

Romans 1:16–17

#0027

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—January 25, 1977

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” Romans 1:16–17.

What did we find the word ‘Gospel’ means? Good news. Is the Gospel good news? Yes. Now notice the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Salvation from what? From sin.

“...Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins” Matthew 1:21.

Salvation is from sin; past, present and future. The word ‘salvation’ as used in the Bible applies to *all* that Jesus does for us in rescuing us from the pit of sin and fitting us for the joys of Heaven. And finally changing these bodies, either by the resurrection from the dead or by translation at His coming, to the immortal state where the marks of sin are gone forever. All of these experiences are included in this salvation. We want to be saved from the guilt of sin. We want to be saved from the power of sin. We want to be saved from the results of sin. All of this is salvation.

The Gospel is what? “The power of God *unto* salvation.” To whom? Everyone. Now, some people might wish it would stop there, but it doesn't stop there. The Gospel is the power of salvation to everyone that believeth. Then, does man has something to do with it?

Not that we can make salvation. I was reading about a man who was arguing that since he had nothing to do with being in a lost planet, that, therefore, he wasn't responsible for the loss of his soul. The man who was talking to him said, “If you were on a vessel and the vessel was torpedoed and you were going down, about to drown, that wouldn't be your fault, would it? But if just at that time a lifeboat came within reach and a lifeline was thrown to you, then if you were lost whose fault would it be?” That's it.

Thank God, He has brought salvation within reach of every soul. Christ is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:9). Don't ask me to prove that to you. The Word of God is its own authority. All we know about salvation is in this Book. When God speaks, that's the way it is. And He says that He has brought salvation within reach of everyone.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” Titus 2:11.

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to *everyone* that believes. How does the Gospel operate? How do we *get* this power? What does it mean to believe? Those are very important questions. There are literally millions of people today who are hunting for *some* power. And what multitudes are looking for is some power that will take hold of them. Then some wonderful, mysterious experience comes to them, and after that everything is, shall we say, okay.

Is this the way the Gospel operates? Is this what Paul is talking about? Let me ask it in another way. Strictly speaking, it isn't the Gospel that saves us. The Gospel is the good news about the One Who *does* save us. Who's that? Jesus. Can you think of any good news about salvation that would leave Christ out?

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" Acts 4:12.

So remember, it is not the message that saves us. It's the Man, the God-Man that the message tells about that saves us. The reason the Gospel is good news is that it points us to Christ.

But does Christ automatically save everybody in this world? No. Did He die for everybody? Yes. He's brought the lifeboat within reach of every drowning person, my friends. But what must I do? I must reach out my hand and take that lifeline, and let Jesus pull me in. There must be a *response* of the will.

But now let us look at that a little closer and a little longer. Is this something that happens once for all, and that's all there is to it? Would salvation include learning what God is like, and choosing what He is like? Would it include learning what God's will for my life is, and choosing it as my own?

I'll illustrate it with something we're dealing with all the time in this health work. Here's a man that's troubled with smoking. Can anyone here testify to the glory of God that He has given you the victory over tobacco somewhere in your past life; may I see your hands? Why look at that; scores of people, thank the Lord. Now I want to ask you a question, you people that just held up your hands. Did you get that victory *before* you knew that tobacco was injurious? Did you somewhere along the line simply accept Jesus, go to the altar, and the next morning you woke up and never wanted tobacco from that time on; is that the way it happened? Or did someone, either before you had accepted Jesus or afterward, teach you that the effects of tobacco might bring lung cancer or a heart attack or some other problem? Did someone teach you that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that if any man defiles the temple of God, him will God destroy? And as the result of listening to that, did you come to understand that God wanted you to give up the tobacco? How many of you've had that experience; may I see your hands?

Ordinarily, God doesn't give a person a vision to tell him about the effects of tobacco. He's made provision for reaching us through the teaching of His message, the preaching of the Gospel. Take the matter of the seventh-day Sabbath. Does the Bible say the seventh-day is the Sabbath? Yes. But is it possible for people to live for years and not be conscious of that? Is it possible even for a person to give his

heart to God and still go on breaking that Sabbath without even thinking about it? Why doesn't Jesus when He saves people, either teach them the whole thing all at once, or even "better" than that, just make it so *automatically* they know all about not smoking, and know about the Sabbath and know about all the other things? Wouldn't that be nice? We wouldn't need any Bible classes then or any physiology classes, would we? Think of all we could do with the time we'd save. I wonder why God does it another way, or does He do it another way?

Now, I want to tell you something, friend. It's amazing how few Christians have really thought this through. And they have the idea (don't miss this point) that if they'd only pray enough and long enough, they'd get the Spirit, and the Spirit would do everything for them, and from then on, they'd just be having a rose garden walk to paradise.

When Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the Gospel, He said, "Teach them to observe all things that I have commanded." (Matthew 28:18–20) Why does He give His church the business of *teaching* the truth? Because salvation includes *choosing* the character of God, and God *chooses* to teach us what His character is point by point, step by step, item by item; that's the way He chooses to do it. I hope everyone here understands God and is acquainted with God better than you were a year ago. Last Thanksgiving, you were thankful for some things. I hope that this Thanksgiving season, your heart wells up with gratitude for *clearer* revelations, more *glorious* disclosures, *better* ideas of what God is like and what His will is. But Jesus waits not only until we are *informed* on what His will is, but He waits for us to choose it.

You say, "Well, do you mean that human choice can of itself lift a man?"

No. Not at all. But this whole work of the Gospel is a wonderful combination, a blend of the divine and the human. The power is all of Christ, but the choice to exercise it is mine. And so we are told that the expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself.

Now notice the 17th verse of Romans:

"For therein [in the Gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith" Romans 1:17.

It *starts* with faith and keeps on with faith. That's another way of saying what Paul says in the 16th verse: that it's the power unto salvation to everyone that believes. In other words, to everyone that has faith, that exercises faith. Faith includes belief and trust. But notice that it is exercised from faith to faith. We begin with faith and then we see more, we act more, we get more faith.

As it is written, "The just shall live by faith." See Paul's further development on this thought:

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness"
Romans 10:10.

How do we get righteousness? By believing.

Someone says, "Well, that's what I thought. You get it just by believing. You don't get it by *doing* any of it."

Do you mean I can have the righteousness of Jesus on the point of honesty applied to my account while I keep on stealing from my neighbors? You mean I can have the righteousness of Jesus on the matter of Sabbath-keeping applied to my account while I deliberately, willfully, keep on breaking God's Sabbath? No. Jesus is the faithful and true Witness. And when I come to Him in faith, believing that His death on the cross was to take away my sin...

Is that what Jesus died for?

"He was manifested to take away our sins" 1 John 3:5.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" John 1:29.

...and I look to the cross and believe He died to do that—He puts His precious life to my account to cover all my past life. That's righteousness by what? By faith, that is, by believing.

But my dear friends, the righteousness of Jesus is not to cover my continued deliberate rebellion. Oh no. That would make Christ the minister of sin the Bible says, and He is not the minister of sin. His *whole* purpose in dying for me and living for me and pleading *for* me and pleading *with* me is to get me to come to Him and give up the sin, and let His precious blood cover the past, and give me power *now* to do the right thing instead of the wrong thing. Is that right? That's the important thing. All right.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness"
Romans 10:10.

How do I believe unto righteousness? I accept Jesus as my Savior. I give up my sins. I believe He covers my past just as if I had never sinned and that He gives me power *now* to do what He says.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;
and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"
Romans 10:10.

"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher"
Romans 10:11–14.

These questions are what are called rhetorical questions. Paul is making a point. How shall they call on Him of Whom they have not believed? What's the answer? The answer is that you can't do it. You can't call on someone you never heard of—never believed in. And how can you believe in Him unless you've heard of Him, and how shall we hear without a what?

[Audience] A preacher.

That's why Jesus sent His church into the world with a preaching message.

Now notice: Paul is telling us here about righteousness by faith. But he's explaining that it's man's *response* to the teaching of the Gospel that makes it possible for this experience to take place. And he's bringing it right down to the point of where we get the message.

The 17th verse, let's read it together:

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” Romans 10:17.

Faith through which we receive the righteousness of Christ comes by hearing. Hearing what? The Word of God. Do I hear it all at once? No. I hear someone say. I'm studying my bible as I should, I'll learn some more another day and another. And as I study, I find out more about what sin is so I can give it up. I find out more about what righteousness is so I can choose it. But in each case, God waits for me to *believe* in my heart and *confess* with my mouth.

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;
and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”
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Suppose I don't believe. Am I saved? No. Suppose I don't confess. Am I saved? No. Man's *response* is essential to the experience.

Let us never—don't miss it—be confused over the idea that Jesus, somewhere, sometime, past, present or future, has done or is doing or *will* do something Himself that makes it immaterial what we do; that it doesn't make any difference what we do. We're out there in the water drowning; He's going to pick us up whether we want it or not, whether we choose it or not. He's going to pick us up and put us in the lifeboat and carry us into the harbor. And of course, when we get there into the harbor, everything will be all right. We won't have any battles, any struggles. It'll all be all right.

That is *not* the Gospel. That's not the Gospel at all. The Gospel is the power of God unto what? Salvation. And salvation is from what? From sin. It's the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. Believes what? Believes *Jesus*. Believes His message. Believes what He says. And this comes to us, I repeat, not all at once, but day by day as we keep studying.

Don't misunderstand me: I don't mean that our acceptance with *Jesus* is a gradual thing. No, no. I mean the completion of our salvation is a gradual thing. We can be saved from all guilt the moment we come to Jesus. And if we die the next minute, we'd be safe in the arms of Jesus and resurrected when He comes. That's the way to keep, isn't it? But that isn't all there is to it. We must learn more and more about God's message. And as we learn more, we *respond* to that which we learn. And where does the power come from to do it? From Jesus. We *can't* do it without Him, but He *won't* do it without us.

I want to read a very interesting comment:

"Conversion is a work that most do not appreciate. It is not a small matter to transform an earthly, sin-loving mind and bring it to understand the unspeakable love of Christ, the charms of His grace, and the excellency of God so that the soul shall be imbued with divine love and captivated with the heavenly mysteries... 'This is the sanctification which God requires. Nothing short of this will He accept'" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 2*, pages 294–295.

The word "appreciate" here is used in its precise sense of properly evaluating. Do you know how long it takes? It takes a lifetime. We're still in school. So next week, Jesus has planned for us to understand as the result of studying His Word through the week, more of His loving character. But remember, the power to *do* what we read about is *His*, just as the inspiration that shows us His will is *His*. The light from His Word comes from *Him*. The power to do what we read about is all *His*.

Now we've been listening to Paul, let's go over and listen to Peter. Of course, it's all a part of the Bible; it's the Holy Spirit in back of these apostles and prophets that makes it authoritative. Now I want you to notice that Peter's message is in precise agreement with what we've read from Paul. 1 Peter the first chapter and the fifth verse: I think we'll begin reading with the third verse to get the setting:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"
1 Peter 1:3–5.

Notice that Peter's presentation of salvation includes what's still *ahead* of us, ready to be revealed when Jesus comes. As Paul says:

"Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" Hebrews 9:28.

Thank God, we're going to be saved from *all* the effects and results of sin. The person who has a weak heart now because he's smoked for so many years or because he didn't exercise or whatever, if he'll do the best he can now to come to God and ask God to forgive him and take away the guilt, *someday* when Christ comes, friends, we'll have immortal bodies without one trace of disease. Won't it be wonderful? We can make some improvement now, perhaps. But we may go down into the grave as the result of the past. But we can go with, as Peter says, a living hope—that means a *living* hope—because when Jesus resurrects us from the grave, it won't be with all the blemishes and deformities and weaknesses. Will it? Thank God, we can have immortal bodies free from disease, and all that is a part of salvation, Peter says.

But in the meantime, we are kept by the power of God unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

“Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” 1 Peter 1:21–22.

We are purified by obeying the truth. Not that we can purify ourselves. But Jesus purifies us as we put our wills on His side. The 23rd verse:

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever...But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you" 1 Peter 1:23, 25.

So what is the Gospel bringing to us? The Word, with its illumination to show us the way, and its power that we may go that way.

Oh, I thank God for the Gospel that shows us the way and enables us to go the way. And remember, all of this is of Christ. *He* is the Gospel personified.

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” John 1:12.

Here it is. John is in agreement with Paul and Peter. They are all inspired by the same Spirit. The power is in *Jesus*, but it comes to those who believe Him and receive Him. There is the human response to the human lifeline that is brought within our reach.

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