

# THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL

Elder Ralph Harris

When the apostle Paul told the Corinthian brethren that he had begotten them through the gospel (I Cor. 4:15) he did not mean that he was in any sense responsible for, or even instrumental in, their spiritual birth or regeneration, but he meant that he had begotten them *to the truth* through the gospel. And, we may be sure that he realized *God* had previously made them receptive of that gospel.

The gospel is never instrumental in anyone's regeneration, but it *is* instrumental in enlightening and instructing in the truth those who have *already* been given divine life by the Spirit of God. Christ has brought life and immortality *to light* through the gospel (II Tim. 1:10). It feeds those who "*hunger and thirst after righteousness*" (Matt. 5:6). It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that "believeth"; that is, to those who are *already* believers (See Romans 1:16). It does not profit unbelievers. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save (to the truth) *them that believe*" (I Cor. 1:21).

Consequently it is *not* the preached word that brings about the new birth, but rather the *Living Word* (Christ) who "abideth forever" or "endureth forever." "And this is the word (that is, the Christ) which by the gospel is preached unto God's people (See I Peter 1:23,25). Neither the *preached* word nor the *written* word abides or endures forever, but the *Living Word* does.

"*The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness*" (I Cor. 1:18). "Them that perish" is another way of saying, *those who are dead in sin*. Such people cannot spiritually hear the word of Christ (See John 8:43). It is only "unto us which *are* (already) saved" that the gospel is "the power of God" (See again I Cor. 1:18). The proclamation of truth is of great value to "the poor" (Luke 4:18), that is, to those who have no righteousness of their own to plead, but to those who have no divine life in them (John 6:53) it is foolishness, and they will not receive it. ---Elder Ralph Harris