

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for March 7: The gospel is all about changing people's lives_22304

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The gospel is all about changing people's lives

1 Timothy 1-2

By David Morgan

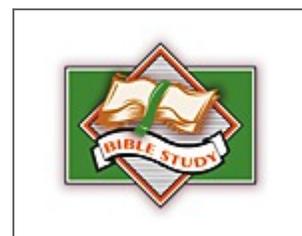
Trinity Baptist Church, Harker Heights

Trinity Baptist Church gathered yesterday to worship. Trinity scattered this morning into offices, classrooms and coffee shops across Central Texas. We assembled to praise God and hear a divine word. Our worship transformed us so that today we better reflect God's character in our community. Having encountered the living Lord, we eagerly proclaim the gospel to our friends and colleagues. We please God when we share the message of salvation with those who yet do not know Christ as Savior and Lord.

Focus on changing lives (1:3-7)

Paul had taught and ministered to the Ephesian church for about three years before being imprisoned in Rome. He had written to the church from that confinement. He had entrusted the church to his young apprentice, Timothy.

One challenge the young pastor faced was strange teachings in the church. We cannot be certain these teachings were heretical, but they surely diverted attention from the church's main task.



The goal of instruction within the church was to produce love and not spawn meaningless discussions and conversations. Genuine teaching would promote a “pure heart” (a godly personality), a “good conscience” (one which was without guilt) and a “sincere faith” (an undivided allegiance to God in Christ). Paul stressed to Timothy the importance of focusing on the central truth of the Christian life. The church could ill afford to get sidetracked by clever and entertaining, but meaningless, discussions.

The false teachers substituted fluff (fruitless discussions and speculation) for substance, love. They sought to be revered as teachers, but their reputation and expertise was based on deception and not genuine teachings.

Christians can easily be amused by conversations in Bible study and worship settings. Paul's word to Timothy warns us to keep focused on the purpose of Christian instructions—changed lives.

Realize God's power (1:12-15)

Paul considered himself a prime example that God's power can save even the worst of sinners. He never ceased to be amazed or grateful that God had redeemed and called him to proclaim the gospel. Paul understood the call to salvation also meant a call to service.

The former persecutor of Christians also described himself as a blasphemer and a violent man. He characterized himself as the worst of sinners. I hesitate to agree with Paul that he was the most sinful person who ever lived. I'm not sure that's what he meant. What he intended was to highlight the power of God's grace. Christ came to save sinners. If God's super-abundant grace in Christ could save someone like Paul, God could save anyone.

That Paul would refer to himself as worst of sinners reveals how close he had grown in his relationship to God. In "Why Live the Christian Life?" T.B. Maston wrote several times of people who are maturing in their faith. The deeper one's relationship with Christ grows, the deeper the consciousness of sin. "It seems that the more the image (of God) has been restored in one's life, the more aware he is of his failure to realize fully the image of God in his life," he wrote.

Pray for the salvation of all (2:1-7)

Worship was an important issue Paul addressed in his letter to Timothy. Paul began his discussion of worship by encouraging the church to pray for all people. His joining of the four words, "requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving" accents prayer's richness.

Paul specifically commanded the church to pray for civic leaders ("kings and all those in authority"). Praying for civic leaders would enable them to rule well. A stable society would allow Christians to live in peace and proclaim the gospel to others.

To pray for everyone is beautiful (“good”) in God's eyes. Paul further described the God whom the church worshipped (vv. 3-7). He related prayer to God's saving character. When Paul wrote that God wanted to save all people, he was emphasizing the universal relevance of the Christ event. Christ died for all, not for some only. To come to the knowledge of the truth is to come to Christ as Savior and Lord.

Humankind has a basic unity because God is one. People are united by a common God who seeks to redeem everyone.

One person, “the man Christ Jesus,” mediates between God and humanity. A mediator restores peace between two people. The one who represented God needed to be a divine being. The one who represented humanity needed to be a human being. Christ was both—fully human, fully divine.

Christ served not only as mediator, but also voluntarily offered himself as a ransom for all people. The concept of paying a ransom stresses the costly price paid for humanity's redemption. The idea of ransom further indicates Christ gave himself in his crucifixion as a substitute for humanity.

Paul recognized his role as one who was to proclaim the message that Christ could save the world. His mention of Gentiles here reminds us of his discussion in the book of Ephesians where he announced God had created one new humanity out of Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:11-22). Christians today continue to be called to proclaim to the world that Jesus saves.

Question for discussion

- ◆ Is becoming diverted from the primary task a concern in today's church as well?