



360 DISCUSSION 09.11.16

THE FOUNDATION OF WORSHIP



In the first chapter of Tim Keller's book, 'Shaped by the Gospel', he tells us that "The Gospel is Not Everything." By that he means, not everything in Scripture is gospel. But he quickly adds that everything in Scripture either points to or flows from the gospel.

In chapter two, he tells us, "The Gospel is Not a Simple Thing." By this he means that there are so many images in the Bible that express the truth of the gospel, that every time we think we have it nailed down, we are confronted with a new way of expressing the gospel that enlarges and enhances our understanding of how God has acted in Christ to fulfill his promises to Israel and restore in us (and all of creation) everything we have lost to the ravages of sin.

The gospel is so simple that the smallest child can embrace it, and is so rich that the combined minds of the greatest theologians throughout the ages could never exhaust its depth and beauty.

Paul makes it imminently clear, in the climax to his letter to the believers in Rome, that the gospel serves as the foundation of our worship. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy (shorthand for the gospel Paul has just described in chapters 1-11), to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship (Romans 12:1)."

The book of Romans begins with a summary of the gospel, which Paul unfolds throughout the epistle, and ends in a hymn of praise flowing out of the gospel. Paul does not exhaust the truths of the gospel, even in Romans, but he does give us a framework for processing the gospel and applying its truths to our lives.

SET APART FOR THE GOSPEL (Romans 1:1-2)

1. How does Paul describe himself in these verses?
2. What do you think it means to be “set apart for the gospel?”
3. How is our call similar to Paul’s?
4. How is it different?

THE CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL (Romans 1:3-4)

1. How does Paul describe the gospel in these verses?
2. How is the gospel a fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel?
3. Why is it significant that Jesus is a member of the royal line of David?
4. What role does the resurrection play in confirming the gospel?
5. Paul will later tell us that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us (Romans 8:34). What role does the resurrection play in our experience of the transformative power of the gospel?

THE RESULTS OF THE GOSPEL (Romans 1:5)

Paul describes the purpose of his divine commission from God as “to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith, for his name sake.”

1. Paul always draws a sharp distinction between the “obedience that comes from faith (and is empowered by the Spirit),” and the “obedience that comes from the law (and is according to the flesh).” How would you describe the difference between the two?
2. While Paul has been set apart for the gospel, his reason for preaching the gospel is that God might be glorified in both his message and those who respond to his message (for his name’s sake).
 - a. Why should God’s glory be our ultimate motivation?
 - b. What does living for God’s glory look like in the ordinary events of everyday life?

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL (Romans 1:16-17)

1. While we commonly think of the gospel as the message of God, Paul describes it as “the power of God.” How is the power of God demonstrated in and through the gospel?
2. Paul tells us that the “righteousness of God is by faith from first to last.” We often enter into a relationship with Christ by faith, but try to maintain that relationship in our own strength.
 - a. What happens when we try to pursue God in our own strength?
 - b. How can we make sure our relationship with Christ is by faith from first to last?