THE POWER OF GOD

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation…” - Romans 1:16

APOLOGY IN ORDER
First off I want to ask your forgiveness for the long silence! When I know it’s time to send a report out regarding the ministry that you so faithfully have invested in, often I battle with a lack of “inspiration.” In other words, if I don’t feel inspired, I procrastinate until I feel ready to compose a letter. While this tendency can result in some interesting news/prayer letters, more often than not it results in long delays between these interesting letters. For this I apologize! Having said that…

ROMANS 1:16 - THE POWERFUL GOSPEL IS BEING PREACHED!
That’s right. I’ve been in the trenches daily preaching the biblical gospel* to literally thousands of Brazilians on campus and on the streets of Rio de Janeiro. I can honestly make the prophet Jeremiah’s words my own when he says,

“I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me. For each time I speak, I cry aloud; I proclaim violence and destruction, because for me the word of the Lord has resulted in reproach and derision all day long. But if I say, ‘I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name,’ then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it.” (Jeremiah 20:7-9 - NASB)

I know this to be very true. Sometimes we even get death threats. A few weeks ago I overheard a homeless guy say to another man, “I’ve already killed two. What’s one more?” Continue reading to get even a better idea of what Jeremiah and I are talking about!

GAY PARADE EVANGELISM CONFRONTS & TRUMPS THE PRIDE OF SIN
Although not “politically correct,” every year we feel compelled to confront the lies perpetuated at Rio’s annual gay pride parade. For example…

*The “biblical gospel” is summed up in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. However, the Good News of Jesus dying for sin and coming back from the dead will not seem so “good” unless the person hearing the gospel hears it in its proper context: God’s holiness, God’s moral law (e.g., the Ten Commandments), the sinner’s breaking of God’s moral law (i.e., sin - 1 Jn. 3:4) and his resultant condemnation (e.g., Rom. 6:23).
An Angry Little Man

“You are a #$*&%! Stop this NOW!” the small man with the British accent angrily shouted at me. Between my “foreign appearance, the “Trust Jesus” in English on my t-shirt and the translation of his Brazilian boyfriend, this parade goer - who had apparently come a long way to participate - was fit to be tied. After grabbing my microphone twice, he only started to calm down when I asked him if he believed in God. After saying he did, I said that we were only preaching what God says about homosexuality so that people could repent, believe and be saved. Believe it or not, that satisfied him; we shook hands and he and his Brazilian “friend” went on their way!

Preaching at gay pride parades is never a dull moment! One minute you’re getting angry looks; the next people get in your face and insist that you leave. For several years the police interfered because of large crowds threatening to kick us “out” (from the very-public Copacabana Beach?!), but the last two years we’ve been able to preach without any intervention (which, like in the U.S., is our constitutional right). What’s interesting is that things only started to get “hot and heavy” these past two parades when I preached on Romans 1:26-27, particularly emphasizing the adjectives the Holy Spirit had Paul use regarding lesbianism and homosexuality:

“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”

OTHER “SINFUL” EVENTS

• **Carnival** (i.e., Mardi Gras) - This four-day event is what is known here as the “Festival of the Flesh.” Alcohol, drugs, semi-nudity and sex describe Carnival pretty well. I also noticed this year that a lot more “men” than in previous years were dressed up as women. We preached in downtown Rio where thousands of “carnavalescos” would pass hourly. What we found interesting is how our banners garnered so much attention, especially the one that states “You Deserve Hell!” (with Rev. 21:8 quoted underneath). Groups would surround the banner for group selfies, then post the photos on social media to multiply the preaching of the gospel all around the world!

• **St. George Festival** - This idolatrous holiday and festival brings out an interesting blend of Roman Catholics and Spiritists. The irony of all this is that this George was a Roman soldier who was executed because he refused to bow down and worship the emperor! Now he is the object of worship! My small team was able to preach quite near the festivities for almost all of the four hours we had allotted, being required to leave after three belligerent Spiritists insisted that the municipal guards take action. What I found rather absurd and
illogical was to be called “excrement” by one of them. When I asked the guy how he could call another human being something like that he said, “What? You gonna do something about it?!” No big deal. We got to preach for all but five minutes of the four hours allotted. The biblical gospel was heard and read by thousands... even by the police!

WHAT ABOUT RESULTS?
Good question. Since Scripture promises that God’s word always does what God wants it to do (Isaiah 55:11), as long as we’re preaching the Word we can rest assured it will give results at some point in the hearers’ lives. Of course those results may not always be what we would wish for them, but ultimately it’s about God’s glory, isn’t it? If God chooses to be glorified in someone for His holiness, justice and wrath, who am I to question Him - especially if I did my part as a watchman on the wall, warning that sinner of the wrath to come (Ezekiel 33:1-11)!

MEANWHILE, BACK ON CAMPUS...
Classes started up the third week of March at Fluminense Federal University (UFF) after an almost three-month summer break. A lot of The 8-32 Movement’s (M8-32’s) leaders have either graduated or taken internships that have resulted in a lower attendance at our weekly meetings. We have been doing a verse-by-verse study of Jude this semester, and those who have been able to participate are loving it! To be honest, however, we need to regularly get back to doing evangelism outside the main student cafeteria. Brazil’s public universities are very tolerant of anything leftist, Marxist, but forget Christianity! Well, M8-32 refuses to back down! Pray for our boldness and availability, especially for the new semester that will start mid-August. Thanks!

A BIG OPPORTUNITY & CHALLENGE
I will be going to Kapchorwa in eastern Uganda again the last week of July and the first week of August to help Rev. Simon Peter Kemboi and his five churches with evangelistic outreaches and training (biblical and ministerial). In order for me to participate - Valéria can’t go with me this time - I need to locate $2,500 for airfare, meals, housing, etc. I also want to raise an additional $4,000 to purchase a used van from another missionary that will be used to facilitate the ministry while I’m there and after. One of Peter’s churches is a two-hour drive from Kapchorwa (during dry season when the roads are good) on the Kenyan border. We feel this well-maintained vehicle will only increase the ministry’s mobility in order to reach more distant districts with the biblical gospel and plant new churches in Uganda’s eastern mountain region. Would you prayerfully consider helping with these needs? Please contact me (bill.ions4Christ@gmail.com) ASAP with any questions or decision regarding how you believe God may be leading you to help with one or both of these needs. THANKS!

A QUICK VISIT TO THE PACIFIC NW
That’s right. Due to the unexpected death of my oldest nephew in San Diego (complications from cancer), I went up for his funeral and was able to see some of my supporters from Oregon the first couple of weeks of March. My nephew had a lot of Christian influence growing up, but later turned his back on his upbringing, claiming to be an atheist. However, something happened to him - while sedated - a few hours before his death that made him actually look forward to dying! When my sister Jan asked him, while holding his head in her hands, “Sam, you know that Jesus loves you, don’t you?”, Sam smiled and nodded. Then she said, “Sam, I want you to be there in heaven when I get there!” Sam again nodded and smiled. Several minutes later Sam passed.
My sister and I believe that God, in His grace and mercy, gave Sam a glimpse of things to come when he was sedated. That would explain why a so-called atheist could make an about-face on his death bed and react the way he did to his Christian mother’s question and statement. Praise God!

PERSONAL & MINISTRY UPDATES

• Our house is on the market. As soon as it sells our plan is to move to the highly-Catholic and mystical neighboring state of Minas Gerais to expand M8-32 and plant an expository preaching church.

• My oldest daughter Amelia is still stuck here in Brazil while waiting to get a spouse visa in order to be able to join her husband Anthony in the UK.

• Jessica is living with me and Valéria for now. She’s doing a technical course in the area of business and searching for a job.

• We moved to a new church and denomination that we’re more theologically aligned with and that wants to partner with us to plant a church (in Minas Gerais). Meanwhile, we will be going to another part of Minas Gerais at least one weekend a month to assist - via counseling and preaching - the recently-planted church of the same denomination whose pastor just left.

A SPECIAL THANKS

“As a Brazilian I would like to thank you all for supporting Bill with your prayers and financial gifts over the years in order to help spread the gospel around my country as well as in Africa.”

- Valéria Hamilton