

# *Truth for Today*

## *The Bible Explained*

---

For reply: Email: [truthfortoday@aol.com](mailto:truthfortoday@aol.com)

**Broadcast Date:** 15 September 2019

**No.:** T1111

**Speaker:** Jonathan Hughes

---

## **The Gospel of Christ Jesus**

### **The Power of God & my response Romans 1:16 & 10:9-10**

I would like to start this morning by talking about the Maginot line. Built during the 1930s by the French Minister of War, André Maginot, it was an impressive line of almost impregnable defensive works designed to keep any future threat from Germany outside of France. It ran just inside the French border from Italy in the south, past Switzerland and Germany to Luxembourg in the north. The border with Belgium had deliberately been left unprotected so French troops could quickly counter attack should the need arise. French military experts hailed it as a work of genius designed to deter invasion. Unfortunately, it was completely bypassed by the invading German forces that attacked through the Ardennes Forest, a route which had been thought too difficult to launch an invasion through. Within a space of two weeks in May 1940, the Germans had overrun northern France and were encamped around Dunkirk. Today, it has become a metaphor for expensive efforts that offer a false sense of security. We shall come back to this later.

Good morning and welcome to Truth for Today. Don't worry, you are tuned in to the right programme and this morning we conclude our series on The Gospel of Christ Jesus. We started by looking at the fact that there is only one God. Last week we saw the outpouring salvation of God, as the people were instructed to stand still and see God at work! Today we will look at the omnipotent God and my response to Him. The Apostle Paul had a sense of the greatness of our salvation as he wrote in Romans chapter 1, verse 16: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.*

I don't know whether you have ever stopped to consider just what a magnificent thing salvation is. Every time I think about this, I realise how much greater it is than I had ever imagined. Too often we think about salvation only in terms of our being forgiven from our sins the moment we trusted in the Lord Jesus. Now this is indeed a wonderful thing but it is only a part of what salvation covers. We will begin this morning by considering the power of God in saving us from the penalty of sin. Then we will think about the power of God in saving us from the power of sin. Finally we will consider the power of God in saving us from the presence of sin. Past, present and future – salvation really does show clearly the awesome power of God!

### **The Gospel saves us from the penalty of sin**

If we go back to the very beginning of time we will be reminded of the words of God to Adam: *Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die* (Genesis chapter 2, verses 16 – 17). Disobedience to God would lead to the inevitable consequence of separation from Him, for this is what death truly is. As the starkest of visual aids physical death would ensue, a separation of the individual from this physical world.

Ever since Adam all have sinned. Without exception, mankind has not lived up to the only requirement that God has placed upon us – to *Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself* (Luke

chapter 10, verse 27). Therefore, Paul could say that: *For as in Adam all die* (1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 22) and in Romans chapter 5, verses 17 – 19: *For if by one man's offence death reigned through the one ..... therefore, as through one man's offence judgement came to all men, resulting in condemnation ..... for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners.* What a sorry condition we are in, *having no hope and without God in the world* (Ephesians chapter 2, verse 12).

It is into this hopeless situation that God, in Christ, has brought hope. By His one sacrificial, substitutional death, Christ has forever put away sin. The judgement that I deserved He has taken and every one of my sins has been answered for. God is rigorously just and having judged Christ for my sin, He will never judge me for those same sins. One payment is eternally sufficient. And it is entirely sufficient. So God would raise the Lord Jesus from the dead as visible proof that the work was finished. Every single one of His righteous demands against my sin had been paid in full. All that is left for me to do is to accept this: *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation* (Romans chapter 10, verses 9 – 10).

Perhaps you are familiar with the story in 1 Samuel chapter 24 of the time when David was being pursued by Saul. David entered a cave where Saul was resting and cut the corner from his robe, when he could have killed Saul, before leaving. Mercy had been shown to Saul, but he was left unchanged and in the cave. There could not be a greater contrast between this incident and what God has done for us. God has not just come down into this world and shown us mercy in forgiving us, but then left us unchanged. His power is so great that, not only has He freed us from the penalty of sin, but He is now exerting that power on our behalf.

### **The Gospel saves us from the power of sin**

There is a proverb that says *A leopard cannot change its spots*. However, the wonderful power of God enables us to be something that we are not by nature. We were born sinners, unable to please God, but we can be altogether different. This truth lies at the heart of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. Jean Valjean had been sent to prison for stealing food to feed his family. He is released once his sentence is served by the policeman, Javert, who does not believe that men can change. Indeed Jean does break his parole but is forgiven by a priest who understands the transforming power of forgiveness. What unfolds is a wonderful story of redemption.

I was saved as a young lad of about 10, over 40 years ago now. Since then God has been patiently working in me to make me more like the Lord Jesus. I am still a work in progress and will be until the day when I die. Before I became a Christian, I only had one nature, and that was sinful. It lived to please itself. For sure, it might be capable of great acts of kindness but they always sprang from what I had decided to do for my purposes. Now I have a new nature and that is capable of pleasing God as my old nature is denied and I do things that come from His leading. Though there is a conflict between the two natures, as I crucify my old nature and feed my new nature, then increasingly, I live a life free from sin and well pleasing to God. At least that is the theory!

Life lived in the power of the new nature is directed and energised by God rather than a forlorn attempt by me to stick to a set of right actions. So Paul could write: *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace* (Romans chapter 6, verse 14). It is vital to understand that as Christians we do have a power within us that is capable of pleasing God. This does not happen by setting a long list of do's and don'ts but by learning to do what the Lord would have each one of us do. The life that pleases God now is not defined by a set of rules but by an increasingly intimate relationship. In Romans chapter 8, verse 2 we read: *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death*. Just pause and

wonder at what Paul is saying here! That law that had condemned Adam is no longer in operation – sin no longer separates me from God, though it does spoil the relationship. No wonder that great chapter ends with the triumphant declaration that nothing can *separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*.

We are on a glorious journey that will one day end in our being in heaven with, and like, the Lord Jesus. As Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth he shared a sense of this with them: *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord* (2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 18). I find it utterly remarkable that there can be any sense in which He is being formed in me now! But that is just what Paul is saying. As I obey the Lord, there is a little bit of divine glory in me that reflects the greatness of His glory. This is not something that I can create within me by my own dedication and hard work! The features of the risen Christ can only be formed in me by the working of the Holy Spirit. That is not to say, however, that I am without responsibility, that this process is forced upon me regardless of my will. This production of glory in my life is a result of my readiness to yield my will to His will in obedience to His word.

You may recall the time when Mary anointed the person of the Lord, recounted in the Gospel of John chapter 12. She broke her alabaster jar so there could be no hope of saving some of the precious ointment for herself. We need a similar attitude when it comes to the surrender of our will and allowing Him to work in us. If I approach my faith by thinking that I can reform my old nature and somehow get my old and new nature to cooperate in working for Him, then I will soon come unstuck. We need to be ruthless in our treatment of ourselves. So Paul could tell the Christians living in Galatia: *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me* (Galatians chapter 2, verse 20). When the choice to react in anger presents itself, I need to ensure that old nature is dead, crucified to His cross. When the desire for riches and greed make me dissatisfied with what I have, I need to make sure those nails are banged in good and hard. And when I am tempted to break a promise, I need to ensure that my desires are totally lifeless.

I think that this is what it means to *work out your own salvation* (Philippians chapter 2, verse 12). We are eternally saved and nothing can change this. But the power of the Gospel not only saves us for heaven but saves us from this present, evil world. It empowers us to live in the here and now in a way that is well pleasing to our heavenly Father. And this is just what Jesus did, leaving us an example of the kind of life we can live now. It is important to notice what is going on here. Jesus lived a life that honoured His Father and is now, risen and ascended, living as a man in a kingdom realm that, although we are unable to see it, is every bit as real as the Kingdom of Great Britain. So following this pattern, God has chosen us to be saved, to live a life that glorifies Him and then to share in the heavenly kingdom in a day to come. We conclude this section with the words of Paul to the believers in Thessalonica: *But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ* (2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 13 – 14).

## **The Gospel saves us from the presence of sin**

And so we come to the Maginot line! When you open the newspapers today, you see compelling evidence for the result of the devil's work in this world. Poverty, societal breakdown, violence and injustice all speak of what happens when God's word is ignored. Empty pews and a church divided is the result of His authority being ignored. The devil must be rubbing his hands in glee. His Maginot line defences seem impregnable but no barrier of man or devil can withstand the power of an almighty God. It is mistakenly thought that God has no place in this world. Indeed rumours

circulate that God is dead! All seems hopeless except for the tiny glimmer of light. There in the Garden of Eden, when the devil first made his mischief in this world, the promise had been made that the Son of the woman would crush his head! And God always keeps His promises! The devil is referred to as *the god of this world* (2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 4) and in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 2 *he is the prince of the power of the air*. But one day, perhaps today, he will be utterly powerless to stop the Lord Jesus returning into the air, supposedly the domain of the devil, to meet with His body, His Church. For the first time since Pentecost, the whole church will be gathered together in one place, united and glorious, and there will not be a single thing that the devil will be able to do to stop it! This is the power of the Gospel written large on the scenes of this world. Let us just remind ourselves of those glorious words in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 16 – 18: *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

God looked to be dead and buried and His voice seemed to be forever quietened in this world. His followers were few and divided. From time to time, pitifully small revivals brought hope to some. But through all the ages God has been quietly going about His work, saving those who will be saved. Actively accepting the devil's '*Take that, ha*' challenge, with His own '*I don't mind if I do*', God has been working all things together for good and will continue to do so until He is ready to move. (Note it is His version of good that He is working towards, not our myopic version). But in one glorious day, God will send His well beloved Son back into this world to gather together all those who have responded to the Gospel. That power that defeated sin and death, that Gospel that protects us from the awful consequences and power of sin will one day gloriously deliver us from its presence – and thus we shall always be with the Lord! No wonder we can comfort each other with these words!

The devil will be utterly impotent to prevent this action of God. His malevolent power in this world will be revealed for what it is – the greatest smoke and mirrors trick foisted on mankind. What glorious Gospel power will enable each one of us to rise up into the air, no longer earthbound, and to be instantly resurrected into our new and eternal bodies. How can this be? I for one cannot explain this, save to say that He is the all powerful God who is able to do anything that is consistent with His person. Today, there is a world that contains just one perfect Man, but one day it will be full of people from every tribe and nation and they will all be there because of the Gospel – that simple message that Jesus loves me, and gave Himself for me!

But as we close, we ought not to forget the very real difference that this should make to us now. This may sound like nothing more than pie in the sky. But Paul shows us that this glorious hope that the Gospel brings makes the profoundest difference to us now. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and verse 6 through to the end of the chapter, Paul outlines what difference this should make with his devastatingly logical *therefore*. We are to watch and be sober, and in case there is any shadow of doubt as to what this actually means in practice, he spells it out particularly in verses 14 to 22. Because the Lord is coming, *we are to rejoice always*. Even through tears, we can rejoice because we know how the story will end. Because He is coming, *we are to pray without ceasing* because there is always hope. Because He is coming, *we are to abstain from every form of evil* because of the shame of Him finding us doing something we ought not to be doing when He calls for us.

There is no force in the universe that can withstand the power of God, revealed to us in the Gospel. We have a Saviour who has worked in our past for good. We have a Saviour who will work in our future for good. So why do we doubt that we have a Saviour who works in our present for good? It is utterly illogical. The Gospel reveals to us the power of God and it also shows us what we must do: *but now [God] commands all men everywhere to repent* (Acts chapter 17, verse 30).

None of us may like being told what to do but this is exactly what God is telling us to do. We are left with the choice of willing submission or outright rejection of His command. As you listen to this broadcast, or read this transcript, what is your reaction to the power of God? You have a choice to make and it can only end in two possibilities. May each one of us willingly bow the knee to Him who will one day receive the universal acclaim of all – *those in heaven, and those on earth and those under the earth*. Philippians 2 verse 10.

But for those of us who already know the Lord Jesus as Saviour, what of us? May we live each moment in the conscious awareness that *He is able to keep us from falling* and will one day *present us faultless before the Father* Jude 24. May our lives bear eloquent testimony to the living power of God and His glorious Gospel that has reached us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ

Thank you for listening to Truth for Today, talk T1111, The Power of God & my response.

NKJV version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.

---

**Please Note:**

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1.