

Sermon Series: “Lasting Faith”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—4/7/2002

Title: “Faith’s Power”

Text: Romans 3: 21-28

Intro.: *Ills. Where the Real Power Is & Faith and Power*

Theme: In a world which is obsessed with power and power-bases, God has set a humanly absurd way in which to be a part of his saving power----to simply believe.

***Power by believing in God’s promises (vs. 21)***

?? God doesn’t change the rules

1. God’s promise of salvation by grace through faith was the same in the Old Testament as it was in the New
  1. A lot of bad theology is out in present day church that the Holy Spirit and faith were not present in OT times
  2. God’s statement, “*No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*” *1 Cor 12: 3* would be a lie, if OT people were not saved by the Holy Spirit and faith rather by *rite, ritual, and rules*
2. Jesus proclaimed what the message of the OT Law and Prophets was
  1. **PRINT AND READ LUKE 24: 44-48**

?? God’s promise doesn’t change

1. The power of faith rest in that it is not based on a sliding scale of our faithfulness or personal righteousness
  1. “Righteousness of God is apart from the Law”
  2. **Ills.: What makes us different from Islam (the five tenants)**
2. Today, you can be secure salvation by grace through faith is the same as it was in the past and will be in the future
  1. “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*” *Hebrews 13:8*
  2. You become a living witness/testimony to the power of that kind of faith in Jesus

***Power by believing in God’s fairness (vss. 22-28)***

?? It is an impartial way to deliverance (22-24)

1. Two abiding truths stand:
  1. All people sin and fall way short of God’s requirement for personally saving themselves
  2. All people may and only can be saved by grace through faith, available to everyone
2. God offers us this gift to freely so that we might freely give it away
  1. God puts no conditions on our salvation and doesn’t want us to do it to ourselves or others, either
  2. “*Freely you have received, freely give.*” *Matthew 10: 8*
  3. What are you doing that is putting yourself/someone back under the slavery to guilt and bondage to the law?

?? It is an objective rather than a subjective faith (25-26)

3. Often we want to slide back into a subjective way
  1. Because a subjective focus put the attention on artificially generated moments rather than a transformed life
  2. Because we don’t want to get real with what God has to transform in me
  3. Because, if salvation is up to me —personal relationship, my list of good things—then I can justify away any sin
  4. **Ills.: Powerless Against Sin**
4. God make a objective public display out of how salvation through Jesus
  1. So that no one could ever say that God wasn’t “fair” and “retrained” and “longsuffering”
  2. To show the gravity of our sin and its consequence
  3. To create a certifiable “trail” to justify how we are declared not guilty by faith in Jesus

?? **Ills.: The OT Mercy seat (a bloody public demonstration)**

?? It is a humbly simple way (27-28)

5. That hardest thing about faith is *surrender*
  1. **Ills.: Powerless Christianity**

2. It means surrendering my claim for my rights
3. It means surrendering my claim for my way
4. It often means dying before I can trying live
5. *“Those belonging to Christ Jesus have crucified their corrupt nature with its passions and desires.”*  
*Gal 5: 24*
6. The freeing truth of salvation by faith in Jesus is that is *“once for all time”*
  1. Never again worrying that God is getting me back for something I did—*not base on actions—good or bad*
  2. All it takes is living in the power of faith and forgiveness—*Declared not guilty by faith for Jesus’ sake*

### Where the real power is

An old tale speaks of a man who died and faced the angel Gabriel at heaven's gates. **The angel said, "Here's how this works. You need a hundred points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you have done, and I will give a certain number of points for each of them. The more good there is in the work that you cite, the more points you will get for it. When you get to a hundred points, you get in."** "Okay," the man said, "I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart." **Gabriel replied, "That's wonderful. That's worth three points.** "Three points?" said the man incredulously. "Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my money and service." **"Terrific!" said Gabriel, "that's certainly worth a point."** "One point?" said the man with his eyes beginning to show a bit of panic. "Well, how about this: I opened a shelter for the homeless in my city, and fed needy people by the hundreds during holidays." **"Fantastic, that's good for two more points," said the angel. "TWO POINTS!"** cried the man in desperation. "At this rate the only way I will get to heaven is by the grace of God." **"Come on in," said Gabriel**

### Faith and Power

Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. Faith begins where man's power ends. *Citation: George Muller.*

### Powerless Against Sin

A man purchased a white mouse to use as food for his pet snake. He dropped the unsuspecting mouse into the snake's glass cage, where the snake was sleeping in a bed of sawdust. The tiny mouse had a serious problem on his hands. At any moment he could be swallowed alive. Obviously, the mouse needed to come up with a brilliant plan. What did the terrified creature do? He quickly set to work covering the snake with sawdust chips until it was completely buried. With that, the mouse apparently thought he had solved his problem. The solution, however, came from outside. The man took pity on the silly little mouse and removed him from the cage. No matter how hard we try to cover or deny our sinful nature, it's fool's work. Sin will eventually awake from sleep and shake off its cover. Were it not for the saving grace of the Master's hand, sin would eat us alive.

### Powerless Christianity

While visiting Grand Coulee Dam, my family and I were surprised to see that the visitor's center was dark. It was a sunny day, so we thought the center might have tinted windows, but as we got closer we realized there were no lights on. We went in and saw that none of the displays were working. Suddenly it became clear: there was no power to the center. Due to a technical difficulty of some kind, the visitor's center that sat only hundreds of feet from a hydroelectric dam had no power. How could something be so close to the power source, yet not be "plugged in"?

**Romans 3:21-28**

Now, the way to receive God's approval has been made plain in a way other than Moses' Teachings. Moses' Teachings and the Prophets tell us this. <sup>22</sup>Everyone who believes has God's approval through faith in Jesus Christ.

There is no difference between people. <sup>23</sup>Because all people have sinned, they have fallen short of God's glory. <sup>24</sup>They receive God's approval freely by an act of his kindness through the price Christ Jesus paid to set us free from sin. <sup>25</sup>God showed that Christ is the mercy seat where God's approval is given through faith in Christ's blood. In his patience God waited to deal with sins committed in the past. <sup>26</sup>He waited so that he could display his approval at the present time. This shows that he is a God of justice, a God who approves of people who believe in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup>So, do we have anything to brag about? Bragging has been eliminated. On what basis was it eliminated? On the basis of our own efforts? No, indeed! Rather, it is eliminated on the basis of faith. <sup>28</sup>We conclude that a person has God's approval by faith, not by his own efforts.[GW]

**Luke 24:44-48**

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup>He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things.