

Pure Message of the Gospel

by Steve Gallagher

This sermon delves into the power of the gospel as outlined in Romans chapter 1, emphasizing the message of God's plan of redemption for fallen mankind. It discusses the offensive nature of the gospel, highlighting the need for individuals to confront their sinful nature and the transformative power of God to change lives. The sermon concludes with a powerful declaration of faith and commitment to living unashamedly for Christ.

Scripture: Romans 1:16, Ephesians 5:25, Revelation 19:7, Matthew 16:24, 2 Timothy 4:3, Philippians 4:13

Topics: "Power of the Gospel", "Transformation through Faith"

Description

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Transcript

In one way or the other, everything that's been shared is going to go along with a message I felt the Lord gave me, and I want to mention that I got the framework of this message about a week and a half ago. And then last week, Nate shared about grace and about God's provision for sinful man, and it really was kind of along the same lines of what I'm going to share today. If you want to open your Bibles to Romans chapter 1, I want to talk about the power of the gospel.

In fact, you remember last Sunday before he even spoke, I said I was going to share on this this week, and I said that part of that was because of something Jim Lewis said in his testimony about how every time he turned around, he was hearing the gospel in this place and how that affected his life. And there is a power in the gospel, but it's not the superficial kind of rendition we often get, and I hope that I can pull a little bit of that out here today. Let's look at verses 16 to 18, which is a concise definition of the gospel.

Paul says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to certain people, to everyone who believes, to the Jew first. Yes, the Jew, they were the ones who had the oracles of God, and it was right that the gospel should go to them first, but not just to them, but also to the Greek, the entire pagan world. For in it, the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed.

That's the word revelation, the revelation of Jesus Christ, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. There is a revelation in the gospel, and here's how it comes to us, from faith to faith. As it is written, the righteous man shall live by faith, for the wrath of God is revealed.

Another revelation that is in the gospel, one that we don't particularly care for, but it is nonetheless a necessary revelation that comes forth from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. All right, the word gospel in the Greek is euangelion, euangelion, and it just means good news. I mean, in secular Greek, it's a word that was just normally used.

It wasn't one of those specialized Christian words. It was just a normal word. You'd get news that your wife had a baby boy, and that comes to you as euangelion, good news.

And the word you, the prefix there, it means good. Okay, so that's simple. So angelion means message, and if you take off the suffix eon, what do you have? Angel, which means messenger.

That's all it means, is messenger. Okay, so this is a message that's coming from heaven to us. And Paul says, I am not ashamed of this message.

He is writing this epistle to this little band of frightened, probably, believers living under the overwhelming power of the Roman Empire. And Paul says, I'm not ashamed. I don't care how much power they have, you know, this earthly sort of power.

The message I am bringing you is tremendous. It is coming from the throne of almighty God. I am not ashamed of it.

And he proclaimed it everywhere he went. And you know what? He was beaten from one end of the Roman Empire to the other. But he would not stop.

They could not shut his mouth. And 10 years later, until 10 years later, they took his head off. That was the only way they were going to shut that man up, is to take his head off.

All right, so as I studied about the gospel, there were three things that stood out to me about it. And it's not exactly a textual sort of message that's, you know, three things I'm pulling out of here. The first one's implied, because this message is good news for a reason.

The reason is that God has a redemption plan for us, for fallen mankind. So the gospel is a message of God's plan of redemption. That's my first point that I want to make here.

There is a plan in place. And you know, if you go through Scripture, you'll see it. But let's just kind of look at this a little bit.

Let's look at the why of the plan. Why does there have to be evil and all the suffering that goes with it on earth? Why do we have to struggle with the temptation to sin for our entire lifetimes? Why did the Son of God have to come to earth and live in the body of a man and die a horrible death on the cross? Why? In fact, why did God create man in the first place? Well, the Lord had a plan. And I'm not, you know, for the sake of time and just whatever, I can't go into every facet of it, but I want to touch on a major component of it, of the plan of God, the purposes of God, why everything had to be the way that it is.

And that is that God was procuring for His Son a bride. He was procuring for His Son a bride, someone that His Son could live with and enjoy forever and ever in the Father's home, in the mansions of God. And behind all of this, you know, this marriage, this husband and wife scenario that's presented in Scripture, behind it all looming is Almighty God, our Father, just looking upon us, smiling and enjoying what His Son is enjoying.

I'm going to read some verses out of Ephesians 5. This comes from the voice, which, you know, puts a little color into it. But the reality of what's being expressed is right there, no matter what your translation is. Husbands, you must love your wives so deeply, purely, and sacrificially, this is Ephesians 5.25, that we can understand it only, okay, now here's what I'm getting to, only when we compare it to the love the Anointed One has for His bride, the church.

We know He gave Himself up completely to make her His own, washing her clean of all her impurity with water and the powerful presence of His Word. He has given Himself so that He can present the church as His radiant bride, unstained, unwrinkled, and unblemished, completely free from all impurity, holy and innocent before Him. All right, now if you fast forward to the end of time, the culmination of our days here on earth, and you get right down to the very end, right down to the end of the book of Revelation, in fact, you will see a couple of things happening.

Satan, the false prophet, and the Antichrist are all thrown into hell, and unregenerate mankind is defeated at Armageddon, and then something tremendous happens. It's right there in Revelation 19.7, let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to God. Why? For the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.

That is where we are headed towards. That's what we're headed towards. That's what God is trying to accomplish.

Not trying, He is accomplishing it. He is accomplishing it, and it's closer than we think. We tend to think of it like, you know, off in the thousands of years from now sort of thing.

It just doesn't seem real to us, because that's, you know, we're just too earthly minded. That's why we think that way. Now let's think about this for a second.

For there to be a marriage that's legitimate, there must be love, right? You're not too sure. For there to be love, there must be a legitimate choice, right? Are you guys thinking this morning, are you still asleep? Okay, I want you to listen. I don't want you to turn me out, shut me out, but I also want you to think, all right? For there to be a legitimate marriage, there must be love.

For there to be love, there must be a legitimate choice, and so if there's a choice, that means that there's an alternative, right? In other words, yeah, God could have made a race of beings that were like robots, and we just, I love you God, I will worship you and serve you forever. How much do you think that would mean to the Lord? I mean, some of you do kind of worship that way, I've noticed. Hopefully over time, the Lord will become a little more real to you, and you'll kind of get with it a little.

For there to be a legitimate marriage, there must be love. You know, who wants to marry someone who doesn't love them? There's some story, I'm hoping one of you guys will know what I'm talking about, and will come up to me after the service and tell me this story, because I can't quite remember the story. I tried googling it, and I couldn't get anywhere, but it was a story of a, I think he was a young prince, and he

purposely made himself to be an ordinary guy in the kingdom, so he could get a wife who wouldn't marry him for the benefit package.

Is there a story like that? Okay, so Chris knows, so Chris will tell me afterwards, and I'll let you know if he knows what he's talking about. Jesus had to marry a bride who he knew loved him for himself, as we have already heard this morning, loved him for himself, not just for the benefit package. That's religion.

That is the religious formula. You say your little prayer, you go to your little evangelical church, because you don't want to go to hell, and you want to go to this nice place called heaven that's kind of, you know, like a paradise sort of deal. That sounds good, so you do this thing.

You go to church, and you don't want to, you know, you just make yourself this religious Ottoman. There's no reality of a love for God, for knowing who he is, and loving him. That's Christianity.

So God creates this situation, and he allows this evil spirit to come into earth and introduce an alternative to obedience to God, that they can go their own way. They can choose not to obey him. They can choose to obey the lusts of their flesh rather than this voice from heaven.

Right? Am I still theologically sound? EJ, am I on track? Okay, all right. It's good with EJ. It's good with me.

So God created this situation so we could choose to love him rather than love our self-life, so that we could obey his will rather than obey the will of our flesh. And you, you know, if you come to know the Lord and enter into this marriage contract with Jesus, then the assumption is that you are committing yourself to spend the rest of your life submitting yourself to him as your husband. And you know what? If you do that, that's going to come with a cost.

It's a price you have not been willing to pay. Right? Now I know many of you have already turned that around, and I don't mean to take away from that. There is the message of the cross, and maybe you've heard me talk about this before, but I think it's the only teaching in all four gospels.

I'm almost positive that's true. Jesus said, if anyone will follow after me, let him what? Deny himself. Right? So that is the message of the cross right there.

And I don't think I'm, well I am pushing it a little bit, and I won't, you know, too far, but it could be that Jesus's thinking in this was as if he's speaking to a bride, because that is the scenario, not so much in our day and age, where it's more like two equal people, you know, a man and woman, everyone's equal. In biblical times, it was understood that the man was the leader of the home, and so the man is headed in a direction in life, and the wife comes into his life and becomes his help mate. Right? It doesn't mean she's less of a human being, it just means that's her role, and he's got the leadership role, and so they go through life together.

So it could be that Jesus is saying to his bride, if you want to follow me, then you must deny yourself. You will have to let go of your life, the life that you had as a single woman. You're going to have to join your life to mine, you'll have to submit to my leadership.

And you know, only someone who really loves a man is going to do that. I mean, there's plenty of women who marry men who don't really love them, but they're not in their heart, they never do this. But anyway, for a wife to do that, to really join herself to her husband, she's got to love him, to be willing to pay that price.

And you know what? When a man gets a wife like that, well, let me just put it in the terms of Jesus. When Jesus gets a wife like that, that's someone he can love, that is someone he wants to spend eternity with. Because there is sacrifice involved.

Your love for the Lord, you can talk about how you love the Lord, you can worship and sing these songs and stuff, but the reality comes out in your daily life if you are truly willing to deny self and to follow Jesus and love him. In 1979, Kathy Irwin fell in love with me, and I asked her to marry me, and we got married in January of 1980. And she agreed to do this, but it came at a huge sacrifice.

You know, she had to forsake her life of independence and join her life to mine, as we've been saying. And, you know, in 1981 or 80, I guess, when I moved to, wanted to move to Los Angeles to be a cop, she had to leave her family, when she had never been away from her family, she had to leave her family and go with me to Los Angeles. And, you know, she had to leave her family.

Then I put her through hell, sexual sin and everything else. And because she loved me, she did her utmost to stick by me and to, you know, follow me and so on. I won't get into that too much.

But later, after I got it together and got in ministry and the Lord called me to, um, really to leave California, she had a job as a manager in an insurance company, she had to walk away from her job, just a, I mean, a job of a lifetime. And she walked away from it to live in a beat-up old motorhome for nine months in Kmart parking lots. And then to move here, and we lived in a camping trailer over here for a year and a half.

I mean, this girl paid a price. When she agreed to follow me, she meant what she said. And it was with a price.

And that, in a nutshell, is what the Lord is asking of us. A love that proves itself through submission and sacrifice. You know, and that, in a nutshell, is what lies behind the plan of redemption.

And it is the message of the gospel, that the Lord wants us for Himself forever. Don't just take that for granted. You should feel privileged to your, down to your toes, that the Lord would want you.

Especially when you consider the way you have lived your life. Amen? Me too. This is a plan so brilliant, no human mind could have conceived of it.

That God would send His Son to earth to die a horrible death, to prove His love, to people who would ultimately become His bride. And that they, in turn, would have this scenario, rather than just marrying for the benefit package, they would be able to join Him in this marital relationship and spend eternity with Him. It just is amazing when you really think about it.

You know, we got to get out of the religious box that we have grown up in, in America. You know, where it's all just all figured out and it's all just like this. You know, use your mind.

God gave you a mind. Use it. What is the point of it all? Yes, it's to save you from your sins.

It's to redeem you. It's to bring you into heaven, of course. But why? Because God loves us and wants to spend eternity with us.

All right. So, you know, the entire plan of redemption is built on choice, free will. If there was not free will, then there would be no choice and there would be no real love.

So there's got to be free will. We have to have the option to say no to God for our yes to have any meaning or any substance or any weight to it. So as part of that choice is that evil was introduced into our world.

And, you know, it was necessary, but it also created a problem. That brings me to the second thing that came to me about the gospel. The gospel is a message that offends.

Verse 18, Paul says, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness. You know, you're not going to hear many sermons in America anymore talking about the wrath of God. You're just not going to hear many sermons like that.

But this is the first thing God wants us to see. And if you are one of those people that had, you've experienced when you first heard about Christianity and you experienced the conviction of the Holy Spirit, that is, you know, what always precipitates salvation is the conviction of the Holy Spirit. I remember when Kathy got saved, she got radically saved in 1979.

But before that, she had this terrifying feeling that she was going to hell. And then the Lord just worked it, sent a Baptist pastor to her, shared the gospel with her, and she got saved. And I mean, she turned that church upside down when she went to it.

They didn't know what hit them. That's what a salvation should look like. You know, so the first thing God wants us to understand is that we are sinners.

We are rotten. Rotten. And we need to be saved.

We need to be cleansed. We need to be transformed. The first thing God wants us to see is that we are not nearly as great as we think we are.

So, you know, He begins to show us things. You know, think about the prodigal son. What were the first two things he said? I have sinned.

I am unworthy. Why don't we hear sermons like this anymore? Now, maybe your pastor does. Maybe you've got a good pastor who preaches the truth.

But anyway, the Holy Spirit begins to reveal how unworthy we are to be in that relationship. And He begins to show us that we are not fit to live in heaven the way that we are. We're not fit to be God's son's wife.

But you know, most people don't want to hear it. You can tell people all day long how God loves them. But when you start to tell them that they are rotten, I mean, just the things that Paul said about himself, you know, that they are rotten inside, that they are sinful.

I'll never forget. I was preaching on grace one time in a big Baptist church in Atlanta some years ago, maybe 10 years ago or something. And I was, I all of a sudden just switched, right, in my message.

And I said, you know, and there's, I think I can't remember exactly how I did it, but I was preaching out of Ephesians 2 where it's talking about, you know, we were lost. We have the wrath of God on us. We were all being led by the spirit of this world and all of that, you know, just, I was preaching on that.

And I said, you know, I kind of created this imaginary illustration of this church woman who says, well, I am not, I can't remember how I said, I am not a sinner. I've been in church all my life, and I have not been led

by this prince of the power of the air. And I said, okay, so that means that what you're saying is the scripture isn't true and that you don't need a savior.

Therefore, you will not have one. I made that statement very strong. And some lady in the back, I mean, she gasped, went through the whole church.

Because she had never thought of herself as a sinner. It was obvious. She had never, she had grown up in the church.

That's all she had ever known. I don't know that she's a Christian. I don't know.

You know, she sure didn't see herself as a sinner in need of a savior. You know, you can tell people they need a savior as long as you keep it positive. But when you start to tell them why they need a savior, you better expect the wrath to come, because it will.

You know, I mean, think about the persecution Jesus and Paul both faced with the Jews. Why? Because their message of the gospel was that you cannot become good enough to earn your way into heaven. You don't have it in you to be good.

And they, it just turned them into a rage against Jesus, killed Jesus, tried to kill Paul. It's really no different today, you know. And the reason the church is already halfway into apostasy, at least, is because we no longer preach against sin.

You know, pastors can talk about the sins of society, abortion, not even homosexuality. We can't even do that anymore, or they won't, or whatever. But, you know, maybe drunkenness, some just some general sins, or we can preach about sin even amongst Christians, as long as it's kept very vague and general, and you don't step on any toes, you don't make anyone feel uncomfortable.

As long as you preach like that, it's okay. It's rare to find a pastor who will zero in on specific sins he sees at work within his congregation, because people won't tolerate it. It is Second Timothy 4.3. That's the reality of our day, that people will not tolerate the truth.

There's one of the leading denominations of our day, I won't say what it is, much as I want to, actually has a position now in their headquarters, a department, where it's all about church growth. So there's this, you know, these guys who work in that department go out to pastors across the country and talk to them about church growth, because church growth is the most important thing by far. And so they go to their pastors, and they tell them, don't preach against sin, keep your messages positive, encouraging, because if you want Christians to come to your church, in other words, pull it away from other churches, if you want to attract the Christians in your area, you've got to present them a positive message.

That is the truth, what I'm sharing with you. Because, you know, why, how does that come about? Because you can really make a name for yourself, you can, you know, if you're a minister, you can be somebody, you can become important, you can make money, you can be famous, if you can attract crowds. Well, you notice my crowd isn't very big around here, and none of you would have come here if you weren't desperate.

I would have a congregation of one, you know. I'd give her what for, though, I promise you that. She can return it, too.

So when Paul was talking about apostate Christians there in 2 Timothy, he said that they hold a form of godliness, but deny the power. Now, I'm going to read, I actually wrote a whole chapter on this verse in my book, *Standing Firm Through the Great Apostasy*. There it is.

Let me just read this one paragraph out of there. There can be little question as what the venerable apostle meant by this statement. He was describing a kind of religion where God is kept at bay, where his efforts to sanctify and purify the person are unhindered, I mean are hindered.

The people being described are resisting the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Rather than submitting themselves to the lordship of Christ, they have taken Christianity on their own terms. They have remained lord of their own lives.

Self has retained its position of authority in their hearts. Without the efficacious work of the Holy Ghost in a person's life, what is left but a form of godliness? There's no reality. There's no substance.

And then I went on in this book to describe three of the common ways people deny the power of God in our day. And one of them you heard last week by exaggerating the message of grace, actually just presenting half of the message of grace as if it's the whole thing, which is God's acceptance of you, and just kind of twisting it into something it's not. That's one way that we deny the power of God.

No, we say to the power of God, stay out of my heart and out of my life. I'm good the way I am. And osmosis listening is what I called the second one.

Osmosis meaning that we get this thing in our minds that as long as we keep learning, learning, learning, that we are somehow becoming more godly because of it. And that is not the truth. All we are becoming is more responsible.

That's all that that means. Learning and learning. Let me tell you something.

I mean, I don't want to say this too strongly, but I think this is pretty much true. That all you're learning until you have been broken before God is useless. It's useless.

That learning may, if it can bring you to a point of brokenness, then there's value to it. But if it does not bring you to a brokenness and repentance to where you're on your face before almighty God, that knowledge means nothing for you other than to point a finger at you and show you how guilty you are. Osmosis listening, that you'll somehow grow godlier simply by reading Christian books and hearing inspiring sermons.

And the third way I talked about that in our day people are denying the power of God comes as the effect of 50 years of psychology on the church. And the message of psychology, just to get it down to a simple basic premise, is that you sin, you do the things you do because you were somehow victimized in childhood and you have emotional needs that you try to meet. And in other words, all your feelings are exaggerated into this enormous mountain and the word of God becomes a tiny little thing off in the distance somewhere.

And God understands. Yeah, that's what the church is full of, is that thinking that we're not really responsible for what we do. People can lie to themselves, but when they stand before God naked and all the reality of what they have, the ways they've lied to themselves and avoided the power of God in their lives, then they'll see.

And there'll be no arguing with God on that day, I promise you. I wrote an article once called, well, it was kind of a, I said, God, can I plead insanity on judgment day? And to sum it up, the answer is no, you can't. I'll save you everything between.

All right, so the gospel message is offensive because people don't want to be told that they're sinful. We're just that way, you know. I mean, if you want to get in a fistfight, just go out and find someone and just start criticizing them and you'll come to blows within seconds.

You have no idea what our counselors have to go through here to somehow just gingerly present, you know, you might just consider that there's, you know, you're just, I mean, you're really a great guy, but there's this little area in your life. What? You guys have no idea what our counselors go through. Okay, Josh, you're getting a little careful.

The gospel message is offensive, it just is. We don't want to hear that we're not perfect, that we, there's some flaw in us, that we need a savior because we're so messed up, you know, so it's really the gospel. It says it's good news.

I like what Tom Blangiardo calls Pure Life Ministries, the greatest bait and switch that God's ever perpetrated on man, meaning that, you know, we lull you in telling you you got to get free of sexual sin and then we lay the boom on you when you get here. It's not just sexual sin, your whole life's a mess. So there's good news and bad news with the gospel, you know, and the Lord, you know, Paul's just kind of like us.

He's the bait and switch deal. He's just telling you the good news, but there really is bad news. The bad news is that you're a sinner, but the good news is God has power to change you and set you free.

Praise the Lord. The gospel is a message about God's power and, you know, I thank the Lord for this ministry because I see the power of God at work in this place all the time. It is awesome.

We live in the miraculous power of God here in this place. I'm so glad, you know, because so many churches just don't have the power of God at work in their churches. Why? Because they won't deal with sin.

The message is that we are sinners, and the second part of the message is we can't change ourselves. We don't have the power within ourselves to become better, to become different, but we have hope because God does have that power. I was out praying this morning on the road.

I can tell you exactly where I was at when this came to me. I was down right before the curve in the road, and by the way, you guys are driving to work in the morning. Have you ever wondered why I'm always faced away from you when I'm walking? You guys have wondered that, haven't you? I have wondered if you wondered that.

It's because if I'm walking this way and I see a car coming, I turn around and go the other way because I don't want to stare into those headlights, okay? There's a big explanation for you. Seeing into the realm of Steve Gallagher's mind. But anyway, I was out praying and walking this morning, and I was just praying about you guys, the message today and everything, and I got this scenario came to my mind.

Well, the way it came to me is a phrase that I first heard in the faith homes, and I'm not sure if I can remember exactly how it goes, but people who have been dealt with or people who have not been dealt

with by the Lord, and the term is dealt with and I can always tell the difference in those two groups. People who have allowed God to deal with them are just different than people who have not. The illustration that came to me was, what if the United States Army decided, because they can't seem to get enough people to join the army nowadays, so they decided to make boot camp optional.

You can join the army, but you don't have to go to boot camp. You can if you want, but you don't have to. You can just join the army, get all the benefit package and everything involved with it and just skip past boot camp.

And I guarantee you, 90% of people would skip boot camp. Who wants to go to boot camp, you know? Who wants to be in a barracks with all these guys and be yelled at from sunrise to sunset and do all the stuff you got to do in boot camp? Who wants to go through that? And that's kind of the picture of the church, is because God has given us a free will. We don't have to let the Holy Spirit deal with us.

We don't have to let His power impose His will on our lives. We don't have to do that because we have a free will. And so you have a lot of people who profess to be Christians, whether they are or not, I don't know where that fits in what I'm talking about, but you know, there's a just a difference.

When you allow God to deal with you, your innermost man, the reality of who you are inside, and you let the Holy Spirit shine His light, and you, you know, the most courageous thing you'll ever do is face who you really are inside. That's separating the men from the boys right there. Let God show you, and you look at it, and you acknowledge it back to Him.

That's where repentance comes from. And there is something different in people who allow the Lord to deal with them, put them in their place, start bringing correction into their lives. You'll just see the junk starts getting purged out of them.

And there is a disciplined quality about a person like that. You know, you wonder, how is it that some people have the, whatever, the the power or whatever to say no to the temptations of sin? It's because they've allowed God to deal with them on that level. And it makes a huge difference in the way people live their lives.

You know, I'm not disciplined by nature. Who I am by nature was that guy 30-some years ago, just reckless, and wild, and just throw myself into every kind of sin. No boundaries.

I didn't care, you know. I mean, that's who I am. I'm not disciplined.

It's not like this, my life changed because I'm so disciplined, or this ministry is the way it is because Steve Gallagher is so disciplined. No, it was because I was desperate, so desperate. I was willing to let God carve deep inside me.

And yet, I'll tell you what, 30-some years of this, or really, in a sense, 40, 46 years, that was, came to the Lord in 1970, but however many years, that God has been peeling my onion. And you know what is real to me this morning, but I don't remember where I was when I thought of this one. This is one of those thoughts you just would rather not think about.

And he has peeled a lot of layers off this onion, I can tell you that. And I want him to, I want him to keep doing it, but there is so much junk left in me. It's shameful, you know.

It's just, man, just selfishnesses and little forms of pride and, you know, just junk. It's like, Lord, will it never end? Yeah, when they take your head off, that's when it will end, right? And it's not that my salvation is dependent on it, that's not it. But you know, God is preparing us to live with his Son.

That's the point of it all. And there will, believe me, it's not like it's been presented by superficial preachers and writers, that you just, you know, you kind of, you go to the altar, you join the church, you're part of the evangelical movement, read a few books, listen to some sermons, identify yourself with the group, and kind of live your, really the reality is you kind of live for the world, and then you die, and you go to heaven, and everyone's equal, and you know, we all just live on the streets of gold. No, it's not like that.

The amount that you allow God to do a work inside of you is going to determine the level of joy, the level of fulfillment that you will experience forever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever. It's kind of like going to college, you know, you can go to college and get an AA degree, or you can go to college and get a bachelor's degree, or a master's, or a doctorate. And the way that you deal with those first few years, when you come out of high school, is going to largely determine the quality of your life thereafter, right? I mean, all things being equal, isn't that basically true? You're not so sure.

You're so stunned by my earlier comments that you don't know what to say, right? All right, this was all a big rabbit trail. Let me get back on track. But let's talk about the dilemma of sin again.

You know, the reality is that we must conquer stubborn, sinful habit patterns. We must overcome a demanding flesh, deal with a selfish nature, and subdue an ever-surging pride. The reason that sounds so good is because I wrote it in my book.

I'm going to read a little bit more here. You know, we must face all of this, and in and trying to change, we have an entire world system arrayed against us. And the devil, this foul legion of devils that are behind it, you know, pinpointing us, and attacking us, and tempting us, and trying to discourage us in everything.

We have all of this coming against us, not to mention our flesh. And we look within, and we see a pathetic, impotent human being that doesn't have the power to say no. You know, is there any hope for us? All right, I got good news for you.

Let me read this. What a great book. People who hear me preach must think, man, that guy's egotistical.

I'm not as bad as I seem, believe me. With marvelous audacity, Christianity steps forward and claims to have the wherewithal to bring about change in the worst of characters. What but the power of God can flush the filth out of the heart of a sexual addict and leave innocence and purity in its wake? What else but the indwelling spirit can change a hopeless drunk or drug addict into a sober-minded man? Who else but God can transform a thief into a man of virtue, a liar into a lover of truth, a mocker into a serious-minded man, or an arrogant braggart into a meek lamb? Only God can work such human miracles, but he does do it.

The great need for Christians today is for the invigorating life of God to flow through their beings, enlightening their minds with spiritual truth, purifying their motives, fortifying their convictions, molding their personalities, solidifying their vacillating wills, sweetening their natures, cleansing and renewing their hearts, and subduing their flesh. We need to be revitalized and energized by the quickening power of the Holy Ghost. Can God do this? My testimony is that I have seen it happen countless times in the most hopeless situations.

Let the skeptics, both outside and within the church, line up with their sneering cynicism and faithless denials of God's power. If they could but see within the walls of the celestial city, a hundred million saints would step forward with resounding testimonies to the that the Almighty converted them from virtual devils into loving saints. For two thousand years, Christ has been transforming people from the inside out.

He can and still does perform this great work within people's souls today. The power of God is available for those who claim it by faith. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

That's the power of the gospel that is available to us, and that is why Paul was not ashamed to preach it, because he saw people transformed. You know, they don't talk much in acts and stuff. They don't have room to get into all the stories and really share how people changed over the years as the Lord dealt with them, and purged them of the love of sin, and humbled them, and all the tremendous work that the Holy Spirit does inside people.

But you get the sense of it. You get the sense of it. So what is the message of the gospel? It is that we're sinners, but God loves us.

He's trying to, well he is, he's procuring a bride for his son, and this bride will allow the Holy Spirit to change her into a person worthy of the Son of God. This is the message Paul was not ashamed of. All right, now I think I'm going to go ahead and finish up.

I don't like reading this much, but this is so good, and this isn't me. I actually don't know who wrote this, but most of you have probably heard it, but I'm going to read it. It's just a good conclusion to this message.

I am a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast.

I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ.

I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tame visions, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by presence, learn by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My pace is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my guide is reliable, my mission is clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, deterred, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, back up, let up, or shut up until I've preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I must go until he returns, give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until he comes.

And when he comes to get his own, he will have no problem recognizing me. My colors will be clear, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

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