

## Sermon Notes, October 29, 2017 The 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation The Power of the Gospel! Romans 1:1-7, 14-17

This Sunday we celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the most significant event in human history outside the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. On October 31, 1517, the world began to shake with a few hammer blows on a small German church door. It can be rightly said that the Reformation had eternal significance. The Reformation reclaimed a biblical view of salvation, worship, and biblical authority.

Martin Luther, founder of Protestantism, later in his life told a story. It was his conversion experience. It all had to do with Romans and Romans 1:16 & 17. Toward the end of his reminiscence he says, "I grasped that ... through gift and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. ... When I saw that Law meant one thing and Gospel another, I broke through." What he means is he was completely transformed...his thinking, his heart, his life, everything. He broke through.

If these two verses have never done to you what they did to Luther, I'm going to try to show you three factors you have to grasp if you're going to break through. You have to grasp, according to, I think, this text, *the form of the gospel*, *the content of the gospel*, and *the power of the gospel*.

### 1. The form of the gospel

You can see, especially if you read all the way through Romans 1:1–17, the word gospel shows up more here than any other place in the book. The word gospel, as most of you know, is a Greek word we transliterate euaggelion. That is, eu, the good, and aggelos, an angel. The word aggelos means a herald. At the very, very heart of the word *gospel*, the message is, the essence of the Christian message is news ... good, joyful news. This is the difference between the gospel and every other philosophy or religion. The gospel is not good advice about what you must do. It's primarily good news about what's already been done for you, something that's already happened. Something has happened *outside you*, something momentous. It's happened *outside you for you*, and that's what infuses *into you*, life-changing joy. Now I *can* live according to Jesus' teachings.

### 2. The content of the gospel

The content of the gospel is that very spot where Luther meditated and meditated, until suddenly he realized, "The righteousness of God is a righteousness that comes to me, and I receive by faith." That opened everything up. It changed Luther's life. It changed mine. We're justified by faith. He called justification by faith alone "the article upon which the church stands or falls."

The "good news" of the New Testament includes not only an announcement of the person of Christ and his work on our behalf, but also a declaration of how the benefits of Christ's work are appropriated by, in, and for the believer. To reject justification by faith alone is to reject the gospel and to fall as a church. Without the gospel, the church falls. Without the gospel, the church is no longer the church.

Let's look at justification and let me use two illustrations to show you.

- 1) The first one, though, think about this. Whenever we talk about being justified, we're talking about not a change in the object but a change in the relationship to the object.

Jesus has done something to change God's regard for us, his relationship to us. Something has been done so now the Father looks at us and loves us and delights in us and accepts us. Our relationship has been changed.

- 2) The second factor in what brings a breakthrough over the gospel is when you realize the gospel is about more than just forgiveness.

Follow me, please. It's about more than just forgiveness. The salvation of the gospel is not so much like simply getting a pardon to get out of prison. It's *besides* and *more than* getting a pardon, getting

forgiveness. The second breakthrough is when you see it's not just forgiveness, but it's being justified, and clothed in the righteousness of Christ. It's a righteousness from God given to me by a gift.

2 Corinthians 5:21. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." In him! All that he rightly deserved is now on us.

Thirdly, the last thing you have to do if you're really going to understand & break through is you have to have a sense of ...

### 3. The power of the gospel

The gospel *is* the power of God in verbal form. Therefore, when I believe it, when I hear it, when I understand it, when I grasp its propositions, its meanings, its words, to the degree that I actually get this gospel into my life, the power of God is coursing through me. It is the power of God! Therefore, the way you know you're beginning to understand the gospel and breaking through is instead of it just being a set of ideas, you begin to sense it being a power.

How is that so? Well, here are a couple of ways.

- 1) First of all, one of the ways you know you're breaking through (or you have a chance of breaking through) is you feel its offensiveness.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians: "Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." You have to feel the power of it. You have to feel the offensiveness of it.

- 2) Here's the other way in which is the power.

What's so amazing about Paul is he is able to get sound gospel theology everywhere. Look at v. 7. "To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints ..." What is a Christian? The first is you're loved by God. Your relationship has been changed. Something has been done to justify you. You're loved, but if you're loved and if you know you're loved, then you're called. That means you're invited. That means you're summoned to be saints, which means to be "holy." You never, ever, ever, ever are loved by God in spite of your bad character without that starting to change your character.

If you are loved, then you are called, you're summoned, into holiness. You want it. You long for it because you say, "I want to look like the One who did this for me."

Jesus Christ is the good news! He is the gospel. In fact, Paul declares this in Ephesians!

"You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."

What a Savior. Go to him.