

Are We Amazed by the Gospel?

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel....” We looked last time at these words from the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:16. In that article I challenged us to ask ourselves this very personal question: “Am I ashamed of the gospel?” We may immediately think that, as Christians, we could never be ashamed of the gospel. But, we looked at some ways in which, even Christians, can seek to justify why we so often find that we rarely share the good news of the gospel with others.

In this article, I want to begin to investigate another question: “Are we amazed by the gospel?” Paul writes that the gospel is, “...the power of God for salvation...” This is an amazing statement and we don’t want to fail to grasp Paul’s meaning. He is saying that, God uses the gospel message as his means whereby he brings non-believers to saving faith as well as spiritually growing Christians.

The gospel is “...the power of God for salvation....” The question may be asked, “What does the word ‘salvation’ mean?” This is a fair question. The basic biblical idea is that of rescue or deliverance from sin—not just once, but all our lives. Scripture actually speaks of salvation in the past, present and future tenses. We could say it this way, “We have been saved (justification, Romans 3:21-28) we are being saved (sanctification, 2 Thessalonians 2:13) and we will be saved (glorification, Romans 8:30). Unfortunately, many Christians speak of the gospel as something that they believed in the past which no longer has any relevance for their life. But that is not true at all. Paul is teaching us that this gospel power is operative throughout our Christian life. The Holy Spirit works through the foundational truth of the message of the gospel—as well as all of the Holy Scriptures—to save us as well as to grow us in likeness to Jesus Christ.

I want us to take just a moment to briefly unpack what I believe the Bible teaches about a genuine saving faith in Jesus Christ alone. Technically speaking, salvation involves more than the belief in a set of facts about Jesus and the gospel. Many have made the mistake of saying something like, “Oh sure, I believe in Jesus. I went to church when I was a child,” but will also acknowledge that their belief in Jesus has had no lasting impact on their lives. Theologians and Bible teachers, since at least the time of the Reformation, have taught that there are three aspects to a genuine saving faith. The first aspect is knowledge. In other words, we need to know what the Bible says about our sin as well as the remedy for our sin in the perfect and finished work of Jesus Christ. The second aspect of saving faith is assent. That is to say that, we not only know the biblical facts about our sin and the salvation that is only found in Jesus Christ, we assent to this truth i.e. we believe that these biblical facts are true.

This next statement may shock you. A person can have both knowledge and assent and still be on the broad road to eternal punishment! The scriptures teach that the demons know who Jesus Christ is! (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24; James 2:19) That being said, along with knowledge and assent we must have trust. Trust says in effect, “I have biblical knowledge of

Jesus, I believe that what the Bible teaches about Jesus is true and I have trusted my life to Jesus. Now, by God's grace, I desire to put Jesus first in everything in my life. He is the priority." This requires a total heart change, by God's grace (Matthew 5:8; Hebrews 8:10). This truth doesn't mean that you or I will ever do anything perfectly in this life or that our desires will be perfect desires. But it does mean that your primary purpose in life has taken a 180 degree turn. Now instead of putting myself first, Jesus is first in everything. We want to give him glory with every moment of our life (1 Corinthians 10:31). If you and I truly understand our sinful condition and the undeserved grace that is given as a free gift in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-10) we can't help but be amazed by the gospel!

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