

Good Sundays Can Change Your Eternity Romans 1:14-17, Philippians 3:7-9

Slide 1

Today we're concluding our series, *I Love Sundays*. We've looked at why going to church (corporate worship) is important.

We have looked at the fact that good Sundays make better Mondays, focusing on rest. So, today I want to talk about the fact that good Sundays can change your eternity.

Romans 1:14-17, *"I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"*

Slide 2

Here in verse 14, Paul said: *"I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish."*

Eugene Peterson's *The Message* translates this verse to read, *"Everyone I meet -- it matters little whether they're mannered or rude, smart or simple--deepens my sense of interdependence and obligation."*

The Greek word used in this verse for "*obligated*" means indebted. Paul's saying that he's eager to share the gospel with the people in Rome because he owes it to them.

The question begs... *“Why does Paul feel indebted to the people of Rome?”* He’s never met them. Why was he so compelled to go? In his letter to the Philippian church, he says,

Philippians 3:7-9, *“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.”*

What Paul had found in Christ was far greater than anything else he had ever found in religion, education, accomplishments or relationships.

Nothing compared with the salvation he had found that day when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus.

Paul was indebted to the people of Rome because he was obligated to Christ and desired to share with the people of Rome the truth, love and freedom that he had found himself.

In 2012, the singer Whitney Houston died. Many different people either sang or spoke at her funeral service at the New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey.

One of those who spoke was actor, Kevin Costner, who co-starred with her in the movie *“The Bodyguard.”*

Kevin Costner started by saying that he and Whitney were very different people. He said that she is a woman and he is a man. She is black and he is white.

However, they did have one thing in common. He said that they were both raised in the Baptist Church. He went on to talk about his life as a child in the Baptist church and compared it to Whitney's life growing up.

While it is true that Kevin Costner and Whitney Houston had a common heritage in the Baptist Church, they also had something else in common. They were both human beings on planet earth.

All of us, whether we are male or female, old or young, rich or poor, black or white; all of us share the experience of being human.

All of us were born and live in a broken world. We are all in the same boat, and that boat is sinking. All of us have sinned and fallen short.

At one point Kevin Costner mentioned that Whitney had stumbled in life. I guess that was his way of saying she had problems with drugs.

Whether it's drugs or something else, all of us have stumbled in life. All of us are guilty and deserve death.

The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus came to pay for our sins. In Christ we've been saved and set free. The reality of our salvation should make a difference in our lives.

Just a few weeks before Whitney Houston died, the cruise ship Costa Concordia struck a rock off the western coast of Italy. The ship filled with water quickly and ran aground, laying her on her side in shallow water.

32 people died in that accident but more than 4000 survived. One eyewitness testimony stated that when the ship first hit the rock it was chaotic and terrifying. For some people it was every man, woman and child for themselves!

People pushed and shoved their way through the crowd, with no regard for anyone else but themselves. They were going to get off that ship ASAP and no one had better get in their way!

On the other side of the coin there were some who were courteous and thoughtful of others. They helped people off the ship with no regard for their own safety. What would you have done?

Are you more interested in your own salvation or the salvation of others? Do you even care about other people? Do you want to see people saved and come to a knowledge of the truth?

We're obligated to care for others. Like Paul, we're indebted to try to get people to see the light of the gospel of Christ and be saved!

Slide 3

This is why Paul said in verse 15 that he was *"eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome."*

Paul said this because he was obligated to the people of Rome he was anxious to preach to them. It's one thing to care about people, it's another thing to care enough to speak up and share the Truth with them.

This doesn't necessarily mean that God wants you to become a preacher, He just wants you to share the hope that you have in Christ with others.

One of the easiest ways to share your faith is simply to invite someone to church. Many studies have been done which show that the vast majority of people who're not presently attending church would go to church if they were asked by a friend.

Many people come to Christ by going to church. This is why I believe that good Sundays can change your eternity.

There was a man out jogging one Sunday morning when an old lady in a car pulled up next to him and said *“get in and I’ll give you a ride.”*

Not knowing why she was asking him this, and wondering if she needed help, he got into the car. She drove down the street and then pulled into a church parking lot.

The man objected saying that he didn’t go to church, but the old lady just smiled and said *“you can come and sit with me.”* He went in and attended the service.

At the end of the sermon the pastor asked if anyone wanted to come to Christ and the man went forward to give himself to Jesus.

The man’s brother was part of that church and saw his brother going forward. He had tried witnessing to him many times in the past, but to no avail. He was so happy to see him going forward he went up and hugged him.

The pastor asked what had happened and the jogger told the story of the little old lady that had picked him up that morning. He asked him to point her out and he pointed to her.

The pastor realized it was his mother. He asked his mother later why she had picked up that man and she said, *“Well, I saw him running down the road and I figured he must be late for church, so I offered to give him a ride.”*

The church was able to do what the brother could not. It was all the result of a simple invitation.

Slide 4

Verse 16, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”*

Paul wasn't ashamed of the Gospel because he understood that it was a message that could change lives.

When you find something of great value and worth you're eager to share it with others. If you watch a movie you love, then it's easy to recommend that movie to others.

I heard the story of a man who was a drug addict and lived on the streets. When he was saved, it turned his life around, but the hard life he had lived still showed on his face.

He got a job driving a limousine. One day he was picking up a woman and as she was getting into his limousine she was appalled at his looks.

She said, *"You should be ashamed of yourself."* He said, *"I am ashamed of myself - I am ashamed of so many things I have done in my life. However, the one thing I am not ashamed of is the GOSPEL."*

Like that man, I am ashamed of many things I've done in this life, but I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I think the reason so many Christians today aren't sharing their faith is that they don't understand how wonderful the salvation they've been given truly is.

I just mentioned inviting people to church. One of the reasons that people don't invite others to church is because they themselves don't see the value in church.

If you think that church is boring and irrelevant and you hate going there yourself then you're certainly not going to want to invite your friends to come. Do you enjoy coming to church? Is it a burden or a blessing to you?

Tim Keller once said, *“Here’s the gospel: you’re more sinful than you ever dared believe; you’re more loved than you ever dared hope.”* We are obligated to people. We should be eager to preach it and not be ashamed of God’s plan.

Verse 17, *“For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

It’s difficult to see what Paul was really trying to say here. I think *The Message* makes it clearer, *“God’s way of putting people right shows up in the acts of faith, confirming what Scripture has said all along: “The person in right standing before God by trusting him really lives.”*

In other words, when people truly give themselves to Jesus it’s evident to everyone around them through their transformed life. People can argue theology until they are blue in the face, but you can’t argue a transformed life.

In his book, *A Ready Defense*, Josh McDowell states: *“You can laugh at Christianity; you can mock and ridicule it, but it works. If you decide to trust Christ, start watching your attitudes and actions, because Jesus Christ is in the business of changing lives.”*

Slide 5

Conclusion

Most of us have a grill or have had a grill sitting in our back yard. That grill is an amazing thing, but it’s not the grill itself that cooks the food, it’s just a box that holds the heat.

Grills are designed to be used with a tank of propane or charcoal, but it’s not the propane or the charcoal that cooks the food. It’s just the fuel. What cooks the food is the fire, and that fire requires a spark.

We can have the most beautiful church in the world, but our church is just a box. We can have the most inspired worship, and the Spirit of God can be powerfully manifest, but that's just the fuel.

What's required is the spark and that's us! We're the spark. It's when ordinary people step out in faith, pray and share their faith, or invite someone to church that God's able to take that spark and use it to change the eternity of another person.

I'm not ashamed of the Gospel, because I know what the Good News of Jesus has done in my life. I am not ashamed of the Gospel because I know that Jesus is in the business of changing lives.

I know what God has done in my own heart. In some small way I know that I'm an example of God's grace and power. I know that God can change your heart as well.