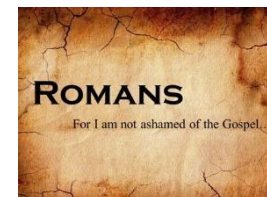


The Power of God
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
January 8, 2023

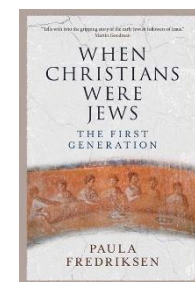
Text: Romans 1:8-17

Purpose: Paul was confident in the Gospel of Jesus Christ because it had the power of God to change people's lives and provide salvation for their soul. The righteousness of God is obtained by faith, not works.

Last week we began to look at the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the church in Rome. We learned that Paul was a bondservant of Jesus Christ and had totally dedicated his life, ministry and mission to sharing the good news of salvation found only in Jesus Christ.



At the earliest beginnings of Christianity, the message of God was initially given to the Jews. The earliest disciples were all Jews. The earliest converts were Jews. But later Paul became convinced that the good news of salvation was not only to the Jews, but it was meant for the remainder of the known world – the Gentile world.



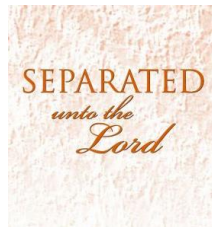
During Paul's day, the influence of the Greek language and Hellenistic thought reigned. The influence of Hellenism was so pervasive that even people today are influenced by

Alexander the Great's goal of spreading Greek government, culture, theatre, arts and even faith in a local god or gods.

Rome was one of the centers of influence and power during Paul's day. It was here that Christians from around the surrounding area began to come together and form a local church. Paul desired to go and meet with them and encourage them in their faith.

Paul the Servant is ...

In chapter one, verse one; we see Paul is identifying himself as one that is separated unto the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is one that is servicing in bringing the gospel to the un-reached areas, both Jew and Greek. Paul even acknowledges that the only way of salvation is found in this gospel – the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Has the gospel of Jesus Christ gripped you in the same manner as Paul? Are you separated unto Christ and are you willing to forsake all to follow Him?

If you are, then you need to be involved in an area of service unto God. Our service does not save us, but it provides an outward proof of an inward commitment. The things that we give our time to are really the things that we serve. How much time do you give to your family? How much time do you give to your work? How much time do you give to the television? How much time do you spend on your phone? How we spend our time determines the importance of our priorities.



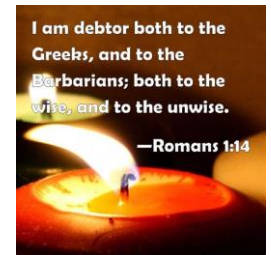
Are you truly trusting in Jesus Christ as your only way of salvation? Or are you secretly hoping that God will grade on a curve and let you slip in the back door? It is time that we get serious and laid all our cards on the table. God is not mocked. God's only plan of salvation is Jesus Christ. We cannot get into heaven by any other door. There comes a time in your life that you will have to say, "I fully commit my entire eternal future on Jesus Christ." You cannot place one bet on Buddha, another on Mohammad, one on Joseph Smith, and another on Jesus. Truth dictates that there is only one answer. I have determined that Jesus Christ is the only way unto God.



The Resolution of Paul – I am

I am a Debtor

In this introductory portion of Romans, Paul makes three declarative "I am" statements. The first one can be found in verse 14. "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and the barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise."

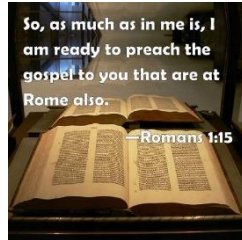


Verse 14 has in Greek a double meaning that is almost untranslatable. The RSV translates it, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians." Paul was thinking of two things when he wrote that. He was under obligation because of all the kindness that he had received, and he was under obligation to preach to them. This highly compressed sentence means, "Because of all that I have received from them and because of all it is my duty to give to them, I am under an obligation to all sorts of men."¹

What Paul wants us to know is that this message is for the wise and simple, the cultured and uncultured, lettered and unlettered. He had a message for the world, and it was his ambition some day to deliver that message in Rome too.²

I am Ready

The second “I am” statement is found in verse 15. It says, “*So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.*”



There had been a period of preparation for Paul after his Damascus Road experience. It was on that Road that God met Paul and struck him blind. Paul, once named Saul, was once the most vicious hater of Christ followers. He was zealous in hunting down this group called Christians and was there at the stoning of the Deacon Stephen.

But after a period of re-studying the Old Testament, Paul was thoroughly convinced that Jesus Christ was none other than the anticipated Messiah prophesied for centuries. Jesus was the Hoped for One. This time of study was precious to Paul, because once he came out of a period of preparation, he came out READY.

Many individuals set aside time to attend Bible College, Seminary, or Divinity School as a time of preparation before they enter the ministry. At the end of their time of preparation, there comes a point of resolution. A point that says, “I am ready.”

Paul has that same resolution. But the question is one that we need to ask ourselves. Are you ready to tell others about

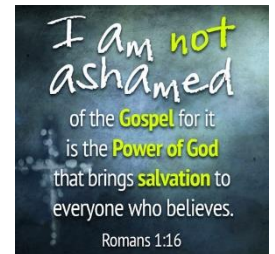
Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection? Are you convinced that He is the Christ and how important it is for other people to know about the only way of salvation? If you are not telling others about Jesus why not? If you are not getting prepared to do that, why not? Could it be that you are not convinced yourself?

Our church will never grow until we are convinced that Jesus is the only way of salvation. If we are thoroughly convinced that Jesus is the only way of salvation, then we will be concerned about our neighbors and family’s eternal security.

Our church will not grow unless you bring others with you. How many did you invite to church today? How many did you bring with you? Are you ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Are you ashamed of this church?

I am not ashamed

Paul said he was not ashamed. In his third declarative, “I am” statement, he said, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*”



Are you willing to boldly tell others of your total dependence on Christ for your salvation? Or are you embarrassed to share your faith? Are you afraid of what others might think of you? Are you going to deny Jesus because of what a few unbelievers say? We need to resolve in our hearts not to be ashamed of proclaiming our faith.

I called someone a few years back and recall they left a gospel message on their answering machine. They boldly

and un-ashamedly proclaimed Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They didn't even advertise their name or business. I left a message saying, "I am not sure I got the right number but here is my phone number." They didn't care if customers called and heard a message of salvation. They didn't care if the world made fun of them. They proclaimed it in a unique way.

I have been to the Paint Station in Kinston and bought paint from them. At the top of their receipt it says, "Friends don't let friends die unsaved." They realized the importance of salvation and were willing to put it on every correspondence they gave out.

How about you? Are you ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? If you are, then you need to do some serious soul searching today. Christ needs to be **Lord of All** or He is **not Lord at all**.

God is looking for people that are willing to **deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him**. God is willing to take anyone obedient and yielded to Him. When we do that, God's hand can be upon us and mighty things can be done.

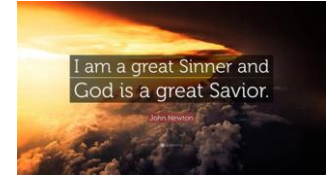
The Power of God

Paul had seen time and time again how God can change a sinner and turn that person into someone useful for the Kingdom. There is power in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When I think of the power of God, I think about how He created the Heavens and the Earth. I think about how in six

days, all of creation that we see, was created by the word of God. I think about how God chose one man Abraham, and from that one person, a nation was born. The mighty hand of God pulled them out of slavery in Egypt and set them apart as a nation dedicated to worshipping God.

But the wisdom of God is demonstrated most fully in our salvation. We are sinful people, prone to continue in sin. We may consider ourselves cultured and refined. But we are still sinners. We may consider ourselves above the debauchery of so many in our world, but we are still sinners.

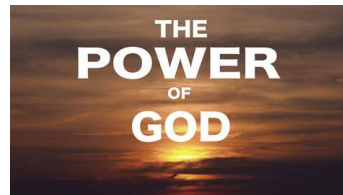
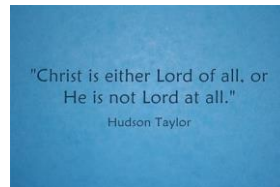


If we were to seriously consider all of our life and what we truly need, the answer would echo like it has for centuries. "Save me O God! For I am a sinner!" Our nation is one that thinks they are good enough for God that He ought to accept us the way we are. We do not think of ourselves as sinners. But we are! We need to recognize our true state before God – wretched, awful, sinner.

Paul is convinced that this gospel is for everyone. The gospel of Jesus Christ came to us first through the history and lineage of the Jews. Paul states that it was first preached to the Jews and now it is being presented to the entire world. This salvation is for all who are willing to come unto God.



- Our greatest need is not peace from terrorists.
- Our greatest need is not an end to war in the Ukraine.
- Our greatest need is not an end of poverty.



- Our greatest need is not to force the G8 nations to eliminate Third World countries debt.
- Our greatest need is not an end to unemployment.
- Our greatest need is not lower gas or oil prices.
- Our greatest need is not a national health care plan.
- Our greatest need is not to build homes for the homeless.
- Our greatest need is salvation!

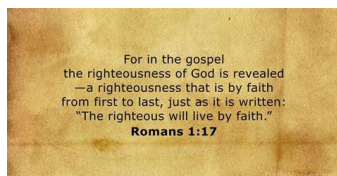
The greatest power God revealed was in Jesus Christ. God allowed His one and only Son to die at the hands of cruel men. The power of God that raised Jesus from the dead can also raise you out of the deadness of your sin. It was through that death on the cross that salvation is obtained. There is no other means of salvation except through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Accept no substitutes. The way of the cross leads home.

The Righteousness of Christ

Verse 17 says, *“For in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.”* This tells us that we can obtain the righteousness of God through faith. Imagine having the holiness of God applied to your account simply by believing. By accepting Jesus by faith, we are accepted by God.

I heard someone expound on this idea of the righteousness of God being revealed from “faith unto faith.” What exactly does faith unto faith mean?

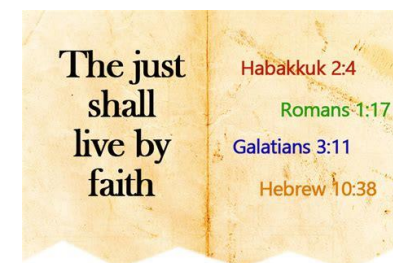
Dr. J. Vernon McGee once said it was like the day we were born. When we took our first breath of air, we began our



life of breathing. Everyday since then you continue to breath. The moment you accept Christ into your life, you can only do it by faith. As you live out your life, you can only live it out by faith – from faith unto faith. We cannot live without faith. If we decide to stop breathing, we will pass out or die. We need to realize that faith operates in much the same manner.

The Just Shall Live by Faith

Our walk of faith, our journey with God should be operated in the realm of faith. When we try to do it on our own, we fail.



Martin Luther the great reformer came to his greatest realization when he decided to live his life as one of faith instead of works. He tried for years to please God by doing penance and following the strict disciplines of the Catholic Church. He found that he could never measure up to a righteous standard required by God. Once he found the verse, *“the just shall live by faith,”* it was as if scales fell off his eyes. He was now forgiven and free in Christ. He began to live as if he was forgiven.

So many today in churches across the world are operating under a great sense of guilt. “I did this wrong 20 years ago. God will never forgive me.” Others work themselves frantically doing good works to atone for some sin event years ago. Guilt drives so many today. But we need to realize that the righteousness of Christ has been imputed (applied) towards us. Yes, our sin is there (and the consequences of that sin still remain), but God only sees the righteousness of Christ. He has separated our sin from us as

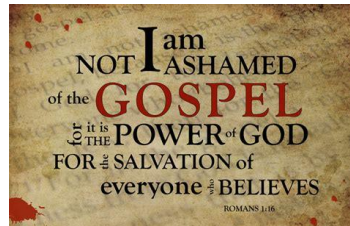
far as the East is from the West. God can do that because He reckons our sin as forgiven.

When God forgives, we need to live our lives in a manner worthy of this great gift. We do not need to continue in that sin any longer. When Jesus healed the man at the Pool of Bethesda he said, “Sin no more.” Jesus looked at the woman caught in adultery and said, “Go and sin no more.”



God takes us where we are and forgives us. He washes us white as snow and makes us a new creature in Christ. We can start on a new path with God if we only come to Him by faith.

Romans 1:16-17 gives us Romans in a nutshell.³



- The Person of the Gospel “Christ”
- The Power of the Gospel “Power of God”
- The Purpose of the Gospel “Unto Salvation”
- The People to whom it is sent “To Everyone”
- The Plan of Acceptance ... “To everyone that believeth”
- The Particular result “The Just shall live by faith”

The Invitation

This invitation is for you today. Jesus, time and time again, calls us to surrender to Him and allow His spirit to dwell in our lives. If we wait until we are a better person, or have brought our flesh into submission, then we



will never come to God. “*While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*”

Today is the day of salvation. Tomorrow may be too late.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ William Barclay, The Letter to the Romans, The Daily Study Bible Series, page 17-18.
² Barclay, page 17-18.
³ Henrietta C. Mears, What the Bible is all about, Regal Publishing, page 447-8.