

THE GOSPEL – GOD'S CHARTER OF FREEDOM

Scripture Reading - Romans 1:11-17.

Introduction

In verses 16-17, Paul presents the Gospel as “God’s charter of freedom.” We are continually being reminded of the freedoms we enjoy in this country, and the price that has been paid for it and is being paid for it, I wonder if we realize that the freedom we celebrate finds its roots in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This freedom is written in blood because it cost the life of the Son of God. Paul was unashamed of this gospel and writes with conviction and passion, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.....” This is a tremendously powerful statement of truth. It is an announcement that this freedom is secured because God stepped out of eternity into time, in the person of His one and only Son, who through His perfect sacrifice on a cross has provided a solution to the seeming hopeless dilemma of sin’s grip on the human race. It is clear that he was proud to be linked to this kind of gospel. In spite of this, there are those who have observed, that the Gentiles heaped scorn on and ridiculed his message, for to them it was foolishness. “As for the Jews, it was an occasion of stumbling. It was an offence to their national pride.” Ritchie (Com – Romans p.19-20.) Paul, however, does waver in his commitment to the cross, and confronting these attitudes and responses wrote in his first letter to the church in Corinth chapter 2:2. “For I am determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” In fact he says that he glories in the cross which he believes is the heart of the gospel.

When Paul writes about his pride in the gospel of Christ in these verses, he is in fact revealing, establishing, and giving notice that it is the theme and the main subject of his letter. He is focused on this great gospel. He knows its power and is convinced that it is the only message for this sin sick world. Everything that is written in the chapters that follow these words are an expansion, explanation and exposition of what the Gospel is, what it means, and what it can do in the hearts

and lives of men and women. And because of this gospel Paul is able to declare later in his letter, that there “Is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans chapter 8:1-2. Paul confirms this truth in Galatians 5:1. “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.” He is in no doubt that true freedom can only be found in Christ. Paul Scherer wrote that “we find freedom when we find God; we lose it when we lose Him.” This freedom places upon us a responsibility not only to preserve it but to proclaim it. If you place your finger on the pulse of verses 14-16, you will feel the passionate heart beat of the Apostle Paul. There is without doubt excitement in his testimony and a driving desire to make known the message of gospel of Jesus Christ in Rome and across the world. The trinity of “I AMS” reveal his passion for this message. Note what he says in verse 14’ “I am obligated.” In verse 15, “I am eager,” and in verse 16, “I am not ashamed.” These are words, which describe the intense restlessness in the heart of this Apostle to make known the gospel of Christ. He was straining at the leash to make its message known to all. You will discover in his words that he feels that he has,

1. AN OBLIGATION TO DISCHARGE. Romans 1:14.

“I am obligated both to the Greeks and non-Greeks, to the wise and to the foolish.” Paul is expressing an obligation to preach this Gospel message at Rome as well as the rest of the world. This sense of indebtedness is evidence of **a. His Concern that all receive the Gospel. Romans 1:14.** He feels an obligation both to the Greeks and non-Greeks, both the wise and the foolish.” The vision of the Gospel of Christ encompasses the world. “God so loved the world.” This is the simple yet unchanging offer of the Gospel of God. Jesus came to break down the barrier between nations. The Cross is the great leveler. Calvary is the great equalizer. There is no class, social or ethnic distinctions at the foot of the Cross. There is room at the Cross for all. This is the Gospel of freedom. Jesus died for all without exception. The Greeks and the Non-Greeks,

the rich and the poor, the respectable and the degenerate, He turns no one away. His Gospel is for all humankind. The gospel said Paul in verse 16, is for the "salvation of everyone who believes." That is why he is concerned that all receive the Gospel. The Gospel is of such a nature that it obligates all of those who receive it, to share it with others. The second evidence of the obligation he feels lies in his

b. His Compulsion to reach all with its message. Romans 1:14. The King James translation uses the word debtor in place of obligation. The sense is the same. There was within Paul the compulsion to take the gospel known to all people. The inner sense of indebtedness was the driving force in Paul's crusade to get the Gospel across the world. Writing to the Corinthian church the First letter chapter 9:16, Paul says, "I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel." Why did Paul feel this indebtedness or obligation? It was not an obligation forced on him from without. He was inwardly driven. He said it on another occasion. It is the "love of Christ that compels or constrains me." He was inwardly driven! He was inwardly compelled! He was inwardly constrained. It was a Divine compulsion. A humanly inspired compulsion is so often a flash in the pan. It is born in the flesh and dies in flesh. But Divine loves lives on. Now why did Paul feel this so intensely? What did he owe the Greeks and the non-Greeks? What had they done for him? What did he owe the wise? What did he owe to the foolish? Surely this is a mistake; he could not to be obligated to the foolish. (Morgan vol. 10. P.228.) This however, was not what Paul meant. John Stott has clarified this point. He pointed out that there are two ways of getting into debt or feeling obligated. The first is to borrow money from someone. The second is to be given a sum of money for someone by a third party. For instance if I were to borrow a \$1000.00 from you, I would be in your debt until I paid you back. Equally, if a friend of yours were to hand me a \$1000.00 to give to you, I would be in your debt until I handed it over. In the former case, I would have got myself into debt to you borrowing a \$1000.00; in the latter case, it is your friend who has put me in debt to you by entrusting \$1000.00 for you. It is in this latter

sense that Paul is in debt or feels an obligation. He has not borrowed anything from the Romans he must pay. The Gospel which was procured for all men at a high price, God has entrusted to us for others. God gave the gospel to Paul to give to the world. That immediately put him in debt to the world. So long as there was the Greek, the cultured and the non-Greek the uncultured, the wise and the foolish, he was in debt to all of them. The gospel which is for others has been entrusted to us, and that puts us in debt to others. "Freely we have received so freely we must give." And so we are in debt to all, irrespective of differences of birth, station or attainment in life. God has given each of us something for the world which He paid for by sending His Son to suffer and die on a Cross. That something is the gospel of Jesus Christ. One has correctly written that if the "Church receives this magnificent Gospel, sings about it, gives thanks to God for it, basks in its blessings and the fruits of the good news, and stops right there, she is corrupting her very nature for selfish purposes." In short, she is destroying the very reason for her existence. Until we take this gospel and give it to the world, we are dishonest because we are in debt. (Campbell Morgan vol. 10 p. 230.) And what Paul is saying is that he is in debt and if he doesn't pay that debt, then he is less than honest. Paul recognizes this that is why he says that he has an obligation to discharge. "I am obligated." "I am debtor." The second phrase in this trinity of "I AM's." there is in him,

2. A DISPOSITION TO DEMONSTRATE. Romans 1:15.

"I am so eager to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome." The word SO indicates the intensity of his disposition. In addition, this disposition demonstrates itself in the attitude of availability. He has made himself available to God. There are two striking features about Paul's availability. The first is his,

a. Eagerness. Romans 1:15. "I am so eager to preach the gospel..." With Paul he was eager to preach the gospel in Rome. I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are Rome also. "I must see Rome." He was not compelled by the curiosity of a tourist. It was the passion of a missionary. I am in debt to Rome. I

have a gospel for Rome. I am ready to preach it in Rome.” Morgan vol. 10 p. 228) It is one thing to be conscious of our responsibility or to be challenged by it, but it is an entirely different thing to be available, willing and eager to carry out. Here what Paul expresses is his total availability, desire and willingness to serve God by spreading the good news to the world. God has not given us the Gospel to bury in the vaults of the church. God has given it to us so that we will spread its message of salvation to the lost. It will only be done with an urgent eagerness and a pulsating passion. Within Paul’s heart, there was this compelling and constraining eagerness to get the gospel to those who were lost. The gospel itself, by what it is, and what it promises, should instill into our hearts this urgent eagerness to compel us to declare it. Paul said, “I am so eager to preach the Gospel.” There was not only an eager willingness in his availability to God, there was also,

b. A Completeness about it. Romans 1:15. The whole tone of Paul’s testimony indicates that his availability to God and his passion for God is total. He gave himself completely to the great task of preaching the Gospel of Christ. He often tells us the he is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is not looking for stars; He is looking for servants who will make themselves completely available to Him. It is only completely available people who God blesses and uses. When the children of Israel cowered in their tents before the challenge of the giant Goliath, a young simple shepherd boy made himself available to God. He was so young he could not even wear the armor of the King Saul to protect himself, but he did make himself available to God and the nation. In addition, with a sling and one stone he slew the giant and saved the nation. It was a young lad on the green hills in Palestine who made a small lunch of five loaves and two fishes available to Jesus, and that is all what He wanted to feed five thousand men besides woman and children. Paul said that God “chose the foolish things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of the world, and the despised things and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are.” It is not necessarily the significant, the size, the shape, the brilliant the talented who are

the most effective. It is first our availability to Him that God blesses and uses. God can only take that which is totally available to Him and multiply its effectiveness in the church and in the world. A number of years ago, Mrs. Sydney Martin of Glasgow, Scotland told of their experience when her husband left the coalmines to answer God's call to the ministry. Their apartment was one of the back rooms of the church. Mrs. G.B. Williamson, wife of the general superintendent spoke to her. The salary was about two pounds 10 a week (about \$10) The first World war was over and mere existence was a struggle. Mrs. Williamson broke into the conversation to exclaim, "I don't know how you made it. Her reply was epic. "Of course we made it," she said, "I had these," and held out her two beautiful work-worn hands. "Why," she said, "I bought yarn and I knitted socks and sweaters for little children. I bought material, made dresses for little girls and clothes for little boys, and sold them. Of course, we made it! I had these hands. They were two hands but they produced so much. God is not limited by our lack of ability; He is limited by our lack of availability. One has said that the work of God is not held back by bad men and women, but by good ones who are unavailable. Finally the third truth in this trinity of "I AM'S" is that Paul had

3. A CONVICTION TO DECLARE. Romans 1:16-17.

Paul said "I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of every one who believes..... for in the gospel righteousness from God is revealed that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'the righteous will live by faith.'" His conviction burned with holy fire in his soul that declared "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. This gospel message was Paul's flaming conviction and urgent compulsion to declare it to the world. Paul Rees maintained that "the Gospel is neither a discussion nor debate. It is an announcement!" "The gospel," said Bishop Inge "was not good advice but good news." The Gospel of Christ is proclamation not postulation. Or as James Stewart would say "the gospel is declaration not dialogue." Now why is there this certainty, this conviction and this confidence in the Gospel? Paul had this

conviction because of its power to bring salvation from sin and so give newness of life and he recognized some extremely important truths in it. He knew that this gospel is centered in,

a. A New Person - A new Savior. Romans 1:16. This gospel is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This man Jesus is unique. This gospel is the power of God. It does not propose a new religion, cult or system of thought. It is not centered in a revolutionary philosophy. It is the gospel of Christ. Its heart lies in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. To declare Christ is to declare the gospel. In verse 9 of this 1st chapter of Romans, Paul says that he serves God with all of his heart, in the preaching of the **Gospel of God's Son**. R.W. Dale rightly said "the real truth is that while (Jesus) came to preach the gospel, His chief object was that there might a gospel to preach." A.W. Tozer wrote, "We do not preach Christ with a comma after His Name, as though waiting for something else, or Christ with a dash after His Name, as though leading to something else, but we preach Christ period." The Lord Jesus Christ is in fact the gospel. Jesus Himself said "I am the way, the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going, without the truth there is no knowing, without the life there is no living." The Jewish Teachers of the Law and Pharisees claimed to teach the message of God. But this new person, this Jesus, is the message of God. God has spoken through His Son. He is God's final word to the human race. Paul makes clear that this charter of freedom is the gospel of Christ. To Paul this Gospel was a conviction to declare not only because of a new person Jesus Christ, but because it was,

b. A New Power. Romans 1:16. This Gospel is the power of God." It was initiated in the heart of God. It began in eternity, was promised in the Garden of Eden, confirmed by the prophets, written in the scriptures and finally fulfilled in the person and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. He planned it, He counted the cost of it, He paid the price of it, and He administered it. It is first and last the Gospel of God and therefore it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes. It is more than a theory- mightier than the law- supersedes religious thought - it is the power of God and it is the power of God for salvation.

Boice points out that Paul is not saying that the Gospel is about God's power, as if it were merely pointing us to a power beyond our own. Nor is Paul saying that the gospel is a source of a power we can get and use to save ourselves. Paul's statement is not that the gospel is about God's power or even a channel through which that power operates, but rather that the gospel is itself that power. The Gospel does not declare power of God, it is the power of God. That is, the gospel is powerful; it is the means by which God accomplishes salvation in those who are being saved." This gospel is the power of God unto salvation. That is what our gospel is! "The Gospel is a Divine thing..." Paul discovered it to be a new power in the world. Finally this new power opened the door for,

c. New Possibilities. Romans 1:16-17. Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul. The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.... For in the gospel righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, "the righteous will live by faith." Three crucial words strike me in this verse. They are, "salvation" and "righteousness" and "faith." They speak to the most essential need in the soul of man and that is salvation from sin, which guarantees eternal life, and it is received by faith. It speaks of the possibilities of salvation to even those who have sunk to lowest depths of sin. It proclaims a freedom from the bondage of sin from which there appears to be no release. It announces a hope to those who have come to the end of themselves and feel that they can not go on in life. There is the open door of hope and salvation for them. Further we must recognize that there is element that makes salvation urgent and indispensable and it is mentioned it in the verse 18, but not much in the contemporary church. Paul says, "The wrath of God is being revealed...." This subject is not underlined much in our day in spite of the fact that it is one of the dominant themes of the scriptures. Because man is a sinner, he is in danger of the wrath of God. Contemporary preaching is not given much to declaring this truth. But the truth of God's wrath gives the gospel of salvation its' relevance and should instill into God's people the urgency to proclaim the hope of the Gospel, whereby men and women can escape the wrath

of God. And one reason that the gospel is good news is because it delivers us from the wrath of God. It presents new possibilities to men and women. "The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." What greater possibility for man in sin than this. That is why there are three significant truths that seem to leap out at us in these words. They are "Salvation," "Righteousness" and "faith." They are the essence of the gospel message. Salvation is the offer of the gospel because of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. There are three truths concerning salvation highlighted here. First,

- i. Salvation can be realized in this life. We can appropriate it now. We can know salvation now! It is for "everyone who believes." Second,
- ii. Salvation is not for a select few. This gospel is not bankrupt; it is not miserly withholding its delivering power from some and handing it out to others. This hope is embodied in the words that salvation is for "everyone who believes."
- iii. Salvation is found by faith in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. This is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the Savior from sin. The Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost made this clear when he declared, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no name under heaven given by men by whom we must be saved." But salvation is more than deliverance from sin. It exceeds the forgiveness of our sins. Salvation is righteousness made possible in our lives. This righteousness is not simply a pattern it is a power. It is not just a design for life, but a dynamic to enable us to live Christ-like lives. The Cross which is at the heart of the gospel message makes this possible. Paul tells us later in this letter in chapter 8:4, that the law failed to make people righteous, but what the law failed to do, Jesus is able to do. He died and rose again that the requirements of law might be fully met in us. Salvation imparts the power to live right, to do right and to be made right. Campbell Morgan wrote that, "however enfeebled (or weak) the will maybe, however polluted (or defiled) the nature of man maybe, the Gospel comes bringing to men and women the message of power enabling them to do right. In the Gospel is revealed the righteousness of God, which is placed at the disposal of an unrighteous person so that the unrighteous person upon

accepting it may become righteous in heart and thought and will and deed.” Man is in rebellion against God and is defiled by sin. Our righteousness is as filthy rags in his sight. We have incurred His wrath, and because of our filthiness, we will be banished from His presence forever when we die. This is the consequence of sin and we can do nothing to be made righteous in his sight. Yet in this great affirmation of the Apostle Paul, he tells us that while we can do nothing, God has done something. Boice says that God “has done precisely what needs to be done. He has provided a righteousness that is exactly what we need. It is received not by doing righteous things (which we can never do in sufficient quantity any way), but by simple faith. (Romans Comm. P.103-104) Paul writing to the church in Ephesus makes this clear “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9. The Gospel provides this glorious possibility for everyone who believes. Paul teaches that salvation is freedom from unrighteousness. It is freedom from sin.

Conclusion

Fritz Kreisler, the world famous violinist, earned a fortune with his concerts and compositions, but he generously gave most of it away. So, when he discovered an exquisite violin on one of his trips, he wasn't able to buy it. Later, having raised enough money to meet the asking price, he returned to the seller, hoping to purchase the beautiful instrument. However, to his great disappointment it had been sold to a collector. Kreisler made his way to the new owner's home and offered to buy the violin. The collector said that it had become his most prized possession and he would not sell it. Keenly disappointed, Kreisler was about to leave when he had an idea. “Could I play the instrument once more before it is consigned to silence?” he asked. Permission was granted, and the great virtuoso filled the room with such heart moving music that the collector's emotions were deeply stirred. “I have no right to keep that to myself,” he said, “It's your's, Mr. Kreisler. “Take it to the world and let the people hear it.” We

have a gospel which has not only been given to us but also entrusted to us and the challenge of these days is it take it to the world and let the people hear it.

