

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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IN
THE GOSPEL
OF
HIS SON

WITNESS LEE

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Living Stream Ministry

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In [Romans 1:9](#) Paul says, “For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son.” Many Christians think that the gospel is simply the good news of how Christ is the Savior who died that sinners may be forgiven and one day go to heaven. But the gospel is much richer and more profound than this. The gospel in [1:9](#) includes the whole book of Romans.

THE GOSPEL IN ROMANS

In the very first verse of Romans Paul says that as a slave of Christ and a called apostle, he was “separated to the gospel of God.” This indicates that Paul’s intention in this book is to write concerning the gospel; the gospel is the theme of this Epistle. The entire book unfolds the gospel, the glad tidings of God, in its fullest way.

In Romans Paul mentions the gospel much more than he does in any of his other Epistles. In [2:16](#) he says, “God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel by Jesus Christ.” According to the natural, religious concept, God will

judge people according to the law. But here Paul says that God will judge them according to his gospel.

The gospel is to be not only believed, but also obeyed. This is proved in [10:16](#), where Paul says that “Not all obeyed the gospel.” Those who do not obey the gospel may become enemies of the gospel ([11:28](#)). It is our attitude toward the gospel that determines whether we are obedient or disobedient and whether or not we are enemies.

The gospel that Paul proclaimed in Romans was to be preached not only to unbelievers but also to the believers in the Lord. In [1:15](#) Paul says, “So, as far as depends on me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.” Furthermore, Paul believed that God would establish the saints according to his gospel: “Now to Him Who is of power to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ” ([16:25](#)).

[Romans 15:16](#) says, “That I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that the offering of the nations might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.” For Paul, the preaching of the gospel was a priestly ministry, a priestly service.

PROMISED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Now we must ask a basic and fundamental question: What is the gospel? What Paul speaks regarding the gospel in the book of Romans is deep and profound. The word “gospel” means good news, or glad tidings. The gospel is news that gladdens those who hear it. It is good news from God, from the heavens. In [1:2](#) Paul says that the gospel of God was “promised before through His prophets in the holy Scriptures.” This indicates that if we would understand the content of the gospel as the good news, we must know the Old Testament. The Old Testament is not merely a record of creation and history. In it are revealed some crucial elements pertaining to the gospel.

The first of these elements is found in [Genesis 1:26](#), where we are told that man was created in the image of God. The image of God is part of the content of the gospel. How marvelous that we men of clay can bear the image of God! What good news this is! Whose heart would not be gladdened by such good news? If we truly saw what it means to be in the image of God, we would praise the Lord.

A second matter related to the gospel is found in [Genesis 2](#). Here we see that the man created

by God was placed in front of the tree of life. This indicates that not only do we have the image outwardly but that we also may have the divine life inwardly.

In [Genesis 3](#) the serpent came in to seduce man to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But this chapter also tells us good news. [Verse 15](#) says that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. Although the serpent has come in, this verse prophesies that the seed of the woman will come to deal with the serpent.

A fourth element is found in the next chapter. [Genesis 4:4](#) says that Abel “brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” This indicates that by the proper offerings we, the fallen sinners, are accepted by God.

In [chapter one of Genesis](#) there are more aspects of the content of the gospel. [Verse 9](#) says that the waters were gathered together into one place and that the dry land appeared. [Verse 11](#) continues, “And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so.” Many kinds of life—vegetable, animal, and even the human

life—are related to this land, which typifies the all-inclusive Christ. This is part of God’s good news.

In [Genesis 2:18](#) the Lord said, “It is not good that the man should be alone.” Man in [Genesis 2:18](#) is a type of Christ. To say that it is not good for man to be alone means that it is not good for Christ to be alone. As the Bridegroom, Christ is longing for a bride, someone to match Him. The matter of God producing a bride for Christ is also an element of the gospel promised in the Old Testament.

A WONDERFUL PERSON

In [1:3](#) Paul says that the gospel is concerning God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The main concern of the gospel is not forgiveness nor the winning of souls nor the saving of sinners for heaven; it is the very Person of Christ, the Son of God. The gospel is not a doctrine nor a teaching nor a religion. It is a wonderful Person.

This wonderful Person has two natures, the divine nature and the human nature. In [verse 3](#) Paul speaks of Christ as the Son. This indicates His divine nature. But Paul also says in this verse that Christ “came out of the seed of David according to the flesh.” This points to His human

nature. By incarnation, the Son of God became a man, a descendant of David according to the flesh.

[Verse 4](#) says that He was “designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead.” The Spirit of holiness here is in contrast with the flesh in [verse 3](#). As the flesh in [verse 3](#) refers to the human essence of Christ, so the Spirit in this verse refers not to the Person of the Holy Spirit of God but to the divine essence of Christ, which is “the fullness of the Godhead” ([Col. 2:9](#)).

This divine essence of Christ, being God the Spirit Himself ([John 4:24](#)), is of holiness, full of the nature and quality of being holy. According to such a Spirit, Christ was designated, marked out, the Son of God in power out of the resurrection of the dead. By incarnation Christ, the Son of God, became a man in the flesh, but by resurrection, as a man in the flesh, He was designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness.

The gospel is concerned with a wonderful Person who became flesh and was designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. For Christ to be designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness is different from the fact

that He was the Son of God in eternity. As the eternal Son of God, He did not have the human nature. But His being designated the Son of God in resurrection has much to do with His human nature. Jesus Christ, a man in the flesh, was designated the Son of God.

The central message of the book of Romans is that sinful, fleshly people are made sons of God and conformed to the image of the Son of God. In this way Christ becomes the Firstborn among many brothers. Thus, the central point of the gospel is not forgiveness of sins. It is the producing of the sons of God, many brothers of the Son of God.

MANY SONS

Christ is the model, the pattern, of the gospel. He was born in the flesh; yet He was made the Son of God by resurrection in the Spirit of holiness. The first three chapters of Romans reveal our sinfulness; [chapter four](#) reveals our justification; [chapter six](#), our death and burial; and [chapter seven](#), our problem with the flesh and the natural life. But [chapter eight](#) reveals that we are conformed to the image of Christ, the Firstborn among many brothers. Christ was designated the Son of God, and we also are designated

the many sons of God. This is the main point of the gospel.

In [chapter one](#) we have the model, the pattern, whereas in [chapter eight](#) we have the mass production. In [chapter one](#) we have one Person in the flesh designated the Son of God; however, in [chapter eight](#) we have many people in the flesh designated the sons of God. Hence, eventually the Son of God will be the Firstborn, the elder Brother, among many brothers.

Christians today talk a great deal about going to heaven. But we cannot find this concept anywhere in the book of Romans. Those Christians who are somewhat advanced speak about the so-called deeper life and about spirituality. However, not even the deeper life or spirituality is the ultimate issue of the gospel. According to Romans, so many who once were fleshly will become the designated sons of God. In a sense, I have no interest in spirituality. Many who claim to be spiritual do not express the image of the Son of God. Romans reveals that we shall be conformed not to spirituality, but to the image of the Son of God.

A person may be kind and humble without being conformed to the image of Christ. Others may see his kindness, but not the image of the

Son of God. Again I say, the central point of the gospel is nothing less than conformity to the image of the Son of God.

THE POWER OF GOD

In [1:16](#) Paul says that the gospel is the power of God. The reason the gospel is so powerful is that the righteousness of God is revealed in it. Many expositions of Romans do not give an adequate definition of the righteousness of God. It is correct to say that the righteousness of God is simply Christ. However, such a definition is too doctrinal.

The gospel of God is powerful to save people because it reveals the righteousness of God. Many Christians think that the power of the gospel is the Holy Spirit or the love of God. Others say that the power of the gospel is the grace of God. But in Romans Paul does not say that the power of the gospel is the Holy Spirit or the love of God or the grace of God. He says that it is the righteousness of God. Nothing is more solid and trustworthy than righteousness. Love, on the contrary, is changeable and may fluctuate. The same is true for grace. For example, if I like you, I may give you a large gift of money. But if I do not like you, I may not feel like giving you anything. Likewise,

the giving of the Holy Spirit is at least somewhat related to our obedience and therefore is not unconditional. But with righteousness there is no room, no margin, for change. When we act according to righteousness, we do certain things, not out of love, but because we are bound by righteousness to do them.

One day I saw that I was saved not only by the love of God and by the grace of God but by the righteousness of God. I could confidently say to the Lord, “Lord, whether You are happy with me or not, You are bound by Your righteousness to save me. Even if You do not love me, You must still save me because You are righteous. Your love is eternal, but the basis of my salvation is not Your love. It is Your righteousness.” Hallelujah, this is the power of the gospel!

Sometimes in preaching the gospel we face certain objections from thoughtful people. After listening to the gospel concerning the love of God, some have said to us, “Yes, God is love, but I’m not lovable. You say that God’s love is unconditional, but how do I know that His love for me will not change, especially if I do something sinful?” Before we were enlightened regarding the righteousness of God, we had difficulty answering questions such as these. But now we can boldly

proclaim the righteousness of God as the very power of God in the gospel. Because God is righteous, He is bound to forgive us if we come to Him through Christ, no matter how He may feel about it.

MINISTERING CHRIST

If we would serve God in the proper way, we need to serve Him in the gospel. To do this, we firstly need to know what the gospel is, and then we need to experience all that the gospel includes. We also need to learn how to minister the gospel to others, that is, how to function as priests in ministering the gospel of God. Serving God is not simply a matter of gathering together to sing, to pray, and to rejoice. Likewise, it is not just to win souls or to help the saints in certain ways. To serve God is to function as a priest in the gospel. This means that whenever we contact anyone, whether a believer or an unbeliever, we need to know his need as far as the gospel is concerned. For example, if a person is not clear about salvation, we must help him to be clear and even joyful in God's salvation. We need to serve him with the gospel. Others may be clear about salvation, but not about other aspects of the gospel. Thus, we must minister something to meet their needs.

The crucial point of the service in the church life is to minister Christ to others in the gospel. For this, we all must learn the elements and the details of the gospel, and we need to experience the full content of the gospel. Along with this, we must develop the proper technique and skill to minister Christ in the gospel according to what we have experienced.

The book of Romans is a full revelation of the gospel. My burden in this message is to point out that the central point of the gospel is that God is transforming sinners in the flesh into the designated sons of God in the spirit. If we would serve God in the gospel, we all need to make this same matter our goal. Why do we preach the gospel? We preach the gospel not simply that people may be saved or be forgiven of their sins or become spiritual, but that they may become sons of God. This is our aim.

The book of Romans, of course, does not stop with [chapter eight](#), that is, with the matter of the many sons being conformed to the image of Christ. In [chapter twelve](#) Paul speaks of the Body. The Body of Christ cannot be built up with people in the flesh; it can be built only with the glorious sons of God. This is the reason that the building up of the Body of Christ is not

mentioned before [chapter twelve](#). In order for the Body to be produced, people in the flesh must become conformed to the image of the Son of God. By the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, God is transforming sinners in the flesh into sons of God in the spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ. This is the goal of the gospel.

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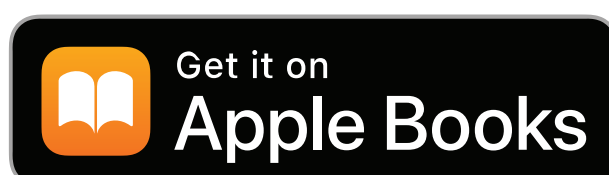
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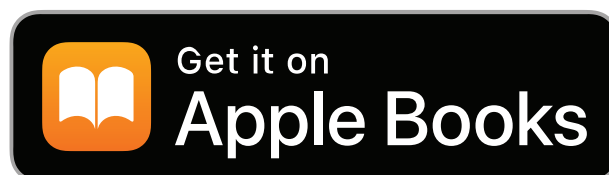
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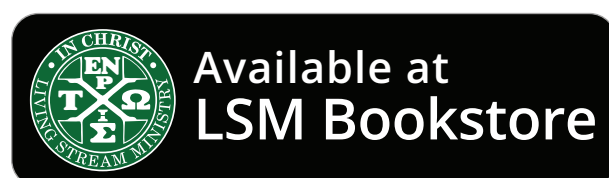
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