

Powerful Message

Jesus is not the messenger; he is the message. Darrell Bock, Dallas Theological Seminary

How often do we find our conversations with friends creeping toward our faith when we suddenly, almost desperately, swerve into something we think would be a safer topic? *"What do I believe? Well, um, uh ... I believe that Burger King's fries are better than McDonald's!"*

It may be because we fear what people will think, we don't want to appear different, or we prefer not to subject ourselves to ridicule. When is the last time someone actually mocked you to your face because you responded to a question about what you did over the weekend with, "I went to church Sunday morning and watched some football in the afternoon?" When we look at it that way, it seems kind of ridiculous to be afraid to tell people about our lives just because we think they'll not understand our faith.

But what if they do mock? Does that mean our message, our powerful message, should not be delivered? This week's passage shows why Paul had no shame in declaring the good news, the gospel that Jesus is Lord. Paul understood the meaning of the gospel, the effect of the gospel, and the power of the gospel. We start to see why Paul declared the power of the gospel every chance he got, whether he faced ridicule or not. As we study his example, let's pray for God to lead us into a powerful. One that shows no shame in our Lord Jesus.

Monday – Not Ashamed of the Gospel

1. Please read Romans 1:16. When was the last time you felt ashamed or embarrassed about anything?
2. Compare Luke 9:26 with Romans 1:16. Why do you think it is so important to Jesus that we not be ashamed about him?

Digging Deeper: David, the King of Israel, had a very dignified position. Read 2 Samuel 6:1-22 for an instance when he considered his own dignity as something worth sacrificing in order to sing praises and bring glory to God. What was it about David and his relationship with the Lord that led him to regard the opinion of people as insignificant, compared to that of his Lord?

Tuesday – Power of God for Salvation

"We have so persistently dissembled the power of the Gospel... that it is pardonable if those who judge of it by us should doubt whether it is anything more efficacious and inspiring than the pathetic guesses which adorn the writings of philosophy." Canon B.F. Westcott, The Gospel of the Resurrection

1. When you read Romans 1:16, you see that, among other things, Paul declares the gospel to be the power of God for salvation. What does he mean? Saved from what?

Text Insight: Gospel means "good news."

2. God poses a series of rhetorical questions in Job 38:8-11. Who is the only one powerful enough, the only one with the authority, to tell the waves of the sea what to do? Now look at Luke 8:22-25. What conclusion can you draw from Jesus' ability to command "the wind and the water?"
3. If Jesus has that authority and power, who is he? What does it say about the power of the gospel of Christ?

Wednesday – Everyone who Believes

"To trust the real person Jesus is to have confidence in him in every dimension of our real life, to believe that he is right about and adequate to everything." Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy

1. Please read Romans 1:16 again. Whose salvation is achieved by the gospel's power?
2. Believing in Jesus is a constantly recurring theme in the Book of Acts. Acts 16:25-34 contains a startling account of belief delivered in a powerful way. What were the events surrounding your decision to trust Christ? How was his power seen in those events that led to your decision?
3. Take a look at Romans 10:9 for a quick summary of what it takes to receive the salvation offered by the gospel of Christ. According to Ephesians 2:8-9, where does belief come from?

Making it Personal: Are you one who believes? If so, thank God for the power of the gospel leading to your salvation. If not, ask yourself if you'd like to believe; then, talk to God about it.

Thursday – First for the Jew, then for the Gentile

1. In Romans 1:16, Paul designates an order for delivering the power of the gospel. What is the order? Why do you think he specified this order?

Text Insight: A gentile is any person who is not a Jew.

2. Now read Galatians 3:26-29. What assurance do you get from Paul's statements?

Digging Deeper: In Acts 10:1-48, we see Peter interacting with a gentile. What obstacles do you think Peter needed to overcome before he could enter into the Centurion's home and share the gospel? What obstacles do you think you need to overcome in being able to share your faith?

Friday – The Power of God

"It is left unexplained how it is possible that one can rely on Christ for the next life without doing so for this one, trust him for one's eternal destiny without trusting him for the things that relate to the Christian life."

Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy

1. Jesus' death on the cross was either a moment of defeat or a moment of triumph. Matthew 27:51-53 and 28:1-10 provide evidence of some things that have already happened because of Jesus' sacrifice. How do they support the notion that the gospel is the power of God for salvation?
2. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and Revelations 21:1-4 show some powerful events yet to come, but which are still completely reliant on Jesus' death and resurrection. What can you look forward to?

For the Weekend: Romans 10:11-13 is a parallel statement to Romans 1:16. Read those passages along with Acts 16:25-34, and consider your own response to the good news of Jesus Christ.