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## THE GOSPEL IS POWERFUL

*"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*

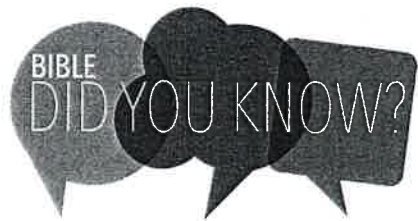
had had the 'legion'; and they became frightened," (Mk. 5:2-4,6-8,15). In the same way, it is almost frightening when you consider the power of the gospel and its potent ability to change a sinner so dramatically.

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 fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you.”***  
**Prov. 9:10-11**



# MONTHLY CHALLENGE

**DIRECTIONS:** Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

## 1) Praying Through Psalms Challenge

**Psalms 34:1-3** *"I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul will make its boast in the LORD; the humble will hear it and rejoice. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together."* While we are encouraged to trust in the power of prayer, at times we feel at a loss to know just how to put our intense emotions and feelings in prayer. The Psalms become a great blueprint to direct us in that way as David literally poured out his heart before the Lord in the Psalms. For this month, try picking out a few psalms that match the emotional intensity you wish to express in prayer and try praying through them. Make them personal to you, and incorporate the phrases and descriptions in your own way as you communicate to God in prayer. Try as many as you can this month and see if these same phrases and illustrations can become a regular part of your own expressions to the Lord in prayer.

## 2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

### *Isaiah 6:1-8*

"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and whom will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"