

So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 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." (Rom 1:15-17)

Introduction—My own story of Sonship with Bill and Jeff, Milton Vincent parallel story in A Gospel Primer. I'll be freely quoting from him but he acknowledges he's channeling Jerry Bridges especially (Discipline of Grace and Transforming Grace) and then there are others like Richard Lovelace from the early 70s and Jack Miller from the 80s and 90s that he doesn't mention, but I promise you, he's drawing from them as I am.

Paul's goal in Romans 1-11 is to show that the gospel is the great leveler. It unites Jews and Gentiles to one another and to Christ. It speaks of their common need, common Messiah and common mission and message. And this is his tool to accomplish that—the message of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that creates a new humanity, giving us a new status, a new family, and a new future.

And to do that daily work of shaping our identity and our world, he gives us his gospel—not just to convert us, but as the gift that keeps on giving us everything we need for godliness. God's gifts are all gracious, unmerited—but the wise believer will learn to position themselves where God's gifts are located.

I've learned that I get God's power for living in far more abundance as I preach the gospel to myself daily than if I read the Bible daily and a whole bunch of other devotional activities I've done over the last 47 years of walking with Jesus. I find myself sinning less, working harder, recovering my footing faster after I slip, and everything I'm supposed to do as a Christian flows more freely, naturally, and passionately when I'm inhaling and exhaling the gospel. You don't believe me? If you will receive what I'm saying this week and the next, and let me pass on to you the wise words and practices of men far godlier than I am, you will believe me and you'll never be the same.

### *Why do I need to preach the gospel to myself?*

#### 1) It's the New Testament Model

The New Testament teaches that Christians ought to hear the gospel as much as non-Christians do. In fact, in the first chapter of Romans the Apostle Paul tells the believers in the church that he was anxious “to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome.” Of course he was anxious to preach the gospel to the non-Christians at Rome, yet he specifically states that he was eager to preach it to the believers. To the Corinthian Christians who had already believed and been saved by the gospel, Paul says, “I make known to you the gospel, which you have believed...” He then restates the historical facts of the gospel before showing them how those gospel facts apply to their beliefs. This is actually Paul’s approach to various other issues throughout the book of 1 Corinthians. In most of Paul’s letters to churches, sizeable portions of them are given over to rehearsing gospel truths. Ephesians 1-3 is all gospel, Colossians 1-2 is gospel, and Romans 1-8 is gospel. The remainder of such books shows specifically how to bring those gospel truths to bear on life. Re-preaching the gospel and then showing how it applied to life was Paul’s method for ministering to believers, thereby providing a divinely inspired pattern for me to follow when ministering to myself and to other believers.

#### 2) It's My Daily Need

The gospel is so foolish (according to my natural wisdom), so insulting (according to my ego), and so incredible (according to my timid heart), that it is a daily battle to believe the full scope of it as I should. There is simply no other way to compete with the demands of my ego, the condemnation of my heart, and the lies of the world and the Devil than to overwhelm such things with daily rehearsal of the gospel.

### 3) So I Can Experience the Power of God

Outside of heaven, the power of God in its highest density is found inside the gospel. This must be so, for the Bible twice describes the gospel as “the power of God.” Nothing else in all of Scripture is ever described in this way, except for the Person of Jesus Christ. Such a description indicates that the gospel is not only powerful, but that it is the ultimate entity in which God’s power resides and does its greatest work. Indeed, God’s power is seen in natural and cosmological events, yet in Scripture such wonders are never labeled “the power of God.” How powerful, then, must the gospel be that it would merit such a title! And how great is the salvation it could accomplish in my life, if I would only embrace it by faith and give it a central place in my thoughts each day!

### 4) For My Daily Protection

As long as I am inside the gospel, I experience all the protection I need from the powers of evil that rage against me. It is for this reason that the Bible tells me to “take up” and “put on” continually the whole armor of God; and the pieces of armor it tells me to put on are all merely synonyms for the gospel. Translated literally from the Greek, they are: “. . . the salvation . . . the justification . . . truth . . . the gospel of peace . . . the faith . . . [and the] . . . word of God.” What 12 are all these expressions but various ways of describing the gospel? Therefore, if I wish to stand victorious in Jesus, I must do as the songwriter suggests and “put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer.” That God would tell me to “take up” and “put on” this gospel armor alerts me to the fact that I do not automatically come into each day protected by the gospel. In fact, these commands imply that I am vulnerable to defeat and injury unless I seize upon the gospel and arm myself with it from head to toe. And what better way is there to do this than to preach the gospel to myself and to make it the obsession of my heart throughout each day?

## 5) To Secure Freedom from Sin's Power

As long as I am stricken with the guilt of my sins, I will be captive to them, and will keep re-committing the very sins about which I feel most guilty. The Devil is well aware of this fact; he knows that if he can keep me tormented by sin's guilt, he can dominate me with sin's power. The gospel, however, slays sin at this root point and thereby nullifies sin's power over me. The forgiveness of God, made known to me through the gospel, liberates me from sin's power because it liberates me first from its guilt; and preaching such forgiveness to myself is a practical way of putting the gospel into operation as a nullifier of sin's power in my life.

(Illustration, Pilgrim's Progress Slough of Despond)

## 6) To Experience and Spread My Inheritance in the Saints

The gospel is not just a message of reconciliation with God, but also of deeply connecting all believers, one to another, in Christ. Through the substitutionary death of Christ, God has brought down the racial, economic, political and social barriers that once divided us. The Scriptures speak of us being members of His household, and giving us gifts; and that speaks of our oneness as we are all in one family, all receiving grace gifts or eucharist in Greek. But it goes deeper as each believer then is a grace-gift to each other. Each one of you is a portion of my gospel-inheritance. Here is in Ephesians 1:18, so plain I've missed it all my life until this week.

"I pray that the eyes of the heart may be enlightened (opened) so that you will know what are the riches of glory of his inheritance in the saints."

I am a portion of your inheritance, and you of mine. So the more you understand the gospel and all it means, the more you value the role that I play in your life, and that you play in my life. One gift of the gospel is us, to each other, forever.

## 7) To Cultivate Humility

According to God's Word, the gospel is deliberately designed to strip me of my pride and leave me without grounds for boasting. Ephesians 2:8-10—for you are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” This is a great mercy of God, for pride is at the root of all sin. Pride produced the first sin in the Garden and precedes every moral stumble in my life—Proverbs 16 says that Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.

The gospel is pre-engineered to deliver us from pride. Preaching the gospel to ourselves each day mounts a powerful assault against my pride and puts humility in its place. Nothing suffocates pride more than daily reminders regarding the glory of God's solution, the gravity of my sin, and the crucifixion of God's Son. And all that is set against the backdrop of hell, of which I deserve, but which God can deny because in the gospel, he's both just and the justifier of the ungodly.

Humility grows lushly, like grass in the Florida winter, in the warm atmosphere of God's gospel of grace. Pride fades away in the light of his glory and grace.

## 8) So My Obedience will Flow from Love

To obey God is one thing—to obey him in perfect love is quite another. To love God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength is the greatest commandment in the law, and if I could do it, every obedience I need and God requires would naturally flow forth. So how can I love God with all my being? The Bible teaches in 1 John 4:19 that we love God because he first loved us. And nowhere is the love of God more freely revealed than in the gospel. Romans 5 says that God demonstrated his great love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. And John 15, greater love has no man than he lay down his life for his friends. And Ephesians

2, But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love for us, even when we were dead in our sins, made us alive together in Christ. Meditate on that, and obedience will flow forth from love!

9) To Grant me New Perspective During Trials

More than anything else I could ever do, the gospel enables me to embrace tribulation and trial. When the gospel becomes the frame through which I view human misery, and the house in which I live through disaster, and the air I breathe even as I draw another breath to scream out in pain, then the gospel makes genuinely good news out of every aspect of my life. Turn with me to Romans 5:1-5 to really get this last point in our souls.

So then, I can embrace both trouble and troubled people as friends and allow them to do God's good work in me as is promised in Romans 5, God's gospel-logic for growing in grace in the midst of the grit and grime of this world.

CLOSE

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Therefore, now you can see Paul's argument shaping up. It's been several years since the church in Rome was founded, and he's telling them what he's about to tell them—I'm about to orient your whole life, your mission, your goals, around the gospel, so that it isn't just a forensic declaration about your legal standing with God, but so that your life conforms to its shape, your identity conforms to its truths, your theology beats in time with God's heartbeat.