

The Unchanging Power of the Gospel

I write these words from India where I'm on my 22nd ministry trip in the last 22 years. How India is changing!

On the one hand, there are many things about India that are as different from America as you can imagine, especially in the more primitive, rural regions, where people still live in tiny huts side by side with their cattle and where there is no running water or electricity.

On the other hand, the changes I have personally seen since 1993 are shocking, from once-barren airports without air conditioning to temperature controlled buildings with Kentucky Fried Chicken and Domino's, and from broken-down roads filled with ox carts where you would cover less than 300 miles in 24 hours to four-lane highways with an increasing number of BMWs and Audis.

You can see the changes in the larger culture as well, with more and more women wearing jeans rather than saris, with cell phones everywhere (in contrast with the not too distant past, when perhaps one person in a thousand had a landline phone in their home), and with Western worldliness starting to spread like cancer, especially in the younger generation.

Yet the gospel hasn't changed one bit, and it remains the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first for the Jew and then for the Gentile (see Rom. 1:16), no matter what happens to the culture and no matter how much society changes.

The gospel will overcome all kinds of resistance and will set all kinds of prisoners free. We need to declare the good news with confidence regardless of what our eyes see or our ears hear. Jesus still saves and delivers! Put another way, the

blood will never lose its power.

I have had the privilege of ministering outside the United States more than 150 times, preaching several thousand messages over the course of those trips in countries as diverse as India or Italy, Kenya or Korea, Mexico or Israel, Singapore or Hungary.

And without fail, in nation after nation, I have watched the Spirit move on hearts—after all, this is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11). And I have watched the Word of God change lives—after all, this is the same Word that Jesus quoted to resist Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4).

From the days of Jeremiah until today, God's Word is "like fire ... and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces" (Jer. 23:29).

From the days of Hebrews until today, God's Word is still is "alive, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

From the days of Paul until today, God's Word is still "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), able to pull down strongholds and demolish arguments and lies (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

And while I absolutely do my best to convey the message clearly, working with the best possible translators overseas, seeking to speak in a way that relates to the culture, whether I'm in a tribal village in India or Oxford University in England (being "relevant" in the best sense of the term), I put no confidence in my ability to persuade and I put all my confidence in God and His Word, by the life and power of the Spirit.

God's Word never changes, and that's why the gospel is never emptied of its power.

To this day, it is setting the most hopeless drug addicts free and delivering the most hate-filled terrorists. That's the power of the gospel!

To this day, it is convicting the self-righteous of their sin and revealing the mercy of God to the worst sinner.

To this day, it is declaring that Jesus alone is Lord—not the gods of the nations and not the prophets and leaders of the false religions—and it is promising forgiveness and new life to everyone who will turn to him.

And the moment they truly turn, they are changed, from death to life in a moment of time, and from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God, from lost to saved and from unclean to holy.

That's the power of the gospel!

I want to encourage you to share the good news with confidence, knowing that God's Word will not return void, knowing that the message of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus will be relevant and fresh until the last moment of human history, knowing that heaven and earth will pass away but Jesus' words will never pass away (Matt. 24:35), and knowing that God's mercy never wanes.

Until Jesus returns, the message of the cross will be transforming lives as we proclaim it boldly and without shame.

And while the tune to the hymn "There Is Power in the Blood" may be old, the message is as fresh today as it was 2,000 years ago: There is power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.

Preach the cross, preach the resurrection, preach the message of new life in Jesus, and you will witness firsthand the unchanging power of the gospel.

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