

Mooretown Presbyterian Churches

June 11, 2023

(<https://pccweb.ca/moorepc/>, 519-813-9646)



*Indicates to please stand as you are able.

God calls us to worship

Call to worship: (Psalm 124:8; James 4:8, 10; Psalm 95:6-7)

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you.
Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

O come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

We respond in praise and confession

Prayer of praise and supplication:

Blessed are you, O Lord our God,
King of all that exists.

Yours are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty;
for all that is in the heavens and on earth is yours;

yours is the kingdom, O Lord,
and you are exalted as head above all.

In your hand are power and might;
and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all.

On the first day of the week
you began creation,
bringing light out of darkness.

On this first day
you began your new creation,
raising Jesus Christ out of the darkness of death.

And now, Our God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
on this Lord's Day,
we give thanks to you
and praise your glorious name.¹
Grant that we,
the people you create by the waters of Baptism and the Spirit,
may be joined with all your works
in praising you for your great glory.
Through Jesus Christ,
in union with the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

*Hymn: #44 “Sweet is the solemn voice”

If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves,
and the truth is not in us.
As we confess our sin
let us remember that
our Lord Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses
since in every respect he has been tempted as we are,
yet he without sin.
Let us then with confidence
draw near to the throne of Grace,
that we may receive mercy
and find grace to help in time of need.

Prayer of confession (*unison*):

Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed.
Preferring our own comfort,
and thinking ourselves wise,
we have not honoured you as God,
we have resisted believing in you,
we have refused to obey your Word,
we have failed to trust your gospel,
your grace, and your mercy.
Forgive what we have been,
amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways.
to the glory of your holy name.
Amen.

God speaks to us

We hear the gospel of God's grace:

(The response to: “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good”, is: “**His love endures forever.**”)

¹ 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

Prayer for Illumination:

Scripture: Romans 1:1-17

(The response to: "This is the word of the Lord" is, "**Thanks be to God**")

Sermon:

The Power of God

The apostle Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome is one of the most complete explorations of salvation and its implications that we have in our library of sacred Scripture. Understanding this letter goes a long way to understanding God's holiness, justice, and grace and what it means to be a Christian. By this letter, people like Martin Luther were inspired to call out irregularities in the church's teachings and spark what became known as the Reformation, of which we are heirs.

It behoves us, therefore, to familiarize ourselves with this letter.

To that end, we're going to spend the next 10 weeks (when I'm not away), going through Paul's letter to the Romans. Between now and September 3rd, we'll cover almost every chapter and, prayerfully, the Holy Spirit will bless our work and we will be encouraged in our faith.

We'll begin by reading the first 17 verses of Romans, Chapter 1.

READ ROMANS 1:1-17.

When I prepared the sermon schedule for this series, I thought that we'd begin by studying the first 17 verses of chapter 1 and then next week move onto the next section, and so on. However, as I was working on this sermon, I struggled a great deal because I quickly came up with about two sermons' worth of material in just these first 17 verses. And the problem is: I think it's all important and deserves some attention. So, what I'd like to do is focus on one small part of this reading today, and then next week, if I still think it's valid, we'll come back and focus on the rest.

What I want to focus on today is verse 16:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

This verse can be thought of as Paul's theme verse and the summary statement of the entire letter to the Romans.

Salvation is the product of the gospel of God concerning His Son – descended from David – the Messiah, Jesus. And, although the Jewish community has primacy in God's redemptive process, salvation is extended to everyone who has faith. Some translations use "Gentile" instead of "Greek", which is a code word for non-Jews.

Paul's argument is that regardless of whether you are part of the original-covenant community (the Jewish community), or you come from a completely different tradition, salvation/fellowship with God/right standing before God is based on one's belief in, trust in, and obedience to Jesus.

Later in the letter Paul elaborated on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the salvation economy, and we'll come to that in a few weeks.

For now, our focus is on the first part of the verse, which is worth committing to memory and meditating on over the next week:

*I am not ashamed of the **gospel**; it is the **power** of God for **salvation** to everyone who has **faith**.*

My father has a beautiful cedar-strip runabout with a 1950's 35 h.p. Johnson Golden Javelin outboard, painted gold and cream. Over time, that motor has been less and less able to propel the boat at its optimal speed. The motor lost its ability to move the boat. It lost power.

Power is the ability to do things.

Strictly speaking, *power* is the work done over a duration of time:

$$P=W/\Delta t$$

Work is the product of a force applied through a distance: $W=F \times d$

The key here is that for work to be done, something has to happen. Something has to move.

If you push with all your might against a concrete wall that doesn't move, you've done no work. Even if you're sweaty and exhausted, you haven't accomplished anything. You've done no work.

Using the same illustration as before: If you were to rev that Johnson outboard to full R.P.M.s and yet the boat didn't move, the engine, for all the noise and blue smoke, would not be doing any work.

So, *work* is force applied through a distance.

Power is work accomplished over time.

So, putting these two together, *power* is the result of a *force* applied through a *distance* over a period of *time*:

$$P = (F \times d) / \Delta t.$$

Now, let's move from science to its cousin, faith.

The *force* we're dealing with is the gospel. It's the story of God creating, providing for, redeeming, adopting, and one day resurrecting His good creation. Which includes you and me. The force is the message that in Christ, God has forgiven sin, adopted us as his children, and imparted His righteousness to you and me.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that, in him, we might become the righteousness of God.

By Christ's faithfulness, those who believe and trustingly obey, are clothed with God's righteousness.

The *force* is the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus, the Messiah, descended from David.

The *distance* through which the force must be applied is our daily journeys.

As we awake each morning and prepare for the day.

As we re-group and try to recharge in the middle of the day.

As we navigate our disappointments, frustrations, joys, and sorrows.

As we prepare supper and begin to unwind.

As we close our eyes in sleep.

Through all the events of the day, living according to the "obedience of faith" means that we apply the force of the gospel to our circumstances.

This requires effort on our part. And willingness to allow God and God's Word to direct us. The gospel, the messages of Scripture, are not magical incantations by which, simply uttering the right formula accomplishes miracles. Faithful living, according to the "obedience of faith" means that we allow the force of the gospel of God to actually influence our emotions, thoughts, and actions.

As we travel through the day, we *apply* God's Word – His directions, His commands, His promises, His warnings, and His wisdom – to our circumstances and, believing God to be real, good, and able, and trusting that He speaks to us through the written words of Scripture, we obey. We set aside our perceived and felt needs and wants, and trust that the Lord God knows what's right, good, and holy.

This is the “obedience of faith”: applying the force of the gospel to our circumstances.

So, the *force* is the gospel of God, which is the message of the Old and New Testaments, centring on Jesus.

The *distance* through which the force must be applied is our daily journey.

The *duration of time* over which this faith-work is done is our temporal, pre-resurrection life spans.

Salvation isn't simply a once-in-a-lifetime moment when we accept that Jesus is the Son of God, Messiah, Saviour, and Lord. Nor is it just about the eternal status of our souls.

Salvation is a process by which the Holy Spirit brings us into wholeness, peace, and joy. It's about being reconciled with the heavenly Father through the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son. Yet, it's more than forgiveness from misdeeds. It's the process by which the Holy Spirit equips us to live without submitting to the influence of sin, death, and the devil. It's about God rescuing us from destruction and delivering us into His safety, His welfare, and His preservation. It's the process by which the Holy Spirit restores us to the divine image-bearers we were created to be.

“Salvation” is the suitcase that carries all the blessings the Father bestows upon us in Christ through the Holy Spirit, when we accept it in faith.

Salvation is a process that begins when we accept Christ and will be completed when Christ returns and the dead are resurrected.

So, to summarize, the ability of God to bring about salvation for individual people (and thus, collectively, creation itself), is the result of the gospel applied through our daily journeys and our joys and struggles over the course of our natural lifespan.

$$P = (F \times d) / \Delta t$$

$$P_{\text{of God for salvation}} = (\text{Gospel} \times \text{Spiritual joys and struggles}) / \text{lifespan}$$

*For I am not ashamed of the **gospel**; it is the **power** of God for **salvation** to everyone who has **faith**.*

Our faith. Our belief. Our trust. Our obedience. This makes the gospel effective for salvation. For peace. For healing. For well-being.

Without faith, the gospel's just words.

Without faith, the Bible is just a library of ancient documents.

But, with faith: with belief, with trust, and with obedience, the Bible is the Word of the Living God, and the gospel is the Power of the Almighty and Holy God to bring about our freedom from the destructive influence of sin, death and the devil and our deliverance into the safety, welfare, prosperity, peace and joy of fellowship with the Holy and Triune God.

For the good of our souls, the health of our nation, and the glory of God,
Amen.

**We respond by affirming our faith,
offering our tithes, and prayer**

Invitation to the Lord's Supper

*The Apostles' Creed

*Offering:

(Offering plates are presented at the Communion Table while congregation sings:)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise him all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

*Prayer of dedication

*Hymn: #528 "Jesus calls us here to meet him"

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving: #564

The Breaking of Bread

The Communion

Prayer

*Hymn: #569 "Oh Jesus, I have promised"

**God sends us to serve and witness
with God's blessing**

Benediction:

Congregational Amen