

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



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God's Power to Save

What is the religion of Christ all about? The book of Romans presents a good overview, but a single verse at the beginning of that book captures all the key elements.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

This verse is the thesis statement of the epistle to the Romans. Everything else in the book supports the premise that Paul lays out in this opening declaration. It would serve us well, then, to unpack this verse and understand what Paul is saying here.

First, let's focus on the word “salvation.” To be “saved” implies some danger or threat. Paul expounds on this threat in detail in chapters 1-3. In a word, it is *sin*, the failure to measure up to God's perfect standard. Many people are hopelessly lost and confused, with no clue about why they are here. Others think they have a hot line to God, but even they fall short of what God wants them to be. Unbelievers mock the Christian doctrine of salvation as some kind of cosmic fire insurance to keep us out of hell, but that's a cheap caricature. The real problem is more immediate. Our imperfections and flaws, even when

we try to live right, burden us with a sense of failure that robs us of our divine purpose in life. That's the problem God has set out to solve.

His solution is not another Red Sea experience, or an enormous intergalactic laser light show, or an instantaneous healing of all the world's health ailments—because none of that addresses the spiritual nature of the problem. Instead, His solution is *the gospel of Christ*, the “good news” of a perfect Man who taught what life ought to be, demonstrated that ideal in His own life, then sacrificed His life as a token of God's forgiveness of our failings. (Paul elaborates on that theme in ch. 5.)

But the benefits of this message are available only to those who genuinely *believe* that message. This not just an academic acceptance of certain facts, but a complete and all-encompassing surrender to the goodness of God. We trust Him fully, and will build our lives, inside and out, upon everything He tells us. (That's the subject of ch. 4, 6-8.)

Finally, even though this offer of salvation came to the Jews first, it is

now available to all, regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, education, economic or social status, or any of the other artificial distinctions that have historically divided the human race. (Covered in ch. 9-11.)

Let's step back from these details for a moment and consider the underlying principle here. Did you notice that this entire enterprise is, at its foundation, an *intellectual* exercise? Our sins are the result of (and reinforced by) faulty *thinking*; God's solution is a historical narrative that addresses how we *think* about ourselves and the world; and it is only those who are willing to align their *thinking* with this worldview who will benefit from it.

We can express this another way: If God's power to save is primarily a matter of the intellect, then we are making a serious mistake when we serve a religion that is chiefly concerned with external rituals and carnal enticements. That's a play religion, not the religion of God. With the gospel, we are transformed by a renewed *mind* (12:2), which results in a renewed *life* (ch. 12-16).

— David King