

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

Part IV

Messages for Both the Saved and the Unsaved

By Arlen L. Chitwood

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [*i.e.*, 'Gentile,' *cf.* vv. 13, 14].

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith [Hab. 2:4]" (Rom. 1:15-17).

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish [*lit.*, 'that are perishing'] foolishness; but unto us which are saved [*lit.*, 'which are being saved'] it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1:18).

The gospel which Paul desired to proclaim to the Christians in Rome (Rom. 1:15) is referred to as "the gospel of Christ" in verse sixteen and is associated with *a continuing act of faith* in verse seventeen.

"The gospel of Christ" in this passage is a reference to the same message Paul called "my gospel" (Rom. 2:16; 16:25), which he had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world (Eph. 3:1-6; Col. 1:20-23). And calling attention to this message, regardless of the terminology used, is simply another way of referring to "the preaching of the cross" in I Cor. 1:18.

Two Types of Christians in Romans

The first chapter of Romans divides itself into two fairly equal parts, dealing with *two types of Christians, in relation to one central subject*.

The first half of the chapter (vv. 1-17) has to do with *faithful Christians in relation to the gospel message, the good news* — though not that facet of the good news pertaining to the grace of God, but that facet of the good news pertaining to *the coming Glory of Christ*.

And the last half of the chapter (vv. 18-32) has to do with *unfaithful Christians in relation to the same gospel message, the same good news*.

1) *The Type Christians Seen in vv. 1-17*

The Christians described in the opening part of the chapter are, as Paul described himself, "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ"; or, using an explanation of that being referenced in the words "gospel" and "Christ" in the verse, a person could say that Christians of this nature are "not ashamed of the good news of the One Who will rule and reign."

There is really *nothing* about salvation by grace through faith in these first seventeen verses. The verses, among related issues, have to do with "the seed of David" (v. 3), declared to be "the Son of God with power ['sonship' has to do with *rulership*]" (v. 4), with "obedience to *the faith* ['the faith,' an expression peculiarly related to *the Word of the Kingdom*]" (v. 5), with the faith of Christians in Rome being "spoken of throughout the whole world" (v. 8), and with Paul's expressed desire to go to and proclaim this good news to the Christians in Rome, for a stated purpose — "that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles" (vv. 10, 13; *cf.* vv. 15, 16).

2) *The Type Christians Seen in vv. 18-32*

Then, with verse seventeen as a closing statement for the opening part of the chapter, the other type Christians are presented. And the type Christians presented in this section, rather than exercising faith and looking forward to the salvation in view in verse sixteen, had, instead, through their unfaithfulness, been led into various types of disobedience and will suffer "the wrath of God."

Exactly the opposite of that seen in the previous

section is seen in this section. And that becomes increasingly evident as one continues studying this section.

First of all, note the subject matter at hand. *The gospel of grace (having to do with the unsaved and one's eternal salvation) is not the message Paul called attention to various ways in the opening seventeen verses*. This has already been shown but will become more evident through progressive material in this article.

Then, to further illustrate that Christians alone can be in view throughout chapter one, note the words "knowledge" and "knowing" in verses twenty-eight and thirty-two.

Both of these words are translations of the Greek word *epignosis* (the verb form of this word is used in v. 32 [*epiginosko*], meaning the same as the noun form in v. 28).

In the Greek text there is the regular word for knowledge (*gnosis*); and there is an intensified form of *gnosis*, formed through the preposition *epi* (meaning, "upon") being prefixed to the word (*epi-gnosis*, which has to do with a knowledge of something beyond a regular knowledge, *i.e.*, some facet of *a mature knowledge concerning the matter at hand*).

And, according to I Cor. 2:14, the natural man (which is all that the unsaved person possesses) can't even come into possession of a type knowledge described by *gnosis* (the Greek word used in this verse). The reason, of course, is because he is spiritually dead. He simply cannot understand spiritual things.

But the individuals in the latter part of Romans chapter one came into possession of a knowledge of that in view described by *epignosis*. How did they do this if unsaved? They didn't, for, according to I Cor. 2:14, if unsaved, they couldn't have even come into possession of a type knowledge of that in view described by the word *gnosis*, much less *epignosis*.

And, aside from the preceding, it wouldn't make any sense whatsoever to see the first seventeen verses correctly (a message [vv. 15, 16] having to do with *faith* [vv. 8, 16, 17], in relation to

fruit-bearing [v. 13]), and then attempt to see the latter part of the chapter (vv. 18-32) dealing with the unsaved. Scripture is simply not structured in such a fashion.

(Note that not every unfaithful Christian would fit into the category of those committing the sins mentioned in vv. 18-32, though many would [an ever-increasing number in the world today].)

The division between these two types of Christians is on the basis of an exercise of faith. *One exercises faith, the other does not.*

And, there is *no middle ground in this realm*. Christians either find themselves among those described in the first part of the chapter or among those described in the latter part of the chapter, regardless of whether or not they are guilty of the sins named in the chapter.

“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” [Matt. 12:30; cf. Luke 11:23].)

The Power of God unto Salvation

“The gospel of Christ” in Rom. 1:16 and “the preaching of the cross” in I Cor. 1:18 — again, two ways of saying the same thing — are associated with *GOD’S POWER in relation to salvation*. As clearly stated in both verses, quoting from Rom. 1:16, this message is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.”

Apart from “the gospel of Christ,” “the preaching of the cross,” *NOTHING ELSE* has anything to do with, or can effect in any way, salvation for fallen man. Christ’s finished work on the cross *ALONE* allows God to exercise His power in this respect.

And this exercise of power could only extend to any facet of the overall gospel message, connected with any part of God’s work regarding man’s salvation, initially foreshadowed in Scripture by His restorative work throughout all six days in Genesis chapter one.

In Matt. 28:18-20, prefacing a command to go into all the world and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing and teaching them (vv. 19,

20), Christ stated, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (v. 18).

The complete statement (vv. 18-20), contrary to the manner in which it is usually handled, has to do with the same message seen in Rom. 1:16 and I Cor. 1:18. And this would be *in complete keeping with the manner in which the overall salvation message is presented throughout Scripture*.

(As previously seen in this series, the overall salvation message presented throughout Scripture is centrally *a message to the saved rather than to the unsaved* [ref. Part I], with the preaching of the cross covering both [messages to both the saved and the unsaved], though the emphasis in Scripture *ALWAYS* centers on the preaching of the cross as it relates to the saved rather than to the unsaved.)

“*ALL POWER*” given to Christ in Matt. 28:18 can only have to do with a proclamation of *THE COMPLETE GOSPEL MESSAGE* surrounding “the cross,” messages to both the saved and the unsaved. *Christ is the Saviour, the One through Whom God effects salvation, regardless of where a person begins with the message, whether to the saved or to the unsaved.*

Christ is the One Who performed a finished work on the cross, a work having to do with both the saved and the unsaved. He is the One in possession of “all power,” seen in connection with the preaching of the cross to the saved in Matt. 28:18-20, which could only, as well, be seen in a broader respect — a prior preaching of the cross to the unsaved, effecting a passing “from death unto life,” allowing a continued preaching of the cross.

There is simply *NO SUCH THING* as salvation being effected at any point in ruined man’s restoration — whether to the saved or to the unsaved — apart from the finished work of the Son on the cross and the power which He possesses, associated with this finished work.

This is seen as “the power of God” in Rom. 1:16 and I Cor. 1:18, but note the identity of the Son in relation to God. The Son is God manifested in the flesh. Thus, the Son’s power and His finished

work on the cross is, as well, God’s power and His finished work on the cross.

One simply cannot be separated from the Other, as the written Word cannot be separated from the Word made flesh, or from God (John 1:1, 2, 14).

God’s actions are *ALWAYS* in connection with His power, which are *ALWAYS* in complete accord with His revealed Word. God simply *WILL NOT act, exercise His power, in a manner contrary to that which He has revealed in His Word.*

The Spirit of God, performing a restorative work in ruined man — whether saved or unsaved man — does this work *ON ONE BASIS ALONE THROUGH ONE POWER ALONE*. The Spirit of God does this work *on the basis of Christ’s finished work on the cross, the One in possession of “all power.”*

This is *the why* of verses such as Acts 4:12:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

There is *NO SALVATION outside of Christ, for there is NO WORK of the cross OR POWER outside of Christ. ANY AND ALL work regarding salvation CAN ONLY have to do with Christ, His finished work on the cross, and His power.*

And *the Spirit of God*, effecting a work in man regarding salvation — whether saved or unsaved man — does that work *SOLELY in connection with the finished work of God’s Son on the cross, exercising the Son’s power.*

If an unsaved person thinks that he can circumnavigate Christ’s finished work and His power regarding salvation, that person had better think again.

Or, if a saved person thinks that he can circumnavigate Christ’s finished work and His power regarding an on-going work of salvation, that person had better think again as well.

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