

February 15, 2015

The Gospel of Jesus

"...the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him and for his name's sake, we receive grace and apostleship to call people from among all...to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ."

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...for in the gospel a 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." Romans 1:2-6 and 16-17

Having spent the last several weeks talking about the nature of Jesus as it is revealed in John's Gospel the next obvious step in our study is, I think, to ask why understanding who Jesus is matters. And it does matter! That seems to be the Apostle Paul's belief as well as he writes his letter to the believers in Rome. His letter, his says, is going to be all about the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ who was both human and God and through whom we receive grace.

This good news is the mechanism through which, the Apostle explains, we are going to receive salvation. The culmination of the work of this gospel or good news in our lives should be righteousness, not righteousness that comes from our feeble efforts to be righteous. But righteousness that comes from God and is ours only through our faith in him.

But why do we need to be righteous? Why does it matter whether we understand who Jesus is or have faith in the gospel?

Like the great teacher he is Paul explains the why in the very next paragraph of his letter. He writes, ***"The wrath of God is being revealed against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him..."*** (1:18-21)



The reason that we need to understand who Jesus is and to understand how we can be made righteous through him is that the wrath of God is coming. If we don't fear the wrath of God we should. God's wrath has destroyed unbelievers more than once and it still can. The reason that we must come to understand who Jesus is and to surrender our lives to him completely is so that we can be saved from the wrath of God. That is what salvation is all about!

Maybe you are thinking like a lot of us do, that you are not really such a bad person. Most of us have approached the idea of our own wickedness from the standpoint of comparison. We want to believe that we are not really all that bad, because in comparison to someone else, we look pretty good. We want to believe that the whole idea of wickedness is comparative.

It isn't though. Paul writes, ***"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things...because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself..."*** (2:1-7)

We condemn ourselves as wicked every time we pass judgment on someone else for anything. Scary thought, huh? The truth is, as the Apostle quotes, ***"There is no one righteous, not even one; no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."*** (3:10-12) He concludes, ***"...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*** (3:23)

The bottom line is all of us are sinners and all of us have earned God's impending wrath and our only hope lies in the gospel.