

Eternity Daily Bible Study

Romans 9-16 The Implications of Salvation

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE AIBI

Number: 624

Verses: Romans 15:15-19

Topic: A Fulfilled Ministry

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Romans 15:15-19 MKJV *But, brothers, I wrote to you boldly, as reminding you in part, because of the grace that is given to me by God, (16) that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the nations, ministering the gospel of God, so that the offering up of the nations might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (17) Therefore I have boasting in Christ Jesus as to the things pertaining to God. (18) For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ did not work out by me for the obedience of the nations in word and deed, (19) in power of miracles and wonders, in power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem, and all around to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*

Some people tap into God very deeply and have His power flowing through them "*in word and deed, in power of miracles and wonders, in power of the Spirit of God*". I have been thinking about this a lot lately after seeing programs on Adolf Hitler and on Alexander the Great both of whom achieved great (though temporary and evil) power through the use of the occult. It led me to think "if the Devil can give spectacular victories to people how much more can God do?" then I realized that the power of God operates entirely differently. The power of God does not produce dictators, it produces saints instead! The power of God aims at quality of character not quantity of conquest!

The Devil produces Hitler, Stalin, Alexander the Great, Papa Doc and Idi Amin. God produces Paul, Augustine of Hippo, St. Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther, Mother Teresa and Billy Graham.

Now Paul could have been a very successful member of the Jewish ruling elite. But he chose Christ instead and the power of the Holy Spirit, not the power of self, or the power of the Devil. When the broken Paul let God take him over there was a realigning of the source of personal power. God came in and became the locus for all Paul's actions so that he could only describe himself as someone "crucified" and could say "it is no longer I who liveth but Christ who liveth in me."

As a result of this surrender to the Holy Spirit and to the dynamic working of Christ within him Paul's ministry was characterized by signs and wonders and the Spirit of God!

I think part of the reason we see so few miracles is because of prayer-less, un-surrendered lives particularly among some Christian leaders. We need to be immersed in God, and to let God flow through us!

Paul's consecration went all the way to his identity which was as a "minister of Jesus Christ to the nations". The Greek word for minister here is not the usual "diakonos" (deacon) but the more specialized "leitourgos" - which means a priest, worshipper or

functionary and in the NT is used of people performing priestly work such as sacrifices and offerings. It is mainly used for "full-time" ministers of the gospel. Here Paul is the "priest" who presents the Gentiles as a fully acceptable offering to God – without spot or blemish, sanctified and holy. Paul's identity was of someone preparing people for God so that God might be pleased with them as an "acceptable offering". (We are obviously not talking about literal human sacrifice but rather about a consecrated life.)

The goal of Paul's ministry was "obedience in both word and deed". Too often we are satisfied with words, with students who can recite the correct answers, rather than living correct lives. These days many modern seminary students know a great deal of Greek and with the latest computer bible aids can do wonderful bible and archaeological study. On a cognitive level they would know far more than the simple preaching saints of old such as St. Francis of Assisi! But despite all this extra knowledge often their lives do not match up. There needs to be a profoundly changed lifestyle so that we are conformed in our behavior to biblical Christian teaching such as the Sermon On The Mount.

As pastors, missionaries, bible teachers and Christian leaders we cannot be satisfied with disobedience. It is not "just sinful human nature" to be excused and even pandered to. Paul wrote that he wanted their "obedience to be complete" (2 Corinthians 10:6). We cannot let people off half way – even if they do not much like the process of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. We do them eternal damage and leave them as incomplete human beings when we indulge their sins.

In order to have the strength and energy to shape people and nations and to do signs and wonders Paul had to rely totally on Jesus Christ. Without divine authority Paul had no authority. Without divine answers to prayer Paul had no miracles, signs or wonders. Success for Paul was not dependent on fundraising or politics but on the Holy Ghost.

So dependent on Christ was he that Paul boasted of nothing except what Christ had done through him: **Romans 15:17-19 HCSB** *Therefore I have reason to boast in Christ Jesus regarding what pertains to God. (18) For I would not dare say anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, (19) by the power of miraculous signs and wonders, and by the power of God's Spirit. As a result, I have fully proclaimed the good news about the Messiah from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum.*

In other words "it wasn't me, it was God". Paul was very careful about pride creeping into his ministry and diminishing his effectiveness, sanctification and reward. *For I would not dare say anything except what Christ has accomplished through me* is powerful language! Paul was not going to boast of his heritage or his intellect or his business ability or his great tent-making skills – but only in Christ, and even then only about what God had done through him.

Paul was humble so God could pour out His grace into Paul's life and make it a mighty life. Back to our theme – the Devil produces proud dictators with temporary fiefdoms, but on the other hand Christ produces humble saints with holy lives that have an eternal impact. The power of God in us may not make us great and famous in a worldly sense but it will give us the means to fulfill our ministry and preach the gospel in our sphere of influence: *As a result, I have fully proclaimed the good news about the Messiah from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum.*

Blessings,

John Edmiston (johned@aibi.ph)

Chairman/ CEO

Antioch Internet Bible International

<http://www.aibi.ph>

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