

The Gospel According to God's Power

Let us turn to our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 1. 2 Timothy chapter 1, as I go through the pastoral epistles here, 1 Timothy and then Titus, 2 Timothy 1, 8-10. I already preached some of this, verses 8-12, and I want to drill down into these verses here about the power of the gospel of God. 2 Timothy 1, 8-10, let's listen attentively to the word of God.

So he continues halfway through verse 8, But share with me in the sufferings for the gospel, according to the power of God, who has called us and saved us, the holy calling, and not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel. Let us pray. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as we read these words, may you work in our hearts, God, to see anew and afresh, I pray, the glories of the gospel according to the power of God and what that means in our lives.

Lord, may it draw us closer to you, we pray. Amen. The grace and mercy of our loving God is a common theme when talking about the good news of the gospel.

Because the good news is that God delivered us from deserved judgment and death by the person and work of his Son, Jesus Christ. That God had mercy in spite of the just judgment over our heads. We do not deserve heaven.

We cannot merit eternal life. All this is from everlasting counsels of the most blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's a wonderful theme, brothers and sisters, and we sing it, we meditate upon it.

But we should not forget that the unmerited favor from the Lord comes not from mere well-wishing, from his outstretched hand of power and might is where it comes from instead. That is to say, although not the only theme in this long sentence, it is a major idea of the power of God, the power of the gospel. The beginning here, it is made explicit, suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.

And at the end, it is clear there, although the word power isn't used, but clearly there is power, who that is Jesus, what abolished death and brought life and immortality. That must be the almighty omnipotence of our Lord and creator and savior. Exercise for our good.

So let's go more carefully here through this deep and rich statement by the apostle, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in order that we may be encouraged to strengthen to this glorious theme of the power and the grace. And now the two are wedded together in our work of the savior.

Gospel According to Power

The gospel according to power, the first point here, in verse 8b, he slides into a theme and an idea.

This is common in Paul's writing. That's why you have long sentences. You miss that sometimes because you have these verses that break things up.

It's a long sentence, right? Don't be ashamed. He tells a young pastor, Timothy, he, like the rest of us have weaknesses. Don't be ashamed of the Lord or me who is a prisoner, but rather on the flip side, share in suffering with me.

Don't be ashamed of my suffering for the gospel according to the power of God. It brings that up. I may seem powerless because I'm in prison.

Don't let that deceive you. Perhaps the implication here, because God is the God of might and power, and that's what we should rely upon. The gospel is about grace and mercy, long suffering for us.

The good news, but it's also about power and might. The grace of God is not well-wishing. He's not up there wringing his hand and hoping people will somehow get saved, but it's the will of the Lord and creator with outstretched hands conquering sin and death, and indeed conquering us in our hearts and shattering hardened stones within us.

Our stubborn will is melted under his holy fire. That's not well-wishing. That's not God wondering, can I really save people? What can I do? I really want them.

It's power, it's omnipotence, it's might. It's not an ineffectual pleading of a father, but the omnipotent God almighty who tears down walls around rebellious souls and smashes our hearts and transforms and turns them into clay pliable in his hands. It is a power that undergirds grace and redemption.

Without it, there can be no grace and redemption. That's why we must need both. We must have both.

But what exactly is this power? The power of God almighty, of our Lord, of our redeemer, of our creator. Our text, we read that he purposed in grace, therefore the power of God, which God saves us not according to his own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, verse nine, which was given to us in Christ Jesus, shows us that it's an eternal power. It's an eternal power.

It's his own purpose and grace, which was given to us before time began. It means it's eternal. And this idea parallels Paul's teaching elsewhere and more fully in Ephesians 1, 3-14, an extended praise of the grace and power of God almighty, for the two must ever be together.

Paul extols the Lord for salvation that was from eternity past. He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, we read there in Ephesians 1. And he continues on and says, having predestined us to adoption, being predestined, he says again, according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, clearly echoing the same idea here, but according to his own purpose and grace before time began, verse nine of the verse before us. Paul is saying nothing different, but rather compresses it all here in this letter to Timothy.

And I'm unpacking it for us so we can see the riches and the greatness of it. What does Paul mean? He means God's power is infinite and eternal. It has no beginning, it has no end, like he has no beginning and no end.

And it's for our good, for you here and now, why you are awake and aware and born again, because he deigned to touch you with his outstretched hand to melt that hardened heart. And therefore it is an effectual power. Why do I have to say this? Effectual means it comes to pass.

It's not just, I'm trying my hardest. I can try to push a car, and I'm not strong enough to do that unless it's a small little Fiat or something, right? Typical car, I'm not strong enough. I have power, but it's ineffectual power.

It leads to nothing in the case of moving a car, lifting a house, and many other things in life. But not our Lord and Savior. It's closely tied to his eternal might.

Because it's eternal, it will have its intended effect. Many Christians affirm that God is omnipotent, omni, all, potent, power. Same idea with this word power here, all power.

But it seems to be more theoretical than actual. It doesn't really affect anything when it comes to salvation because God still, in their thinking, unfortunately, has to wait upon the will of man to say, yes, Lord, you can save me now. So God's power isn't real power there.

It's not being exercised. It's just kind of holding back. It is, in that sense, really not helpful for our peace of mind.

God's waiting on me? That could be a long time. I need to be saved now. And God knows this and saves us in his own time, to be sure.

It's no longer theoretical. It's no more theoretical at all, but actual and real. The creator God, with his power, is effectual.

It comes to pass. What he plans will come to pass. The text here implies that.

Paul's suffering of the gospel, of course. It seems as though it's ineffectual power, so it makes no sense. What kind of leader is this? He preaches, and people mock him for preaching.

We saw that in Ephesians 1, right? The foolishness of the message preached. We heard that in Sunday school class. And the world also mocks him.

He's in jail. People left, and we read this in other verses. People, other supposed believers, are like, I'm embarrassed.

Paul's in jail. What kind of a guy is he? So it seems, from that perspective, ineffectual. There's nothing really there.

But there is, as we know. That's why he tells them it is the power of God, according to the power. It's based upon.

It needs the power. In verse 10, he who abolished death and brought life and immortality, and again, it's not wishful thinking. It actually happened by the work of Jesus Christ.

And he conquered sin and death 2,000 years ago and applies it to us today. That's something that comes to pass, that will happen, because he wants it to happen. And that's a good thing.

And he affects it, therefore, for our redemption. The power of our Lord and Savior is used for our good. The power and grace, in fact, go together, as we know. Intertwining themes throughout the Bible.

Gospel According to Power

So it leads us to the second point, the gospel according to grace, in verse 9 here. He who saved us.

So this is what Paul does. He gets one idea after another. Suffering under the gospel, according to the power of God.

What about this God? It is he who saved us and called us. What about this calling? Not according to our works. If it's not according to our works, what's it according to? Verse 9, according to his own purposes, before time began.

And he continues. That's how Paul writes. This is what his thinking is.

So here, the gospel of grace. God delivers and saves us. From what? Paul doesn't tell us here.

He knows that we should know. We know the rest of the Bible. We know in our hearts, even as unbelievers, we know Romans 1 and elsewhere.

We are sinners. That we are violating our own conscience, which is given to us by God in his creation. We know right from wrong.

We just suppress the truth and unrighteousness if we are not saved and redeemed by his might. We are saved from that. Those violations and the consequences of sin.

Sin and death. Death of the body. Death of the soul.

We come about from transgressing his holy will, written on our hearts and made clear on the word of God. And so this is the salvation that we have. He has saved us.

He has delivered us as drowning men and women. Beyond that, Ephesians 2, dead and trespassed as a sin. We're at the bottom of the ocean.

We went down with the ship. And so this deliverance is first and foremost about our soul that would not end up in hell. And it goes together.

He who saved us and called us with a holy calling. Calling us out of darkness and into his glorious light. Of course, Paul in Timothy's case, their calling is the holiness of the office.

And we are called as believers. So they have one more thing that we don't have typically. They're an office.

But they are also like us. They are also believers. There was a time they didn't have an office.

As in the case of Timothy. He was raised a believer, apparently. And he was still like the rest of us, always.

That never changes. So you go through 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Remember, you're reading about Paul, one church officer, writing to another church officer.

You may be thinking, well, how's that relevant to me? I'm not a church officer. They're still Christians. They still have a holy calling.

You have a holy calling. We all have this. And so to the extent, which is a lot, I hope you've seen in this series so far, you can see it's still applicable to me.

This is clearly for us as well. And we can learn thereby. And we are therefore to be called.

And we are called by him, separated from the world, a sinful world. And it's God Almighty who saves us. Notice, who's the one doing the saving here? According to the power of God, who? It is he who has saved and called us with an effectual calling, not ineffectual wishing.

And it's all about God. God first, God last. It is God who saves sinners.

It's not what you do or what you wish that ever brings deliverance. It cannot bring deliverance. We see here and elsewhere, it is what God doing the saving, the activity upon us.

We are but the passive vessels and calls us as well, a holy calling of salvation and deliverance by his might and his power, because he knows we cannot save ourselves. It's all about him. The calling is not just salvation in general, but involves the holy call of sanctification.

But he continues on to unpack this Lester's confusion, I suppose, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works. He hammers that point. The New Testament hammers it.

It's there in the Old Testament as well. We, I think, know why, if you recall, the Jews had turned the grace of God into their own works by the time of Jesus, the Pharisees, especially. Look at God.

He has been good to me because I am a son of Abraham. I am special already. And they would give their tithes and offerings publicly walking into the temple.

Look at me dropping their gold coins. The whole world can praise them for what they have done. They too talked of grace, but it wasn't a real grace, an understanding of the depth of grace as we see in these verses.

For them, it was according to grace and works, their own works, their own obedience, their own intention, their own love or faith. And unfortunately, we see that today in Christian circles as well. But Paul undercuts and undermines all of that at the legs.

It cuts them off right at the legs, but according to his own purposes, but not according to our works. Not our works, but his works, purposes, and intentions as well. Because he does do work, doesn't he? Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

He lived and died for us, not according to our works. Whenever I hear that phrase, perhaps it's just me, not according to works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2.8 through 9. Paul says this elsewhere.

Ephesians 2.8 through 9. For by grace ye have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works, lest any one should boast. It's interesting his argument there.

It's just, of course. And so even faith itself, trusting and believing in Christ, is a gift of God. Because if it wasn't, you can believe it and then would boast about it.

Look at my faith. Look what I believe. We had a similar idea there in 1 Corinthians, as you recall, about baptism.

There, it's not what they did. They're already boasting about what someone else did. Well, I was baptized by Peter.

I'm in a special group over here. Well, I was baptized by Paul. I'm in a special group over here.

And the super holy said what? I'm baptized by Christ. Ho, ho, that's what someone else did for them. How much more would they boast if they believed faith was of their own heart and nature and came from their free will? All the more.

We know this. Lest any man should boast. That principle already undercuts any theology that teaches faith is inherent in the human condition.

It is not. It, too, is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Praise be to his name.

Not according to works. So it's not just Jewish works, as some modern theologians try to argue. It's the specific temple worship and temple acts and what.

It's any kind of works. Lest any man should boast. But according, on the other hand, but the word but here is a strong contrastive according to his own purposes and grace.

It could be nothing of ours. It is God who saves and calls. It is not us.

It's not our works. It's not our baptism. It's not our obedience.

It's not our pure intentions of heart or the strength of our faith as such. Although you must believe, of course, which is a gift of God. But, but, but we are saved from eternity past.

Which is, which was given us in Christ Jesus before time began. His own purposes, his own plans, and the grace given to us through Jesus Christ was there from eternity past in their plans, in the plans of the covenant of redemption, which unfolds in history in the covenant of grace, as we see in our lives here in our baptism. There's another way, in other words, here in this verse to write about predestination.

Right? Grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, before you were born, before you existed, there was nothing there to move him to save you. Paul says this the same way in Ephesians as well, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, before all things were established and created in Genesis one. Either way, it's saying the same thing here.

That is from eternity past, as we say. And so the works are not the ground for salvation, but it is Christ Jesus. And it is our dear redeemers saving us and planning to save us from eternity past.

That picture is there in Ephesians one, you can go to Ephesians one, and it talks about the father protesting us, calling us from the foundation of the world, the son dying for us, living for us, redeeming us and gathering the elect.

Gospel According to Revelation

And the third point there in verses 12 and 13 and 14 in Ephesians one, he says, and this by the power of the Holy Spirit who seals the word of God upon we who believe. It's a Trinitarian doxology.

And that unpacks what is here implicit in short little sentences, Christ is here, redemption is here, and eternal power of God Almighty in saving us from eternity past is here, more explicitly, of course. We read there, and the unpacking of this idea in Ephesians one, we were delivered according to the good pleasure of his will, not our own. Again, he says, according to the good pleasure which he had purposed in himself.

To make it clear, it's not him looking at us and going, well, you know, I guess you're more savable than you over there. But his own purposes, because there's nothing good in us to draw God to us, is the point. Nothing at all, his own good pleasure in himself or his own purposes, not ours.

We don't sneak in and somehow convince God to save us. But he deigned to take pity upon sinners who deserve punishment. That's what's being highlighted here, brothers and sisters.

The Jews, of course, thought they were special. They thought their works were good enough to get them to heaven. And Paul's like, no, a thousand times no.

It's his own purposes, not yours. And it's its own grace, unmerited favor. You cannot merit it.

You cannot warrant it. You can't go to heaven and say, look at me, God, I was baptized. I took the Lord's Supper.

I heard the sermons. Isn't that enough to get me to heaven? To justify me? And God says, no. But my good pleasure, my grace, my compassion, through Jesus Christ.

And that before time began. And it's a gospel according to revelation. So Paul unpacks this here in verse 10, that yes, it's before time began, but it's not merely and only outside of time.

It's now brought into time. That is the revelation, the truth, but has now been revealed or unfolded to us by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ. It isn't just outside of us.

We can never know the eternal counsels. And that's true. We would not know as mere creatures.

We'd be stuck in darkness and lost. And we're lost without our Savior. But God moved beyond that and says, I will reveal this to you through my son, the son of God.

God's eternal plans, in other words, don't stay in the past, but is affected and revealed in his time in history. And the second member of the Trinity came to earth, our Savior and our Lord. His appearing showed us redemption in the flesh.

And his words directed us to salvation and deliverance. And his actions overcame sin and death and his resurrection and ascension on high, openly displaying his power and might over sin and its consequences. This is the revelation of God and as much to behold.

It is both Jesus' appearance in the flesh as well as his words. The Jews seeing Jesus in the person is to see the revelation of God walking among them, the truth of him. To hear him speak, of course, is a double revealing of the truth.

And although we don't see him today in the flesh, God says, you don't get to see me. Jesus is sitting on the right hand of God the Father right now. We can see by the eyes of faith when we read the Bible.

We have the truth. God says, this is sufficient. Do you believe or not believe? And I pray all of us here believe the revelation of the power of redemption and salvation of our Lord and Savior.

The revelation is also an expression of power itself because, well, we had deaf ears and blind eyes and God opened them. The Spirit of God came into our hearts so that we could see. People here, you know them.

They've heard the truth and yet nothing has changed in their hearts. I don't want anything to do with the church. I don't care about the Bible.

What's the difference between you and them? The Spirit of God opened your heart and revealed it to you. That too is power, isn't it? It takes power from the creator God himself who made heaven and earth and guides and sustains all things to shatter your blind heart that you may see. So in revelation itself, it's implied when we understand the depravity of man.

Gospel According to Power

But it continues on here in the fourth point, the gospel according to power again, where it's made more clear. It is Jesus Christ who has revealed God's eternal intent to save you with an everlasting salvation. It is this Jesus who has abolished death, verse 10, and brought life and immortality to light, to the revelation that we may see it through the gospel.

Through the good news. He abolished death. The same Jesus not only brought the good news, he's not just talking about it, but he actually affected the good news by his own person and his own work for us on the cross and his resurrection, especially abolishing death.

Now abolishing death, of course, we see around us people are still dying. He doesn't mean right here and now, the resurrection, nobody ever dies and we're on heaven or something weird is going on there. No, we still die.

Everyone dies. But the effect of death is no longer deadly for us. He destroyed the power of death by his power.

That's what he's talking about. Because again, it's compressed. He's not writing a theological treatise.

He's writing a heartfelt letter to his son in the Lord, Timothy. We do the same thing. Abolishing death here means the effect and the power of death over us because of sin.

We are justified in Christ. We no longer deserve death, eternal death in hell because of that justification, because of his love for us and the work of Christ Jesus. So yes, the body will die, but it doesn't stay dead.

There's a resurrection, isn't there? The death of the body and the soul is punishment for sin. The lies we've been told in the schools, I'm sure most of us went to public school, the older ones anyways. We were taught evolution.

In evolution, they teach what? Death is natural. It's to be expected. Of course, everyone dies.

That's part of what it means to live. That's not part of what it means to live. It's unnatural and we know this.

This is why we're terrified of death. We're like, this shouldn't be. Something's wrong here.

Even the atheists know something's wrong. God, through our Lord and Savior, has conquered that punishment. Thus, in overcoming death, Jesus overcame sin.

He overcame the effect of sin because he overcame sin itself. The sin of our lives in particular. We trust in him.

We are indeed saved and death is no longer the final frontier, but the gateway to heaven, brothers and sisters. This is a comfort. It should be for us.

That death has no more power, condemning power, but rather as an entrance to heaven. Christ's work is not one-sided, but brings about eternal life as well. It's not as though Christ only did half a job.

Oh, death's gone. Now you guys are kind of on your own. You're like a second Adam all over again.

See what you can do about it. But it brings us righteousness and eternal life itself. That too is what? Evidence of power, that the grace of God is the power of God exercised for our deliverance.

Not just the earthly life after the fall, but ultimately the eternal life and the new heavens and the new earth because the gospel is about life. Life now. We can be born again by the power of the spirit of God.

I pray this is true for all of us. Life later. When death comes, we will be ushered into heaven.

But the body as well, the resurrection body as displayed in Christ. He had a resurrected body. And he is the what? The first fruits of the resurrection.

The greatest of all the fruits. And we are in him. And therefore what he has done in his flesh, he is doing for us in our soul.

And we'll do in our flesh as well. We will have a better body. The eternal life only comes by the grace and power of God.

Almighty brothers and sisters. Grace, unmerited favor to those who repent and believe, which itself is a gift of God. Power, God's unlimited might to save us from sin and death.

And indeed he has done it. If you are his. And some, the good news is the power of God to bring eternal life.

Man tries even today to conquer death. Both of the body through failed scientific experiments and rich billionaires trying to do these special things with their bodies. I think there's still a guy and a machine.

His dead body is still there after decades. They can't do it. They've got nothing.

They're impotent. And of course the soul. Men try to deliver their soul from death with false religions or kind of glom onto the Bible and use Bible language but end up having a foreign content all the more.

They lack one important thing in all this, which is the power of God Almighty to save. Because fallen man is impotent to stop the march of time and death. Even unfallen man says, Adam couldn't do it.

Moral perfection is impossible for us. They have no power. God has all the power.

And thus the good news is the great news. Christ has overcome death, brothers and sisters. And he has brought immortality to you here and now.

You have a foretaste of it here. And that's just not wishful or wistful promise, but the power of God to save. Let us pray.

Lord, our Savior God above, help us to rely upon you to trust and have comfort in this truth that we are indeed saved and delivered by your mercy, unmerited favor upon us by the everlasting covenant. And that through your power and your omnipotence, God, exercise for us. And even now it works in our hearts, Lord and Savior, to will and to do your good pleasure.

May this never change, God Almighty, and draw us to heaven, we pray. Amen.