


The Gospel is the Power of God

2026-04-26 - Romans 1:16-17

	<p>What makes Christians eager to share the gospel? What makes churches zealous for evangelism and mission? This zeal is not generated by having a certain personality, or simply telling yourself you need to evangelize more, or adopting new programs and attending conferences. What makes you zealous for the spread of the gospel is simply this: you truly believe that the gospel is the power of God for salvation. If you believe the gospel really is the power of God, then you will not be ashamed of it, and you will be eager to see its advancement.</p>
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With grace and peace to you from God our Father, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As mentioned, my name is Pastor Stephen Corbitt. I serve as a pastor of teaching and discipleship at Christ the King Reformed Baptist Church. The saints there send their greetings to you here this morning. We're grateful for all of you here at Cornerstone Church, and we're grateful to be able to even preach here as well.

So before we look at the sermon, or hear the sermon, I would like to invite you into a time of prayer. We do a pastoral prayer at our church, and we'd love to do that here this morning. It's a little bit more of a lengthier prayer, but in a day where it's pretty much prayerless in so many circles, it does not hurt to pray a little longer. So please join me now in a word of prayer.

Gracious God, You really are awesome and great. You are the Alpha and the Omega. God, with You one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. You are eternal, but we are time-bound creatures. The days of our life, they contain seventy years, or due to strength, eighty years. But soon our days are gone, and we fly away.

And God, You are not only eternal, but You are the thrice-holy God. Angels must shield their faces before Your presence, and to look upon You would destroy us. And one single act of disobedience against an infinitely holy God requires infinite punishment. So God, we confess that You are infinite in being and infinite in holiness.

And who are we, God? Who are we but withering leaves under the summer sun, here today and gone tomorrow? Who are we apart from Your grace except crucifiers of Christ and devils incarnate, sinners in the hands of an angry God?

And yet, although we come as finite and unholy people, God, we are amazed that You delight in lavishing us with Your grace. Would it not be enough to forgive us? But more than that, You make us righteous in Your sight. Would it not be enough to make Your enemies Your servants? But more than that, You have adopted us as sons and daughters. Would it not be enough to keep us from hell? But more than that, You have promised to give us a glorious inheritance.

An inheritance encompassing every mountaintop and ocean depth, and every angel and beast, every square inch of the new heavens and the new earth. All will be ours in Christ, even intimate fellowship with You, the God who dwells in unapproachable light.

So God, we thank You for Jesus Christ. We thank You for the grace upon grace we find in His life, His death, His resurrection, and second coming. God, and in light of that grace, I thank You so deeply for these people You have called at Cornerstone Church, these precious blood-bought people of God.

God, we ask that You make us a more holy people. Where there is pride, humble us. Where there is hidden sin, expose us. Where there is unrepentance, soften us. Where there is lust, purify us. Where there is indifference, revive us. Where there is worldliness, wean us. Where there is fear, encourage us. Where there is suffering, comfort us. Where there is sorrow, God, we ask that You heal us. Where there is material need, God, please provide for us.

God, we come to You needy and empty, but have You not said, "Ask, and it shall be given to you"? So God, we expect much from You this morning.

We also pray that You strengthen the leaders here at Cornerstone Church. God, provide stability even in this season of transition. We pray for unity. May this church be built upon the cornerstone of Jesus Christ, unified in the truth and unified as one temple built to the living God.

We also pray for our political leaders. We pray for the Glenview Village President Michael Jenny, for Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, and for President Donald Trump. We ask that You surround these men with true Christians who can be witnesses of Christ to them. God, soften their hearts, save them from their sin, and bring them to new life in Christ.

We ask that You bring repentance and revival in our state and in our nation by raising men of God who preach the unadulterated gospel without shame.

Finally, Lord God, I do pray that You use the preaching of Your Word this morning to bring about great change in our midst. God, we believe, we truly believe in the Holy Spirit, and we truly believe that Your Word is powerful. So do a mighty work this morning, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you don't mind rising, if you may, if you are able, to hear the Word of God read. I'm reading from Romans chapter 1, verses 16 to 17. It's from the NASB95, what we use at our church at Christ the King.

As you know, Pastor Brandon has preached through Romans 1, and now we're here at Romans 1:16–17. I'm just carrying on, taking the torch from him, so to speak. I'm going to start reading from verse 15, but our main focus is verse 16 to 17.

Hear now the Word of the living God:

"SO, FOR MY PART, I AM EAGER TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOU ALSO WHO ARE IN ROME. FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES, TO THE JEW FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GREEK. FOR IN IT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS REVEALED FROM FAITH TO FAITH; AS IT IS WRITTEN, 'BUT THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.'" (Romans 1:15–17 NASB95)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

This morning I want to ask just one basic question: **WHAT IS THE FUEL THAT KEEPS THE FIRE OF GOSPEL MISSION BURNING?** What keeps people zealous in their desire to see the gospel go forth? Or to ask it negatively, what keeps us from mission burnout, or mission drift, or mission indifference?

Many churches start off white-hot for the gospel, and then eventually they cool off. Some become nothing more than a program-heavy, consumeristic, self-help entity. Some are hijacked by liberal theology and hardly mention any hard things like sin or hell. Some may provide social goods to the community. They may even be a place of fellowship, but they do not preach the gospel, and they lose that initial zeal.

Our church is located in Niles. Christ the King is located in Niles, not too far from here. But maybe you're familiar with the Leaning Tower of Niles, that great piece of architecture there next to Costco. But behind that building, there used to be a large multi-story building that was recently demolished. That building was owned by the YMCA.

A lot of people don't know this—I just realized this recently—but do you know what the YMCA stands for? Well, yes, I know this. It's impressive. The Young Men's what? Christian Association. Christian. This was a Christian institution. They had Bible studies and prayer meetings. It was formed, why? To improve the spiritual condition of young men in London.

In fact, D.L. Moody, the great Chicago evangelist, was the president of the Chicago YMCA from 1866 to 1869. This was a Christian institution. And yet, what do you hear today on the front page of their website? This is what it reads: (www.ymca.org)

“For 175 years, the Y has been a place where meaningful connections help build stronger communities. With locations in more than 10,000 neighborhoods across the country, we are part of everyday life, helping people work toward their goals, build relationships, and discover a true sense of belonging.”

Now, what is missing here? Nothing about Christ. Nothing about spiritual eternal realities. Nothing about the Bible or praying to the living God. The YMCA has been reduced to social responsibility, to healthy living, to humanitarianism, but there is nothing about the gospel.

So my question is: **What is the fuel that keeps the fire of gospel mission burning in your hearts?** What keeps us from becoming a shell of our former selves?

Not that everyone is called to be a missionary or a full-time vocational pastor. Not that everyone here is meant to be a gifted evangelist. But what is it that makes a Christian pray day and night to see the gospel go forth? What is it that makes a Christian not ashamed of the gospel even if it costs them much? What is it that makes a Christian whose highest priority is not earning a lot of money, not gaining status in the world, not entertaining themselves to death, but who embody the words of that great Moravian who said, **“Preach Christ, die, and be forgotten”?**

In this text, we see what it was that kept Paul's zeal for the church's mission alive. Verse 15, he says, "FOR MY PART, I AM **EAGER** TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOU ALSO WHO ARE IN ROME." (Romans 1:15)

After twenty years of strenuous missionary endeavors in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, after beatings and riots and imprisonments from outside the church, after moral failures, abandonment, and division inside the church, here is the apostle Paul who says he is still eager to preach the gospel.

There was no burnout. There was no drifting. There was no distraction. His passionate flame for the gospel mission was not extinguished. So the question is, how do we become like that? Why was Paul still so **eager** to preach the gospel? Why was he so stubbornly zealous?

He doesn't say it was because he had an extroverted and adventurous personality. He doesn't say it's because he saw the risen Lord Jesus Christ and had these great experiences. He was caught up into the third heaven. He doesn't say it was because he went to this great missions conference and had this great emotional experience.

What was it that made Paul so zealous for gospel ministry? That's what we're seeing in this text. Verse 16, he says, "FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION." (Romans 1:16)

How do we gain this Paul-like zeal for the mission of the gospel? The answer is simply this: **YOU MUST REALLY BELIEVE THAT THE GOSPEL REALLY IS THE POWER OF GOD.**

Do you actually believe that the gospel is divine power?

That's my main idea this morning:

Believing the power of the gospel produces zeal for the gospel.

The more we believe the power of the gospel, the more that flame increases. The less you believe it, the greater risk of extinguishing that flame.

So that's what we're going to look at this morning in three points. Follow along with me. You have both notes or the screen behind me here.

First point: **Not believing the power of the gospel produces **shame**.**

We see that very clearly in verse 16. It says, "FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL." (Romans 1:16)

Now, in Greco-Roman culture, there was much reason to be ashamed of the gospel. Rome was the capital of the ancient world. They gloried in military dominance. They reveled in riches and prosperity. They prided themselves in their sophisticated Greek philosophy. And yet here is Paul saying that this poor, uneducated Jew from that flyover state called Nazareth is God in the flesh, and that this Jesus saved the

world by being carved and slaughtered on a Roman cross. And then you have the gall to say that this Jesus is right now Lord over Caesar.

How absolutely arrogant, embarrassing, weak, and dumb—and even bigoted and immoral. This is your gospel?

There was every reason to be ashamed of the gospel in Paul's day. And quite frankly, it doesn't take long to realize that Christianity and the gospel is a shameful thing in 2026 America today.

Aaron Renn wrote an article in 2022 describing the state of affairs of Christianity in America, and he observes that society in America no longer has a positive view of Christianity like it did prior to the 1960s. Neither does it even have a neutral view of Christianity. It's the opposite. Our culture in America has a negative view of Christianity.

This is how he (Aaron Renn) describes it:

“Being known as a Christian is a social negative, particularly in the elite domains of society. Christian morality is expressly repudiated and seen as a threat to the public good and the new public moral order. Subscribing to Christian moral views or violating the secular moral order brings negative consequences.”

Job opportunities jeopardized, businesses boycotted and shut down, protesters in front of abortion clinics imprisoned. Maybe you've lost friends. Maybe you got a snide remark, mean words. Saying you're Christian does not help you out in our American culture. There is no other time in American history for men and women to be ashamed of the gospel. There is really no greater time to be ashamed of the gospel in our country.

Our culture says you're narrow-minded if you don't believe all religions lead to God. What do we say? We say Jesus Christ said, “I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH ME.” (John 14:6)

Our culture says you're judgmental if you don't believe everyone is born good and should follow your heart. We say everyone is born a sinner in Adam and worthy of damnation and hell.

Our culture says you're gullible if you don't see the Bible as a man-made document full of errors and contradictions. Yet we say the Bible is the only inerrant, infallible, sufficient Word of God.

Our culture says if you don't affirm same-sex attraction and abortion as reproductive health care, you are an evil person. And yet we say God gets to decide morality, and God views those things as an abomination in His sight.

There is nothing more offensive, more shameful, than being a Christian who actually believes what the Bible says.

Then how do a lot of people respond to this shameful culture? There's really three ways.

First way is this: ***Some affirm the whole gospel but are ashamed to speak.***

Some say, "Yes, of course, I believe the gospel truth. I believe Jesus Christ is the only way, the truth, and life. I believe that apart from Him, you cannot have salvation. I even affirm hell."

But oftentimes these people, while they affirm the whole gospel, in order to avoid the shame, they refuse to speak. They retreat to quietism, to the monastery in the desert. They retreat to the Amish country homestead in Pennsylvania—or dare I say, the comfortable church pew in suburban America.

And to ease their conscience, they often reduce the gospel mission to social transformation and godly conduct. They say, "As long as I exemplify moral character in my job, as long as I'm fighting my personal sin, as long as the church is digging wells and doing social good, well then we've done our duty."

Maybe they affirm the whole gospel, but they are ashamed to speak. The shame in this case produces silence.

The second type: ***Some speak but are ashamed of the whole gospel.***

Some do speak to the world. Some are quick to gain platforms. Some are eager to preach in conferences and start podcasts. They really take up the megaphone and speak. But in order to avoid the shame and backlash, what do they do? They subtract from the whole gospel in order to make it palatable to natural man.

They will speak but mention nothing offensive. They will say, "God will bless you in this life," but subtract anything about suffering for Christ's sake. They will say Jesus is your personal Savior, but take out that part about Him being your Lord. They will confront the sins of greed and pride, but never really take a stand on things like critical race theory, lest they offend somebody.

They may speak, but they are ashamed of the whole gospel. Instead of producing silence, the shame produces subtraction.

But then there's a third category. This is what we want to be: ***Some speak the whole gospel without shame.***

This is what we see Paul doing. And believe Paul, Paul is not oblivious to the scandal of the gospel. He knows that the gospel is intrinsically offensive to natural man.

If you remember, in 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul says the word of the cross is what? He doesn't say it's like honey for the unbeliever. He doesn't say it's simply tolerated. Paul says, "THE WORD OF THE CROSS IS *FOOLISHNESS* (IT IS FOLLY, IT IS ABSURD) TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING." (1 Corinthians 1:18) And yet he doesn't refuse to speak. He continues to endeavor in gospel mission, and he preaches the gospel.

So again, the question is, how do we get to that point? What was it that allowed Paul to speak the whole gospel without shame?

Here is this second point, first point **not believing the power of the gospel produces shame**.

Second point: **Believing the power of the gospel produces zeal**.

Verse 16 reads this: "FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD." (Romans 1:16)

What was the reason he was unashamed of the gospel? It was not by looking within and reawakening some kind of emotional fire. It was not simply telling himself, "I've got to be less ashamed." It was because of what he believed.

What conquered the shame and what made Paul so eager was the fact that he believed that the gospel truly is the power of God!

The more you see the gospel as weak, the more ashamed of it you will be and the more you want to keep it hidden. We understand that intuitively, don't we? No one wants to highlight their personal weaknesses. If you write a résumé, you don't write, "Not good at math," or "No experience on Microsoft Excel," or "Sometimes I show up late to work." You do not highlight your weaknesses. But you accentuate what you believe is powerful and effective.

So notice three components of this gospel power.

First, **the source of power is God**.

Ancient Rome knew what power was. Their army controlled much of the known world. Their navy put the fear of Caesar in the Mediterranean Sea. Their justice system arbitrated right and wrong, freedom and imprisonment, life and death. The Romans knew power. They knew what that was.

And yet here is Paul saying there is a power greater than Rome, and this power is not in swords and spears. This power is not political offices, or nuclear armaments, or billionaire money, or seductive beauty, or sharp rhetorical wit. This power is not sourced in creation. It does not originate in the mind or hands of man. This is a power beyond this world. It is the power of God.

It is the power from the One who makes sub-zero temperatures in January and unbearable heat in August. It is the power from the One who treats Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Napoleon—

all these great figures—as expendable pawns. It is the power from the One who created trillions of galaxies by the mere nod of His head.

There is no greater force unleashed in human history. There is nothing more nuclear and seismic on the face of the planet. There is nothing that causes greater historical impact in this world. When the gospel of Christ is faithfully articulated, it is no mere act of man. It is accompanied by supernatural, explosive, Holy Spirit, divine power!

Do not be ashamed of God’s power.

The source of power is God.
Second, the result of power is salvation.

Power is often used to destroy. Power is often used to abuse and control. But what we read here in verse 16 is that it is “THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION.” (Romans 1:16)

The gospel is the only effective means in all this world through which the Holy Spirit exercises His power to call and save mankind. The gospel is the only way to escape the punishment of God’s wrath. The gospel is the only way to gain the resurrection from the dead and eternal life. The gospel is the only key that opens the door to salvation.

So then what doctor would be ashamed of a cure for cancer? What drowning man would be ashamed of a life raft? Then why would we be ashamed of the saving power of the gospel?

The result of power is salvation
Third, the extent of power is universal.

On the one hand, Paul says it is the power of God for salvation “TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES.” (Romans 1:16)

So this particularizes, the extent of gospel power, it’s only effective to those who, by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, believe. God’s saving power does not automatically affect everyone who hears the gospel. It applies only—but always and without hesitation or restriction—to the one who believes.

So there is a particular element to it, but on the other hand, Paul says, it’s to everyone who believes, “TO THE JEW FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GREEK.” (Romans 1:16)

So that universalizes the extent of the power. Gospel power began with the Jews first, but it is not meant to stay with the people of Israel. It is meant to go out to the Greeks, to the non-Jews as well.

Since the power of the gospel depends on faith, and not on nationality, or sex, or race, or occupation, or status, or even degrees of sinfulness, wherever and whenever there is faith, gospel power is active and working. Meaning gospel power is designed to impact all people everywhere throughout all history. It is a wide-reaching, invasive, outward-moving power.

We often think that the gospel is weak and ineffective against the world, when in reality, the world is weak and ineffective against the gospel!

This is how C.F.H. Henry described it:

“The early church didn’t say, ‘Look what the world is coming to.’ They said, ‘Look what has come into the world.’”

The power of the gospel is universal and invasive, and no one can slow its power.

So my question again is this: **Do you really believe the gospel is powerful?**

I’m not asking if you know the gospel. I’m not asking if you have been saved by the gospel. I’m asking, do you believe that the gospel is fiery, divine, power?

We believe in the power of charismatic leaders. We believe in the power of money and resources. We believe in the power of social media presence. We believe in the power of political control. We believe in the power of all sorts of things. But do we believe in the offensive, salvific, universal power of God in the gospel? Do you believe that?

James Montgomery Boice wrote this back in the year 2000, noticing a trend of pragmatism in a lot of churches:

“Evangelicals now emphasize numerical growth, physical plants, and money. Pastors tone down the hard edges of biblical truth and use bizarre evangelistic methods and entertainment to attract more people... Yet, as Gene Veith writes, Christianity thrives ‘not by trying to offer people what they already have, but by offering them what they desperately lack - namely, the Word of God and salvation through Jesus Christ.’”

We believe in the power of men. We believe in the power of methods. We believe in the power of money. But do we believe in the power of the gospel?

Believing in the power of the gospel produces zeal for the gospel.

So then the last question, to look at verse 17 why is it that the gospel is the power of God for salvation. Believing the power of the gospel this third point requires knowledge verse 17 so following Paul's logic,

Paul is **eager** to preach the gospel. Why? Well he's not ashamed of the gospel. Paul is not ashamed of the gospel. Why? He believes it is the power of God! So then it is the power of God. Why, then in Verse 17: "FOR IN IT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS REVEALED FROM FAITH TO FAITH; AS IT IS WRITTEN, 'BUT THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.'" (Romans 1:17)

The gospel is powerful because it reveals something. It is powerful because it unveils theological truths that are otherwise unknown. So then you need to know what the gospel actually is, because the power lies in the content of what is revealed. You understand it relies on the content.

Two sub points very briefly, First sub-point: **KNOW THE CENTRAL TRUTH OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE.**

Paul says, "IN IT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS REVEALED." (Romans 1:17) The righteousness of God is revealed.

That's a very strange thing to say, isn't it? Shouldn't Paul say in the gospel, the mercy or grace of God is revealed? Why does he say "righteousness"?

What we have to understand is that Paul here is not highlighting God's attribute of righteousness. He is highlighting God's gift of righteousness. Paul is saying that in the gospel, the gift of righteousness from God that He gives is revealed.

How do you receive that gift? He says it is revealed "FROM FAITH TO FAITH." (Romans 1:17) Paul is saying the righteousness is received by faith alone.

The central truth of the gospel then is **justification**: that you are made righteous by faith alone. Although everyone is unrighteous and rightfully deserving the wrath of God, God Himself provides that righteousness—not on the basis of your works, but completely on the basis of Christ's perfect work in His life and in His death.

And this righteousness is received not by earning it, but entirely by faith, trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ. So you're not only completely forgiven of your sins; you are made positively righteous in the sight of God. *The core doctrine here is the justification by faith alone.*

Paul goes on and says this isn't just a New Testament thing. It is an Old Testament thing: "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." (Romans 1:17; Habakkuk 2:4) He's saying that this truth, that the righteous man, the one who's made righteous before God and shall live eternally, he is made righteous by faith. This is not just a New Testament thing, it's an Old Testament thing.

Now I'm intentionally not going to spend too much time on this point because this verse functions like the thesis of the entire letter. If Romans were like a paperback book, this sentence would be the back-cover blurb. Paul is going to unpack what that means in the rest of the letter.

But my point is that the power is in that central truth of justification by faith alone.

The power is not in polished oratory. The power is not in personal charisma. The power is not so much how the gospel is being communicated. The power is in what is being communicated.

To give an illustration of this In 1522, Martin Luther was reflecting on the Reformation and wondering why the gospel was so powerful during that time. This is what he said:

“What is Luther? I simply talked, preached, wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything.”

The power is not in the person communicating the gospel. The power is in the content of the gospel itself.

So yes, you need to know how to share the gospel. Yes, you need to believe that the gospel is powerful. But even more fundamental to that, the church needs to know what the gospel is and protect that at all costs.

There is no virtue in being eager for the church’s mission if you do not know the church’s message.

You need to know the truth of the gospel, which leads to this last point. Here's an implication. It means: **KNOW THAT MISSIONAL ZEAL IS NOT IN COMPETITION WITH DOCTRINAL CLARITY.**

Many people think that in order to have missional zeal, we need to stop being so dogmatic. We need to smooth out the rough edges of the gospel. We need to be quiet on controversial and sensitive topics. We need to make everything a secondary or tertiary issue for the sake of the gospel.

And believe me, there are many inconsequential things Christians argue about. Paul addresses that in Romans 14. That is true. There are things that are secondary and tertiary that hinder the gospel, but much of the problem today is that Christians have zero thoughts or reflection on pressing matters of society. They have zero interest in theology and history, and they think, “I’m just zealous for the gospel. I have no time for doctrine and theology.”

But the astonishing thing is Paul spends sixteen long chapters unpacking what the gospel is, because there is a lot of truth that undergirds justification by faith alone, and there are a lot of implications that flow out of justification by faith alone. Paul was very much concerned with doctrine!

Meaning we should never separate missional zeal from doctrinal clarity.

Paul never thought like that. Here's a great quote from Zane Pratt. He's a professor of Christian missions at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

“The gospel is not a vague message of cosmic benevolence, nor is it open to private interpretation on the part of the receptor. The gospel has a very specific content, and this content is unchanging and binding across time, geography, and cultures. The person who takes the gospel seriously must, ipso facto, be a serious student of the classical theological disciplines of scripture, theology, and history.... No amount of zeal can make up for indifference to the truth.”

You need to have both missional zeal and doctrinal clarity. A fire has both heat and light. You need both intensity and clarity, both courage and correctness. The point is, believing the power of the gospel does require knowledge and clear knowledge of the gospel and all that it entails.

So then again, how do we keep that burning zeal alive? You need to know the gospel, know what it is, believe that it is actually powerful, and not be ashamed of it.

Now let me close with one word to believers and one to unbelievers.

For you believer: Do you still believe in the power of the gospel for yourself?

Many start off seeing the power of the gospel when they're first saved. They are amazed by the grandeur of Christ and His saving work on the cross, and they're full of zeal. But then that amazement wears off. Soon enough they no longer apply the gospel to themselves.

Oftentimes what happens is they get onto this performance treadmill. They think, “God will only be good to me. God will only fellowship with me. God will only bless me if I keep up my end of the bargain, if I keep the streak of holiness, if I maintain perfectly my morning devotions, if I have zeal for the gospel.”

And you return to a legalistic relationship with God.

If you think you measure up, you become full of self-righteousness. You start to think, “I've earned God's favor by all my little good works. I'm actually not that bad.”

Or you're full of despair because you realize, “I still struggle with sin. I still abuse the gospel. I still offend my Father in heaven. How can I go back to God?”

In both cases, you are relying not upon the power of the gospel, but the power of your good works.

My prayer is that this morning you would have a renewed sense of gospel power in your life as a Christian, that you relish once again the fact that God loves you, that God rejoices over you, that God has forgiven you based on one thing alone: that Jesus Christ died for me.

At the cross He paid for my sins, and He rose again from the dead for my eternal life.

All my righteousness, all my power to fight against sin, all God's love for me—all of that is found not in myself, but in the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Do you still believe in the power of the gospel in your own life?! Or has that worn off?

And then finally, for the unbeliever: Do not doubt the power of God in the gospel.

God's wrath does hang over you like a sword ready to fall, whether you believe it or not. You cannot avoid judgment and death, and you cannot be made right with God by your good works.

But God calls you to salvation today, and by His power He will declare you completely righteous in His sight. He will give you a new heart, make you a new creature. He will give you resurrection life, so that death loses its sting.

And the one condition that Paul gives—he doesn't say the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who never hurt anyone, or to all who live a decent and upright life, or to all who are good.

He says the power of the gospel belongs to all those who believe.

So turn from your sin and believe this morning, and you will experience the power of God for salvation.

Close with me now in a word of prayer.

Father in heaven, we see so much power in this world, and so little power in Your Word. I pray, God, that would be reversed this morning, and that we will see great power in the gospel and in the Word and in the Holy Spirit, and see how trifling and weak all the powers of Satan, all the powers of the world, and all the powers of sin are against the Almighty God.

God, revive us this morning, we ask. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.