

THIS GLORIOUS GOSPEL

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California, June 18, 1951, by Dr. C. Roy Angell, Miami, Florida.

Text: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Rom 1:16).

For the first twenty years of my ministry I shied away from this text. It seemed to me to be out of character with Paul. It was so unlike Paul to be on the defensive. The picture that it painted on my mind was one of Paul backed up against a wall urging and justifying his belief in the gospel; defiantly opposing the people who were attacking him. That isn't ^{like} Paul.

Paul was always on the offensive. He was aggressive, driving into new territory with the banner of His Master unfurled above his head against the wind. He was eager and earnest for the fray, always moving forward. When they put him out of one city he went to another. When he was called on to defend himself before the Roman governor, he attacked and the governor trembled.

So this negative sentence, "I am not ashamed of the gospel," seemed out of character. Then one day I found an old Bible with a marginal reading. It read like this: "I am proud of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation." I sprang up from my chair! That was what Paul meant, of course! There was nothing wrong with the text, it was wrong with me. I hadn't read it right. "I'm proud of the gospel of Christ." That sounded like him. That's what he meant.

He wrote down here only one reason: "For it is the power of God unto salvation." That, of course, was the prime reason, the main channel. No ^{who} one/ ever lived would know better than Paul about the power of God and the salvation that the gospel presents. He had experienced it in his own life.

He had seen it in the lives of thousands; lives that were transformed, made over, saved from every sin and transgression. This is enough to explain all the sacrifices and sufferings which he endured. But this was only one of the reasons for his being so proud of this glorious gospel, as he called it. He gives four others that round out this picture of the gospel that Paul carried across his part of the world and of which he was so proud.

The first one. I am proud of the gospel of Christ because it picks up our lives and throws them against the background of eternity. This is what Paul was thinking when he said, "The time for my departure is at hand." By the word "departure" he was indicating that he was not coming to the end of anything, but was just taking a journey. He was almost quoting David's beautiful Psalm, "When I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death," not into, but through. One end of it opens wide into this world; the other slants upward to God.

Then let me say it this way:

Two men were looking at one of the beautiful oil paintings of the famous Turner. It was one of his sunsets. One of the men said to the other, "Aren't the colors too brilliant? Don't they scintillate too much? Aren't they too bright?" The other, after a little meditation and thought answered, "No, I don't think so. I think that the reason you feel that way about it is because it is framed and hung against a drab wall. God's sunsets are not like that. "God's sunsets," he said are splashed against an evening sky. They shade off down into the deep purple of the mountains, and up into the blue dome of heaven. There's no frame on either side of them. They just fade out around them."

And I thought how true that is of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It picks our lives up and splashes them against the background of eternity. Life is not framed and hung against drab walls. Life is lived in the power of

the gospel of Jesus Christ, saved from all the things from which the gospel saves us. It isn't framed at the beginning by birth or at the end by death. It isn't fenced in. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" and all the wide world's your sphere.

There are no drab walls against which life is hung. Eternity is out yonder on the other side. There are not blind alleys in God's scheme of things. Death isn't the end of life at all. Not, when you've read the story of the resurrection of Jesus, the gospel of Jesus that is the power unto salvation. Rather, it's like Ben Bronner, the great old commission merchant, said, when I went over to this home at midnight one night when his wife called me to say, "Ben says he is going home before the day is over."

He'd been in a wheel chair for a couple of years, and hadn't been able to lie down at all. When I came he was asleep and his wife and two daughters were weeping silently. I sat down close to him and as he opened his eyes, a smile came over his face: "Roy, good news. I've got my long distance call. I'm going home before the day is over and I'm so glad. Tell my family not to weep. I'm tired of suffering. I hate to leave them. And Roy, I want you to have some of my things that you and I have enjoyed together through the years."

He turned to his wife and said, "Bring all my fishing tackle." She piled it up in front of him. "Now, Roy, don't take it and put it away and show it to people and say, "This was Ben Bronner's," but take it down to Chesapeake Bay, down to Bloody Point Light, where we have caught so many big fish, and use it. I'll be watching you from somewhere and wishing you luck."

And after a moment he said, "Didn't your father die recently?" And I said, "Yes, sir, in December." He said, "Was he a Christian?" I said "Yes." He said, "Don't you want to send him a message? I think I'll know

him when I see him over there." "Take my body down to the old burying ground in Virginia, "And tell the folks Ben Bronner was smiling when he went home." I'm proud of the gospel of Jesus Christ that picks up my life and throws it against a background of eternity. Death holds no sting, no fears or hurts. And "ashes to ashes and dust to dust" were not spoken of the soul. I'm proud of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And the second one, I'm proud of the gospel of Jesus Christ because it puts the emphasis on the inside of man. You remember Christ was forever talking about, "You keep the outside of the platter clean, but the inside of it—you Pharisees, you hypocrites, you whitened sepulchres, white-washed on the outside, but the inside of it is the important part. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he," "Out of the heart are the issues of life." Some day we'll understand that the most important things are not the visible things of life. They are the invisible things.

Not the tangible and touchable things of life, but those that we cannot handle with our hands and cannot see with our eyes. There is nothing more real than love and hatred, jealousy and envy, fear and courage, these invisible things, these inside things of life.

There is nothing more important than the thoughts that we think, then the meditations of our hearts, than the things that we allow our minds to dwell upon, to dream about. We become those things. They drop down into the bin of our subconscious life, our subconscious mind, and by them and by all our automatic and reflex actions come from them. Not from our planned actions and words, but involuntarily out of this thing that Jesus called our hearts, come the issues of life, the determining factors of life. Nor is it only true of us as individuals, it is true of us collectively, it's just as true of nations, and it would be well for us to think about our own for a moment for this gospel of Jesus Christ has a message for that.

Macauley the great historian of the nations didn't like Thomas Jefferson and his plans and his policies and his ideals. So he wrote about the United States of America; "It cannot possibly last, this United States of America. Some strong nation will overrun it from without, or it will^{be} overrun from within. If I turned prophet for once I would say that any nation that ever attacks the United States of America from without will get whipped. I've an idea that they will have such a unity of spirit when it comes to fighting an external foe that nobody would ever conquer them.

"But this will not mean they will last. It only defers the fall. The fall will come from within. Groups of people with avarice, selfishness, greed for money, position and influence, jealousies from within will undermine it."

Now, Macauley didn't know anything about "agriculture blocs" and "labor blocs" and power politics and the ideology of Communism. He had never seen these things, but he knew the deadly poison of selfishness and greed and avarice and envy, the cardinal sins that grow so naturally in the hearts of men. Here my brethren, are the real enemies of America, and the defense? The Gospel of Jesus, the power of God unto salvation-- "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Well, listen to Eric Johnson, past president of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States of America, the highest paid man in America, when he said not so very long ago: "When the last war was over, America sat on the top of the world with all the gold and prestige and the power and position and influence, but American was unhappy about the kind of world in which we live and so we said to each other, "We'll change it. Money can do almost anything. We'll change it. We'll work out a Marshall Plan, and we'll buy the good will of the rest of the world."

7

Oh, we didn't say it quite that baldly, but that's what we meant. And we started out to set this work up like we thought it ought to be. On the other side of the world there was another nation. Russia, who wanted to change the world, too. They did not like it as it was. They wanted to change it, and rule it themselves, but they did not have the wealth or the gold so they sent out their emissaries with one word, the word Comrade, "brother," in our own language, and on the lips of every one of them it was a lie. But even with the lies that word "Brother" and a smile and an outstretched hand has accomplished more than America with her gifts of gold."

Then Eric Johnson stopped and looked at the five or six hundred men before him and repeated quietly this sentence: "Gentlemen, there are some things that money cannot buy." The brotherhood of man is one of them." Then he startled all of us as he said; "Jesus Christ came to earth to organize a brotherhood of man."

I'm proud of the gospel of Jesus Christ because it would create a brotherhood built on what's inside of you, friendship, love, neighborliness, and the wish to be of service and help to the rest of the world and to humanity. Jesus put it succinctly when He said, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, with all the strength and thy neighbor as thyself."

When we open up these hearts of ours to God and love Him with all our minds and souls and with all our strength, it's a dangerous thing if we do not find an outlet; it's dangerous not to love our neighbors and turn this power of God into a great brotherhood of man.

The third one. I'm proud of the gospel of Jesus Christ because it challenges me to love on the highest level of life, the spiritual level.

Not the level of the law, but the level of Grace.

In an old, old book I found a beautiful illustration of this. A man was talking about these three levels of life, level of Instinct, the level of the Law and the Spiritual level. He said, "I had two dogs. One of them was a tiny Pekinese, and the other a big English bull. One day I turned them both loose together in the yard and fed them. Quickly the big bull dog ate his meal and then he looked over at the plated that belonged to the Peninese. He walked over and without even growling, with just the swing of his big head he knocked the little Pekinese winding and gulped down all his food."

He continued, "Well, that's the level of the instinct." Take what you can, keep it as long as you can, push other people out of the way, run over them if necessary." He said, "You'll find that all through life, the low level of the instinct."

He went on, "But I knew I must do something about this so I brought some more food for the little Peninese and this time I brought my whip and when the big bull dog started over toward the little Pekinese, I whipped him soundly." He said, "Ever after that when I fed them the bull dog would walk "round and round the little Pekinese, drooling and moaning, but he never touched his food." He said, "That's the level of the Law. Where we refrain from doing things because we are afraid of the penalty that is attached. That's the level of the Law."

The writer continued, "There is a higher level." Paul called it the "Level of Grace." We're not under the law but under Grace." Men should live on that level of Grace where he doesn't refrain from doing things because there is a penalty attached, but because he doesn't want to take what belongs to someone else, where he wants to help others and the direction of his life is giving, not taking, where

he wants to be the servant, where he's learned the grand and beautiful lesson of Grace.

And when I think of it/those terms, I think of what Dr. Lindsey, that great preacher from Boston said about Grace; "The best working definition I ever found of grace is something you need, but do not deserve." To illustrate it he told this humorous incident:

"I had a Sunday school class over in Scotland, and I was trying to teach them what grace was, for the lesson was on grace, but I couldn't make them understand it. A few days later I was walking along down the street going to an evening tea. I had on an English walking coat, striped trousers, a high silk hat and spats. It was early spring. The trout were biting up in the mountain brook. There was a little snow left in the north side of the hills, wet snow.

"Now," he said, "A boy never saw one of these high hats, when there was snow on the ground that he didn't get the idea of what he could do with a snowball. "So," he said, "one of my Sunday school class saw me coming and hid in the boxwood hedge. He made a couple of ice snowballs and when I got opposite he let one of them fly, He missed that hat but he hit me in the ear with it." Dr. Lindsey asked, "Have you ever been hit with an ice snowball in the ear? I nearly kills you."

Dr. Lindsey continued, "It disconcerted the boy so that he broke from cover and ran. I never would have known who it was or even seen him if he hadn't run. I stood there looking at him, trying to make up my mind whether to catch and punish him or tell his mother and let her punish him. Then it dawned on me that there was a third course to follow. I remembered Bobby had borrowed my fishing pole last week, so with a bit of a smile (as much of a smile as I could manage with that earache)

I went down and bought a three joint fishing pole.

"I took it by his home when I wnet back that evening Bobby wasn't anywhere to be seen, but his mother came to the door when I knocked and I told her: "Tell Bobby I bought him a fishing pole for his birthday present, I know his birthday doesn't come for a littl while yett, but he needs the fishing pole. Tell him I know he needs the fishing pole, emphasizing the word Needs. Will you do that?" His mother assured me she would.

I went on home and a little while after dark there came a timid knock at the door and I opened it and there stood Bobby with the pole in his left hand holding it out to me: "Here's your fishing pole, Mr. Lindsey," I said, "Why, that's not my fishing pole. That's yours. Didn't your mother tell you? I bought it for your birthday present," He answered, "Yes, sir. She told me. But wouldn't a bought it if you'd knowed it was me that hit you with that ice snowball today." And I said, "Why, Bobby, that's the reason I bought it."

He said, "Well, I don't understand that." I said, "Bobby, do you remember what the Sunday school lesson was about last Sunday?" He shook his head, "No, Sir." I'll tell you. It was about grace. And didn't I tell you that grace was something you need and do not deserve?" "Slowly, he said, "a smile spread over Bobby's face." "Yes, sir, Yes, sir."

I said, "All right, Bobby, ready for the catechism? Bobby, what is grace?" "It's a fishing pole, Mr. Lindsey," I said, "Your're right, Bobby, it's a fishing pole. You don't deserve a fishing pole but you need a fishing pole, and when you've done something that ought to keep me from giving you a fishing pole, that's grace, that's grace."

m "I'm proud of this gospel of Jesus Christ that challenges me to live on that level, that level of grace, that highest level, that

exalted plane. Did you ever realize how much of the teachings of Jesus are about grace? What are the two most beautiful stories Jesus ever told?

The story of the Prodigal Son, of course, is number one. Well, think a minute. You remember what the boy was going to say when he came home. He was going to say, "Father, make me as one of thy hired servants. I no longer deserve to be called thy son." Suppose the father had done that? And made him one of the hired servants because he didn't deserve to be called his son.

Well, then the prodigal story would never have been written. It wouldn't have been worth telling. It's built around that great, glorious center, Grace, Grace. That father gave him what he needed, not what he deserved. And I imagine the sweetest thing the boy ever heard in his life were the words of his father addressing the servants, who had come running, "This is my son, my son." I don't imagine he heard the rest of it—go out and kill the fatted calf, bring in sandals—only the words, "this is my son." That's what he needed. And I imagine his emotion broke loose in a torrent of tears.

And the second greatest story Christ ever told and that ever was told, I reckon, is the story of the Samaritan. You know, a Jew just gathers up his robes when a Samaritan came by and stepped just as far away from him as he could and spat in the general direction of the Samaritan. But it's a Jewish man that is wounded, and a Samaritan is coming down the road and that Road of Jericho goes round the world, beloved, it doesn't stop at Jericho, it goes round the world today.

So he comes down, this Samaritan does, and ministers to the Jew. Gives him what he deserves? Just leaves him there? No, gives him what he needs, gives him what he needs. The story hinges on grace and that high level of not slapping back when you're slapped, turning

the other cheek and going the Second Mile, trying to be perfect, climbing up above the level of instinct and up above the level of the law and into that glorious sunshine of the gospel of Jesus Christ of which I'm proud.

And the last one. I'm proud of the gospel of Jesus Christ because I know God never intended that I should be able to live this life like I want it in my highest moments and like he wants me to live it, without the help that Christ can give. The gospel of Christ isn't just the gospel that ~~blazes~~ ^{blazes} the way and hangs a sign post up and says. "This is the way. Walk ye in it. This is the road." The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation and it not only shows me the way, but it gives me the strength and the power and the grace to walk that way and live that way.

With a story I've finished. Down in the heart of Africa a missionary found a little black boy that was a lot brighter than the rest of them in his mission class. One day when he had taught him about all he could, he asked, "Son, how would you like to go to America and go to my college, and then come back and be a preacher to your people." The little black boy's eyes and mouth popped wide open and he stammered in his answer, "O, Master, if I could. O, Master, if I could."

The day came when a college professor walked with the little black boy onto the campus. He'd met him at the train. Suddenly the little black boy dropped both of his bags, "Professor, look, look! Is that the track team? Is that the cinder track that my missionary told me about? Those boys out there in their white shorts? "Yes, that's the track team. They're training," was the answer. "Well, do you reckon--I know I'm black and they're white, will they let me run with them? The professor answered, "Well, I'm pretty sure they will, if you can run. Can you run? "Mister, where I come from you have to run to keep alive. Yes,

sir, I can run."

The day came when the coach said to the little black boy. "Stay out here, I'm going to let the others go to the showers. I want to clock you on that mile. You've been running from the others." The coach let him rest a while and then told him, "To your mark, get set, go." He pressed down on his stop watch. The boy's clean, straight limbs just ate up that cinder track. He came sprinting down the home stretch and as he crossed the line, the coach pressed his stop watch and looked at it. Then he blinked his eyes, shut them, opened them and looked at it again. With his mouth hanging a little bit open he said, "Son, this watch must be wrong or broken or something. If it isn't you have broken the state track record and you've broken it by a wide margin. Son, lie down over there and rest a little while and then run it again, will you?"

So the little black boy lay down and rested for a while and got up, toed the mark and away he went again and the coach watched that stop watch all the way round this time. When he pressed it down again, it was right where it was before within a second or two of it and the coach said, "Son, you have beaten the state record twice in one afternoon."

He stood silent for a full minute and then half aloud he said, "I've got a good pole vaulter, I've got a good broad jumper, I've got a good hundred yard man, this boy can run the half mile and the mile. I'm going to take a team down to the State Track Meet. I haven't been down in six years."

So they went, a crack team. Just a little team, but they were choice. When they came to the last event, the mile, the coach gathered his team around him and told them, "If we win first place in the mile, we'll win the meet by half a point." To the little black boy he said, "Son, just run like

you've been running on our campus. Don't try to run fast, just run. Get on the outside. Give them a pole. You can run circles around them even on the outside, there won't be anybody in your way."

So the order came "Toe your mark, get set," the pistol cracked and they were off. The little black boy lagged, all the way around that first lap he was falling behind and the tears were streaming down his face. It looked like his feet were so heavy he couldn't get them off the ground, looked like they just stuck. Then in the second lap and suddenly he exploded into action, and he caught that group just ahead and then the next and the next and the next and when they came into the home stretch he was shoulder to shoulder and chest to chest with the head man and then he forged ahead and the tape broke across his chest.

He dropped down in the grass panting and the coach and team pummeled him and cried and laughed and hugged him and finally the coach asked, "Son, when you get your breath tell me what happened." The little black boy said, between panting and puffing for breath, "Coach my feet were so heavy--I--couldn't get them off the ground, they stuck to the ground." The coach said, "Well, we could see that, but what happened in the second lap?" "Coach, I prayed." And the coach said, "You don't have anything on us. We all prayed."

And after a while the coach asked, "Son, what did you say? What was your prayer?" "Coach, I just said, Lord, Lord Jesus, if you'll pick 'em up, I'll put em down. And the Lord Jesus pick 'em up so fast I could hardly touch the ground."

Beloved, I'm proud of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the hours of crisis, in the hours of emergency, in the hours when life is too much for us. He's not just pointing that way, but he picks 'em up and lets us put 'em down."