

The Gospel – The Power of God to Salvation

We used to have a retired pastor serving in the Colony of Mercy ministry at Americas Keswick. We called him Chaplain Blackley. He was a godly man who considered it his calling to proclaim the Gospel until his dying day. He said that God spoke to him in his later years with this verse;

“Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.” (Psalms 71:18 NKJV)

The license plate on Chaplain Blackley’s car read ROM116 because his life testified that he was not in fact ashamed of the Gospel.

“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.” (Romans 1:16-17 NKJV)

But it wasn’t until this morning that I understood the full ramification of these verses. It seems that a lot of Christians that I meet interpret the word salvation to mean, I prayed the prayer, now I am going to heaven, and so what happens between here and there doesn’t matter. The problem with that line of thought is that what happens does matter. In fact it matters a lot, especially to men caught up in the bondage of life dominating sin. In fact to them it could be a matter of life and death. In reality this passage helps us to see that there is so much more. The hope of every believer in this passage is realized that not only are they saved from the consequences of sin when they die but they are also saved from the power of sin while they live! Listen to the commentary on these verses from the Faithlife Study Bible:

Power, The word *dynamis* often refers to miraculous works (Matt 7:22; 11:20; Mark 6:2). Here, it refers to God’s power in salvation (1 Cor 1:18; see note on 2 Tim 3:5). ***The gospel demonstrates God’s ability to save by transforming sinful people into His likeness.***

Salvation, The word *sōtēria* refers to deliverance from the final judgment. ***It may also refer to deliverance from sin and the results of sin: death and alienation from God.***

Barry, J. D., Grigoni, M. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Mangum, D., & Whitehead, M. M. (2012). Faithlife Study Bible (Ro 1:16). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

For those like myself that were once caught up or more accurately in complete bondage to life dominating sin this was an amazing revelation. We tried and tried and tried some more but to no avail. All that was accomplished was to demonstrate our total lack of self-produced righteousness. That is when we fell on our faces and saw the need for a righteousness other than our own. Listen again to 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.”*** (Romans 1:17 NKJV)

“the righteousness of God is thus opposed to the righteousness of man, “they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.” Now what is that righteousness which natural people seek to establish, and which is especially called “their own?” Doubtless it is a righteousness founded on their own works, and therefore what is here properly opposed to it is a righteousness founded on the “work of God. (ALBERT BARNES Commentary)

1:17 righteousness of God May refer to righteousness that comes from God—that is, the righteous status or right standing that God grants to those who have faith in Jesus Christ. Alternatively, “righteousness of God” may refer to God’s own righteousness and His saving work. It’s also possible to combine these possibilities: **righteousness is an attribute of God which is manifested in His provision of salvation.** As a result, those who believe are granted righteous status before God.

Barry, J. D., Grigoni, M. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Mangum, D., & Whitehead, M. M. (2012). Faithlife Study Bible (Ro 1:17). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

So you see because it is HIS righteousness and not my own that is produced I can get off of my little performance treadmill and rest in the finished work of Christ. I am not only not capable, but I am not obliged to try to figure out or do what Jesus would do! I am simply called to surrender and allow Christ to live through me. Hannah Whitall Smith puts it this way;

“It is this which I have discovered lately, that **Jesus is just as much my Savior from the daily power of sin, as He was long ago from its guilt. I never knew that He would do so much for me as this that He would fight my battles and conquer my enemies, that He would live my life for me in short,** and that my only part was to abandon myself to Him, to abide in Him and to leave all the rest in His hands. Oh what a rest of faith this is!”

Smith, H. W., & Dieter, M. E. (1997). The Christian’s secret of a holy life: The unpublished personal writings of Hannah Whitall Smith. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

“Our Father is going to teach us, mainly through personal failure, that the life we live is the life of our Lord Jesus alone. The Christian life is **not our living a life like Christ, or our trying to be Christ-like, nor is it Christ giving us the power to live a life like His; but it is Christ Himself living His own life through us; ‘no longer I, but Christ.’**”

Stanford, M. J. (2002). Complete Works of Miles J. Stanford. Galaxie Software.

So this morning instead of striving I am resting and rejoicing, not just that I am saved from death, but that I am saved from life, a futile life of failure. This is the whole Gospel that Chaplain Blackley gave his life to proclaiming. I reckon I’ll just do the same!

Jim Freed