

February 7, 2021 - Dave Stough

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Preacher: Dave Stough

[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. If you have your Bible or your phone, turn it to Romans chapter 1 while I put my clip on.

We're going to be going through verses 8 through 17. This is week 3 in the study of the book of Romans. In our introduction two weeks ago, it was pointed out that Romans is the most comprehensive look of the gospel in the entire Bible.

Last week, Dave pointed out that there's only one gospel and that it came from God, not man. That it's centered around Jesus Christ and it's for the glory of God alone.

Not for any political movement or church denomination. It's for the glory of God. Also, it was mentioned that the gospel was prophesied throughout the Old Testament.

If you remember, the illustration was given in Luke chapter 24. Where Jesus, after he rose, met with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. And he opened up the scriptures and showed them things concerning himself.

[1 : 25] And he said, is it not right? Shouldn't the Christ should have suffered before he entered into his glory? So, the gospel is prophesied throughout the whole Old Testament.

Now, normally I don't remember that much from a sermon. But I took notes. So, today we're going to examine verses 8 through 17.

You may want to write down things that the Holy Spirit impresses you with. Let's go ahead and read the verses. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all.

Because your faith is spoken of throughout the entire world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son.

That without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers. Requesting, if perhaps, now at last, I might find a way in the will of God to come to you.

[2 : 33] For I long to see you, that I might impart to you some spiritual gift that you may be established. That is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

Now, I want you to know, 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.

I have a great sense of obligation to both Greeks and barbarians, both to wise and unwise. So, as much as it depends on me, I am eager and ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. For the Jew first, and to the Greek.

For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed by faith from start to finish. As it is written, the just shall live by faith.

[3 : 39] Now, some passages of scripture, when we read them, they seem to be weightier to us than others. And that's because, I think, because their content may directly more impact us in a powerful and somewhat personal way.

Many people say that about verses 16 and 17 in our text. These verses are used as memory verses in discipleship programs. These are the verses that ignited the Reformation when Martin Luther read them.

And was convinced that salvation was a free gift of God, not by works. So, because these verses speak to us in a way directly related to the plan of God for saving sinners, they can be very special to us.

When I read them, I kind of get a sense, I kind of maybe feel a little bit like maybe Moses did when he approached the Lord. He said, take your sandals off, this is holy ground. That's because in the

gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed, and the grace of God is revealed to sinners like us who need those.

These two verses, 16 and 17, they could be used as a summary statement for the entire book of Romans. If you wanted to pick out some verses and say, what's Romans about?

[5 : 12] You could read those, and you could say, yeah, that would pretty much capture in a concise way what the book of Romans is about. Of course, there's so much to explain there.

I've prayed that these verses today can be unpacked by the Holy Spirit in a way worthy of their content. My burden is that we gain better insight on how to take a stand on the gospel.

In the day in which we live, when we see in our culture the father of lies getting his way more and more, my burden is that we learn how to, by the power and grace of God, to take a stand for the truth.

Now, verses 16 and 17, they're kind of like the main course for today, but every good meal has its appetizers first, right?

So we're going to look at these verses in context. In verse 8, Paul mentions he was thankful that the believers in Rome were known for their faith throughout the entire world, or maybe it's better said, throughout the entire Roman Empire.

[6 : 30] I find that interesting for a couple reasons. When you think of Roman Christians, what do you think of in history? Persecutions, the Roman Colosseum, Christians being burnt as candles, some horrific persecutions.

And during that time, the gospel spread a lot, and the word of the faith of those Christians was known mightily, right? Well, that was somewhere in the middle 60s, maybe AD 64 through 68, right in that time frame.

This was wrote before that, maybe a decade almost before that, somewhere around 57, 58 AD. So before all that happened, they were known for their faith throughout the entire world.

So when you consider that fact, and the fact that the church was not started by an apostle, but was started by the spread of God's Word, probably those people at Pentecost or someone else, they came back, you can say that these people here understood the power of God's Word and evangelism by the Spirit.

So in Paul's usual style in this text, he mentions the role that prayer has had with him concerning the people he's writing.

[7 : 57] He says, I find it interesting that Paul is saying that prayer is a ministry of the gospel.

When I think of ministering the gospel, I think of ways of proclaiming it, but here we're pointing out, it's, hey, prayer is much a ministry in the gospel as preaching it.

Spurgeon was once asked, what's more important, praying or preaching? And he answered with the question, what's more important, breathing in or breathing out?

In other words, you can't have one without the other, right? So as we see evil being called good and good being called evil more and more in our day, let that, I'm learning myself, to let that be a call for me to pray more.

Now this can happen, like when we think of prayer, I mean, the first thing I think is we take time to pray and you get before the Lord. Well, you do that, but you can do that in a minute as you go throughout your day.

[9 : 23] And I've come to realize instead of thinking about stuff, which sometimes can drive you crazy, you can just stop and take those thoughts and put them up before the throne.

Keep them simple. Tell God how you feel about them. Remember His promises and be thankful. Keep it simple and before the throne. I think that's what Paul, I think that's how Paul could say, without ceasing, I pray for you, make him mention of you always in my prayers.

And he just, he knew the connection he had with God and he relied upon that. But my point here is that prayer is as much of ministry of the gospel as preaching it.

Prayer is where we do our fighting. You know those passages, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, and it's talking about prayer. And there's that passage in, I think it's 2 Corinthians 10 about knocking down strongholds that Satan has.

Those strongholds are things in people's minds that are lies that go against the truth of God's Word. And it says that the weapons of our warfare are mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.

[10 : 37] And he's speaking about prayer and a proclamation of the truth. Those are the two weapons we have. We need each other's prayers, and we need to pray more about what we're

doing.

At least I know I do. So in this text, Paul's big request is that he could get to see these people in Rome so he could impart to them some spiritual gift that they may be established.

Now, we don't really know if Paul meant, like as an apostle, he would go there and lay hands on them and give a gift to somebody that was needed in that local body.

Because you see that other places that apostles do that. Or maybe he just meant he could exercise a spiritual gift that he had to help establish and strengthen them.

But either way, we do know that spiritual gifts are for establishing, strengthening, and building up of a body.

[11:40] That's their purpose. We are to build each other up by glorifying God when we use the gifts that he gave us.

Each one of us has those. some gift. A spiritual gift. So it's the building up. We do not need to tear each other down as can be easily done with our words sometimes.

Usually that's from exalting self. We need each other for encouragement to point us back to the Lord. when we meet together, we exalt our Savior and we serve one another.

That's what goes on when we have church. When we meet. That's when the church meets. That's a primary function of the local body of Christ.

So Paul had not yet been to Rome, but he already did know some people there. We read later in 16, I think Dave pointed this out, that Priscilla and Aquila were there and they were kind of like near and dear to Paul.

[12:52] I think they risked their lives for the sake of the gospel and for Paul. But most of the church there, he didn't know them. But even with them, he still wrote phrases like, I long to see you or that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

You know, the gospel, it has a way of creating a bond with somebody that you hardly know. When you see somebody exalting the Savior, loving the Lord back with their life and exalting the Savior and you want to do the same, God gives you this avenue of a spiritual connection that the world doesn't understand.

but it's a way that God has of identifying Himself in people around you. So the love of the Lord is something you experience when you share it.

Frank and David are not here right now, but hasn't it been really like a breath of fresh air to get to know Frank and David? Teresa, I don't know if you're here, but I really appreciated when she stood up and gave testimony how God has become a perfect Father to her that she needed.

I've got a co-worker at work. His name is Demantre. He drives a fork truck at GM. And we just see each other occasionally.

[14:26] And over the last five years, I don't know if it was a shirt I was wearing or he was wearing or something, but we started talking about the Lord and I found out, hey, this guy's a believer. He gave me his testimony and he's studying and he wants to get involved in full-time ministry.

And we don't see each other a lot, but when we do, we have this connection. There was a time when I said, hey, you want to meet for lunch?

I got like 20 minutes. He goes, yeah. He goes, I've been wanting to know what you think of this word propitiation. And so we sat there and we opened and it was like when we prayed, there was like, I just said, Lord, thank you for this guy.

And we were going to the Lord and to each other. That's the gospel. That's what the gospel does. So verses 14 and 15 tell us who Paul was called to share the gospel with.

Paul considered himself a debtor or maybe better said, because of the love and forgiveness that Paul experienced through Christ, he felt compelled to share that with the people that God called him to share it to, namely the Gentiles.

[15:46] He was the apostle to the Gentiles. Now, in this context, the terms Greek and barbarian, they're used to describe Gentiles.

Now, to understand that, like from the viewpoint of the Greek Roman culture, anybody who was educated and cultured was Greek and anybody that wasn't was a barbarian.

That's pretty much what they're saying. And the words wise and unwise could be translated educated and uneducated. What Paul's getting at is he's burdened to preach to anyone and everyone.

See, Paul, I think I can safely say Paul was motivated by the gospel itself. Because the gospel, it has a divine value system built into it.

Does it not? I mean, we're all made in the image of God. Christ died for us all. God values people, whether they're rich or poor, no matter what their culture or skin color is.

[17 : 04] He values them no matter even what their political views are. Seems to be a hot button nowadays, right? Because, you know, God does not esteem the things that the world does.

Think about this. This is why Jesus could call both Matthew the tax collector and Simon the zealot. Matthew is, in the Jews' eyes, is a traitor because he's co-hearted with the enemy Rome.

And then you've got Simon who's dedicated to the violent overthrow of the Romans. And Jesus calls both of them. He says, drop that stuff.

Follow me. God's kingdom, his calling, is beyond anything this world would entangle us with.

Now, the need to have the divine value system at work in us is one of the lessons we learn when we read the book of Jonah. God sent Jonah to preach to the Ninevites who, that was the capital of Assyria.

[18 : 21] And the Assyrians were the enemies of the Jews. And at that time, they were really known for being vicious and cruel to their enemies. So God sends Jonah to preach to them.

What does he do? He takes off and goes the other way. And finally, when he gets there, he preached to them. And they did.

They turned. They turned to the Lord. In Jonah 3.10, it says, God saw their works that they turned from their evil ways. And God relented from the disaster that He said He would bring upon them.

And He did not do it. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly. And he became angry. What?

He became angry that a city of people repented and turned to the Lord? I think Jonah still had fear and anger in his heart.

[19 : 25] Jonah said in chapter 4, verse 2, he says, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my own country? Therefore, I fled.

For I know that you are a gracious God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, one who relents from doing harm.

Jonah wanted revenge even though these people returned to the Lord. So, the admonition from Paul here, the way I see it in these verses, he's saying, man, don't be a Jonah when you're sharing the gospel.

Be like Matthew or Simon the Zealot. Drop this stuff and follow me. don't let your hate for what your enemies stand for become hatred for their souls.

We can hate what is wrong. We're called to do that, right? That's what love is. But don't let there be hatred for them. I mean, this is a big lesson for me to try to understand and learn personally.

[20 : 41] I have to remember that we don't wrestle against the flesh and blood, but we wrestle against the spiritual forces behind them who are deceiving them.

So, we wrestle with them through those two weapons, prayer and a proclamation of the truth of the gospel. These knock down Satan's strongholds.

So, yes, God gifted Paul to do what he tasked him to do, but more importantly, I think he empowered and motivated Paul through the love found in the gospel. So, he prayed for an opportunity to minister to the saints in Rome.

So, here we are. We're now at verses 16 and 17. Let's read them again. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

for the Jew first and also the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed by faith from start to finish.

[21 : 51] As it is written, the just shall live by faith. There's three phrases in there that I think we need to look at.

One is, the gospel is the power of God. Two, the righteousness of God is revealed. And three, the just shall live by faith.

First, the gospel is the power of God. People like power, don't they? I mean, we like cars with big engines.

We guys usually, if we see a muscle car and we get a chance, we want to pop the hood and look at that engine. Man, that looks like it. My neighbor's got, I think it's a 39, 30-something Willys that he restored.

And he takes, it can do a quarter mile in 12 seconds. And it's street legal. We admire things that have power. what about when you want to upgrade your computer?

[23 : 01] I just had to do that recently. What do you look for? You want to find something that has the power to process things quicker, right? We need some power sometimes.

I think that's why I drink coffee in the morning. Governments, they want to grow in power. Romans were known for exerting their power back in the day when Paul wrote this.

They would militarily conquer a people and come in and subdue them either by enslaving them or taxing them. What we see going on in America today is a grab for more power over the people, right?

Do you remember what Satan offered the Lord Jesus when he was tempting him? He offered him the kingdoms of this world and all the power and glory that was associated with him.

He was tempting with power. If he would only fall down and worship him. That's what Satan wants. The world has its systems of power, but only the gospel, only the gospel has the power of God.

[24 : 18] No power in this world has the ability to change a sinful human heart. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can do that. This is why Jesus told Pilate, my kingdom is not of this world.

If it were, my servants would fight. He went on to say, you rightly say that I am a king for this cause. I was born and sent into the world that I should bear witness of the truth.

Those who are of the truth hear my voice. it is the truth in which we take our stand. It's the truth of the gospel that the power of God is revealed.

The power of God is found in the gospel because the gospel is about Jesus Christ, the creator, the almighty.

God choose to display his power when he comes into the world. We think about this at Christmas a lot.

[25 : 29] Let's take a minute to ponder this a little bit. Think about Jesus when he came versus Herod who was at that time the reigning government official in the area where Jesus was born.

So Herod he had this big elaborate palace. He had servants. He had military people around him. He had riches.

He had wealth. He was esteemed very powerful in the Lord Jesus when he came into the world. He's out in the barn. He's out there with the smelly stuff and the animals.

We had a couple shepherds come by but life just went on normal. The world didn't know him. Why does God do that? Why does the Almighty show his why does he choose to show his power through weakness?

I believe it's because it's the only way he knows it's the only way he can grab our attention for what we need without condemning us.

[26 : 42] First time he came in weakness think about if he came the first time the way he will come the second time will we even have a chance to know him? When the gospel is preached it is foreign to the flesh it's offensive to us yet there's something attractive about it say strangely attractive about it to people who see their need for forgiveness.

weakness. So the truth we share in the gospel has the power of God revealed in it through weakness. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2, I was with you in weakness, in fear, in trembling.

My speech and my preaching, they weren't from the persuasive words of human wisdom, but they were in demonstration of the spirit and power that your faith may not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

In our text, the Greek word for power is dynamis, or some people say dunamis, I don't know which one it is, but it's that word. You may have heard that that word, in an illustration, you may have heard that that word is the same word that was the basis for the word when they created the word dynamite.

Okay, so I, for sure dynamite illustrates power, but I think it has the power to destroy things, and I think that illustration falls short of what that word means in our text here.

[28 : 19] When we hear the term, the power of God, we think of things only God can do. God's power brings harmony and order in the midst of chaos.

The power of God created all the matter and energy in the universe. it was done by the power of his word. And it was done in an orderly, creative, beautiful fashion with a purpose.

God's power makes the blind see. It makes people who were born lame from birth walk. And even probably more extraordinary, God's power raises the dead.

God's power actually defeats the destructive works of Satan. Strong's concordance says dynamis means power or ability for the miraculous, and has an extended meaning of a supernatural ruler who administrates that power.

So I read a commentary that said of this verse 16 about the power of God. He said, the infinite resources of an infinite God are applied towards the goal of the salvation of sinners.

[29 : 42] That's good, right? God chose to use all of his power to save sinners, and he does that first by showing weakness. The everlasting creator God is all the power he has, he uses to save us from his righteous wrath.

It's that kind of power that takes men out of darkness and brings them into light. So the gospel is the power of God. Number two, it's the righteousness of God. In it, the righteousness of God is revealed.

The term righteous is a noun. It's used 33 times in Romans. It's safe to say righteousness characterizes the book of Romans because it characterizes God as he unfolds his plan of salvation, right?

So from the new birth to being sanctified, God's righteousness is revealed. From living in the church now to Israel's future, which is talked about in Romans, God's righteousness is revealed.

The phrase, the righteousness of God, is a phrase being used not just to describe God's own righteousness, but it describes the work of God when he makes sinners righteous.

[31 : 07] It's God's own righteousness which proceeds from him and is conferred upon sinners like us as a gift to those who believe the gospel.

righteousness. It's referred to as God's righteousness because it comes only from him.

And it's given to those who are convicted or convinced by the Holy Spirit that they ain't right and that they need to be made right by believing that Jesus died for their sin.

Now, when it comes to this term righteous, it was pointed out to me it's important to understand the difference between the Greek and the Jewish way this term was understood.

In the Greek Roman culture, it's used like it is in our culture today. Righteous means somebody doing the right thing. Like maybe the world says it doesn't matter if you do right or wrong, but this person chooses to do something right no matter what.

[32 : 23] That's righteous, right? Well, it meant that to the Jews, but it meant more than that. See, to the Jewish mind, righteous was something that a judge determined.

Deuteronomy 25.1 says, if there is a dispute between men, they can come to court so that the judges may judge them and justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.

So, with the Jews, righteous kind of meant like innocent versus guilty. In the 17th verse of this chapter in Romans, the righteousness of God that is being revealed is God's righteousness flowing from His character and bestowed upon those that He, as the judge, declares righteous.

When God sees faith in the gospel, He imparts His righteousness and a new life to the person who believes. It's a righteousness from God that cannot be earned but is only given as a gift to those who believe the gospel message.

Now, there's that little phrase in there that I never really understood and I think I'm starting to understand a little bit but it says the righteousness of God is revealed.

[33 : 46] Some translations say from faith to faith and others say by faith from start to finish. I think what we got here is that as you grow in the Lord, everything you do when you grow in the Lord, you take a step of faith as you did when you got saved and you see more of God's righteousness that's being revealed.

So as you become more sanctified, you understand God's righteousness more. So number one, the gospel is the power of God. Number two, the righteousness of God is revealed.

And number three, the just shall live by faith. That phrase is from Habakkuk. Habakkuk 2.4.

Now, the context of that verse was Habakkuk was a prophet and he had a question for God. And his question was basically this.

God, how can you use a wicked people, the Babylonians, a nation more wicked in Habakkuk's estimation than the backslidden Jews, Jews?

[34 : 59] But God, how could you use them to judge your own people? By letting them come in here to Jerusalem, kill us, enslave us, and destroy the temple.

How can you do that? And he went up into a tower and he waited for God's answer and it says his correction. So, in Habakkuk 2.4, this is what God says.

This is his answer. Behold, the proud his soul is not right within him, but the just man shall live by his faith.

That's his answer. So, God is saying to Habakkuk, though you don't understand why or how this is going on exactly and it seems awful to you, just trust me.

because if you're righteous, you're going to trust me. Habakkuk, you don't even know, you don't even have the correct perspective on what's right.

[36 : 06] I'm a faithful God. Don't be proud. Trust me. I'll do what is right. So, that was the attitude Israel had.

It was an independent attitude, a proud attitude. That's what brought their destruction. But if any of them wanted to be right with God, they would need to humble themselves and receive what God was saying by faith.

So, Paul takes that phrase and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he puts it in here and he's saying, I think what he's saying here is that the just shall live by faith.

He's trying to capture that attitude of humble submission that faith expresses. So, I think oftentimes God's power to save is seen in the context of a dilemma.

The power of the gospel is demonstrated in those who have come to the point where they know they need Christ, right? I mean, have you experienced that? Because we get to the point, one way or another, if we're a little kid or if we're an adult, whatever we're going through, we know that Christ is the only one.

[37 : 32] He's the answer. So, God releases his power to save through faith, but most often, it is those who are humbled to the point knowing God is the only one who can save them.

Musicians want to come up? Jesus makes our soul within us right when we are broken before him.

I think that's the essence of faith. Now, I'd like to end with an illustration of that from the scripture.

So, we kind of like to read the apostle Peter when we like to read the gospels and hear him talk because often times he's expressing what we're thinking, right?

Well, in John chapter 1, Andrew introduces Peter to Jesus. And I don't know if he was saved then or not. Could have been, I don't know, but what I do know is by the time Luke chapter 5 comes around, he's not following Jesus.

He's out fishing. And Jesus is on the shoreline and he's talking to a group of people and Simon comes in all night from fishing and didn't have any success. And Jesus wants to use his boat to stand on so he could be heard better, I guess.

[38 : 48] And while Jesus is talking about the kingdom to these people, Peter's taking care of his nets. And so when Jesus is done talking, he tells Peter, hey, go out here a little bit and throw your net out there for a catch.

And Peter's like, hey, I've been doing this all night. He still don't understand, I've been doing this all night. But nevertheless, at your word, I'll do it.

So he goes out and you remember the story, right? There's so much fish that comes in the nets that he pulls it up and then the people were working, I think there was two boats that were almost sinking.

Okay? And Peter is so overwhelmed by the goodness of God, I think he sees himself maybe for the first time that God, the way God sees him, he sees himself as a sinful person.

But God does that by showing us his goodness and our need for his mercy, right? So Peter comes before him and says, Lord, depart from me for I'm a sinful man.

[40 : 00] And Jesus says, don't be afraid, just follow me. that's, I believe, the illustration of how God produces faith in us.

And I pray that as we are living in this changing, crazy culture where we feel pressure with wickedness, as far as maybe sometimes not wanting to speak the truth, I pray that a remembrance that God's kingdom is, he's the ultimate power.

power. And just the way he's showing us his love and forgiveness, because of that, we can take a stand in a way that the world doesn't understand.

And no matter what, we take a stand on this truth. You know? And now I'm not saying we need to get in all the nitpicky politics and things that go on.

I'll tell you one thing people will listen to is a, I don't know the Lord's working on me on this, but is a humble, submissive spirit. You know, we're to submit to authority, but we always take the opportunity to preach the truth and love.

[41 : 12] And so number one, the gospel is the power of God, not man. Number two, God's righteousness is revealed in it, and we receive it as a gift by faith.

And number three, faith is a process started by God and exercised by us when we have the right spirit before Him. Amen.