

A Way in the Will

Seeing is Believing is Sharing

March 13, 2022

Today we're talking about pushing through to share what's true.

But to get there, we gotta go through this question: **What's holding you back?**



Last Sunday we saw Paul was trying to find a way to his friends in Rome in order to mutually encourage one another, by sharing their stories of obedience that come from faith. Praying *constantly* that:



By some means, now at *last* I may find a way in the will of *God* to come to you. – Romans 1:10 NKJ



Cut to Paul in *handcuffs* trying to convince the crew of a *prison* ship to stay anchored in the peaceful harbor of *Fair Haven* as storms begin to blow in.



"Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives." – Acts 27:10 NKJ



Well, they should've listened to him because (spoiler alert) they're about to endure a fourteen-day shipwreck. Turns out, *that* was the way in *God's* will. Paul *got* what he wanted, but not *how* he wanted. Because **God's will is quite often quite unlike our will for God's will**. Where there's a will there's a way – if you submit to *His* will, otherwise you'll get in your *own* way. So when *our* way is *connected* to *God's* way, *double whammy*, in a *good way*! Cuz we'll be willing to *do whatever it takes* to get it *done*.

Like being given a cure for cancer – you'd *find* a way to *share* it with the world, and wouldn't let *anything* stop you! So when *we* realize what *Paul* realized – that **the Gospel is the cure for death itself** – it'll take a lot more than a *shipwreck* to sink us. So, what *is* holding you back?

[Paul said] I am *obligated* both to Greeks and non-Greeks, [doesn't matter where you're coming from] both to the wise and the foolish. [doesn't matter what you know, don't know, or think you know] That is why I am so *eager* to preach the Gospel also to you who are in Rome. [all the world's roads led to and from Rome] For I am not *ashamed* of the Gospel, because it is the power of *God* that brings salvation to *everyone* who believes. – Romans 1:14-16 NIV

Right on Paul! "Obligated" and "eager" and "unashamed" to share the cure for death itself! And we get a dose of that *medicine* whenever we receive his encouraging *words*. Jesus famously said "before Abraham was, I AM" (Jn 8:58) – but Paul's got a few *I am's* of his own.

When it comes to sharing, he says "I AM obligated" and "I AM eager" and "I AM not ashamed".

So ... **why does it feel like we need to be convinced to share?**

Well, if you really, truly *believe* you've discovered eternal life, and *don't* feel compelled to share ... something's wrong *somewhere*. I mean, if a person *knows* they have the cure, they share. So **are you sure you know you have the cure?** Because when you *believe*, you go out of your way to find a way to share what you know, *right Paul?*

You should have listened to me ... [but] *now* I urge you to take *heart*, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I *belong* and whom I *serve*, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before *Caesar*; [is that good news or bad? Sounds like out of the frying pan, into the fire. But Paul don't care, cuz saints gotta serve. Anytime. Anywhere] and indeed God has granted *you* all those who sail *with* you.' Therefore take *heart*, men, for I *believe* God. – Acts 27:21-25 NKJ

If you're not compelled to share the cure, you're failing to fully grasp one of three things: The **power** of the cure. The **need** for the cure. Or that people are *worth* the cure. So, which is it: Power, need, or **compassion?** Whatever the case, there's a *flaw* in the faith that will *anchor us* in place when we're *supposed* to be cutting loose and pushing through. Spoiler alert – they have to literally cut the anchors loose in order to live. So, **do you underestimate the power?**



All the world's religions can be divided into *three* categories: 1. **Those that say sin does not exist.** 2. **Those that say salvation must be earned.** And 3. **Christianity.** Remember that. We're not *accommodating* humanity by *our* power, but *transforming* it through *God's*. Only *Christianity* offers the radical concept of the *cleansing* of sin *and* the *clothing* of righteousness; by *faith* alone. Not only *pardoned* from sin, but *cleansed* from guilt and shame. And **Jesus Christ alone has the power and authority to accomplish such a feat.** And *that's* the Gospel. *That's* the cure that He came to deliver. *Don't underestimate the power.*

Paul recognized its supremacy. He was schooled in *Greek* logic, *Roman* law, and *Hebrew* theology and could see how *all* religion and philosophy *paled* before true power. It moves 300-pound linebackers to their knees without *shame*; and *empowers* 90-pound weaklings to move mountains without *pride*. So, **how can I feel ashamed to share something so supreme?**

If an Olympic gold medalist came to your house for dinner, would you feel *ashamed* to introduce them to your neighbors? And if a world famous chef cooked *that* meal, would you feel *ashamed* to share it with your family? Dumb questions. Because they're *irrelevant*. Because, **we're ashamed of things that are less than, not more than.** So if you are ashamed of the Gospel, you see it as less than. Less than extraordinary. Less than perfect. Less than more than anything anyone can imagine.

Now, if you recognize the *power*, **do you underestimate the need?**

Everyone requires and desires Jesus Christ ... *whether or not* they know His name. Because *everyone* was designed (*by Christ*) with a void, a vacuum, an *unrest* that is *only* satisfied by a *connection* to the Creator; a *friendship* with our Father. And *this* relationship has been made possible through *only One*, for *everyone*. But **we won't make the effort if we don't see the need**. Whereas Paul, maybe, as a former murderer of Christ's followers, recognized, more than anyone its **sufficiency**. And hindsight being 20/20, once Paul got it, he saw how *seriously, eternally essential* it is for *all* of us!

So **how can I not feel obligated to share something so sufficient?**

Not that we're supposed to be running around telling everyone what we believe, it's like if you're a doctor at a restaurant, you (hopefully) wouldn't *see a need* or feel *obligated to tell* everyone. "*I'm a doctor! Hey, I'm a doctor!*" But, if someone starts *choking*, and everyone's yelling, "*Is anyone a doctor?!*" Then hopefully, you'd *see the need* and *feel the obligation*. "*I'm a doctor. Let me through.*" Well, the *world's* choking on *sin*.



And maybe you're not a doctor. You're like, "I got nothing to offer." So let's say you have a trunk full of old pants. You're taking them to Goodwill. You wouldn't see the *need*, or feel any *obligation*, to hand them out to every stranger you pass by. *But*, if you came across some kind of horrific *accident*, and everyone's stumbling around with no pants, you'd hopefully say to yourself, "*I got a trunk full of pants! I should give these people pants!*" It's a *no-brainer*. You're the pants savior! I have *no idea* what type of accident that was. Use your imagination.

Point is, **you do have something to share and you shouldn't be ashamed to share what you have**. They weren't even *great* pants. You were taking them to Goodwill. But look how *unashamed* you were to *share* them! So you're not the doctor type. *Pants savior*. That's you. And hey, *this world's* not only choking on sin, its pants are on *fire* with lies.

And if you *are* recognize the *power* and see the *need*, **do you lack the compassion?**

It isn't that we don't *care* about the people God has placed around us, we just don't care *enough* to make the *effort* to *learn* what we'd need to *know* to share Jesus simply, plainly, and clearly. Apparently, **that requires more effort than we think they're worth**.

But listen, you probably *don't* want to learn about *leukemia*. You're not a doctor. But if your daughter got leukemia, you would quickly become an *quite knowledgeable*. You'd be on the *internet*. You'd read a *book*. You'd talk to *doctors*. And you'd probably be in some sort of support group. And you'd share. We just don't *share* when we're *not eager*. And we're not *eager* when we're uninformed. And we're uninformed when we won't *learn*. And we won't *learn* when we lack compassion *for those who need what we have to offer*. And **we lack compassion when we fail to see their eternal significance and terminal condition**. The *world's* dying.

And Paul recognized their significance. And he *felt* what we tend to *forget*: The people around us are the *very people* Jesus came, and suffered, and died to save.

So, **how could I *not* feel eager to share the cure with those so *significant*?**

Paul recognized the Gospel's supremacy and its sufficiency and our significance (and apparently the value of alliteration!) and *that's* what pushed him to feel "obligated" and "eager" and "unashamed" to share, saying:

I am not ashamed of the Gospel, *because* it is the *power* of God for the *salvation* of everyone who believes. – Romans 1:16 NIV

[And that's why he tells his friends in Rome] I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you. – Romans 1:13 NIV

Though he has no idea how that harvest is going to come. **Our plans can change. God's will doesn't.** So it's *our* job to *find* a way to *make* way for His will.



Anchors in Malta Maritime Museum

And **if something is holding you back from *that*, you gotta cut it loose and change your ways**, like the anchors in that spoiler alert. By the way, they think these might just be those anchors they cut away! Because the weather started getting rough and that tiny ship was tossed, if not for the Gospel of this faithful Jew, those Romans would be lost!

And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing. Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival," ... [get the parallel for us? Nourishment ... for our survival ...] And when he had said these things, he took bread and *gave thanks* to God [in the midst of the storm] in the presence of them all; [somebody paint that picture!] and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then they were all *encouraged*, and also took food themselves. [know what I hope they said? "Paul-I-want-a-cracker"] And in all we were two *hundred and seventy-six* persons on the ship [so forget what I said about the *tiny* ship – a *massive* ship was tossed!] And they let go the anchors and left them in the sea ... and made for shore. striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose ... And so it was that they all escaped safely to land. – Acts 27:33-37, 40-44 NKJ

And Paul's bitten by a snake and all the natives are saved, the end ... unless ... you go home and read the rest. But careful, or you just might learn something you'll feel compelled to share!

And then it's anchors aweigh ... in His will.