

Chapter Nine

Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans

Power To Save

“And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:” (Romans 1:4).

Promises are only good if the one giving them has the means to see them fulfilled. A check is an empty promise of payment if there are no funds in the bank to back up the promise. The promise of eternal life is a sure thing because of Who gives it. God has proven His ability to fulfill His promises over and over in the Scriptures. However, all the promises for this life are of little value if our hope is tied to this side of eternity. The Gospel is a promise. The gospel promises salvation to whosoever wants it. That promise of salvation includes the promise of resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus defines Him as the Son of God with the ability to keep His promise of salvation in the gospel. The word “declared” is from the Greek word *horizo* (hor-id'-zo). It means to define something or to mark out the boundaries or limitations of a place or thing. The resurrection defines the power of Jesus over the death sentence as the Son of God.

The word “power” is from the Greek word *dunamis* (doo'-nam-is). It refers to the strength, power or ability inherent in something by virtue of its nature. When used in the context of Romans 1:4, it refers to the supernatural ability to raise a person from the dead to life. Therefore, the resurrection defines Jesus as the One with power to give life.

A gospel without hope of resurrection is no gospel at all. The Apostle Paul states this emphatically in I Corinthians chapter 15.

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ² By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. ³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: ⁵ And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: ⁶ After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. ⁷ After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. ⁸ And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. . . ¹² Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: ¹⁴ And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. ¹⁵ Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. ¹⁶ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: ¹⁷ And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. ¹⁸ Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. ²⁰ But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . ²⁵ For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (I Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-22, and 25-26).

The promise of the gospel involves three accomplished realities. Take any one of these realities away and the gospel is an empty promise.

1. Christ died for our sins (I Corinthians 15:3).

2. Christ was buried (I Corinthians 15:4). He was separated from God in death and descended into Hell (Abraham’s bosom or Paradise) tasting death for every man.

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9).

“⁹ (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)” (Ephesians 4:9-10).

3. Christ rose again (I Corinthians 15:4).

Paul gives six separate instances of those who witnessed the resurrected Christ.

1. Cephas (Peter, as mentioned in Luke 24:34)
2. The twelve: a general reference to the Apostles even though Judas and Thomas were absent. He would appear to Thomas again later
3. The 500; this probably refers to the group gathered by Mary Magdeline and the mother of Jesus at Galilee in Matthew 28:10
4. James
5. Then all the Apostles again
6. Paul on the Damascus road

Just as Jesus is human “according to the flesh” (Romans 1:3), He is Deity “according to the spirit of holiness” (Romans 1:4). These two statements are not intended to divide Christ into the Divine and human, but rather to unite Deity and humanity in Him.

“The spirit of holiness” was a Hebrew idiom for the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Son of God with power in that His Deity was united with humanity and, in that unity, He was victorious over death by being resurrected out from the dead.

“⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? ⁵⁶ The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 15:54-57).

The power of the gospel (Romans 1:16) is the power of God to keep His promises because Jesus fulfilled everything necessary for our salvation. His victory over death and the grave is proven by His resurrection out from the realm of death and separation from God. Essential to understanding the gospel message is an understanding of the seal of that victory in the resurrection of Jesus.

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1. Discuss the basis for faith in any Scripture promise. _____

2. Discuss some of the promises of God in the gospel. (See how many you can find in the book of Romans.) _____

3. Discuss the meaning of the word “declared” (Greek: *horizo*) from the context of Romans 1:4.

4. From the context of your answers to questions 1 and 2, discuss the meaning of the word “power” as used in the context of Romans 1:4. _____

5. Read I Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-22 and 25-26. Discuss why the gospel is an empty promise without hope of being resurrected. _____

6. List and discuss the three accomplished realities of the gospel that are the basis for the promises of the gospel as listed in I Corinthians 15:1-4.
 - A. _____

 - B. _____

 - C. _____

7. Discuss the meaning and significance of “according to the spirit of holiness” in Romans 1:4. _____

8. Discuss the “power of God unto salvation” of Romans 1:16 compared to your understanding of Romans 1:4 from this lesson. _____

9. What will you **do** with what you have learned in this lesson? _____
