

Something they always tried to teach us at Bible College, is “When you’re giving a sermon, always start out with a really catchy story. That’ll get their attention, and once you’ve got their attention, they’ll keep on listening.”

*.....Yeah, sometimes that works, but I reckon it’s got more to do with the **substance** of the message.*

It’s got to be **worth** listening to. It’s got to be something that “Hey, this is actually relevant for **me**.” And with **some** Bible passages, the relevance is immediate. And even as you hear the reading itself, the Holy Spirit is right there, speaking to your heart, and you **know** that God is speaking to you personally.

Let me test the waters here: has anybody ever felt that? As you read a passage in the Bible, or as you heard a Bible passage being read, have you ever been **immediately** struck with an important, life-changing truth, and you just know that God is speaking to you...

Alright, well what about today?? Answer honestly – you won’t offend me. As we were reading the Bible just now, was this one of those readings? Was anybody **immediately** struck with an important, life-changing truth that you’ve never realised before???

No? I’m not surprised. And this is where the job of the preacher comes in (or the Bible teacher).

Today we’re coming toward the end of Paul’s letter to the Romans, and he’s sort-a closing up. And I’ll be honest: it’s the sort of passage where, if we were reading it in our Bibles, we’d probably just read straight through it, and “Nah, not

really doing it for me today.” So we just plough through it, so we can get to the start of Corinthians where it might be a bit more exciting again.

But I don't reckon the Lord wastes words. Even as Paul's closing up his letter, I reckon there's some **really** important stuff here for us. There are truths here, that we need to understand.

And I think what I'm going to be sharing today, is our **NEED for preaching and teaching**.

And that's why I began the message the way I did today: Every truth of the Scriptures is important, but it's not always immediately apparent. But even the **basic** truths of the Gospel, (and if you've been a Christian for a year or more, you should be pretty familiar with the basic truths of the Gospel [even our children should be pretty familiar with them]), but we need to be reminded of these things, and to be **encouraged** by them.

Something I realised when I was at Bible College, studying theology, was “Some people aren't satisfied with the timeless truth of the Gospel.” They feel they need to add something, or bring something **different** out of it, to make it fresh and appealing. And that's why I reckon we've got so many crazy theologies about today – stuff that just isn't biblical, but it's different, and so people will listen to it, and to **them** it's interesting **because** it's different.

But we don't **need** something 'different'. We just need to be reminded and encouraged by the same old wonderful, unchanging truth.

There's an old hymn, *Tell me the old, old story.*

Tell me the old, old story

Of unseen things above,

Of Jesus and His glory,

Of Jesus and His love.

Tell me the story simply,

As to a little child,

For I am weak and weary,

And helpless and defiled.

And it goes on to say "*Tell me the **same** old story*" and then it describe how this same old story, is the only source of comfort and hope for us in Jesus Christ. There's nothing **new** in Christianity. It's been around since Jesus Christ proclaimed it.

And we need to be **reminded** of the basic, unchanging truths of the Gospel. We need to be **encouraged** by the same old story. If your faith starts feeling empty and dry, you don't need something new – You just need a new experience of the same old story. Because the Gospel message that brought life to the early church, is the exact same Gospel message that gives life today.

Now, in V14, Paul says to the church in Rome:

¹⁴ **I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers**

What was his satisfaction? That they were **full of goodness;**

That they were **filled with all knowledge;** And they were

able to teach – they were **able to instruct one another** in the faith.

And let me tell you, as a minister of a church:

- it is **so** satisfying to see the goodness of God coming through in the church.
- It is **so** satisfying when you know that the people of the church really understand the things of God. And;
- it's **so** satisfying when you know there's some there who are able to teach:
 - When there's people there who can teach Sunday School;
 - teach RE at the Schools;
 - prepare a message for a Sunday;
 - share their faith with an unbeliever; And
 - when a goodly number of them are able to share the basics of Christianity with a new Christian, or someone who is seeking God....

That is **so** satisfying. Do you know why? Because that means God is at work in that church. It also means the preacher's been doing his job. The aim of a good Bible teacher, is to make himself redundant – to build **others** up, into **their** ministry in the church. And it also means that when God calls that minister away to another church, or another mission, he knows the current one's not going to all fall in a heap, and what God has begun, is going to continue.

But how does Paul know this? He's never been to Rome. How does he **know** that they are full of goodness? How does he **know** that they 'know stuff', and that they are able to instruct one another? Well, he mightn't've ever been to Rome, but he's certainly got some good friends who are members of that church in Rome.

Acts 18 tells us about how when Paul went to Corinth, he met there a married couple, by the name of Aquila and Priscilla. They were Jewish Christians, who had been expelled from Rome. Alright, so they were members of the church in Rome, but when all the Jews were expelled from Rome, they had to get out of town, and so they headed to Corinth.

And there in Corinth, is where Paul **met** them, and not only that: they worked together (literally). Paul was a tent-maker; they were tent-makers, and so they teamed up and made tents together.

Now, if you're spending much time in the vicinity of the Apostle Paul, let me assure you, you're going to learn a lot of truth about the Gospel (there's no doubt about it). And when Paul's mission then took him on to Antioch, guess who went with him. Aquila and Priscilla –they were missionaries together.

But **now**, Aquila and Priscilla are back in Rome (We know this because Paul says “G’day” to them in Chapter 16.) So he knows there are at least **some** people there who know the Gospel, and who are able to teach (because his fellow missionaries are there). But he **also** knows a fair bit about the character of the place. He has a pretty fair idea of what the Roman church is like – what its theology is – what it's being taught, and what they believe.

By the way, does that word “theology” scare anybody? The word “theology” simply means the study of God – what you believe about God. Every time you read the Bible, if you're thinking about what it tells you about God, you're doing “theology”.

Anyway, Paul had a pretty fair idea if their theology – of what they believed, because it's not that hard to pick it up, when you're talking to somebody who attends that church.

Even in our little town of St George, all the churches have their differences. We have our different traditions (the way we do things; the way we worship). And we have our different theologies – those different things that we believe. And if someone is aware of the different types of traditions and the different types of theologies, you generally don't have to talk with somebody for very long, to pick up (what's **probably**) being taught in that person's church. All you have to do is listen to their passion: "What excites them about Christianity? And what excites them about faith? What excites them about what they're hearing in church?"

For instance:

- If when you talk to somebody about matters of faith, they lament about "how bad the world is", and how other churches don't teach the truth, but they do; and about how most people who claim to be Christians aren't Christians at all because "they don't do the things that we do", ,, There's a pretty fair bet there's a bit of legalism being taught there.
- But, if you talk to another person about their faith, and they say "Oh, I'm so free. You've just got to believe – It doesn't matter what we do – "Of course I can live with my girlfriend – I'm living by grace. God won't judge me. And you shouldn't either..." ,, Well there's a pretty fair bet they're being taught "Easy-believism.",

which does away with the place of repentance.

- But then you might talk to another person, and they're most passionate about claiming blessings from God – You know – I need more money, or a bigger house, and the Lord – He's going to provide it, because I'm believing for these things... Well, they might be coming from a church that regularly preaches a "Prosperity theology"
- But then you might talk to another person who is very passionate about **social** action, and protesting against what the government is doing with the refugees or they might be passionate about women's rights; or gay rights; or land rights; or whatever rights are the flavour of the month... „ Well, they may have come from a church that concentrates on a social gospel, rather than a personal, saving Gospel.

Alright, you understand this? You don't have to spend very long with somebody, discussing issues of faith, to get a bit of a picture of what their home church **might** be like. And of course, it's all complicated a bit more today, because people aren't only receiving teaching from their home church – we have such easy access to all sorts of bible teachers on the internet / Christian radio / TV.

Anyway, we don't know exactly what Paul had picked up on about the Roman church, but from the guts of the letter, it's **probably** got something to do with the relationships between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians... But that's

not what's so important to us. What **is** important to us, is
“What **should** be getting preached in our churches?”

Alright, so Paul knew: that they were **full of goodness**;
they were **filled with all knowledge**; and they were **able**
to instruct one another... Sounds like the dream
church...

But in V15 he goes on to say:

¹⁵ But on some points I have written to you very
boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given
me by God ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the
Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God,
so that the offering of the Gentiles may be
acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

That's a polite way of saying: “You've forgotten some really
important stuff in your church”. And I've been bold in
reminding you of this, because I have a duty to do it. He
doesn't use the word “apostle” here, but that's what he's
claiming. He's an apostle, and he has authority, and a duty, to
put them on the right track – to remind them of what's
important...

So, what's most important? Well, just think about the
contents of the whole of what he's been teaching in Romans:

- In the early stages: Sin; Righteousness; Judgment.
- And he lays down the basics of the Gospel:
 - Everybody has sinned.

- And the wages of sin is death.
- Therefore, nobody is righteous, and therefore everybody is condemned
- But there is hope, because Jesus died for sinners.
 - And he describes the grace of God
 - Jesus took our sin upon Himself
 - He took the punishment that we deserved
- But that doesn't mean everybody's saved:
 - Only those who repent of their sin, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are saved

- And then in the middle of the letter, he reminds them, that those who **are** in Christ, are saved, not to continue in a life of sin, but we are saved to become new creations of God.
 - This being saved business – it's a metamorphosis that takes place – the Holy Spirit changes us. We are not the same as what we once were. Our behaviour must be holy. Our behaviour cannot be, the same as that of the world...
 - Part of our transformation is, He gives us a renewed mind
 - And we are to live, not according to the flesh, but according to The Spirit.

- And then, towards the end of the letter, he's reminding the church about love. He's boldly telling them, what it means to love each other.

Paul was proud, of what Jesus had done through him.

What satisfaction is there in preaching? Being a preacher is a pretty thankless task really. If it all goes well, God did it. If it all goes terrible, it's my fault...

So, where's the job satisfaction? Why do preachers keep on preaching?

I'll tell you why: pride. What???? Isn't pride a bad thing? Well, sometimes pride's a good thing – it depends on what we're being proud of. In V¹⁷ **In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.** What was his pride about? His pride, was in what God was doing through him.

The miracles that were being done, and the message that was being preached, was being done **through** him, but not **by** him. And **that**, is one of the greatest satisfactions a preacher can ever have – when despite ourselves, and all of our imperfections, the Holy Spirit does a mighty work in those who hear the message.

That's what will give me satisfaction today... If somehow, the Holy Spirit has reminded you of what's important:

- If He has helped you to understand the importance of seeking out good Biblical preaching and teaching
- If He has reminded you of the importance of the basics of the Gospel (or any component of it)
- If The Lord has touched your heart today, and convicted you of something that needs to be changed in your life...

That's the satisfaction. The knowledge that God has done something wonderful in somebody's life, through you.

Can you imagine any greater satisfaction???

And it's not only **preachers** who get that satisfaction. All Christians are given Spiritual Gifts – Do you know what that means? That means, when you're obedient to God (and when I'm obedient to God), and we actually use our gifts, to serve Him, God does the work through us. And how wonderful that is.

But let's come back to the importance of preaching and teaching:

Paul's pride, was **only** in what **God** did. And I mentioned a bit earlier on, some preachers are just always looking for something different. We don't need something different. If it's not from God, it has no value for Christian living; it has no value for salvation...

The preacher's job isn't to spruik on about the latest psychology; or the latest research; or to come up with a new interpretation of the Gospel.... The preachers job, is to preach Christ... It's to tell the same old story... It's to share Biblical truth, and the Holy Spirit does the rest.

Questions?