

The Gospel: The Power of God (Rockport Baptist Church)

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the transformative power of the Gospel and the necessity of true regeneration for authentic Christian living.

Duration: 29:59

Scripture: John 3:3, John 10:24-25, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Galatians 6:14, 2 Timothy 1:7

Topics: "Sin And Salvation", "Spiritual Freedom"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the consequences of sin and the freedom that comes from following God's commandments. He highlights the power of God to save and sanctify individuals from the wrath and power of sin. The preacher challenges the idea of categorizing Christians into spiritual, carnal, and lost groups, stating that the Bible teaches there are only spiritual and carnal lost individuals. The sermon concludes with a call for self-reflection, urging listeners to examine their thoughts, desires, and obedience to God's commands.

Transcript

Let's open our Bibles again to John chapter 10. I just want to touch on this again as a way of summary. Some of the things that we looked at last night that are very, very important.

I want to add to them a bit. In John chapter 10, we'll go to verse 24. And the Jews then gathered around him and were saying to him, How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.

Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, these testify of me. But you do not believe because you are not of my sheep.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. Again, verse 27. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Now, we have two groups of people, as I shared last night. We have the Jews, the unbelieving Jews, led by leaders of Israel, Pharisees, teachers, scribes, and others, who were constantly needing more, more and more knowledge, more and more signs, more and more things to convince them that Jesus truly was the Christ, that they should walk in that way and endure in that way and follow him. And then you have another group of people who'd heard enough.

I mean, almost from the very beginning, they heard his voice, they believed upon him, and they followed him. And they needed nothing more. And what is the difference between the two groups? Doctrine of regeneration.

What is commonly called in America, being born again. Here is what has happened in Christianity today. And I want you young people to understand this.

And you can understand this. If I was right now giving this sermon in a seminary class, in a preaching class, and it was a sermon supposedly directed towards youth, I would be severely reprimanded for using terminology and words too high for young people to understand. I don't believe it.

If what I am saying right now, young Christian, is too hard for you to understand, then go to your pastor and learn these words. Go to your ministers and learn these words. Go to your parents.

Go to a dictionary. If they are the words of life and they're hard for you to understand, then it's worth casting aside every other goal just to learn what they mean. There's no need to dumb down Christianity.

But here's the thing about Christianity that I want you to understand. This is the malady of the ages. I've come to a conclusion in my own heart.

This is one of the great maladies of every age in the last 2,000 years. I want you to look at something. Typical young person, either in vacation Bible school, or church camp, or a regular meeting at church.

What happens? They walk down an aisle, they come with a friend, or they walk up to somebody and say, I want to get saved. Usually the counseling is very brief and superficial. Do you want to go to heaven? Yes, I want to go to heaven.

Would you like to have Jesus in your heart? Yes, I would like to have Jesus in my heart. Pray this prayer. Pray that prayer.

Usually, isn't it true, that we're talking about dealing with the salvation of a soul, of a young person lasting somewhere between 5 and 20 minutes? And then the theme is never touched on again. Do you realize that? They say, alright, now you've got past that, let's go on to discipleship. And then, for the whole lifetime of that individual, they are run through programs, and plans, and teaching seminars, and Acquire the Fire conferences, and everything, trying to get them to live like a Christian.

What is the problem? This is the problem. Let me give you an example. If you look in the time of John and Charles Wesley, or the time of Whitefield, and Hal Harris, and Daniel Rowlands, what was going on? People were in the church building.

They were in the religious organizations of the day. They were coming to church, and they believed that they were saved, because when they were infants, they were baptized. They had got that done, you know, quick, I'm baptized, I'm in the covenant, I'm part of the church, okay, I'm here.

We scoff at that, don't we? We say, how absurd that someone could think that just because they were baptized as an infant, that they were actually, you know, part of the church. Well, why scoff? We do the very same thing. Except it's not infant baptism, it is this.

I prayed that prayer. I got it done. And it is treated by the ministers at large.

This thing is promoted. I mean, it's absolutely unbelievable. So that since we do not deal with what it means to truly be converted, since we do not preach a gospel that is strong, that is the power of God unto salvation, most people in the church are not converted.

And then what do we do? We recognize that the people in the church by and large are ungodly. But instead of going back to the root of the problem, that they are unconverted and they don't know the Lord, we heap discipleship plan after discipleship plan upon them. But it's never enough to make them live like sheep, because in their very nature they're not sheep.

Discipleship does not have the power. Youth conferences do not have the power to make a goat live like a sheep. For a goat to live like a sheep, his very nature has to be changed into a sheep.

He has to become a sheep. And who can recreate? The only one who does create, and that is God. And how does He do it? Through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

And when that happens... Now, I'll grant you this. Some true saints are more high maintenance than others. Some true Christians require more help than others.

But the fact of the matter is, if you get some of the people in the church truly saved, they're not as high maintenance. You don't have to call them up every Saturday morning to get them to come to church the next day. You don't have to constantly be carousing around in a car, surveying where they're at.

You don't have to keep looking for them all the time. Because God is the one who has taken them into His hand and under His wing, and He will not let them go. He is a Father who loves them and zealously guards them, so that if the church drops the ball and doesn't even discipline them or teach them, God will do it.

He will not let them go. And that is what we're seeing here. We're seeing a group of Pharisees and others who just need more and more and more, but they never do come to the truth.

And then we see a group of basically uneducated fishermen who recognize this is the Christ. And they end up being theological scholars of the ages, knowing the truth. How many times have I seen supposed important men in Christendom and wondered if there was any true knowledge of God at all in their heart? And how many times have I seen poor beggarly mountain pastors in Peru who make their sandals out of discarded truck tires, cut up, unshaven and unkept, without so much as a first grade education, and yet sit down and in the simplest way speak forth the great things of God.

And what is the difference? The power of God in regeneration. They were truly born again, and everyone that is born again is taught of God. Now, go now to Romans chapter 1 for a minute and just do a brief summary of what we talked about last night in that text.

He says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel. Now, remember what I said. Paul's flesh had every reason to be ashamed of the gospel because his gospel was so contrary, so contrary, and so opposed to the society and the culture around him.

It would either cause, when Paul went in to preach in a place, people would either be converted or they would hate him and stone him and chase him out of town or the worst of worst, they would ignore him and ridicule him as a fool because his gospel was contrary. Remember what I said. The gospel, although it brings peace between God and man, the gospel does not extend an olive leaf to other opinions nor to

cultures.

The gospel is a culture in itself. It creates a new culture, a new society, a new way of thinking, a new way of living that totally contradicts everything in the world. And that's what's wrong with your young contemporary Christianity today.

You think that in order to change the world, you've got to be like it. So you dress like it, look like it, smell like it, act like it, walk like it, and talk like it. You think you're cool.

You might be cool, but you're not godly. A while back came in this young guy who was doing street work in this sort of small town. He was doing street work.

Man, he looked like a modern day serpico. You probably don't even know who that is. But he had an earring and bracelets on and everything and I'm kind of talking to him.

He goes, well, you've got to understand, you know, Mr. Washer, I'm there on the street. And I go, how many people's in this town? I said, look, young man, I served for years in inner city Dallas-Fort Worth in places where the police wouldn't go. I had male prostitutes sleeping in the bunk bed beside me down at a mission.

I've been in places you'd be afraid to dream about and ministered to people who were on the street. And guess what? You know what I looked like? A preacher. And you know what? They didn't care.

Because they didn't need someone who looked like them. They needed someone who would love them and tell them the truth. You're not relevant because you're like them.

You're relevant because you're totally different from them. And don't take Jesus and make Him cool. Because He's not.

You see, apart from the intervention of God regenerating a heart of a person, if you truly tell them about Jesus, they're going to hate Him. Paul had every reason to be ashamed of the Gospel. His flesh had every reason to be ashamed.

The Gospel we preach ought to be a shameful, stupid, horrid thing in the mind of an unconverted man. But to those that God saves, it will be the very Word. And here's what I want to tell you.

People come to me all the time and they say, Boy, I would love to see God do miracles and love to see God really do stuff. Well then, what you've got to do is cut yourself off from all these silly little... supporting yourself in the flesh. Silly little things of thinking that through doing this or that or other things, God's going to move.

No. Spare yourself. Cut yourself off from every hope in the flesh.

Trust only in God. Do exactly what He says. And you may be crucified on a train, but you will see God move.

And you will see a manifestation of His power. That's what's wrong with church. Turn it into nothing more than a six flags over Jesus where people are entertained and they have to do it because there's no power left.

And there's no power because the truth is not being preached and it's not being demonstrated. I love the statement made by Leonard Ravenhill years ago. He goes, the world isn't looking for a new definition of Christianity, it's looking for a new demonstration of Christianity.

Now, Paul said he wasn't ashamed of the Gospel. Why? Because it was the power of God. The conversion of a person.

A person being born again. The way I see Scripture, the true conversion of a person is the greatest demonstration of the power of God that's ever been revealed in the history of time. You think creation is a miracle? What about re-creation? The greatest demonstration of the power of God is to be the church of Jesus Christ.

And I want you to know something. It is. Now, let me just say something.

It's very, very important. I am so tired. Now, listen to me.

Follow me on this. I am so tired of hearing people say there's just as much sensuality and wickedness and divorce and pornography and wickedness in the church as outside of the church. Have you ever heard people say that? Man, there's just as much gross error and immorality and filth and things in the church as outside of the church.

That is not true. The church of Jesus Christ in America is broken and humble and beautiful and although she has many failings, she is not wayward, but she is following her husband, the Christ. The problem in this culture is what you're calling the church is not the church.

People say, oh, there's so many churches in America, so many churches in the South. No, there's not. There's a lot of really pretty brick buildings on finely manicured lawns, but there aren't many churches.

Every true believer is going to walk with God. It's like a dear friend of mine always says, people will say, you know, we're Christians. We should not be hating one another.

If you're hating one another, you're not Christian. We're Christians. We should act like it.

If you're not acting like it, you're not a Christian. My goodness, listen to us. If you don't act like a human being, you're not a human being.

If you don't act like a deer, you're not a deer. You may be a cow, a horse, or a pumpkin, but you're not a deer. And the fact that it's so... You know, I do not burn so much.

I do burn for lost people. But my burning is more a zeal for the Lord in His name. And I can't stand it that because of the pathetic preaching, and because of the way churches are supposedly grown, you have a whole bunch of people professing the name of Christ who live like devils, or even worse, moral people without any love for Christ.

And the world looks on, and because, like Paul the Apostle says, because of you, the name of God is blasphemed among the unbelievers. They go, where's the power? Let's just say this gospel had power. Look how the devil in his wickedness, so... You know, we always think the devil's after you.

Well, let me tell you something. Let me just set something for you. He's not so much after you as he is after God.

You're a small fry. He's not worried about you. His great desire is to malign God.

To accuse God. To misrepresent God. And one of the greatest instruments in his hands today to do that is evangelical preachers.

Because they build churches by entertaining unconverted people. My dear friend, he says that the gospel is the power of God. Now let me ask you a question.

Is there any power of God revealed in your life? And I'm not talking about the power to heal, or the power to do miracles, or the power to call down fire from the sky. I'm talking about the power of a godly life. I'm talking about the power of loving your brothers and sisters in Christ.

I'm talking about the power of sacrificial generosity. I'm talking about the power of kindness. I'm talking about the power of covering over sensuality.

Is there any power of God in your life? Or is Christianity just something you do? Is there any? Can you point to the power of God changing you? It is the power of God. And now here is the word for the day. The power of God for salvation.

To everyone who believes. Not to some who believe, but to everyone who believes the gospel, there is the promise of salvation. And you say, yes, Brother Paul, that is true.

Be careful. Because when I say salvation, I might be meaning something completely different than you. You see, in America today, when someone says, yes, everyone who believes is saved, what is basically meant by that, everyone who believes is going to heaven.

And that's not what this text means. It does mean that. But far more than that, so that if you only say that, you haven't got the correct meaning.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation or deliverance. Now what type of salvation are we talking about? Salvation, yes. From the condemnation of the law, the wrath of God, death.

Yes, that's what it means. Fellowship with God, a home in heaven, all those things that you hear about, it does mean that. But it doesn't just mean that.

It's not just the power of God unto salvation from the condemnation and death and wrath of God, but it is salvation and deliverance from the power of sin in your present life. Is God manifesting His power in your life so as to deliver you from the sins and the darkness and the fallenness of this age? Do you see, as you walk year by year with the Christ, year by year in faith, year by year trusting in His work, do you see an ever-increasing deliverance from the power of sin and temptation? Are you being conformed to the image of Christ? Are you being separated from the world? You see, that's what it means. We have this idea that somehow it's almost like a deist view of God.

The deists have this view of God. God created the world and then He just left it. We have that same view in salvation.

Well, God saved a man, then just leaves him. Man can run, live like the devil all the days of his life, and then bam! He goes to glory. If you don't look like you're going to glory, you're not going to glory.

If there's no glory here, there'll be no glory there. If there's no power manifested in your life now, don't expect to find it in the resurrection. You see, it's a deliverance from sin.

And it's not a grudging thing. This thing, and I'm going to talk about this today, but this thing of, oh yeah, I'm a Christian, now I ought to do these things. Yeah, I know I need to do them because, well, they're the right thing to do.

What you're really saying is, yeah, I know I need to do all these things God commands, even though I hate to do them, in order to save my own skin on the final day. My dear friend, that's your attitude. You're lost.

You're a goat trying to act like a sheep. The commandments of God are not burdensome. When the power of God's been revealed in a person's life in salvation, it's not a burden to fulfill the commands of God.

It's a joy. It's a burden to sin. The burden starts when we sin as believers.

The pain starts. The nausea starts. The burden on the back, the weight on the mind, all starts when we sin.

The commandments of God bring us freedom if we've truly been converted. You see. So it's the power of God.

The power of God to save from wrath. The power of God to save from the power of sin and sanctify people. Now here's something very, very important.

It's the power of God to everyone. Here we go again. Just bowl down this idea that there are three groups of people in the church, that there are the spiritual Christian and the carnal Christian and the lost people.

That is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches there is the spiritual man and the carnal lost man. There's spirituality and carnality.

There's life. There's death. There's righteousness and wickedness.

You might be thinking, well, Brother Paul, you're saying Christians don't sin. No, Christians sin. One of the greatest evidences that a person truly is a Christian is that when they sin, they're broken by their sin and brought to repentance and confession.

And that when they sin and if they cast off into that sin, the Father will come quickly and discipline them and bring them back. Christians do sin. But Christians do not live in sin as a style of life, practicing it as a joyful activity.

They are given victory over sin. Now let me ask you some questions. Is any of this a reality in your life? You know, one of the greatest problems about reformations, when young people really start getting excited about truth.

I hear so many young people today, I go to colleges and they're excited about truth. You know, teenagers, I'm excited about truth. It's not a question of whether you're excited about the things I'm saying.

It's not a question of whether or not you agree with them. There's a far bigger question. Is this a reality in your life? Can this be seen by the observant eye? Can someone see that you no longer belong to you? That you belong to God? Can someone see God working in your life? If there is no evidence of God

working in your life at this moment, I cannot tell you that you are lost, but I can tell you that you can have no assurance of being saved.

It is God who works in the true believer. It is God who has made the true believer, His workmanship, the very workmanship of God. It is God who says that the work that He begins, He will perfect in every one of His children.

Now that work manifests itself in various ways. It manifests itself in various levels and degrees. Some grow faster than others according to the grace and the purposes of God.

We understand all that, but the fact of the matter is if you don't grow, you're dead. And if you're dead, you're lost. The fact of the matter is there is no such thing as a fruitless Christian.

And there is no such thing as a temporary fruitful Christian because Jesus says that the fruit they bear will remain and they will endure bearing fruit. Because see, a lot of people, according to the parable of the sower, a lot of people will supposedly hear the Word of God, spring up quickly and look like a fruitful vine only to wither away. Do you bear fruit? Do you bear the fruit of a Christian? Do you look like a Christian? Can people point to evidences? People outside of you that God is truly at work in your life.

You see how sacramental and creedal we have become? You see how useless our words are? I've accepted Jesus, I'm going to heaven. If you have trusted in Christ, you are going to glory. But the evidence that you have truly trusted will be the manifestation of the power of God in your life.

A God who will not let you go. I remember when the Lord had just solidified the call for me to preach and I remember just being so disturbed. Because I can remember even in my young years, when I was 14 and 15, I would have dreams of me preaching and I would wake up crying and say, God, I'll get saved if you promise me I don't have to do that.

And I can remember finally, 21 years old, coming back from the university, knowing that God had called me to preach. And I remember going out in the garage where I had an old 66 Mustang. Sitting there.

If I had that car today, I'd be a millionaire. It was sitting there in that garage and I got in it and I just got the wheel and I just wanted to go as far away as I could from God and from all these ideas of preaching and everything. And I just sat there and I just grabbed the steering wheel and all of a sudden I just collapsed.

Because I realized that no matter how far I drove that car, God would be there when I got there. That I was inescapably His. That I was now His prisoner.

That I belonged to Him. And when I gave in and stopped kicking against the goad, His decree and His plans for me became like sweetness in my mouth. A man encompassed by God.

Young person, can you live like you want? Can you think like you want? And what I mean by that is, can you go out there and live like people who really aren't believers? Well, that's because you're not a believer either. Can you just fill your head full of all kinds of things just like every unbeliever and it not bother you? Well, that's because you're an unbeliever. Young people, do you want to walk with righteous people? Or do you want to walk with jesters and fools and scoffers? Well, that's because you are one.

I mean, why is it so hard? The power of Satan in diluting the mind, the power of the flesh is absolutely amazing. Because someone can actually be totally content believing they're saved even though every

thought in their mind demonstrates they do not love God, nor want God, nor want to be with Him, nor do things in the will of God, and yet still be convinced they're on the road to glory. Isn't that amazing? Power of the flesh, the power of the demonic is absolutely amazing.

And that is why only by the grace and the power of God does anyone ever get saved. That is why salvation must be more than simply a decision on the part of a man, but it must be the manifestation and the result of the power of Almighty God working in our heart. Now, where are you? As we bring this first lesson to a close, where are you? I don't have to point my finger at you.

Let your own thoughts... How much of your mind, how much of your thoughts are on the things of God? How much of your heart is given to the things of God and the person of God? What desires and passions do you have? How much is God in all those plans of yours? And what about God's commands? How real are they to you? How much do you seek them out? Be honest. Let your thoughts either defend you or accuse you on this day. They themselves can be better teachers than any preacher.

Let them tell you. Are your thoughts and your ways nothing more than a manifestation of the world? Because you are of the world. Some of you might be here right now and I want to be careful not to bring in a false condemnation on true believers.

Some of you are here right now and you're going, oh, I, you know, I read His Word, but I need to read it more, and I want to be more like Him, and I don't seek Him enough, and sometimes I am so worldly, and I hate myself. That's a good place to be. Against you I have no fight, but it's against the average Baptist youth that I have my quarrel.

Where you sleep in complacency because someone one time told you were saved. Because you prayed a prayer with someone one time ago and there's never been a manifestation of God in your life. It is so easy to grow up Southern Baptist and be in church all your life and go straight to hell.

Everything in our denomination is designed for it. You get saved in vacation Bible school by someone who just asks you if you want to go to heaven. You're taught language.

You're taught the things. You're full of activities. You're entertained.

You're given a moral place to have fun. All the days of your life with the serious things of God are never brought before you. And you practice religion all the way to hell.

Is there any evidence of God having saved you? I'll leave you alone to that for this first section.

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