

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S USE of 'What ?' The 'KINGDOM' of GOD ?

I thought it would be an interesting study to consider what Paul had to do with **the kingdom of God**, to think about his use of the phrase. We'll get the **context**, begin in Acts, and then move through Paul's epistles.

After the Jews thought they killed Paul, they left him for dead

but Paul got up, brushed off, and went right back to preaching:

Acts 14:19-23 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 And when they had **preached the gospel** to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

Let's look at the **content** of Paul's sermons.

He was making sure folks had not believed in vain that they knew the gospel whereby they were saved, like in 1 Cor 15:2-4:

(Acts 14): 22-a • Confirming the souls of the disciples,

He encouraged the saints to stay true to their belief in Christ:

(Acts 14): 22-b • and exhorting them to continue in the faith,

He assured believers that they would have a lot of trials

getting into God's kingdom family:

(Acts 14): 22-c • and that **we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.**

(Acts 14): 23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Next, we find Paul spending his time without fear, thoroughly discussing
 in argument in exhortation reasoning about God's kingdom ---

both to Jews and Gentiles. (FYI, Peter, in Acts 15:9 about an event in

Acts 10, said there's no difference - before Saul-Paul was ever even saved):

Acts 19:8-10 And he went into the synagogue, and **spake boldly** for the space of **three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.**

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, **disputing daily** in the school of one Tyrannus.

10 And this continued by the space of **two years;** so that all they which dwelt in Asia **heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**

From a seaport town about 36 miles south of Ephesus, Paul summoned the elders to give them his **final farewell** speech and remind them of his ministry --- both public and private --- **both to Jews and Gentiles:**

Acts 20:17-27 (**Acts 20:17-20**): And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them,

Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with **many tears,** and **temptations,** which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you,

and have taught you **publickly, and from house to house,**

Paul's sermon **content** was 2-fold: Change your mind, and believe:

(Acts 20): 21 Testifying **both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks,**

- **repentance toward God,**

- and **faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

Paul was consistent in having trouble no matter where he went

but he wasn't deterred by it:

(Acts 20): 23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that **bonds and afflictions** abide me.

Paul was resolved he was settled in to complete his mission:

(Acts 20): 24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul described the **content** of his ministry as being about God's kingdom:

(Acts 20): 25-27 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching **the kingdom of God**, shall see my face no more.
26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.
27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

In the last chapter of Acts, from house arrest, Paul spent all day long

still constantly talking and teaching about **the kingdom of God**

using the Old Testament scriptures

to convince people of Who Jesus was, and things about Him:

Acts 28:23-31 (Acts 28): 23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified **the kingdom of God**, persuading them concerning Jesus,

- both out of the law of Moses,
- and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

Some accepted the truth and others didn't:

(Acts 28): 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

Then Paul quoted Isaiah's prophecy about how Israel would be blinded:

(Acts 28): 25-27 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Paul gave a **stern announcement** to Israel.

Since they didn't want Christ the Gentiles were welcome to Him:

(Acts 28): 28-30 Be it known therefore unto you,

- that **the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles,**
- and that **they will hear it.**

29 And when he had said these words,

the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

30 And Paul dwelt **two whole years** in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

Again, the **content** of Paul's ministry was God's kingdom and Christ:

(Acts 28): 31 Preaching **the kingdom of God,**

and **teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ,** with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

That concludes the book of Acts that covered several years. Now we will go through Paul's epistles for the phrase **the kingdom of God**. Paul's focus was on the spiritual not the physical aspect of God's kingdom:

Rom 14:17-19 For **the kingdom of God** is not meat and drink; but

- **righteousness,**
- **and peace,**
- **and joy in the Holy Ghost.**

18 For he that **in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God,** and approved of men.

19 Let us therefore follow after **the things** which make for **peace,** and **things** wherewith one may **edify** another.

The saints at Corinth had the message of salvation because of Paul:

1 Cor 4:14-21 (1 Cor 4): 14,15 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus **I have begotten you** through the gospel.

Paul begged them to pattern their life after **his** example

and the things **he taught** to the saints anywhere he went:

(1 Cor 4): 16,17 Wherefore I beseech you, **be ye followers of me.**

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall **bring you into remembrance of my ways** which be in Christ, as **I teach every where in every church.**

Paul intended to visit them and see for himself how they were living --

not just listen to what they were saying:

(1 Cor 4): 18-20 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

20 For **the kingdom of God** is not in word, but in power.

It was like "Their **actions** speak louder than their **words.**"

Paul wanted to find out **how stern** he needed to be with their correction:

(1 Cor 4): 21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

Paul taught the church not to **say** one thing and **do** another:

1 Cor 6:9-12 (1 Cor 6): 9,10 Know ye not that the **unrighteous** shall not **inherit the kingdom of God?**

Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall **inherit the kingdom of God.**

Life -- before Christ -- was enslavement to sin

but life -- in Christ -- brings **deliverance** from sin.

Saints are not 'who they used to be.'

They have been **cleansed**. They have been **made righteous**:

(1 Cor 6): 11 And such **were** some of you:

- but ye are **washed**,
- but ye are **sanctified**,
- but ye are **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus,
and by the Spirit of our God.

Not being under the law is not a license to sin:

(1 Cor 6): 12 All things are lawful unto me,
but all things are not expedient:
all things are lawful for me,
but I will not be brought under the power of any.

This is the same principal that Paul taught 'every where in every church':

*Rom 6:14,15 For sin shall not have dominion over you:
for **ye are not under the law**, but under grace.
15 What then? shall we sin,
because **we are not under the law**, but under grace?
God forbid.*

Let's go back and continue in Paul's 1st epistle to the Corinthians.

Paul was persistent to explain to them about **the kingdom of God**.

People - in a physical, sinful body will not inherit God's kingdom.

They in that condition are still subject to sin and death.

They must be **changed** in order to **experience eternal life**:

1 Cor 15:50-54 (1 Cor 15): 50 Now this I say, brethren,
that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**;
neither doth **corruption inherit incorruption**.

(1 Cor 15): 51-a Behold, I shew you a mystery;

What is that mystery?

(1 Cor 15): 51-b We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**,

How **quickly** will that change take place?

(1 Cor 15): 52-a In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,

When will that change take place?

(1 Cor 15): 52-b at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound,

What will **happen** when that change takes place?

(1 Cor 15): 52-c and the dead shall be raised **incorruptible**,

A new, glorified body that is the change:

(1 Cor 15): 52-d and **we shall be changed**.

Here again in verse 53 (as in verse 51-b),

we will see '**2 types**' that will be changed.

- the **corruptible** those that are dead and decaying
- the **mortal** those that are alive -- but are subject to death:

(1 Cor 15): 53 For this **corruptible** must put on **incorruption**,
and this **mortal** must put on **immortality**.

And again:

(1 Cor 15): 54-a So when
this **corruptible** shall have put on **incorruption**,
and this **mortal** shall have put on **immortality**,

What will happen then?

(1 Cor 15): 54-b **then** shall be brought to pass
the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

As we move into another of Paul's epistles to the churches of Galatia

Paul also told the saints there as he did 'every where in every church'....

as we already read in Rom 6:14,15 not to **abuse** grace by sinning:

Gal 5:13 For, brethren, **ye have been called unto liberty;**
only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh,
 but by love serve one another.

Similar to how Paul described the struggle in Rom 7:14-23

is this 'war' between our flesh and God's Spirit that dwells within us:

Gal 5:16-25 (**Gal 5**): 16,17 This I say then, **Walk in the Spirit,**
 and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17-a For the flesh lusteth **against** the Spirit,
 and the Spirit **against** the flesh:
 and these are **contrary** the one to the other:

Have you heard it said, "You can't do that!" Then the response, "Oh yeah?

I just did!" Then the reply, "Well, you cannot do it and get away with it!":

(**Gal 5**): 17-b so that **ye cannot do the things that ye would.**

Let's look at a Bible example of using the word 'cannot'

*(though usually used in the sense of 'not being **able** to') ...*

in this instance 'cannot' is used like 'should not':

Gen 44:22 *And we said unto my lord,*
*The lad **cannot** leave his father:*
for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

In other words, he cannot leave without consequences.

As in Rom 6:12, we should not let sin reign in our mortal body:

(**Gal 5**): 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, **ye are not under the law.**

Similar to 1 Cor 6:9-12, here is another detailed list of fleshly sins:

(Gal 5): 19-21 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these;
 Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, sedi-
 tions, heresies,
 21-a Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, **and such like:**

No one who will inherit God's kingdom will be doing any of these things.

No one who will inherit God's kingdom will have the ability or the capacity
 to commit sin:

(Gal 5): 21-b of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in
 time past, that they which do such things shall not **inherit the kingdom of
 God.**

Everyone who inherits God's kingdom

will do so in a changed, incorruptible, immortal, glorified body.

Sins are **against** God and **against** God's law. They are **contrary**

to His **Holy** Spirit which produces **righteousness** in a believer's life:

(Gal 5): 22,23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering,
 gentleness, goodness, faith,
 23 Meekness, temperance: **against such there is no law.**

"Nothin' wrong with that!"

God's Spirit behooves us to act like 'who we are' 'who we have
 been made' in Christ:

(Gal 5): 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the
 affections and lusts.

There is a lot of instruction of how we ought to walk and please God:

(Gal 5): 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also **walk in the Spirit.**

Paul also mentioned God's kingdom when he was remembering folks who assisted him in ministry. In his epistle to 'the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse' Paul drew attention to a few Jewish people that worked with him in his labor about the kingdom of God:

Col 4:11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, **who are of the circumcision**. These only are my **fellowworkers** unto **the kingdom of God**, which have been a comfort unto me.

Finally, we'll read a section that shows the saints to whom Paul ministered were and would be suffering physical harm for the cause of Christ until He breaks through the sky to deliver them and give them rest from trouble:

2 Thess 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be **counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer**:

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, **when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven** with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

10 **When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.**

That concludes our study in Paul's use of the phrase 'the kingdom of God.'