**“The Gospel the Power of God” The Present Truth 7, 21.**

E. J. Waggoner

Romans 1:16.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 328.1}

There are few more comprehensive texts in the Bible than this. John 3:16 is another like it; either one of them could well be taken as the text for a sermon on almost any doctrinal subject, and they are of the greatest practical importance. They are vast treasure-houses, which can never be exhausted, but whose rich stores seem to increase in proportion as they are drawn upon. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 328.2}

The text tells us that the gospel is the manifestation of God’s power, and before we consider the greatness of this power, and how it is applied, it may be well to note briefly what the gospel is. Primarily, the word means good news. It is the good news of a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,-the good news of salvation. But a Saviour and salvation imply that somebody needs to be saved from something; and so the angel in foretelling to Joseph the birth of Christ, said: “Thou shalt call his name Jesus [Saviour]; for he shall save His people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21. But sin brings death, for James says that “sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15), and Paul tells us that “the wages of sin is death.” Therefore since Christ came to save from sin, it is evident that he saves from death; and this is what the apostle says in Romans 5:8, 9: “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 328.3}

When Christ saves from sin, he saves from the transgression of the law, “for sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. The law, of which sin is the transgression, is the law of ten commandments, for, says Paul, “I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 7:7); and the only law which says, “Thou shalt not covet,” is the ten commandments. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 328.4}

The tenth commandment is doubtless taken by the apostle to show how he was convicted of sin, because it is the only one of the ten the transgression of which is wholly in the mind, and it therefore affords the most direct proof of his later statement that “the law is spiritual.” David said: “I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad.” Psalm 119:96. We are told also that “the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12. To the same intent the wise man wrote:- {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 328.5}

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.1}

The injunction to fear God and keep his commandments, is based on the fact that God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, and derives its force from it. Therefore the text quoted is proof that the law of God has to do with every work and every secret thing. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. But we are not left to draw conclusions in this matter, for Jesus has told us plainly that murder may be committed in the heart, and that a single impure look and desire is a violation of the seventh commandment. See Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28. Solomon tells us, also, that “the thought of foolishness is sin.” Proverbs 24:9. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.2}

These few texts are quoted for the purpose of showing the nature of sin, that we may the better understand the power that is required to save men from it. In addition to these we might note the Saviour’s statement that evil thoughts flow naturally from the human heart (Mark 7:21), and the words of God through the prophet, that the “heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Jeremiah 17:9. As showing the loathsome nature of sin, and how completely it has fastened itself upon men, we quote the words of the Lord through Isaiah:- {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.3}

“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” Isaiah 1:4-6. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.4}

To save people from their sins is to change all this. It is not merely to forgive the sins of the past, but it is to save from sins in the future, by changing the heart and the whole being,-to make a man entirely new. It is no less a work than to cleanse a man “full of leprosy,” or to raise the dead. The man who is saved from sin is saved from doing that to which his whole being naturally inclines. There is no earthly power that can do this. No man can change his own nature so that good thoughts will come naturally from the heart in the place of evil thoughts; no man has power to resist the fierce temptations that come through the lusts of his own heart, and that have been strengthened by long practice. Nothing but the power of God can do that; and that power is manifested in the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. Many doubt the efficiency of even this power, for they say it is impossible for them to overcome. “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:18. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.5}

It is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses from sin. He “was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” Romans 4:25. In this the power of God to save believers is manifested. The death and resurrection of Christ show not only the great love of God, but, also, his power to redeem. Note the words of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians, to whom he wrote that he ceased not to pray for them,- {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.6}

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 1:17-20. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.7}

From this we learn that if we believe God, we shall know the exceeding richness of His power, even of that power which raised Jesus from the dead. The death and resurrection of Christ is God’s pledge to us that He will save us from sin, if we believe in Him; and it shows the power that will be put forth in order to effect this. This was the thought in the mind of Paul when he wrote that he counted all things loss if he might win Christ, and be found not having his own righteousness, “but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” Philippians 3:9-11. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.8}

To know the power of Christ’s resurrection, is to experience the working of that same power, in the removal of sin, which God wrought in Christ when he raised Him from the dead. Who could fail with this strength? {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.9}

It is of this power and its results that the apostle Peter speaks, when he says to us: “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” 2 Peter 1:2-4. This is an assurance that the divine power of God, exhibited in the resurrection of Christ, is amply sufficient to enable one to overcome all the lusts of the flesh This is what we are taught also in the following:- {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.10}

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.11}

What is it that will bring to us this mighty power? Faith in Jesus Christ. Let the sinner but have an intense desire to be freed from the bondage of sin, and let him have the faith that the man “full of leprosy” had when he said, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” and the Lord will say to him, as He did to the leper, “I will, be thou clean.” If Christ dwells in the heart by faith, the soul will be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit, according to the riches of the glory of God, and may “be filled with all the fulness of God.” See Ephesians 3:16-19. What greater power could one ask for than this? And the possession of this power is a sure antidote for sin, and a preserver against it, for sin is the working of Satan, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead marked His victory over Satan. He had entered into Satan’s house and bound him, and had taken all his armour wherein he trusted, so that when He ascended into heaven He could say, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.” Matthew 28:18. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.12}

And this power is continued so long as the person has faith. The gospel is the power of God *unto salvation*, to everyone that believeth. The same power that forgives the sin, and that changes the nature, will still remain to keep the soul from sin. Says Peter: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:3-5. The power of God is the gospel of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ has begotten us unto a lively hope, because we know that the power of the gospel is the same power that brought Jesus from the dead, and is able to keep us, through faith, until the Lord returns. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.13}

Let none say then that he cannot overcome any evil habit. “But it is a part of my nature, and I have no power to resist it.” Exactly, but the power of God can change the nature, and make a new man. It could change a leper, so that his flesh became like that of a child. It could give power to the man who was impotent from birth. More than this, it could raise the dead, even after the body had undergone decomposition, as in the case of Lazarus. All these things are done by the same power that raised Jesus, which is a pledge of all things that we need. Romans 8:32. The same Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead, will, if it dwells in us, strengthen us with the same power against sin, and, having kept us through faith unto salvation to be revealed when Christ comes, will quicken our mortal bodies, so that as we are now in spirit made to sit in heavenly places in Christ, we shall then be made to sit at his right hand, clothed in glory according to the riches of His grace. “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.” E. J. W. {PTUK October 8, 1891, p. 329.14}

**“The Law in the Gospel” The Present Truth 7, 22.**

E. J. Waggoner

Romans 1:16, 17.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” {PTUK October 22, 1891, p. 344.1}

The apostle had just before stated that he regarded himself a debtor to all mankind, and that he was willing to preach the gospel even in the proud city of Rome, because, says he “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” The reason why he was not ashamed of the gospel, was that it is “the power of God unto salvation.” Men glory in power; if they have none of their own, then they attach themselves to someone who has, and exalt in the power with which they are connected. The man who has the greatest power, or who thinks he has, has none of that apologetic air which characterizes the weakling. The ambassador in a foreign country feels boldness, and has a sense of pride in proportion to the greatness of the Government which he represents. Of course Paul’s feeling was entirely different from the pride of self-exaltation of the ambassador of an earthly court; but as the ambassador of Christ, he felt that he had nothing to be ashamed of. The power which he represented was the power of God. Why should he be ashamed? Yet it is a fact that many who profess the name of Christ are ashamed and afraid to declare it. Must it not be because they have never experienced the power of the gospel in their own hearts? When one has actually felt “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead,” he cannot be ashamed of it. {PTUK October 22, 1891, p. 344.2}

But the seventeenth verse contains another reason why he is not ashamed, or, rather, an evidence that the gospel is the power of God, namely, “for therein is the righteousness of God revealed.” What is the righteousness of God? and how is it revealed in the gospel? These questions should be settled here, for the expression, “the righteousness of God,” is one upon which a great deal depends in the book of Romans. Pages upon pages have been devoted to this question by commentators, who have learnedly discussed the original; but the reader who depends solely upon the Bible for an answer will find it very easily. {PTUK October 22, 1891, p. 344.3}

In Deuteronomy 6:25, after rehearsing the ten commandments, Moses says, “And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He hath commanded us.” This follows from the fact stated in Psalm 119:172, where the psalmist says: “My tongue shall speak of Thy Word; for all Thy commandments are righteousness.” Since all the commandments of God are righteousness, it is evident that those who do them will be righteous; for “he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He [Christ] is righteous.” 1 John 3:7. {PTUK October 22, 1891, p. 344.4}

But the ten commandments are not simply righteousness in the abstract. They are the expression of the righteous character of God. Says the Lord, through the prophet Isaiah:- {PTUK October 22, 1891, p. 344.5}

“Hearken unto Me, My people; and give ear unto Me, O My nation; for a law shall proceed from Me, and I will make My judgment to rest for a light of the people. My righteousness is near; My salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon Me, and on Mine arm shall they trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My law.” Isaiah 51:4-7. {PTUK October 22, 1891, p. 344.6}

Those who know righteousness are the ones in whose heart is the law of God; and this righteousness God calls “My righteousness.” That the commandments of God are an expression of His righteousness, may be shown in another way. The apostle Peter says: “As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [conduct]; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15, 16. This is what God requires of us-to be holy, as He is. But the wise man says: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13. Now since He requires holiness of all, and the keeping of the commandments is the whole duty of man, it follows that the keeping of the commandments constitutes holiness. {PTUK October 22, 1891, p. 344.7}

The proposition that in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, which is only stated here, is fully elaborated in the epistle later on, so that a few words on it may suffice at the present time. First, the righteousness of God-the law of God-is revealed in the gospel, because the gospel carries the law on its very forefront. Without the preaching of the law there can be no preaching of the gospel. The gospel is God’s remedy for sin, which is the transgression of the law. All men are sinners, but all men do not realise that fact; for many who are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, think that they are rich and increased with goods. Revelation 3:17. Now it is evident that before such will listen to the counsel to buy the eye-salve, the gold tried in the fire, and the white raiment, they must be shown their condition. They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; but they who are sick will not send for a physician until they are convinced of their illness, and shown that they need help. So it is useless to preach the gospel as the way of salvation, without showing the need of salvation; and the law of God is the only thing that points out sin. {PTUK October 22, 1891, p. 345.1}

But it is with a deeper meaning than this, that the apostle says that in the gospel of the righteousness of God is revealed. The opposite of sin is righteousness; and so when God remits-sends away-sin, He does it by putting righteousness in its place. Where once was sin, now appears perfect righteousness, “even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” Romans 3:22. The righteousness of God is declared for the remission of the sins of all who believe in Jesus. He cures the disease by putting health in its place. The righteousness which is brought to the believing sinner through the gospel, is the same thing exactly as the righteousness of the law, for it is witnessed by the law (Romans 3:21); but it cannot be contained except in Christ, who, as the Word of God, is the embodiment of the law. {PTUK October 22, 1891, p. 345.2}

This gospel righteousness is the righteousness of which Paul speaks in Philippians 3:9, where his desire is that when Christ comes he “may be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” The fact that God cannot deny himself, proves that he can have but one righteousness; and therefore the righteousness of his law, and the righteousness which the gospel imparts,-the righteousness which is of God by faith,-must be the same righteousness. So we have the law before the gospel, the law in the gospel, and the law in the life as the result of believing the gospel. E. J. W. {PTUK October 22, 1891, p. 345.3}