

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Lord's Day Morning

Reformation Sunday

Date 30th October 2022

Preacher Rev Philip Knowles, Ps/Hymns Ps 46:1-6, 10-11, First Version, 324, 306, 503 Warrington.

Read: Romans 1:15-17 Text: Romans 1:15-17

Title – PAUL & THE REFORMERS CONVICTION OF THE GOSPEL

The days prior to Paul's conversion was that of darkness and bitterness to the gospel.

Such was the extent of Paul's hatred for Christ, that Paul persecuted the church of Christ, believing his zeal earned favour with God.

However, there was a day when Paul was brought to see himself as a guilty sinner in the sight of a righteous God.

Paul's religious activity displeased God and his religious zeal was without knowledge.

The reason being, Jesus who he persecuted is the Son of God, and ***God sent forth His Son into world, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.***

Furthermore, because Christ and His church are one, then to attack the church is to attack Christ.

Paul also known as Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of the faith, was saved by the power of the gospel, to preach the power of the gospel.

The Lord raised up Paul to be a light in a dark day. He served and lived for Jesus Christ. He was separated unto the Gospel, called with a holy calling.

It was because of Christ, that Paul loved to preach the Gospel,. He said ***I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth...***”

As we assemble this Lord’s Day, at the end of October, we reflect and remember those who like Paul were saved by the Gospel and then stood for the Gospel in dark days.

That is why the Sunday closest to the 31st of October is known as Reformation Sunday, because on 31st of October in 1517 Martin Luther, the German Protestant Reformer, nailed his 95 thesis or statements to the church door at Wittenberg, Germany, exposing the error of Roman Catholic teachings.

Martin Luther was one of many reformers who God raised up in defence of the gospel.

Others include John Wycliffe the forerunner to the reformation, John Huss, Patrick Hamilton, John Calvin, William Tyndale, John Knox and many more.

Therefore, we must ask why did the reformers not gave in to pressure during the days they lived,

with all its spiritual darkness, declension, and danger, along with its rituals, relics and religious superstitions promoted by the Roman Catholic Church.

Even when Martin Luther was brought to the council in Germany, He was told to retreat, recant, reverse, retract, go back on the gospel he preached.

He answered “*I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen.*”

The reformers believed in the power of the Gospel, and they were not ashamed to proclaim that Jesus Christ alone is the only mediator between God and men, and the just shall live by faith.

Such gospel truth viewed them as heretics, blasphemers and sentenced many to death, by torture, execution, drowning and burning.

Both Paul and the Reformers believed the gospel of grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This was their conviction.

Over 505 years from 1517 have passed, Is the gospel message your conviction believer?

Do you live, pray, serve and believe “*the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation...*”

If so continue to live and share it's power.

If not, then you are either *backslidden having doubted the gospel's power* or *still in bondage needing delivered by the gospel's power.*

I FIRST, PAUL AND THE REFORMERS CONVICTION IN THE SINGULARITY OF THE GOSPEL

Paul calls the gospel in v1 as “*the gospel of God*”, v 9 “*the gospel of His Son*,” v16 “*the gospel of Christ.*”

These words show Paul had unshakable unbendable and unmovable, convictions about the gospel.

Paul believed there was only one gospel, one message to fallen sinners and that message centred upon Jesus Christ and His finished work, to set sinners free from spiritual bondage.

Paul said “***the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation...***”

During those dark ages when Rome perverted the gospel, promoting another way, or many ways to have pardon.

The Reformers, like Paul were convicted of the one and the only way of pardon from God, by Faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

As we stand here today, is the singularity of the gospel your conviction, do you stand with Paul and the Reformers concerning one gospel, one message.

Will you labour and pray for souls with the conviction “***the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation...***”

May God be pleased by His almighty and sovereign power, during these spiritually dark days, **to send a mighty reformation**

To return to scripture

for the re-emphasising of gospel preaching,

the revival of believers,

the restoration of backsliders,

and remission of guilty sinners.

II SECOND, PAUL AND THE REFORMERS CONVICTION IN THE SUBSTANCE OF THE GOSPEL

Paul identifies the gospel he preaches in **v16** as “**the gospel of Christ**”. It’s not the gospel of man, or the gospel partnership between Christ and man.

Paul said of the gospel in **1 Cor 15:3-4** “**For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.**”

You see the gospel centres on what Christ has done and does for sinners, not what sinners do for Christ.

The substance of the gospel is not a half way gospel, where Christ and humanity both give 50%. The gospel is not a joint account.

The gospel is not even Christ doing 99% of the work and mankind doing 1%. There is no mixture of faith and human effort.

Rather, the gospel, is all of Christ earning salvation for guilty sinners

Paul said in **Galatians 2:16** “**...a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.**”

Luther said “***I must listen to the gospel. It tells me not what I must do, but what Jesus Christ the Son of God hath done for me.***”

This is the reason why the gospel of Christ is rejected, because it robs men and woman of their own religious efforts, notions, and plans.

The gospel offends sinners, because it refuses their own works, input for salvation.

There is nothing you can do to earn salvation, even if you work extra, give more, nothing will ever be enough,

because the cost is of infinite value, that's why Jesus paid the infinite cost by His sinless life and with the shedding of His blood which is infinite value.

Salvation is the free gift of God to sinners, only because Jesus paid its price in full.

The reformers believed that sinners could not save themselves, the church cannot give spiritual liberty, even the religious leaders of their day could not take away the guilt of sin, not even the Pope.

The **Reformers** stood on the authority of Scripture alone, and nothing has changed in our day.

The substance of the gospel, Christ's person & gospel ministry, has not changed, **1 Peter 1:25 the word of the Lord endureth forever**"

Even today among so much compromise, the substance of the gospel is still being preached throughout England and in London in this very place.

This place is a little light to shine in a dark day.

Maybe you are offended by the Gospel, the gospel empties every hope of self, in order to receive full salvation in Christ.

Illustration of a life guard saving someone drowning. The life can only save, when person in need stops trying to save themselves.

Otherwise they will bring both the life guard and the needy one under water.

The more the needy person depends upon their own notions, more kicking, more splashing, trying to stay above the water, they are actually exhausting themselves.

But when they stop, and reach out for the life guards help can they be rescued.

Only when you stop trying to save yourself, leaning on own efforts, will you be saved.

III THIRD, PAUL AND THE REFORMERS CONVICTION IN THE STAND FOR THE GOSPEL

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel”

When Paul went to Rome, it was at its height. Rome was the seat of government, it had all her military power, the games, the theatre, the culture, a city of arts, philosophy, and education.

Furthermore, it was a wicked city, full of sinful pleasure, carnality, cruelty. It was a city given over to the flesh.

In Rome people cared nothing for Christ. They worshipped the creature than the creator.

We learn from history that in Rome, Nero, persecuted God's people, throwing them to the animals to be torn apart, placed on devices to have their bodies pulled apart. They were burned at the stake to be lights throughout Rome.

It was not popular to preach the gospel in Paul's day, Yet Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. **v15** ***“I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.”***

The word **ready** means **egar**. He was not put of by the spiritual state of Rome. He could say if God be for me who can be against me.

The message, I have is God's message that Rome needs to hear. I must be faithful even when I live in an age when to preach the message is unpopular.

No matter where Paul travelled he was not ashamed to preach the gospel, he was always ready.

But his courage was not in himself, he did not give himself motivational speech's, or work up adrenalin.

Paul's courage lay in the power of the gospel. He had the power of God resting upon him and working through him.

The Lord empowered, equipped and enabled Paul to stand for the gospel. He said in **Phil 4:13** "***I can do all things through Christ which strengthen me***".

As the Psalmist said in **Ps 3:6** "***I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.***"

The church of Rome in Luther's time was far from Paul's time.

Throughout the centuries they added more and more error, putting the gospel out of sight out of mind.

A faithful church became unfaithful and unfruitful.

The reformers appeared before council's that despised them.

When Luther was ready to preach the gospel in Worms in Germany, his friends worried for him, yet **Luther** said "***I will enter Worms under the banner of Christ against the gates of hell.***" He then said "***though there should be as many devils at Worms as there are tiles on its house tops, I would enter it.***"

Luther, as all the reformers, their courage was not in themselves but the sufficient grace of God.

He was not ashamed of Jesus or to be identified for His faith alone in Christ alone.

What, about you today believer, as we think of our city of London, our country England, yeah UK, can you say I am not ashamed of the gospel, to own my Lord or to defend His cause.

With all the religious life in London, its strong holds, its spiritual darkness, declension, and departure from the gospel,

are you ready to be a witness of the gospel hope within, whoever rejects disowns and laughs at you, Will you count it nothing, like your Saviour, despise the shame, because Jesus bore the shame of the cross for you.

He was not ashamed to die for you and He's not ashamed to pray for you and He's not ashamed to come back for you.

IV FOURTH PAUL AND REFORMERS CONVICTION IN THE STRENGTH OF THE GOSPEL

“The gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.”

Paul went to Rome, knowing the power of the gospel. He had confidence the gospel does was it set out to do, that is delivers sinners and transforms lives, it is the power of God.

Rome was a place of place.

However, Paul knew he had something more powerful than Rome. Paul had Gospel power.

The Gospel is the power of God. The word **power** means **dynamite** or where we get the English word dynamite.

The gospel was not a dead and empty message, but divine in source, and dynamic in operation.

Furthermore, the word **power** is present tense meaning **a continual action.**

Therefore the gospel will never lose its power. It is the dynamite of heaven.

The reformers believed the power of the gospel. It made impact their lives, its blasts, awakens out of sin, oppression, fear and guilt, releasing from the burdens that holds down.

The Gospel has power to blow away sin in the life of all who trust in it, because its evident by your life.

Your life believer is the greatest explosion of gospel power, as it was in Luther's life, with the fear, bonds, burden, bondage, guilt, domination of sin blown away, and replaced by a new sight, a new life, set free by gospel power.

Unsaved one, heavens gospel has all dynamite, power to blow the chains of sin away.

V FIFTH, PAUL AND THE REFORMERS CONVICTION IN THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL “unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

The gospel's power or success did not rest in Pauls ability, or his appeal, or his arguments, or his appearance, or his actions, but it was the power of God, the word spoke for itself.

Paul offered the Gospel, ***for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved***. He preached to the Jews and then Greeks needing saved. The Greeks are anyone who is not a Jew.

But how did they respond **1 Cor 1:23** “***But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.***”

The Jews saw the gospel as a stumbling block, the Jews prided themselves in their culture, ceremonies, traditions, their many laws.

They couldn't grasp the fact that Christ did paid all and there was nothing for them do work towards concerning salvation.

The Greek saw the gospel as foolishness.

In a day when so many philosophers, intellectual minds, and many gods, they could not understand the simplicity of the gospel.

professing themselves to be wise they became fools. They over thought the gospel, confusing themselves, they couldn't grasp the fact that they must confess their sin to one Saviour to receive forgiveness.

The gospel message, is clear, so simple, its power ready to work in your life.

We who believe, the gospel is the power of God.

Will you believe on the name of Jesus Christ today for pardon, this was the conviction of Paul and Reformers.

Closing hymn 503 Warrington.