

The Power of God To Salvation

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

The meaning of this passage has never been more crucial than it is today. For that matter, it has never been any less vital in any other day. But in these days when all the weight is put on methodology, psychology, and training, sophistry is the watchword. We must be competent, we are told, to reach man in the peculiar environment of a post-modern world. Churches, programs, education, preaching, of past days will not produce results in today’s climate as it did in the past. Nor is there a single “one fits all” approach that will do for all churches, all cultures, all modes and stations of people. The means and message for adults will not do for children. Children must have their own “church” that speaks to them in children’s language. Churches serving areas populated by intellectuals must have a scholar for a pastor. A laboring class of people, in the other hand, will only respond to a gospel couched in the idiom used by one of their own.

All of this is wonderfully debunked by a profound remark made by D. Martin Lloyd-Jones in January 1945 at a Theological Student’s Conference organized by Intervarsity Fellowship, held at Cambridge University, and hosted by Lloyd-Jones. The only other main speaker was former Marxist D. R. Davis, whose book, “On To Orthodoxy”, published six years later had been widely hailed as the prophetic word for the day. Lloyd-Jones, however, had reservations about the thoroughness of Davis’ conversion, and proceeded to question his fellow Welshman following his addresses on ‘The Church and Civilization’. The result was an unscheduled lively debate that lasted an hour and half. The substance of that debate was over presentation of the Christian message in the modern context. Davis was arguing that if intellectual socialists such as Harold Laski were to be converted they must be met on their own ground by men able to discuss politics and social affairs.

Lloyd-Jones was saying the exact opposite. He pointed out how D. L. Moody had appealed to the aristocracy in Britain more than the common people, and that the scholarly John Wesley was more successful with miners than he was among the students at Oxford. Lloyd-Jones argued that Harold Laski was more likely to be converted by a Salvation Army speaker than by D. R. Davis. Then this:

“Psychologically, people do not like to be proved that they are wrong, and more than that, generally, if people become Christians, they capitulate completely. In their conversion there is an emotional element rather than an intellectual one: in other words, they stop ‘reasoning’, surrender and abandon themselves to Christ”.¹

Why this remark should be thought profound is a monumental comment on how little we believe the holy scriptures, for the Bible is filled with this truth. Men are not converted by sophisticated arguments through logical reasonings in minds able to lay hold of the profundities of philosophy, but by the power of God in the Holy Spirit. Matt. 11:25-27; 13:10-17. John 6:44; 12:32; 16:7-14. Acts 1:8. I Cor. 1:18-31; 2:1-5, 4:19-20, I Thess 1:5.

Consider the wisdom of God in I Cor. 1:21: *“For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”.*

- It strips the wise, the intelligencia, the superiorly educated and trained, of their perceived advantage and superiority, and brings them down to the same level of all men. They are equally incompetent to either believe or communicate redemptive truth.
- It reveals the fraud perpetuated by this present contemporary religious world in its mad clamor after the writings, teachings and “ministries” of psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, and other worldly-trained gurus who arrogate to themselves exclusive claim to the keys of the kingdom. This is not to say that all those engaged in these ministries are intentionally fraudulent, and that they cannot be preachers of the gospel. We only assert that the spiritual advantage of their training in these fields is zero.
- The Th.D., the theologically trained preacher, has zero advantage over the God-called day laborer when it comes to effectiveness in evangelism, the preaching of the gospel and conversion of sinners. In not a few cases, such poorly educated, but Spirit anointed ministers, have a far richer diet of spiritual truth to feed their flocks than the down-town First Church, Ph. D.
- The pleasant melodious voice, the deep resonant one, booming with intimidating authority, the winsome, disarming personality...any and all such natural gifts...count for nothing when it comes to communicating spiritual truth.

¹ D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *The Fight of Faith*, by Iain Murray, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1990, p. 127).

- It wipes out any intellectual obstacle to the sinner's understanding, low I.Q., lack of education, or childhood. God reveals His truth to "babes". This is why there is no such thing as "age of accountability". John the Baptist responded to the gospel in his mother's womb!
- It betrays the invalidity of the practice of fragmenting families and church congregations into various groups, sorted according to age, sex, education, or social status, ostensibly, to provide a teaching and environment more compatible with their capacity to understand and learn. We all learn and receive the things of God by His Spirit or not at all!
- It removes any advantage, disadvantage or barrier inherent in a tribe's language to receive salvation's message. There is no human language better or poorer suited by which to communicate the word of God and inculcate faith. A people's idiom or culture is not the key to their receiving the word of salvation. It is the power of the Holy Spirit Who helps us pray when we do not have a clue to what we ought to say or pray. How much more will He help us preach and communicate the meaning of what we preach in terms of the Spirit that will resonate in the sinner's heart!
- It also shows up the impotence of apologetics in evangelism. Creation Science has slight, if any, validity in persuading men that God is and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him. Preachers ought not waste their audience's time trying to disprove the silly claims of evolution. God confessors do not need it and God-deniers will only be angered. Apologetics may have marginal value in helping the more intellectual among genuine believers be more comfortable with their faith, but it has no power to persuade the unregenerate.

I think, however, the most profitably instructive benefit of this truth is the encouragement it ought give us all in the matter of personal witnessing. John told us that Jesus would baptize us with the Holy Spirit. Jesus affirmed that the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon His disciples, and that we would be witnesses unto Him. He did not command us to witness, or to do witnessing, certainly not "learn how". He said we would BE witnesses. Make no mistake about it, Christian friend: if you are Christ's you *are* a witness. Forget about what kind of argument or reasoning or persuasive words you are going to use to "win" that man or woman or child to Christ. He is not going to be converted by your argument. If you tear down his philosophy, show him to be wrong, make him appear to be the fool he is you will have succeeded only in making him angry. Nor should you be intimidated by the fact you are not able to argue him down. It is not the power of your argument that will persuade him, but the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us be of the same mind with the Apostle Paul who requests: *"(Pray)...for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel...that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."* (Eph. 6:19-20) - C. M.

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