

Paul And The Gospel

Romans 1:14-17

Pastor John Miller

In Romans 1:14-17, Paul says, “I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” or Gentile. “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

This text, I believe, is one of the most important in Paul’s letter to the Romans and many feel, perhaps, in all of literature. I am in awe and in agreement that this text is one of the greatest in all literature—certainly in Paul’s letter to the Romans. The reason why it is so important is that it is about the Gospel. There is nothing more important than the Gospel of Jesus Christ—in understanding the Gospel and in our obligation to proclaim the Gospel. Notice in verse 15, it says, “the Gospel,” and in verse 16, it says, “the Gospel of Christ.” In this entire passage, as Paul ends his introduction to the book of Romans, it is talking about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Back in verses 8-9, Paul starts to tie in his thought about the Gospel when he says, “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel...”—there’s the first mention of it—“...of His son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.” So in verse 8, Paul is thankful for them, and in verse 9, he is prayerful for them.

Paul continues in verses 10-13,”...making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.”

No sooner had Paul mentioned his desire to go to Rome and to the Gentiles, that it set Paul off, because God called Paul specifically to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles.

So as Paul wraps up his opening greeting and introduction to the book of Romans in verses 14-17, he is summarizing the book. If you want the whole book of Romans in just a few verses, then go to Romans 1:14-17. These verses contain the theme of the entire book of Romans, which is the Gospel of God’s grace.

I like what Charles Erdman said about the Gospel of Christ. He said, “It is the sweetest music ever heard upon the earth, the most powerful message proclaimed among men, the most precious treasure entrusted to the people of God.” What a great statement. God has entrusted us with the same Gospel, His special treasure, that He gave to Paul. He has also given it to us

to be proclaimed to the world around us.

In our text, we're going to see three, strong, personal statements that Paul makes about the Gospel. The first one is in verse 14: "I am a debtor," about Paul preaching the Gospel. Secondly, in verse 15, he says, "I am ready" to preach the Gospel. And thirdly, in verse 16, he says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." So we will unpack these three statements: "I am a debtor," "I am ready" and "I am not ashamed."

First Paul says, in verse 14, "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise." What we see here is Paul's obligation. He uses the expression, "I am a debtor." What did Paul mean by that? Did he mean he spent too much on his credit card at Christmas? No; he's not talking about being financially in debt because of borrowing. He's talking about having a responsibility or an obligation to do what God has called him to do with what God has entrusted him.

Have you ever had someone give you money to give to someone else? "You're going to see so-and-so. I have some money to give to him. Can I give you the money to give to him?" All of a sudden you think, I have this money in my hand! The question is, will this money get from your hand to his hand? Can they trust you with that money to give it to the other person?

A number of years ago someone gave me several hundred dollars cash to give to a person I was going to meet. What do I do? Do I go shopping? Go out to lunch? Do I faithfully hold this money and give it to the person?

The Gospel has been given with that kind of responsibility. That's what Paul meant when he basically said he was under obligation, that he was a debtor. God had given him something that He wants Paul to give to others.

In the preaching of God's Word, I have a sense of obligation that God has entrusted me with His Word. He has called me to preach, and I have to faithfully communicate the Bible—nothing more and nothing less; I can't add to it or take away from it. I just faithfully dispense God's Word to God's people, to the household of God.

And we all have the same kind of responsibility. If you've been saved by the Gospel, if you know the Gospel, then you've been entrusted with the Gospel and therefore, we are to go out to share the Gospel.

Some people go through this life thinking that everyone owes them something, everyone should give to them. They get this attitude of "You owe me!" instead of having a sense of obligation and responsibility. We don't hear a lot today in our culture about responsibility and obligations.

So Paul is pointing out here that he was a debtor. Why? Because he was saved by the Gospel—and so are we. He knew the Gospel and was entrusted with the Gospel—and so are we. And he was commissioned to preach the Gospel—and so are we. Maybe we don't have an apostolic commission. Maybe we don't have a definite gift or calling to preach the Gospel in a

public setting, but we are all called to share the good news.

Jesus gave the great commission: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” But the church seems to want to do everything but this. It’s the great commission; not the great suggestion. What I’ve been praying for myself and for us as the church is that we go out into the world this year with the Gospel of Jesus Christ; that we don’t just sit around and stuff ourselves with Gospel blessings while millions are starving for a taste. But I pray that we get motivated, because we are under obligation to go out to preach the good news of Jesus Christ.

So if you’re a Christian, you’ve been saved by the Gospel, and you know the Gospel—knowledge brings responsibility; it is entrusted to your care—then you have been commissioned to go into all the world to preach the Gospel.

Then notice in verse 14 that Paul makes it clear this is a universal Gospel. He said he is to preach “both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.” In verse 16, he says, “for the Jew first and also for the Greek” or “Gentile.” But in verse 14, where he says “to Greeks and to barbarians” and to “wise and to unwise,” simply stated, I believe “the Greeks” are the “wise,” and the “barbarians” are the “unwise.” So basically, Paul says he is called to preach to the highly educated, to the sophisticated, to the aristocrats, to those who understand culture, to the wise, and he is also called to preach to the lower class, to those who are unwise, the barbarians.

At that time in history, the world had been Hellenized. It was all under the influence of the Greek culture and the Greek language. Greek was the universal language at that time. So if you didn’t speak Greek or know Greek, you were considered a bar-bar-ian. The word comes from the way it sounds. If a person didn’t speak Greek, the language spoken sounded like gibberish or “bar-bar” to those who spoke Greek.

I speak no other language but English. I have a son who speaks Mandarin Chinese and Spanish fluently. When I hear him talking in those languages, I don’t understand a word. I like the sound of Spanish. But some languages just sound like noise to me. It doesn’t make any sense to me. I spent a lot of time in China years ago. I remember one day I spent eight hours on a train traveling through China. All I heard all day was Chinese. I couldn’t make out a word of what people were saying. It didn’t sound like anything to me.

So if you didn’t speak Greek, you spoke “bar-bar.” So our word “barbarian” comes from that, and it means you don’t speak Greek, you’re not cultured, you’re not refined and you’re not educated. Paul was basically saying that he was called to preach to everyone—to the Greek and to the barbarians “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” So we are to “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel.”

There is a great illustration of this in 2Kings 7. It is a story of the time of Elisha the prophet when Samaria was being besieged by the Syrian army. The army surrounded the city of

Samaria, and they were starving in the city and were dying. But the prophet said that there would shortly be a day when the city would have all the food, wealth and everything they needed. No one believed him.

Then outside the city there were four, hungry leprous men, who couldn't live in the city because of their leprosy. What do they do? These lepers thought that if they went back into the city, they also would starve and die, so that wasn't an option. If they went over to the enemy camp, to the Syrians, where they had food, they might get fed. They also might be killed, but they were going to die anyway, so they had nothing to lose by going there.

Then they mustered up enough courage and went over to the enemy camp. And they found that the camp had been completely deserted. Everyone had left, but in their haste, they left all their food, their belongings, their gold and silver behind. God had actually scared off the Syrian army. Now this all lay before the four lepers. So they gorged themselves and put on jewelry and clothes and thought this was awesome. But they then realized that the people in the city were still starving to death, thinking they were still under siege by the army that had fled, so they stopped themselves and said, "This is a day of good news. If we don't go back to the city and let them know that there is food for everybody, something bad is going to happen to us. Let's go back to the city and tell them what we found, or we're going to be in big trouble."

That's really a picture of us as believers. We have found the food. We have found the feast. We've been set free in Jesus Christ. And back in the city, our loved ones, our family members, our friends, our coworkers are dying in their sin, and we know the truth, we have good news, so we have to go back and tell them.

This story is a living example of how we have been saved, we know the truth, we've been given the Gospel, so let us go to our family and friends and neighbors—everywhere we go—to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them.

Someone said, "Us as Christians, sharing the Gospel, is like one beggar telling another beggar where he has found bread." I like that. We're just one beggar telling another beggar where we've found bread in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So let us be debtors.

The second statement that Paul makes is in verse 15. He said, "I am ready." Here we see Paul's eagerness or his readiness. "I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also." Paul was eager. The word "ready" doesn't mean that he was prepared to go. It means that he was eager to go.

Sometimes we can be fully equipped and ready to go, but we don't have the motivation. In verse 15, Paul is talking about what motivates him. He had a willingness and an eagerness to go. Some people may know the truth, are equipped to share the truth but they don't have an eagerness or readiness to share the truth.

So what I'm challenging you to do this year is to pray, "God, give me an eagerness, a desire to share the Gospel," believing that God will answer that prayer. We're not to just go through life

quietly and not tell others about Him but to be motivated, eager and ready to share the Gospel with others.

What exactly is the Gospel? We need to know what it is, if we're going to be eager to share it. It's not good views; it's good news. It's not about a creed, a code of conduct, a ceremony, being baptized, taking communion or receiving confirmation. It's proclaiming good news. The word "preach" has the idea "to herald" or "to proclaim." So all we have to do is to tell the story about Jesus.

Notice that in verse 16, it is called "the gospel of Christ." I like the fact that Paul refers to the Gospel not only as the good news, but it the good news about Jesus Christ. If you take Jesus Christ out of the Gospel, you do not have the Gospel. The Gospel is about Christ. So get to know all you can about Jesus; just tell others about Him. Tell about who He is, His marvelous work or what He has done.

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul gives us the content of what the Gospel is. He said, "I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved if you hold fast that word which I preached to you." Then there are three elements of the Gospel in verses 3-4: number one, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"; number two, "He was buried"; and number three, "He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." That is the bare-bones Gospel message.

Now I want to point out that the Gospel involves Christ's death for sin. When you are sharing the Gospel, you must start with sin. It's interesting that today the church doesn't even want to use the word "sin." We've watered it down or we've avoided it altogether, because it's not positive; it's too negative a concept. But unless you realize that you're a sinner, you won't see your need of a savior.

We don't need to go around preaching hellfire and brimstone—"turn or burn." You don't need to go witnessing with a flamethrower. But we should let people know that the reason they need Jesus is because they're sinners. "The wages of sin is death." Unless you repent, you will perish. People say, "Oh, that's so negative!"

If you go to the doctor and he discovers that you have cancer, is it negative for the doctor to say that you have cancer and need some treatment? Is it negative for the doctor to tell you the truth? No; it's loving and caring and right that he properly diagnoses you and is honest with you.

When we go out with our friends and family, they need to realize that we are all sinners, even though they may not like to hear it. We "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We've sinned and disobeyed God not only by our actions and deeds but by our thoughts. We've broken His Commandments. We haven't glorified God. And Jesus came to die for our sins. He came to do what we could not do for ourselves. So the Gospel, the good news, has to start with the bad news about our sin.

When we are witnessing to somebody, it's not enough to say, "Would you like to be happy?"

Would you like to be blessed? Would you like to prosper? Would you like to have the joy of the Lord?" They first must sorrow and repent. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted," Jesus said. So we have to start with our mourning over sin in order to come for forgiveness and be comforted.

Why does Paul say that "He was buried" in 1 Corinthians 15:4? Isn't that a given if He died for our sins? Paul is emphasizing in that statement that Jesus physically, literally, actually died. Why? Because the next point is that "He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." You can't have a resurrection unless you have a physical death. Jesus had to literally die in order to physically, literally be raised from the dead. So He physically died and then He physically, literally rose from the dead; it wasn't a mystical or spiritual resurrection. Jesus' body was quickened, and He came out of the grave in an eternal, immortal body.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:16, "For 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." Paul realized that preaching the Gospel was a necessity, and shame on him if he didn't tell others by preaching the Gospel. So we need to be eager as well as ready to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And notice that Paul says in verse 15, "to you who are in Rome also." Paul had never been to Rome, and he wanted to go to Rome to share the Gospel there.

There is a third statement that Paul makes. In verse 16, he says, "I am not ashamed." Here we see Paul's boldness. He says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..."—why?—"...for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

Then in verse 17, he says, "For in it..."—that is, "the Gospel of Jesus Christ"—"...the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" You might say that verse 17 is the whole book of Romans. He quotes here from the Old Testament book of Habakkuk in chapter 2, verse 4. It is one of the greatest verses of the Bible.

It is sad that so often Christians are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Are you ashamed of Jesus? I remember when I first got saved, I hadn't shared my testimony with my unsaved buddies, and I was nervous to tell them. One day they saw a Christian sticker on my car. They started mocking me, laughing at me and putting me down for my faith in Christ. I was pretty freaked out, but the Lord gave me the strength to tell them that I was a Christian. They just couldn't believe that I would become a Christian.

So many times we are ashamed. But I thought, Why would I be ashamed of Christ? Jesus forgave my sins. He took away my "heart of stone" and gave me "a heart of flesh." He's given me eternal life. Jesus said, "Whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" and "Whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God."

Ask yourself, "Am I ashamed of Christ? Do my coworkers, my neighbors, my own family

members know that I'm a believer? Do they know that I'm a Christian?" When you witness, you don't need to be obnoxious and cram it down their throats, but you need to let your light shine. Jesus said not to "put it under a basket, but on a lampstand" where everyone can see it.

Sometimes we want to be "Christ of the secret order." We're Christians, but we don't want to tell anyone.

Again, when I first got saved, what a struggle it was for me to break away from my old crowd. I went to church on the weekend, and they would ask me, "What did you do this weekend?" They were thinking partying and having a great time. But I told them, "I went to church."

"You did what?! Church?! Are you crazy?" And I remember how they put me down because of my faith in Jesus Christ. So gradually I had to find new friends. How important that was.

So many times we're ashamed of what our friends will say or what our friends will think. "They'll ostracize me. They won't invite me to the parties. They won't invite me to hang out with them after work. They won't like me anymore if I tell them I'm a Christian. What will my wife say? What will my husband say? What will my friends say? What will my family say?" We worry more about offending people than we do grieving the Holy Spirit and dishonoring our God.

So Paul says that he has boldness. "I am not ashamed" to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Many times to the unbeliever, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:18, the preaching "of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

There are six reasons why Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel, in verses 16-17. These are the very reasons we should grab ahold of, as well, so as not to be ashamed to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Number one, Paul knew the Person of the Gospel, verse 16. It was "the gospel of Christ." Jesus is the Person of the Gospel. Why would you be ashamed of Jesus Christ? He's your Savior. He is Lord. He loves you, saved you and redeemed you. He's your best friend. Would you be embarrassed to introduce your best friend to someone? Jesus is the subject of the Gospel, and He is our personal Lord and Savior. Why would we be embarrassed?

Number two, Paul knew the source and power of the Gospel, verse 16. "For it is the power of God." The Greek word "power" here is the word "dunamis." We get our words "dynamite" and "dynamic" from it. So the Gospel is actually the power of God. It is so simple but so simply profound.

When the church abandons the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we lose our power. The reason for the great decline in so many churches in their Christian influence in the world today is that they have forsaken the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The very dynamic power that God has entrusted to us, filled us with His Spirit to enable us to go out to preach, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which we have abandoned. We've turned to psychology, to philosophy, to programs. We've turned away from the preaching of the Gospel. We've turned away from the proclamation of sin, repentance and believing in Christ, from the Cross of Jesus and the Resurrection. That's where the power lies. When we come back to that as the church, that's when the church will have its

impactful, dynamic power on the culture around us. The church, through the Gospel, will have the power to change lives. Only the Gospel has the power to change a person's heart and life.

Think of what it did for Paul, the Apostle, who is penning these words. He was a persecutor, a hater of Christ. He was killing Christians. He was on his way to Damascus, in Acts 9, to arrest and throw into jail those who believed in Jesus. But God changed his heart.

Not everyone has a radical, Damascus-road conversion like Saul of Tarsus. But everyone should have a conversion story. "Though I was blind, now I see." As the words of Amazing Grace say, "I once was lost, but now I am found." Once I was a child of the devil, now I'm a child of God. You can share your personal testimony of how God's power has changed your life. So the source of power is God, and that power comes through the Gospel of Christ. It is God Himself who does the life transformation.

Number three, Paul knew the purpose of the Gospel. It was "to salvation," verse 16. Each of these phrases is pregnant with theological and doctrinal truth. The Gospel is the power of God, which brings salvation. The word "salvation" encompasses the whole redemptive work of Jesus Christ. God sent His Son to save us. Simply stated, we are saved from sin's past penalty—we don't pay the debt of death; we are saved from sin's present power—we are free from the power of Satan and sin in our life; and we are free in the future from the presence of sin—one day we get to go to heaven.

The past has been forgiven—I'm not under sin's penalty; and in the present I live in the liberty where Christ has made me free. I am free from sin's power and control. You do not have to live in sin. Jesus Christ can deliver you to live a life of victory. And one day when we die and go to heaven or we're raptured and the Lord takes us home—and wouldn't it be awesome if this was the year He comes for us, the church? If he does come this year, let's get busy, because we only have so many hours of daylight left until our Master comes. But when He does come, we will be free from sin's presence altogether—no more sin. We are truly saved, in that sense. So we have man's greatest need, salvation, in the Gospel.

Number four, Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel, because Paul knew the Gospel's scope, verse 16. "For everyone...the Jew first and also for the Greek," or for the Gentile. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is universal; it's for everyone. There isn't a gospel for the United States, or a gospel for the west or for western Christianity and they have their own religion in the east. No; there is one message with the power of God to bring salvation to every human being on planet earth.

That's why we need to "go into all the world and preach the gospel." And there is a need to translate the Bible in other languages. There is a need to preach the Gospel "in every tribe and tongue and people and nation." It's universal. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world." We make no distinction. We don't change the Gospel content because of the culture. We might try to connect with the culture, but in doing that, sometimes we cloud the message. It is the same message to the whole world. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only

begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

The fifth reason that Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel—and that should also motive us—was that Paul knew the Gospel’s reception, verse 16. He said, “for everyone who believes.” So he says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” We know that the Bible teaches very clearly that we are “saved by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Faith is described as the hand of the heart that reaches out to receive the gift.

This is what many times people stumble over. “What must I do to be saved?” asked the Philippian jailer. Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” He didn’t say, “Get a haircut. Go to church. Take communion. Be a good person. Stop smokin’ and chewin’ and hangin’ out with those who do. He said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

You say, “You’re kidding me!”

“No.”

“I have to simply believe on Him?!”

“Yeah.”

What does it mean to “believe”? It doesn’t mean that you intellectually just believe that Jesus exists or that there is a God. I meet people all the time who say, “Well, I think they’re a Christian because they believe in God.” That doesn’t mean anything. Satan believes in God, and he trembles. You’d be shocked to realize that you can believe in God, you can believe in Jesus, you can believe in the Bible, you can go to church, you can take communion, you can be baptized, but you can still be lost in sin and go to hell for all eternity. It’s because you haven’t opened your heart, trusted Christ as your Savior and received Him. You haven’t reached out your hand of faith and said, “I put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone.” It’s Christ alone, faith alone, grace alone. It’s the only way we can be saved. Those things are the evidence of true salvation. Not by any righteous deeds we could do.

Now there are other words we can use for “believe.” We can use “faith,” we can use “trust,” we can use “receive,” we can use “surrender.” All are the same concept. That’s the moment in time when you become a child of God. It’s when you say, “I do” to God. It’s when you say, “I surrender to You.” It’s when the little flag in your heart goes up. You might be raised in a Christian home, have a Christian mom and have a Christian dad, you might come to church, might go to youth group, but someday, someday, somehow, the white flag of surrender needs to go up in your heart. You need to say, “Jesus, I surrender. Jesus, I believe. Jesus, I trust in You. I’m not trusting in my church attendance, I’m not trusting in my Christian family and I’m not trusting in my good behavior. I’m trusting in You, and in You alone.”

Then notice, sixthly and lastly, in verse 17. Paul knew the Gospel’s revelation. This is so profound. Paul says, “For...”—so he gives us the reasons he’s not ashamed—“...in it...”—that

is, “in the Gospel of Christ—“...the righteousness of God is revealed.” Do you know that in the Gospel, God reveals His righteousness? There is a lot revealed in the Gospel, but it is made clear that God’s righteousness is revealed in the Gospel message. So all the theology of the book of Romans is contained in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And God’s righteousness is revealed in the Gospel.

Paul wanted the believers in Rome, both Gentiles and Jews, to understand that this salvation in the Gospel of Christ, which is by grace and through faith in Christ, is not a new concept. It goes back to the Old Testament book of Habakkuk, chapter 2, verse 4. He quotes it: “As it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” This verse is considered one of the greatest in the Bible. It appears three times in the New Testament. It appears here in Romans, it appears in Galatians and it appears in Hebrews. It appears three times in the New Testament, and it has three statements: “The just,” “shall live” and “by faith.”

So in Romans we have the reference to “the just.” Man can be righteous before God, be justified. In Galatians, we have “shall live.” It’s talking about living in the liberty wherein Christ has made us free. And in Hebrews, we have the reference to “by faith.” The concept in Hebrews is that is how we live.

Notice in verse 17 of our text, Paul refers to “from faith to faith.” When you believe in Jesus by faith, you are saved, and then that starts a life of faith. You continue in a walk of faith. You must live by faith. So you are saved by faith in Christ, and you continue to live by faith.

Now you are not saving yourself by continuing to believe. When you believe, you are born again. The theological term is “regenerated.” Once you have been regenerated, you are saved for all eternity. You cannot “unregenerate” yourself. You can grieve the Holy Spirit, quench the Holy Spirit, but you can’t “unsave” yourself. You are “sealed [by the Holy Spirit] for the day of redemption.” So something happens when you are saved. You cannot just give back your salvation; God gave you new life. You are a new person; you are transformed. In Christ, you have been transformed. You are “a new creation; behold, all things have become new.”

After salvation comes sanctification. Someone said, “A little faith will get your soul to heaven...”—that’s salvation—“...but a lot of faith will bring heaven to your soul”—that’s sanctification. Sanctification happens when you read God’s Word, believe God’s Word, trusting God and walking in God.

As you go into this new year, what you will have to do is “live by faith.” You’re going to have to believe God, believe His promises, trust in Him. Believe that what He says about you is true. You will have to “walk by faith, not by sight.” Don’t walk by feelings. Keep your eyes on the Lord and trust all year long, as you walk with Him.

But what does it mean that “the righteousness of God is revealed”? I’ve been listening to atheists on YouTube. I’ve been doing that for many years to hear what they’re saying. I was listening to Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens. Both of them put down the concept of

God, who would kill His Son, in order to save people. They say, "If He's a God of love, why couldn't God just forgive everyone?" When you hear that, you think, Yeah! Sounds pretty good to me. If He's a God of love, all loving, all powerful, why couldn't He just say, "I love you all. You're all forgiven. You all get to go to heaven"?

What they forget is that God is love, but God is also righteous. God is also holy. God is also just. You can't take those attributes of God away from God and say that He just needs to be loving.

If I'm driving down the street and breaking the law by speeding and get pulled over, the cop might ask me, "Are you Pastor John Miller? Aren't you the pastor of Revival?"

"Yes."

"Oh, you're such a great guy! I'm just going to let you go. You shouldn't have been driving 120 miles an hour in a 25-mile zone."

"Sorry, officer. I was late to church. I had to get there to preach."

"Well, I'm just going to let you go."

That's pretty nice for me, but that isn't righteous of the cop. If you got pulled over, you'd get a ticket. Would it be righteous for a judge to say, "You're guilty, and the penalty is you go to jail for six months, but I think you're a nice guy. And I'm in a good mood. It's my birthday, so I'll let you go"? No; then he wouldn't be a righteous judge, he wouldn't be a fair judge, he wouldn't be a just judge. He might be a nice judge, a loving judge, but he's not righteous.

So because of His holiness, His righteousness, His justice, God cannot just turn a blind eye to sin. He can't just say, "I forgive you. I'll just let you go." But what He does do is He becomes the judge, He gets up from the bench, takes off His robe and comes down to pay your fine or He goes to jail for you.

God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. Jesus paid for man's sin, because God's own righteousness demanded it or required it, so He could be just in justifying the unjust. I wrote it down like this: in the Gospel, the righteous God makes unrighteous men righteous in a way that is righteous. God paid the penalty for the breaking of the very law that His righteousness demanded.

Paul refers to this as God being "just in justifying." We get the word "propitiation" in the New Testament, which is the death of Christ to satisfy God the Father. God's righteousness demanded that the sin be paid for, and then God's love provided the way for it to be paid. So His righteousness demanded it, and His love provided it. The righteous God justifies unrighteous man in a way that is righteous. So then God maintains His righteousness. It's a righteousness provided by God through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Unless you understand that, you will lack motivation to go out to share the Gospel. So I will ask you these three questions. Number one, are you a debtor? Every believer is. Do you see yourself as having been entrusted with the Gospel? Do you have a debt toward the unbelieving world, to share it with them?

Number two, are you ready? Do you know the Gospel? Are you eager, ready and willing to share the Gospel?

And number three, are you ashamed of the Gospel? We should never be ashamed of it.

So we should see ourselves as debtors of the Gospel, we should be ready to share it and we should not be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.