

Romans 1:14-17

“God’s Righteousness Revealed”

In our last gathering together we spoke of the life changing impact of encountering and entering into a relationship with Jesus Christ Vs 5 tells us that through Him we’ve received grace for obedience to the faith, for His name... which translates to the effect of when you meet/receive Jesus Christ into your life, your life is going to change, it will be earmarked by obedience to the *word* of God, for the purpose of bringing *glory* to God. If you claim to be a Christian and yet have had no practical changes take place in your life, or have no desire to be obedient to God’s Word, than you would do well to seriously re-evaluate where you’re truly at with the Lord. Jesus said, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”* John 14:15 Which is to say that your love for Jesus will be displayed in a practical way by your honoring and obeying His Word. Again He said, *“...why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?”* Luke 6:46 Or to understand that another way, if He’s your Lord, you’ll be obedient to His design, desire, and instruction for your life. Now obviously we’re not speaking of a life of sinless perfection, only Christ lived that life. But we *are* talking about a persistent pattern of godliness as opposed to a persistent pattern of worldliness. A life led after and pursuing the Spirit rather than reveling in the flesh and the works thereof, we’ve been given *grace for* obedience. He’s not asking you to do it on your own, He’s not asking you to do anything, He’s asking you to let Him do it in you, to let Him to do the work through you all, you need to do is step aside, or as J.B. put it, *“He must increase, but I must decrease.”* John 3:30

Getting past the greeting we noted 2 more things about the apostle that we do well to have assimilated, or incorporated into our lives and that is his #1 Thankfulness, and #2 Prayerfulness.

He was never with out a reason to give thanks. and If you know Jesus Christ neither are you, as a matter of fact the bible tells us that our being thankful is apart of the will of God for our lives. We often wonder, what’s God’s will for my life? Here’s one, that you be thankful, regardless of your circumstances, because the love of God isn’t demonstrated for you circumstantially. That’s something we really need to let sink into our brain and our heart, because we’re too often thinking we’re right with God when things are going good, but God must be mad at me, or somehow against me when things are going bad. As if the love of God *for* me is demonstrated in the circumstances that *surround* me. However the bible says, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Rom 5:8 In other words God displayed His love for you in the sacrifice of His Son upon the cross for the forgiveness of your sin that you might have everlasting life though it’s the farthest thing from what we deserve.

Remember Jesus said, “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*” John 15:13 Jesus died for you, that should well up with in you an attitude of gratitude, of thanksgiving. Paul went through more (as it relates to hard times) than the greatest majority of us ever will, yet he was continually finding reasons to be thankful. These Roman believers were reflecting the person of Jesus Christ properly, their witness one of accuracy, Paul said, “I thank God for that.” How thankful we should be to God for those who portray Him properly, when it seems like misrepresentations are so prevalent in our society, when one comes along who just exudes Christ to the world around them, thank God for that.

Paul was also Prayerful, “with out ceasing, I always make mention of you in my prayers.” No wonder they were flourishing, prayer was being offered up persistently for them, we spoke about the potency, the power of intercessory prayer Wednesday evening. You guys need to know that I pray for you, and I hope you’re praying for me, and for this place, consistently, persistently.

That God would be guiding us, providing for us, that we might be an accurate reflection of who He is to the community around us and on out from there, that we would be a strong and healthy body spiritually speaking, of one heart, and one mind in Him. I can’t emphasize enough the need for, and power found *in* prayer. If you’re not a person of prayer, *pray* that God would make you one, it’s so important. If Jesus found it necessary to pray, how much more, you and I need to pray, Paul was prayerful, he told the Philippians, “*The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*” Phil 4:9 Prayerfulness, Thankfulness, essential attributes of the man/woman of God.

In Vs 13 Paul shares with them how he’s planned and he’s prepared to come *to* them, that he might receive fruit *among* them, just as he has the other Gentiles, he’s looking forward to what God wants to do there, or for that matter anywhere that God desires to take him, notice.

Vs14-17

So there in vs 14 after Paul share’s with them his plans to come there, and how he looks forward to a fruitful time of *being* there, he says, “Besides that I owe it *to* you to come and share the gospel *with* you.” He says, “I’m a debtor” notice, “both to Greeks and barbarians, both to wise and unwise. The idea there being that whether you’re sophisticated or simple, educated or untrained, privileged or deprived, prosperous or poor, all are equally lost therefore all need the gospel equally. The gospel is the great equalizer, *all* have sinned therefore *all* need a Savior, and the highest intellectual and the least academic individual, the richest and the poorest, the President of the United States and the individual on the lowest rung of the societal ladder, on skid row, or death row for that matter, come to God the same way, through Jesus Christ That’s why Paul can say, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” Gal 3:27-28

But what I want you to see here is this idea of indebtedness. Paul wasn't in the ministry because of the power it privileged him with or because he thought it would make for a good career, it was his calling, his compulsion, he was compelled by this sense of debt, remember he told the Corinthians, "...if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" 1 Cor 9:16 He was a man called, the love of Christ compelled him, constrained him, drove him on, his whole life was indebted to the Lord. So to with you, so to with me, we've mentioned it before, if God saved you, it's for a purpose, He has a plan for your life, good works that He's prepared beforehand that you should walk in them. and He's paid a price for you that you could never pay on your own, what does that spell? That you owe Him, it's your reasonable service (Paul will say later on). So we're indebted to Him, to lead our lives after His purpose for us, that others might see Him in us and so be saved.

Maybe you're one who prides yourself on paying your debts, doing what you can do to owe no man anything, what about what you owe the Lord? Have you thought much on that one? Your entire life is eternally indebted to Him, and again it's not saved *by* good works, but *unto* good works. Sure there'll be times you don't feel like serving, or doing what God's called you to do, this may come as a shock to you but I don't always *feel* like studying the word, standing behind the pulpit and giving a bible study, meeting/counseling, dealing with all the business side of things, the spiritual side of the things, there's no greater privilege that I could hope for (granted). But at times it's wearisome, labor intensive, at times disillusioning, but you know what I've come to learn, it doesn't matter how I *feel*. My life's not my own, I've been bought at a price, that price being the shed blood of Jesus Christ I owe everything that I am, my entire life to the Lord, I've committed to serving Him, and it's a poor servant (at best) who serves only when he *feels like it*.

It's like entering into a world of people who are starving to death yet you've come into this bountiful feast, but you're just to tired, or to burned out, or to self-consumed to give them any food. You owe it to them, God's given you this bountiful feast and now you're just going to set by and watch them starve? Turn to 2nd Kings 7, now when you get to this ch you'll find that there was a horrible famine in the land, on top of that Syria is besieging Samaria, the situation is desperate, people have actually boiled their children and ate them in order to stay alive.

Vs1-11

From there they all ultimately take the word of the lepers and enter into the bountiful feast that God had so graciously provided. Here's the deal, we're those lepers, in a no win situation of death, but God has led you to a bountiful feast in Jesus Christ and So here we are feasting on, and getting fat on the word of God, yet there's a whole world out there starving... and If it ends like this we aren't doing right, we need to get the good news of what God has done out to a hurt and dying world, how they don't have to die, but that they can partake of God's goodness, His grace, and be saved through the person of Jesus Christ I pray that we catch that vision.

Paul had caught that vision, he owed it to Rome, in fact the whole world to share the gospel with them. It's not that God so loved *a few*, but that He so loved *the world*, Jesus said that we're to go into *all the world* and share the gospel with them, we've already spoke of how our love for Christ will translate into obedience to Christ, so until the whole world has heard the gospel (God not being willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance) than we owe it to Him and to them, to share the good new *with* them.

Vs15

Not only was Paul indebted, he was what? Enthusiastic about the opportunity, it wasn't obligation to him to serve the Lord, it was opportunity, not burden, but blessing. "As much as is in me" As much as depends *on* me, from the deepest recesses *of* me, with all that's with *in* me, I'm looking forward to the opportunity, I'm ready, that is prepared to preach the gospel to you.

"I am ready," seemed to be sort of a motto of the apostle's ministry. In Acts 21 you find him saying, "*I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*" Acts 21:13 He was ready to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus, in 2 Cor 10:6 we find him, "...*ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*" He was ready to do the unpleasant work of church discipline if that was what was needed. In 2nd Timothy you find him ready to be poured out as a drink offering knowing the time of his departure was at hand. and Of course here being ready to preach the gospel, whatever God had for him, whenever God had it for him, he was ready. How important that is, he told Timothy, "*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*" 2 Tim 4:2 We need to be ready when God wants to move so as to stay in stride with His Spirit, Paul was ready to preach the gospel.

Now there's an underlying thought that goes along with this and that is this; before you can be *ready* to share the gospel you need to be prepared, or to understand that another way, if you don't *know* the gospel, you can't *preach* the gospel. How many of us here (I wonder) if called up here right now on the spot would be able to simply share the gospel message? Are *you* ready, are *you* prepared, do you know the gospel? When God opens the door for you to present the gospel to a friend, or a co-worker, or whoever, are you ready to seize that opportunity? Can you encourage people in the principles found in God's Word, we're to study the word, to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth. So Paul is excited about his opportunity to preach in Rome.

Vs16

So the Jew was 1st in privilege, not in priority, God's not willing that any should perish. But Messiah came through the Jews, was promised *to* the Jews, so chronologically salvation came 1st to the Jews, and Paul always went to the synagogue in whatever city he was in 1st in order to fulfill that commission. But Israel as nation rejected Jesus, so now the gospel is going out primarily to the Gentiles, God will return priority to the Jew before He's finished, but we're presently primarily in the age/time of the Gentiles. But realizing the Jew was 1st in privilege they're also 1st in penalty (Rom 2:9).

But he says here, “I am not ashamed of the gospel.” That is the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the gospel message is a simple message. Jesus Christ born of a virgin, in all ways tempted as you are tempted yet with out sin, suffered and died a substitutionary death on your/my behalf upon the cross shedding His blood for the forgiveness of your sin, 3 days later He rose from the dead having paid in full the wages of sin. 1st Cor 15 makes it even simpler, “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” That’s it, that’s the gospel, that’s the good news, Paul says, “I’m not ashamed of that.” He’d been beaten, accused of blasphemy, breaking the law, imprisoned, stoned and left for dead, criticized and all kinds of things because of the gospel, but he wasn’t ashamed. How many of us can honestly say the same? Not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, or of being identified with Christ in any way? Jesus said, *“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”* Mark 8:38 Paul was definitive about the fact that that wouldn’t be him, he wasn’t ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

Have you ever been at a public restaurant, and you kinda squirm at the idea of praying out loud before you eat, or you look around timidly to see who’s watching you before you pray, why do you think that is? and How often we may have an opportunity to speak for Christ yet we remain silent, why is that? Because the world shuns the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ it’s unattractive, unappealing, repulsive and offensive to them. It exposes man’s sin, wickedness, depravity and lost-ness, it declares pride to be despicable in the sight of God, our righteous works as worthless before Him. and People don’t like that, so the fear of man brings us into a snare. It’s been said that if you were to draw a circle with white chalk around a goose that it won’t leave the circle for fear of crossing the white mark.

How often the chalk marks of criticism, ridicule, tradition and rejection prevent many believers from leaving the security of that circle of Christian fellowship that they might witness to the unsaved and unbelieving. I’d rather stay in my little circle of security than step through those marks. But the gospel is offensive, an inoffensive gospel is an inoperative/ineffective gospel, if I don’t know that I’m a sinner I don’t see my need for a Savior. But too often we’re ashamed to simply share the gospel, one thing you should realize is that you need to come to grips with the fact that by the time God has brought you to a place where He’s presented you the opportunity to share, He’s already been dealing with them in such a way as to be prepared for the message. O they may not respond in such a way as to let *you* in on that, but God’s already told us that in His word. So who you gonna believe, the lying heathen ;o), or God who cannot lie? Remember Jesus said, *“Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”* John 4:35 Do you know what that means? It means the majority of the people out there are already prepared for and waiting to hear the message of the gospel, they’re ready to harvest.

But like Jeremiah we're too often dismayed at their faces, fearful and ashamed. But think it through, why should we be ashamed? The gospel is the power of God to salvation, notice that, it's not *about* the power of God, it *is the* power of God, the gospel message contains within itself inherent intrinsic dynamic power to transform a soul from dead in sin, to alive in Christ. Apart from Christ people go through the motions of living, but spiritually they're dead, and there's nothing we can do about it. The bible says, "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.*" Jer 13:23 Translation: If the leopard has the ability to change his spots, then you'll be able to do good as opposed to evil. But the bible is clear, outside of Christ, there are none who do good, there are none who seek after God, none that are righteous no not one. There's only One good and that's God, everyone else is disqualified because we've all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But the gospel carries within it the power of transformation unto salvation, that is a rescuing and delivering of the soul from eternal destruction to eternal life. You say, "How does that work?" I have no idea, all I can tell you is that it does, and it has for countless millions over the years and it will continue to transform lives until Christ comes back.

I'll never forget the time some desperate parents brought their daughter to my office, she was a rebellious teen, you've heard her story before. But they wanted her to get some one on one time with a pastor and some organization had given them my name. So I set up a meeting at a time when Jody could be there with me and we sat and reasoned with this girl for what seemed like forever and she refused to budge, just hard. Finally our time was about up and said, "Listen, I don't know what you think about what we've been talking about all this time but you just need to know that God loves you, that Jesus came to this earth, lived a sinless life and died on the cross for you, 3 days later He rose from the dead and you can receive the forgiveness of sin and everlasting life if you'll just believe in Him." She began to well up and weep, I said, "Do you want that?" She said, "Yeah" and we prayed right then for her to receive Christ. The Gospel can break through barriers and give people new life. All my talking was like skipping rocks across a pond, just not sinking in, but the gospel contains the power to transform lives. Often times you'll hear someone speaking about some *powerful* preacher, let me tell you there's nothing powerful about that preacher, it's the Word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ that's where the power is.

How does it work? No idea, Who does it work for? Notice, "Everyone who believes" The message of the gospel isn't "Behave" it's "Believe." Jesus said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*" John 11:25-26 You see that's where it's at, you simply *believing* in Jesus the focus isn't what you *do*, the focus is what He's *done* and you simply believing, that is placing your trust or your faith in Christ. That's as close as I can get to "How" it works, it works by faith, which is the *vs* that brings us to our close.

Vs 17

God's righteousness revealed, in what? In the gospel. The gospel not only reveals the righteousness of God in dealing with the sin issue placing your sin on the perfect lamb of God that He might pay the penalty of your sin, but it also reveals the righteousness of God imputed to you by faith in the finished work of the cross of Jesus Christ delivered up for our transgression, raised for our justification. It's by faith in Christ that God imputes His righteousness to us whereby we can have a relationship with Him, the forgiveness of sin, and everlasting life. Later on we'll read, "*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.*" Rom 3:21-22

What does this, "From faith to faith" statement mean anyway? Listen, the point here is that our relationship with God, your being made righteous in His sight, from beginning to end it's all about faith. We receive Christ by faith, and as we've received Him we're to what? So walk in Him, it always starts by faith, but unfortunately it often makes the segue to works, or legalism of some sort. But it's not, "From faith, to works as you mature." "From faith to religious regimen" No, it starts with faith, it ends with faith, and everything in between is faith, for without faith it's impossible to please Him, that's what the bible says.

Remember these vs? "*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*" Gal 3:1-3 Each and everyday we're to walk by faith, we do in every other arena of life, you trusted you wouldn't be in an accident on your way to church this morning so by faith you got in your car "trusting" that it would start and drove here, there was all kinds of faith in that. By faith you'll eat later trusting your food not to be laced with arsenic. You sat down in that chair by faith, we exercise faith each and everyday, and so to we're to place our weight, our trust, in Christ that His righteousness might be imputed to us in the sight of God. We're not talking about a mental assent, but a full fledge casting of all that you are into who He is. and It's a day by day walk and relationship that we cultivate by faith with Him. That was Paul's desire that he would, "*...be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*" Phil 3:9 So yes we're saved by faith, but that's only the beginning we also *live* by faith as it is written the "Just" or the justified, those righteous in God's sight, shall live by faith.

I don't know where everyone here is at today, perhaps there are some that need to begin that walk of faith, just receiving Jesus Christ into your heart and into your life, letting Him

forgive your sin and give you everlasting life. I would dare to say that there are also those of you who need to get back to that walk of faith, you've been living by do's and don'ts, or perhaps counting on strong church attendance, or your tithe record, or how much you pray and study, all those things are good, but they don't commend us to God, only faith in Jesus Christ can do that God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Prayer Points:

Lord help us to continue to walk by faith, not just begin there but to end there as well, that we might take each day, day by day, by faith, unashamed of who You are, to be identified or associated with You in anyway. and God give us that sense of opportunity, not obligation, blessing not burden as it pertains to our service to You, that we might gain even a glimpse of the extent of all that You've done for us, how we owe all that we are and all that we have to You. and That we would be ready any time, any where, for any reason that You might want to use us, that we would be available *to* You, and excited to be used *by* You.

If you don't know Jesus, you've never had that life changing impact/encounter with Him, whereby you've acknowledged your own sin in the presence of His righteousness and God is dealing with you today, and you're ready to receive the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on your behalf today, than open your heart to Him today. He loves you, shed His blood for you, was buried and rose again the third day that you might be justified, made righteous in the sight of God through Him. Step out by faith and receive the gift of everlasting life, the forgiveness of sin today.