removes the barrier that separates man from Him. It is an act of grace. The creator God accepts us as His own simply through faith in His Son. In justification God does not change us, but accepts us as we are. He does change us once we have been accepted, but this new acceptance with Him comes first. Progressive sanctification takes place over a lifetime as we learn to live by faith in Christ and walk in the Holy Spirit. If you believe in Christ He will not let you live as your flesh desires. His Spirit will constrain you to mortify its affections and lusts. If He gives you the grace to make you believe, He will give you the grace to live a holy life afterward. If He gives you faith, He gives you good works afterward. Our standing with God is by grace through faith. This is the foundation basis for everything else that happens in our Christian life.

Saving faith

What is this saving faith? It is the attitude in which we acknowledge our complete insufficiency to gain a right relationship with God, and we rely utterly on the all-sufficiency of God in Christ. We cease all self-assertion, even by way of effort after righteousness, and trust in Christ alone to make us right with God (Rom. 3:20, 22, 24, 28; 4:2-3, 13; 5:1).

Moreover, something else wonder has taken place in God's court. The moment we believe we take Christ's robes of righteousness and are clothed in them. In the moment when Christ takes our sins, we take Christ's righteousness. When God now looks upon the sinner who was dead in sins, He looks upon him with as much love and affection that He ever had for His only begotten Son. He takes away our filthy garments and clothes us in His royal raiment. That is imputation. If a man is to live in the presence of God, he must be clothed with the divine righteousness of Jesus Christ. Our filthy rags of self-righteousness are placed on Christ our substitute, and His garments of perfect righteousness are placed on us. Christ takes our sins; we take Christ's righteousness. The basis is our substitution. We go free justified by His grace because God can find no fault with His own imputed righteousness. The redemptive work of Christ is the ground upon which the righteousness of God is reckoned or imputed to the believing sinner.

I love what C. H. Spurgeon once said, "Those who are once justified are justified irreversibly. As soon as a sinner takes Christ's place, and Christ takes the sinner's place, there is no fear of a second change. If Christ has once paid the debt, the debt is paid, and it will never be asked for again; if you are pardoned, you are pardoned once for ever. God does not give a free pardon . . . and then afterward retract it and punish man . . . He says, 'I have punished Christ; you may go free.' And after that we may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, that being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . In the moment they believe, their sins being imputed to Christ, they cease to be theirs, and Christ's righteousness is imputed to them and accounted theirs, so that they are accepted. "

Has the great exchange taken place in your life? The person who is made right by faith in Christ will live by faith in Him. To be justified by faith is to enter into a new relationship with God, not because of the works of his hands, but because of his utter faith in what the love of God has done through the death of Jesus Christ.

No one can summarize this great truth better than A. M. Toplady in "Rock of Ages. "

Not the labors of my hands,
Can fulfill thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no languor know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and thou alone.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

Title: Romans 1:14-17 The Power of God

Series: Exchanged Life in Romans

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