

PART I

REASONS TO REHEARSE THE GOSPEL DAILY

“The gospel isn’t one class among many that you’ll attend during your life as a Christian – the gospel is the whole building that all the classes take place in! Rightly approached, all the topics you’ll study and focus on as a believer will be offered to you ‘within the walls’ of the glorious gospel.”

C.J. Mahaney,

The Cross Centered Life, 75-76

1. THE NEW TESTAMENT MODEL

The New Testament teaches that Christians ought to hear the gospel as much as non-Christians do. In fact, in the first chapter of Romans the Apostle Paul tells the believers in the church that he was anxious *“to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome.”*¹ Of course, he was anxious to preach the gospel to the non-Christians at Rome, yet he specifically states that he was eager to preach it to the believers as well.

To the Corinthian Christians who had already believed and been saved by the gospel, Paul says, *“I make known to you the gospel, which you have believed....”*² He then restates the historical facts of the gospel before showing them how those gospel facts apply to their beliefs about the afterlife. This is actually Paul’s approach to various other issues throughout the book of 1 Corinthians.

In most of Paul’s letters to churches, sizeable portions of them are given over to rehearsing gospel truths. For example, Ephesians 1-3 is all gospel, Colossians 1-2 is gospel, and Romans 1-11 is gospel. The remainder of such books shows specifically how to bring those gospel truths to bear on life. Re-preaching the gospel and then showing how it applied to life was Paul’s choice method for ministering to believers, thereby providing a divinely inspired pattern for me to follow when ministering to myself and to other believers.

2. MY DAILY NEED

The gospel is so foolish³ (according to my natural wisdom),

¹ Romans 1:15, ² 1 Corinthians 15, ³ 1 Corinthians 1

so scandalous⁴ (according to my conscience), and so incredible (according to my timid heart⁵), that it is a daily battle to believe the full scope of it as I should. There is simply no other way to compete with the forebodings of my conscience, the condemnings of my heart, and the lies of the world and the Devil⁶ than to overwhelm such things with daily rehearsings of the gospel.

3. THE POWER OF GOD

Outside of Heaven, the power of God in its highest density is found inside the gospel. This must be so, for the Bible twice describes the gospel as "*the power of God.*"⁷ Nothing else in all of Scripture is ever described in this way, except for the Person of Jesus Christ.⁸ Such a description indicates that the gospel is not only powerful, but that it is the ultimate entity in which God's power resides and does its greatest work.

Indeed, God's power is seen in erupting volcanos, in the unimaginably hot boil of our massive sun, and in the lightning speed of a recently discovered star seen streaking through the Heavens at 1.5 million miles per hour. Yet in Scripture such wonders are never labelled "*the power of God.*" How powerful, then, must the gospel be that it would merit such a title! And how great is the salvation it could accomplish in my life, if I would only embrace it by faith⁹ and give it a central place in my thoughts each day!

⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:23, ⁵ 1 John 3:19-20, ⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:4, ⁷ Romans 1:16, ⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:24,

⁹ Hebrews 4:2; Ephesians 1:18

4. MY DAILY PROTECTION

As long as I am inside the gospel, I experience all the protection I need from the powers of evil that rage against me. It is for this reason that the Bible tells me to “*take up*”¹⁰ and “*put on*”¹¹ the whole armour of God; and the pieces of armour it tells me to put on are all merely synonyms for the gospel. Translated literally from the Greek, they are: “... *the salvation ... the justification ... truth ... the gospel of peace ... the faith ... [and the] ... word of God.*”¹² What are all these expressions but various ways of describing the gospel? Therefore, if I wish to stand victorious in Jesus, I must do as the songwriter suggests and “*put on the gospel armour, each piece put on with prayer.*”¹³

That God would tell me to “*take up*” and “*put on*” this gospel armour alerts me to the fact that I do not automatically come into each day protected by the gospel. In fact, these commands imply that I am vulnerable to defeat and injury unless I seize upon the gospel and arm myself with it from head to toe. And what better way is there to do this than to preach the gospel to myself and to make it the obsession of my heart throughout each day?

5. TRANSFORMED BY GLORY

The glory of God is the most powerful agent of transformation available to mankind. It is so powerful that it transforms those who merely gaze upon it. The Apostle Paul gives personal testimony

¹⁰ Ephesians 6:13, ¹¹ Ephesians 6:11-12, ¹² Ephesians 6:14-17,

¹³ “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus,” written by George Duffield, Jr., (1818-1888)

concerning this stunning fact. *"But we all,"* he says, *"beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory."*¹⁴ From Paul's testimony I learn that if I wish to become all that God wants me to be, I must behold His glory each day.

But where do I find God's glory to behold? Indeed, the glory of God is revealed throughout all of Creation,¹⁵ but the Bible indicates that, outside of Heaven, the glory of God in its thickest density dwells inside the gospel. It is for this reason that the gospel is described in Scripture as *"the gospel of the glory of Christ"* and *"the gospel of the glory of the blessed God."*¹⁶ Consequently, as I habitually gaze upon the glory of the Lord revealed in the gospel, I can know that actual deposits of God's very glory are attaching themselves to my person and transforming me from one level of glory to another.¹⁷ This transformation is deep and abiding, and unfadingly displays the glory of God to others.¹⁸

6. A CURE FOR DISTRUST

Every time I deliberately disobey a command of God, it is because I am in that moment doubtful as to God's true intentions in giving me that command. Does He really have my best interests at heart? Or is He withholding something from me that I would be better off having?¹⁹ Such questions, whether consciously asked or not, lie underneath every act of disobedience.

However, the gospel changes my view of God's commandments, in that it helps me to see the heart of the person from whom those

¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:18, ¹⁵ Psalm 19:1, ¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:4, ¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 3:18,

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 3:13, ¹⁹ Genesis 3

commandments come. When I begin my train of thought with the gospel, I realize that if God loved me enough to sacrifice His Son's life for me, then He must be guided by that same love when He speaks His commandments to me. Viewing God's commands and prohibitions in this light, I can see them for what they really are: friendly signposts from a Heavenly Father who is seeking to love me through each directive, so that I might experience His very fullness forever.²⁰

When controlling my thoughts as described above, the gospel cures me of my suspicion of God, thereby disposing me to walk more trustingly on the path of obedience to His commands.

7. SUFFICIENCY IN THE GOSPEL

The gospel serves as the means by which God daily constructs me into what He wants me to be and also serves as the channel through which He gives me my inheritance every day of my Christian life.²¹ Hence, it could be said that the gospel contains all that I need "for life and godliness."²² It is for this reason that God tells me to be steadfastly entrenched in the gospel at all times and never to allow myself to be moved from there.²³ The mere fact that God tells me to stay inside the gospel at all times must mean that He intends to supply all of my needs as long as I am abiding in that place of luxury.²⁴

8. FREEDOM FROM SIN'S POWER

As long as I am stricken with the guilt of my sins, I will be captive to them, and will often find myself re-committing the very sins about

²⁰ Deuteronomy 5:29, ²¹ Acts 20:32, ²² 2 Peter 1:3, ²³ Colossians 1:23, ²⁴ Colossians 2

which I feel most guilty. The Devil is well aware of this fact; he knows that if he can keep me tormented by sin's guilt, he can dominate me with sin's power.

The gospel, however, slays sin at this root point and thereby nullifies sin's power over me. The forgiveness of God, made known to me through the gospel, liberates me from sin's power because it liberates me first from its guilt;²⁵ and preaching such forgiveness to myself is a practical way of putting the gospel into operation as a nullifier of sin's power in my life.

9. RESTING IN CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

The gospel encourages me to rest in my righteous standing with God, a standing which Christ Himself has accomplished and always maintains for me.²⁶ I never have to do a moment's labour to gain or maintain my justified status before God!²⁷ Freed from the burden of such a task, I now can put my energies into enjoying God, pursuing holiness, and ministering God's amazing grace to others.

The gospel also reminds me that my righteous standing with God always holds firm regardless of my performance, because my standing is based solely on the work of Jesus and not mine.²⁸ On my worst days of sin and failure, the gospel encourages me with God's unrelenting grace toward me.²⁹ On my best days of victory and usefulness, the gospel keeps me relating to God solely on the basis of Jesus' righteousness and not mine.

²⁵ Romans 6:14, ²⁶ Romans 5, ²⁷ Romans 4:5, ²⁸ Romans 5:18-19, ²⁹ Romans 5:20-21, 6:1; 1 John 2:1-2,

10. ENSLAVED BY CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

The righteousness of God, credited to me through Christ, is not merely something I rest in, but it is also the premier saving reality by which God governs me. According to Romans 6, when I obeyed the gospel call I was both declared righteous and “*became a slave to righteousness*” at the same time.³⁰ Quite literally, the righteousness that God credited to me became my master on the day I was converted! And now I am daily called by God to surrender the members of my being as slaves to do whatever this righteousness dictates.³¹

That I would be called to present my members as slaves of this imputed righteousness implies that my justification has something to say to me by way of directing me how to live my life each day. What it directs me to do is to be holy; and what results from my obedience to its rule is sanctification, or holiness of life.³² Hence, it could be said that ‘sanctification’ is merely the lifelong process wherein I joyfully surrender myself to God’s imputed righteousness and then do whatever this righteousness directs me to do. Indeed, God has clothed me with His righteousness. Now He wants this righteousness to master me.

The more I exult in the reality of my justification in Christ, the more I position myself to experience the full governing force of its sanctifying power in my life. And the more sanctified I become, the more I experience the full breadth of eternal life that God has given to me in Christ.³³

³⁰ Romans 6:17-18, ³¹ Romans 6:19, ³² Romans 6:19, ³³ Romans 6:19,22

11. LOVING MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS

The more I experience the gospel, the more there develops within me a yearning affection for my fellow-Christians who are also participating in the glories of the gospel. This affection for them comes loaded with confidence in their continued spiritual growth and ultimate glorification, and it becomes my pleasure to express to them this loving confidence regarding the ongoing work of God in their lives.³⁴

Additionally, with the gospel proving itself to be such a boon in my own life, I realize that the greatest gift I can give to my fellow-Christians is the gospel itself. Indeed, I love my fellow-Christians not simply because of the gospel, but I love them best when I am loving them with the gospel.³⁵ And I do this not merely by speaking gospel words to them, but also by living before them and generously relating to them in a gospel manner. Imparting my life to them in this way, I thereby contribute to their experience of the power, the Spirit, and the full assurance of the gospel.³⁶

By preaching the gospel to myself each day, I nurture the bond that unites me with my brothers and sisters for whom Christ died, and I also keep myself well-versed in the raw materials with which I may actively love them in Christ.

12. MY INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS

The gospel is not just a message of reconciliation with God, but it also heralds the reconciliation of all believers to one another in Christ.

³⁴ Philippians 1: 3-5, ³⁵ 1 Thessalonians 2:8, ³⁶ 1 Thessalonians 1:5