

TRUTH & LIGHT

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THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

"So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith,'" (Rom. 1:15-17). When you consider the dramatic changes Jesus was able to produce in even the most extreme and hopeless cases, you begin to understand what Paul meant when he describes his feelings about the gospel and his faith in its power.

Whenever I read this passage I can't help but immediately think of the man possessed with thousands of demons whose life radically changed when he encountered the power of Jesus. "When He got out of the boat,

immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him...Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and shouting with a loud voice, he said, 'What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!' For He had been saying to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!'...They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who

had had the 'legion'; and they became frightened," (Mk. 5:2-4,6-8,15). In the same way, it is almost frightening when you consider the power of the gospel and its potent ability to change a sinner so dramatically.

Consider the Apostle Paul, himself, the very one making this bold statement of the "power" of the gospel, as he serves as a wonderful example of the very power he speaks of. *"'So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities," (Acts 26:9-11).*

It is at times almost impossible to think of Paul as anything but the most loyal and devoted of disciples to Jesus and His gospel, yet we must remember, as he so often did, what a dramatic change in his life the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ produced. *"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He*

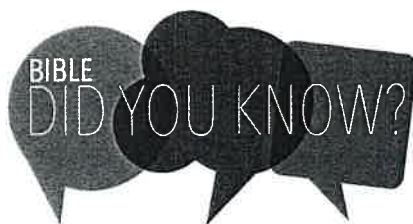
considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all," (1 Tim. 1:12-15). It is no wonder the vivid language Paul uses when he speaks so candidly about the explosive capabilities the gospel holds when he calls it the "dunamis" (power) of God, the very word we get our English word "dynamite" from. Paul was walking proof of the explosive ability of the gospel to destroy the thickest walls built to resist its effects, as it obliterated all of his own doubt, skepticism and hate to transform him into a loyal defender and proclaimer of Jesus willing to sacrifice his own life to do so. *"'Is not My word like fire?' declares the LORD, 'and like a hammer which shatters a rock?'" (Jer. 23:29).* Paul had no problem whatsoever preaching the message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus to anyone

he came in contact with, because regardless of how thick the walls of doubt and skepticism built up to resist the message, Paul felt like he was putting a spiritual stick of dynamite in their hands able to blast through. *"I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome,"* (Rom. 1:14-15). Even though Paul had encountered more than his fair share of doubters who would not listen to or obey the message, it never impacted his willingness to plant as much dynamite as he could wherever he went, knowing full well the potential for explosive life changing power was there, but only the listener could light the wick. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..."* (Rom. 1:16).

While Paul could never light the wick for any to believe, he also realized there would be nothing to actually light and ignite if he didn't provide them with the explosives. Knowing full well the potential for the message of Christ to destroy and blast away the sin in our lives, Paul was eager to make sure plenty of dynamite had been adequately strapped to the listening souls of anyone he could get to, willing

to patiently wait for the listener to one day have enough faith to light the wick themselves, and have the faith to obey the message. While there may very well be plenty of skeptics who, like the man possessed with the "legion", express how totally disinterested they are in the message of the gospel (*"What business do we have with each other, Jesus?"*), it is our unashamed trust in the explosive dynamite power of the message that will determine whether or not they ever have an opportunity to actually ignite and potentially be changed by it.

— Daniel Ruegg



The Bible has been translated into more than 1,200 languages.

The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years and consisted of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

BIBLE TRIVIA

C H A L L E N G E

DIRECTIONS: After searching through your Bible, circle which answer is correct.

1. What musical instrument did David play?

- a) Lyre
- b) Flute
- c) Guitar
- d) Harp

2. What direction was the land of Nod from the Garden of Eden?

- a) North
- b) South
- c) East
- d) West

3. What young Israelite refused to eat the meat given him by the king of Babylon?

- a) Daniel
- b) Ezra
- c) Joshua
- d) Joseph

4. What was the occupation of the man who climbed the tree to see Jesus?

- a) Tent maker
- b) Tax-collector
- c) Carpenter
- d) Centurion

5. What supply did the Pharaoh cut off from the Israelites to weaken them?

- a) Clothes
- b) Food
- c) Water
- d) Straw

6. As recorded in Revelation, what are the leaves for on the tree of life?

- a) Decoration
- b) Healing for the nations
- c) Sign of Christ's reign
- d) Represent the saints

7. What relative of Saul was Ishbosheth?

- a) Son
- b) Grandfather
- c) Brother
- d) Father

8. To what kind of a tree was Jesus speaking when he said: "Let no fruit grow on thee for ever,"?

- a) Mulberry
- b) Palm
- c) Fig
- d) Sycamore

9. Name the father of Aaron.

- a) Jethro
- b) Hur
- c) Mephibosheth
- d) Amram

10. Whom did Elisha curse with leprosy?

- a) Gehazi
- b) Samuel
- c) Jesse
- d) Naaman

- 1) D, Reference: 1 Sam. 16:23
 2) C, Reference: Gen. 4:16
 3) A, Reference: Daniel 1:8
 4) B, Reference: Lk. 19:1-10
 5) D, Reference: Ex. 5:7
 6) B, Reference: Rev. 22:2
 7) A, Reference: 2 Sam. 2:10
 8) C, Reference: Mt. 21:19
 9) D, Reference: Ex. 6:20
 10) A, Reference: 2 Kgs. 5:25-27