



True Power



THE GOSPEL ALONE HAS THE POWER TO REMOVE
THE GUILT OF HUMANITY’S SIN.

ROMANS 1:13-25

All of us have experienced the power of good news. Perhaps it was when you got the report that you passed an exam. Or when you were told that you got the job. Maybe you received the blood test results and learned that nothing’s wrong. Good news has a powerful impact on us. It turns an ordinary day into an extraordinary event that we will always remember.



What’s a memorable good news moment you’ve had?
How did it affect you?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 1:1-32

Paul introduced himself to the church in Rome by way of the gospel. When anyone used the word “gospel” in those days, they meant that they had good news. For Paul, the gospel meant the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Paul served Jesus as a missionary to the Gentiles. He devoted himself to sharing the gospel with people who had never had a chance to hear it. For that reason, he told the believers in Rome that he would visit them soon. Paul’s passion to share the gospel prompted him to make this visit. He wanted to encourage believers there, and he also wanted them to partner with him in proclaiming the gospel to others who had not heard it. He testified that telling others the good news of Jesus did not embarrass him. On the contrary, he shared the message with eagerness. He had an obligation to proclaim it everywhere. Paul knew that anyone who placed their faith in Christ would have their lives transformed.

A sincere burden for Gentiles compelled Paul to preach the gospel to them. Even though he didn’t mention Gentiles specifically, he had them in mind as he wrote about the wrath of God. They lived in a world that God had created. By looking around them, they should have sensed His presence. But instead of turning to Him and worshiping Him, they ignored His presence and rejected His existence.

By turning a deaf ear to the truth about Jesus, they stumbled along in spiritual darkness. Sinful behavior directed their lives. Having rejected the Creator, they worshiped objects that He created. They also gave themselves to immorality and other pagan expressions of sexual degradation. Their sinful way of living had poisoned them spiritually. As a result, they sank deeper into sin and encouraged others to join them in their disgraceful conduct. Therefore, God would have the last word over their lives, and His judgment would affect them eternally. For that reason, they needed to hear the good news of Jesus.



Read Romans 1:1-25 and underline the words and phrases that call attention to Jesus and the gospel.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

GOSPEL POWER (ROM. 1:13-17)

¹³ Now I don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am obligated both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.

VERSE 13

Paul was eager to visit the Christians in Rome. But so far, his work **prevented** him from going there. He looked forward to being with them because he had many friends in the church (Rom. 16:3-16). But he also had another reason for wanting to be with them. The visit would strengthen their spiritual kinship for the sake of **fruitful ministry**. The Lord had called Paul to serve as a missionary to the **Gentiles** (Acts 9:15). With the help of the church in Rome, he intended to expand his ministry to new areas where Christ was not known (see Rom. 15:23-24).

VERSES 14-15

Paul passionately embraced his call to mission work. He considered himself **obligated** to people who had not heard the gospel. They needed to know about Jesus and the gift of salvation that is centered in Him. Some of them spoke the Greek language. Others, like the **barbarians**, spoke other languages. Likewise, they may have been known as **wise**, or they could have been categorized as **foolish**. All of them shared one need in common: to hear the good news about Christ. Jesus had changed Paul's life forever, and the need for others to know Him compelled the apostle to stretch himself as far as possible to take the gospel to them.

Paul did not consider his obligation to be a heavy ball and chain that he would have to drag around for the rest of his life. Quite the opposite, he took hold of it with wholehearted enthusiasm.

He looked forward to walking through the doors of opportunity God would open for him. At this time in His ministry, walking through the door meant going to Rome and deepening his relationship with the church there.



KEY DOCTRINE: *Evangelism and Missions*

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations.
(See Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.)

VERSES 16-17

Paul’s testimony reminds us that we should never be *ashamed of the •gospel*. The good news about Jesus is the *power of God* that changes lives and brings *salvation* to everyone who believes. Paul’s mention of both *Jew* and *Greek* reminds us that the gospel has no boundaries—it is good news for all people everywhere.

Receiving the gift of salvation through Christ changes everything. Most importantly, it makes us right with God. Trying to earn *•righteousness* by our good deeds leads to nothing more than emptiness and frustration. A right relationship with God does not result from doing charitable deeds, keeping religious rules, or observing empty rituals. It results from placing our *•faith* in Christ to save us.

When Jesus makes us right with God, He will then guide us toward maturity. The level of faith we exhibit in spiritual infancy gives way to a more mature level of faith as we follow Him. From one level of faith to another, we grow stronger and deeper in our walk with Him.



**Do you see sharing the gospel as a duty, a privilege, or both?
How can you cultivate a heart that is eager to share the gospel?**



How does remembering that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation” change your confidence in sharing it?

DIVINE REVELATION (ROM. 1:18-20)

¹⁸ **For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth,** ¹⁹ **since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them.** ²⁰ **For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse.**

VERSES 18-19

Having affirmed the power of the gospel, Paul explained why people need to hear the gospel. He explained that **God's •wrath is being revealed . . . against all godlessness and unrighteousness**. *God's wrath* does not suggest that God lost His temper because Gentiles did something that made Him mad. Rather, God's wrath is His appropriate response to sin.

Paul noted that God's wrath was directed toward those who **by their unrighteousness suppress the truth**. Paul was talking about people who closed their eyes and covered their ears so they could not see the obvious signs of God's actual presence in their world. By muffling the truth about Him, they could deceive themselves into believing that He did not exist at all.

Paul's explanation about people's attempt to bury the truth underscores a critical point that cannot be overlooked. Everyone who tries to wipe out the reality of God will fail in their attempt. The reality of God's existence screams at them from everywhere. Consequently, the vast evidence that validates His presence simply cannot be ignored. Anyone who is awake can see it before them. Not only does the evidence exist all around them, but He has also gone to the trouble of making sure that they see it. He has taken the initiative to show it to them. Therefore, they cannot say that they have never **known about God**.

God does not conceal Himself from us. He doesn't occupy a throne so far away that we'll never be able to encounter Him. Quite the opposite, He makes Himself known to us through the extraordinary as well as the ordinary circumstances we face each day. Theologians have a name for the everyday evidence of God's presence: general revelation. In the Bible, God shows Himself in a way that's called special revelation. There we meet Jesus. God's special revelation about Jesus in Scripture is necessary for salvation.

VERSE 20

The most obvious evidence of God's presence can be seen in His **creation**. In **the world** He created, He has made Himself known in a vast assortment of ways. Granted, nobody has seen His **invisible attributes**. We cannot see His **eternal power**. Neither can we behold His **divine nature**. However, anyone can **clearly** perceive His attributes in the world that He created for us. Furthermore, we can sense His presence when we look at a newborn baby, feel the warmth and safety of a loving hug, or enjoy the food the soil produces. When we examine God's creation, we can agree with Paul. Nobody has an **excuse** for denying God's reality and presence in the world.



What does creation teach us about God's attributes?

WORTHLESS THINKING (ROM. 1:21-25)

²¹ **For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened.** ²² **Claiming to be wise, they became fools** ²³ **and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.** ²⁴ **Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves.** ²⁵ **They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.**

VERSE 21

When people refuse to see God in His creation, they begin to spiral downward spiritually. They find themselves wandering around in a spiritual wasteland. There they begin to foster notions about themselves and their world that turn out to be **worthless**. Such notions leave no room for God and His presence. In turn, they ignore the truth about Him at every turn. With their minds closed to the certainty of His presence, their **hearts** turn cold toward Him. The chilling emptiness in their hearts redirects their passions in a destructive way. As they adore their own **senseless** ideas and

misdirected passions, they consider themselves to be enlightened. In reality, they are stumbling along in spiritual darkness.



How does failing to glorify God lead to a darkened heart?

VERSES 22-23

Paul pointed to the result of their deception. The people who reject the reality of God's presence continue to mislead themselves. They lie to themselves about how their world works and how they work in their world. Instead of telling themselves the truth about God's presence in their world, they choose to deceive themselves into thinking that He does not exist. They consider their self-deception to be wisdom. Actually, it has made **fools** of them.

They show their foolishness in the objects they choose to worship. They pay no attention to the **immortal God**. Glorifying Him alone would reflect true wisdom. God created them to worship Him. Glorifying Him would exhibit their awareness of His awesome presence and eternal reign. Ignoring Him sets them on a path of worshiping what He created. Instead of choosing wisely to worship the Lord who will never die, they made a foolish choice. They decided to indulge in the practice of paying homage to **images**. They shaped the images into pagan idols that they adored and worshiped. Some of the idols looked like humans, while others took the shape of the **birds, animals, and reptiles**. The idols of their worship share their mortality.

VERSE 24

In response to their foolish choice, God reflects His eternal wisdom. He has the authority to destroy them completely or to wash His hands of them for good. But instead of choosing either option, He determined to hand them over to their pagan passions. Their hearts crave **sexual impurity**. He released them so they could follow their hearts in their attempts to find spiritual contentment in unbridled sexual encounters. In turn, they took a nosedive into an empty lifestyle of morally degrading behavior. In so doing, they continue to disgrace themselves as they sink deeper into spiritual darkness.

VERSE 25

By choosing such a self-destructive path, they make an exchange. They replace *truth* with a *lie*. If they would take hold of truth, they would give themselves to worshiping and serving God. Unmistakable validations of His living presence surround them. But they turn their backs on the truth. Instead, they place their faith in a lie of the worst kind. Consequently, they devote themselves to a lifestyle that renders spiritual emptiness. They reject *the Creator* who could fill their lives with spiritual contentment. He alone deserves to be *praised forever*.



What does it look like to claim wisdom but live foolishly?



How do people exchange truth for lies today—and how might you be tempted to do the same?



BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible dictionary to better understand a theological concept.

Paul emphasized that God reveals Himself through nature (“natural” or “general” revelation) as well as through His Word and through Jesus (“special” revelation). Read a Bible dictionary article on “Revelation” to learn more about these two forms of divine revelation. Record your thoughts about their similarities or differences.

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers seek opportunities to share the gospel’s power with those who need it.
- + We can point others toward God through what He has revealed in His creation.
- + Rejecting God ultimately leads to devastating consequences.

 **Focus on people in your life who do not know Jesus. Agree with your Bible study group to pray together for these people and to ask God for opportunities to share the gospel with them.**

 **Look at your own determination to share the good news of Jesus. How do you exhibit your confidence in the power of the gospel? What will you do this week to demonstrate your eagerness for others to hear it? With whom will you start a gospel conversation?**

 **Memorize Romans 1:16.**

Prayer Needs



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide
Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter’s Bible passages.