



LIBERATING
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The Order of Service

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary
as a signal for silence
- II. Singing
- III. The Apostles' Creed
- IV. Prayer, closing with the
Lord's Prayer in concert
- V. Singing
- VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
- VII. Responsive reading
of the lesson text by school
- VIII. The Decalogue

The Lesson

- I. Organ interlude while
the classes are being arranged
- II. Class study of the lesson
- III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
- IV. Closing bell — silence

The Closing

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application
of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

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— Lessons —

Rev. Lionel Merritt

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.



The Church School Creed

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

A.M.E. Discipline

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Lesson Scripture: Romans 1

Focus Scripture: Romans 1:8-17

Key Verse: I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16 (NRSV)

ROMANS 1:8-17 (NRSV)

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world.

9 For God, whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel of his Son, is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers,

10 asking that by God's will I may somehow at last succeed in coming to you.

11 For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—

12 or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

13 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles.

14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish

15 —hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."

ROMANS 1:8-17 (KJV)

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

INTRODUCTION

The four lessons in this second group consider the link between faith and salvation. In these lessons, we look at how Paul, in his letters to the early church, shared his understanding of the hope of salvation through faith. From the Epistles, we see the Apostle's fundamental belief that God's righteousness shines through persons who live by faith. Paul illustrates faith using the example of Abraham. He unpacks how we are reconciled to God through faith, and teaches that salvation is available to all.

We start this second group by looking at how Paul shared foundational elements of Christianity with believers in Rome.

Check the text to see if you can sense Paul's passion for sharing his joy about the Gospel of Christ. We all know that eagerness.

Consider the time you saw an exciting movie or found a great bargain in a store. You were naturally eager to share your discoveries. You wanted your friends to experience the pleasure you found. And

you have had the reverse experience also. A friend or relative shared with you the details of something they considered exciting. You wanted to get your own experience from the event or item recommended. The same excitement swells in us when we desire to see a beloved relative or new friend whom we have never met but about whom we heard pleasing stories. At the earliest

opportunity, we travel to meet the cherished friend or relative. Sometimes, we must buy a tank or two of gas or boat fare, train fare, or an airline ticket to see the person. But we consider that investment worthy of the joy we will experience from visiting a relative or friend.

Such is the case with Paul. He heard great reports about the believers at Rome (Romans 1:8-9) and wanted to meet them to share his understanding of the power of the Gospel with them. It was a simple message of God's love and divine outreach to people. Such sharing Paul was sure would encourage their faith as well as his.

In these lessons, we look at how Paul, in his letters to the early church, shared his understanding of the hope of salvation through faith.

In modern times, believers who are still excited about the Gospel even use social media platforms to tell friends and strangers alike of the Gospels' saving power.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

To understand Paul's zeal to visit the early church in Rome, we must marry verses one and five, then blend these to later passages in Romans (Romans 3:29-30; 9:24, 30; etc.). Paul held a deep conviction of Jesus' teaching that God intended the Gospel message to go first to the Jews. After the Jewish introduction, the message of salvation through faith would go to the whole world. And he was specially appointed to spread this message outside of Israel.

Further, Roman believers set an excellent example by the faithful way they embraced and practiced the Gospel message. They impressed the world. The reports pleased Paul so much he wanted to contribute to that faith community.

In this introductory letter to the believers at Rome, Paul struck some bases that would become reoccurring themes in his Epistles. It was apparent he was writing to people who understood the religious history of the Jews. Thus, he started by validating Jesus as a descendant of David. The Hebrew scriptures state in many places that the Messiah would be of the family of King David. Jesus was

the expected Messiah and had brought the liberating message of salvation through faith. This simple doctrine of salvation by grace through faith was capable of saving even the worst of sinners.

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Paul then addressed the basis of his authority to be a part of Rome's community of faith. Christ appointed him to pioneer the spread of the Gospel worldwide, including to the church at Rome. Paul also prayed for them and nourished the desire to visit them personally. His visits to them kept with the obligation Christ gave him to take the Gospel "to Greeks" (a reference that includes Rome's believers). Having

set out his authority to address them, Paul moved to explain the Gospel message's transforming power. On this, verse 16 is pivotal. This Gospel message, although simple, contains the divine power to save any sinner from the wages of sin. Paul was aware that the concept of salvation by faith would appear to be revolutionary to the Jewish community. Therefore, Paul connected what he was teaching to established scripture, which shows that faith was always God's route to salvation rather than law and works.

Please note that the remainder of the chapter swings on verse 16. In verse 20, the Apostle shared that God made known his divine attribute and power from the beginning of time. Therefore, people had no reasonable excuse not to know

God. Those who recognized God (e.g., like Abraham) received blessings. People who did not acknowledge God and the divine rules for living received damnation and miserable lives. So, it was in everyone's interest to believe

God and the sacred principles of life. The principles of the Gospel's power, which Paul shared with believers at Rome, remain the foundation on which evangelists still share the Gospel across the globe.

SANKOFA

Many believers who came after the Apostle Paul emulated his zeal to spread the Gospel message around the world.

The principles of the Gospel's power, which Paul shared with believers at Rome, remain the foundation on which evangelists still share the Gospel across the globe.

This passion for sharing the Gospel led to the launch of many church groupings in Africa. The simple doctrine of salvation by faith made it possible for lay people to share the Gospel.

The genesis of the Methodist church in southern Africa is a case in point. No evangelist or recognized church planters started the Methodist Church in South Africa. Around 1795, soldiers in the British army stationed in the Cape began the fellowship that would later become the Methodist Church of South Africa. Notable among these early pioneers were John Irwin and George Middlemiss. Later, they asked

the Methodist missionary society in Great Britain for missionaries to work in that area. That request brought men like Barnabas Shaw and William Shaw into the region. Their message was the same one Paul preached: salvation by faith.

From that early start, the Methodist movement in South Africa grew to become one of the largest Christian denominations in southern Africa today.

Of course, it was not an easy ride from 1795 to the present day. Starting and maintaining a church in a virgin territory is never easy. Along the way, missionaries lost their lives, conflicts with local authorities developed, and people opposed to the missions destroyed some church facilities.

Eventually, the church expanded to become the large network of believers that it is today. And the foundational doctrine remained salvation by grace through faith. This simple doctrine lay people shared.

We cited this history to show what a person, or a few persons, with a passion for the Gospel and the basic doctrine of

salvation through faith can do. There are no records that show that the pioneering soldiers were rich or had extensive theological training. They had a passion to see the Gospel spread among the group of people with whom they were in contact. Paul's simple doctrine made it easy for the pioneers to bring persons into the kingdom of God. We should all take stock of our love for seeing the

We should all take stock of our love for seeing the Gospel message reach all people groups worldwide.

Gospel message reach all people groups worldwide. Likewise, we should check how well we understand the doctrine of salvation through faith, and its power to transform people from spiritual death to eternal life.

CASE STUDY

We cannot discuss how the Apostle Paul's pioneering spirit came down through the ages to the modern church without looking at the person who gave birth to the AME Church. It is clear from the historical records that passion drove Bishop Richard Allen and his coworkers. Here is an excerpt from the International House of Prayer website: "Richard was passionate about

fulfilling God's apostolic calling on his life, regardless of personal sacrifice, and his ministry enabled African Americans to worship Jesus without hindrance and receive a witness of the gospel for generations." That gospel was the same gospel Paul proclaimed. It was simple enough for the slaves and free negroes of the time to understand. Many embraced it and passed from spiritual ignorance and death to a life of fellowship with God.

That passion enabled the young Richard Allen to teach himself to read and write. Also, he preached four or five times in open squares on Sundays. The same passion and Gospel message led him through battles with slave owners who tried to stop him. The passion and doctrine motivated him to oppose raw racism, which was a feature of his society. Allen also inspired other persons to join the fight against slavery. The education of the negroes was also a passion of his. He proved himself to be a capable organizer and led the effort to combine several different congregations into what

became the AME Church we love today. This church has the distinction of being the first national independent Black Church in the United States. From its small humble beginnings in a blacksmith shop in 1794, the AME Church is today an internationally recognized fellowship in twenty Episcopal districts. Allen did not change the Methodist doctrine which he got from his days at St. George's

Methodist Church. The base doctrine of the AME Church is still salvation by grace through faith. It has touched and inspired millions of people around the globe.

LIFE APPLICATION

The great commission (Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-18) is the believer's marching orders to engage the

world. In those orders, Jesus was explicit. He told his disciples what to do, where to go, whom to go to, and the message to share. Jesus commanded believers to share the Gospel of Christ.

In Mark's version, the transforming power of the Gospel is detailed. The

“That passion enabled the young Richard Allen to teach himself to read and write. Also, he preached four or five times in open squares on Sundays.”

Gospel has the power to save people from the consequences of their sins. It transforms ordinary people into powerful change agents. Believers get power and authority to do amazing things like casting out demons and healing the sick; this is the power of the Gospel.

Real disciples of Christ know the transforming power of the Gospel and draw on it in their ministry. All of us must ensure we are familiar with the Gospel, its power, and how to share the message of salvation of grace through faith.

Further, we must not be selective with the people in sharing the Gospel. Some believers are quick to share the Gospel message with people from poor districts. They are comfortable telling people on the streets and in the shopping malls about the love of Christ. However, these same believers are reluctant or afraid to engage people from suburban neighborhoods. We must be clear that the Gospel is for all people.

Business moguls and celebrities all have souls and need the power of the Gospel in their lives too.

In the text (Romans 1:13) the Apostle Paul admits that his first efforts to visit Rome were unsuccessful. Mature Christians understand that sometimes our efforts to evangelize do not bear the fruit we expect. They accept that God's plans

and timing can often supersede ours. Mature believers do not give up on missions because their initial efforts are fruitless. They follow Paul's example and continue trying until they are successful, or God instructs them otherwise.

The soldiers who moved to start the fellowship that became the Methodist Church in southern Africa saw

an opportunity to share the Gospel. They acted in the power of the Gospel and did what they could to share the Gospel with people with whom they interacted. We stress that these pioneers were not theologians. They were not paid



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evangelists. But they understood the need to take action. They obeyed the call in the Great Commission. We must do the same. Obedience to God's call to spread the Gospel demands believers must take action to introduce people to the Gospel. Sometimes we take action by ourselves. At other times, work with others of like mind.

Questions:

1. Have there been moments when you acted as if you were ashamed of the Gospel and unsure of its power? Describe the feelings and the reasons for this.
2. How do you balance bold and confident witness with humility?
3. Who specifically can you pray for this week that they may come to truly know the saving power of God? Commit to pray for them this week.

CLOSING DEVOTION

Closing Song: "Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound," AMEC Hymn #226

Closing Prayer: Dear Father, I thank you for the beautiful saving grace that you extended to me through the simple Gospel of Christ. I pray you would grant me the wisdom and strength to share the same Gospel with people who are drowning in the sea of sin. I asked this in Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

July 5-July 11

Monday	1 Corinthians 3:1-11 (Apollos and Paul, Builders)
Tuesday	Galatians 2:1-10 (Entrusted to Take Gospel to Gentiles)
Wednesday	Romans 1:1-7 (Grace and Peace to All)
Thursday	Romans 1:18-23 (God's Righteous Wrath)
Friday	Romans 1:24-32 (God's Actions Are Fair and Just)
Saturday	2 Peter 2:4-9 (God's Righteous Actions for Saints, Sinners)
Sunday	Romans 1:8-17 (The Gospel Changes Jews and Gentiles)