



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 1:1

Romans

"An Introduction"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are beginning Romans this morning. And we're beginning with the beginning. We're gonna look at verse 1. That is not really a foretaste of things to come. I'm not going to go through the book of Romans verse by verses, meaning one verse each Sunday. Some people do that. Some people have spent ten years or more on the book of Romans, and we could easily do that, but we will look at the first verse this morning, and much more. And then in the weeks to come we'll have larger sections of scripture to deal with. But this morning our scripture reading is rather brief.

Romans 1:1, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God." May the Lord bless this reading of His word in our study together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for this time together. And we praise You for it. We praise You because we are here as children of God, we who have believed in Jesus Christ by Your grace. And we are reminded of that in this great book of Romans, which we will spend some time studying together in the weeks and months to come. And as we do that, we pray You'd bless us with an understanding of Your grace, which brings centers to Yourself, quickens them, gives them faith, puts them in the body of Christ, joins them together. And we who have believed in Your Son are here in union with Him, in union with one another. And we praise You for that and thank You, because

we can, in this time, open the scripture, study them together, learn of You, and be built up in the faith.

That, Father, is how we are, built up in the faith. That's how we mature, that's how we grow spiritually. It's through study together and this book is so foundational to our understanding of who we are as Christians, of who You are as our sovereign God, what You have done for us, and Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the consequences of that, all of the benefits and blessings that follow from that.

And so we pray that as we study this book together, we would be built up in the faith, we would be matured as men and women in Jesus Christ, and we would be used greatly of You. The world we live in is and always has been in desperate need of the truth of this book, the gospel of Jesus Christ. May we come to understand it better, know what we believe, live according to it, and speak it clearly and freely to those around us. To that end, bless us this morning.

Father, we are a needy people. We are completely dependent upon You for the spiritual things of life. Spiritual life is a gift. We were dead in our transgressions and sins, but God, being rich in mercy, made us alive together with Jesus Christ.

What we have, we have because of You. We are new creatures because of Your sovereign saving grace. We are also dependent upon You for the material things of life. You are faithful to provide, Father. We thank You for that faithfulness. You are so regular in Your faithfulness to provide that we take things for granted. We tend to think of our daily bread and our every moment breath of life as the natural course of things in this world, but they are not. You can take all away in a moment. And the only reason we have it is because every moment You give. Make us thankful for that, Father, but we pray that You would provide our daily bread, that You would provide all of the material needs that we have.

We thank You that You do that. We thank You that You give us what we need and You take away from us what we don't need. Help us to always be thankful and rejoice in what we have, regardless of the

circumstances. Trials in life come and we may think that You've abandoned us because of them, but just the opposite is the case. It's in those trials that You meet us and You bless us, and so help us to understand that.

Bless though, Father, that are in particular need. We pray for those who are sick, those who are recovering from surgery, those who are grieving. We pray that You would be merciful to them. We pray that You would bring about healing in whatever area they need that and cause them to rejoice in You.

We pray, Lord, for our meeting this evening. We pray that as we gather again here, You'd bless us. Bless all who participate. May it be a time of good worship of You and a time of edification for us, and we pray that for our meeting now. Bless us as we study. And bless us as we sing our final hymn. Prepare our hearts for our time of study and worship together. We pray in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] Sometime around the year A.D. 57 the apostle Paul was in the Greek city of Corinth, finishing up his third missionary journey. He was about to leave for Jerusalem with a gift for the poor saints there when he wrote a letter to a little church in the capital of the empire. It was a place he'd never been and he wrote to people he had never met. But he hoped to visit them soon and he wrote to inform them of his plan.

He began, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God." Sixteen chapters and 432 verses later, he concluded, "To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever. Amen." He rolled up the letter, sealed it, gave it to Phoebe, who put it in her purse and sailed off to Rome.

The letter that she carried, Paul's epistle to the Romans, has been called his greatest epistle. Samuel Taylor Coleridge called it the profoundest book in existence. It's fair to say that Phoebe carried in her luggage the future history of the church. And while it might seemed to have been risky to entrust so valuable a text to one person, to such tender hands, as someone as said, it was absolutely secure.

God guarded Phoebe's purse, because He had ordained that Paul's letter reach not only Rome, but churches across the world and down through the ages.

The book of Romans is the profoundest book in existence. It is also one of the most influential books ever written. It has been the means of the conversion of multitudes of people, some very significant. It was while Saint Augustine sat in a garden in Milan that he picked up the Bible and turned it random to Romans 13:13, 14. He read them and was saved.

Centuries later, a German monk, Martin Luther, sat in his room at Wittenberg University, puzzling over Romans 1:17 and the subject of God's righteousness. He struggled with the righteousness of God for years when at last the Holy Spirit enlightened his mind and he understood the Gospel for the first time. He believed and was saved.

Two centuries later, John Wesley sat in a small London prayer meeting on Aldersgate Street, listening to a Moravian read from the preface to Luther's commentary on the book of Romans. Wesley was a minister in the Church of England, but lost. He'd only recently returned from Georgia, a very discouraged man. As he would later write, I who went to America to convert others, was never converted to God myself.

But as he sat in that house, he heard the Gospel and was converted. He said, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given to me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Down through the centuries, this book has warmed the hearts of multitudes and it has changed lives so significantly, that they, many, have gone on to influence the church in a very significant way. The Swiss commentator Frederic Godet called the book of Romans the cathedral of the Christian faith. And he compared the way we approach it to the way we might approach and look at one of the great

Medieval cathedrals of Europe. First, we might admire the architecture as a whole, and then begin to marvel at all the details.

Well, in the months to come, we're going to study the details of this cathedral of the Christian faith. But this morning I want to try to get a look at the whole. And so I want to give an overview of the book and hopefully give a sense of the theme and the direction of the epistle, and then toward the end spend a little bit of time on verse 1.

Paul wrote to the Romans to inform them of his planned visit to them on his way to Spain, where he would preach the gospel. But his purpose was far greater than that. In the book of Romans, Paul gave the church a full and plain statement of the gospel of salvation, its blessings, and much more.

The scope of this letter is wide. It is a theological letter. It's not until 6:11 that we read the first command, the first exhortation. And it is not until chapter 12 that we come to the main section of application, which indicates clearly that before we can live the Christian life, we must understand the Christian faith. We must understand what it is we believe, understand the doctrines of the word of God.

Well, the book of Romans teaches us that. It is a theological letter. It unfolds for us the doctrines of the Christian faith, the essence of Christianity, and that is why it is so influential, why it has had such a wide effect throughout the entire world. It divides simply into three major sections.

The first, chapters 1 through 8 concern the doctrine of justification and its consequences. The second, chapters 9 through 11, are about Israel and its future as a nation, as a people. The third, chapters 12 through 16, consists of practical exhortations, and then a final greeting to the Christians in Rome.

The opening introduction in chapter 1 includes a statement of the theme of the book in verses 16 and 17, and Paul will develop that in length later on. The theme is simple: It is the gospel of God. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For

in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.'

Gospel, or evangel, means good news. And the good news is about salvation. It is the revelation of God's righteousness. Not the righteousness that we produce to please God and gain His approval, His acceptance. That's impossible. Paul makes that very plain throughout this book. But this is the righteousness that God gives as a gift to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"The just shall live by faith." But to understand the gift of God's righteousness, we must first understand man's unrighteousness and God's justification in judging us. To do that, Paul demonstrates the need of all men for the gospel by establishing the guilt of all and the impossibility of a salvation by works. He goes this in chapters 1:18 through 3:20. He begins with the Gentiles in chapter 1. They are without excuse. They had light. They had the revelation of God in nature, which makes it plain that the world around us is a creation and there is, by clear implication, a creator.

But they turned from that light and turned instead from worshipping the creator to worshipping the creation. They suppressed the truth in unrighteousness, Paul said. As a result, God abandoned them to the natural outworking of their sins in a descent into depravity.

In chapter 2, Paul turns to the Jews. They had greater revelation. They had special revelation, the Law. They boasted in the Law. But they failed to live up to its standards and they too stand condemned.

In chapter 3, Paul sums up the matter with a string of indictments declaring there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands and none who seeks for God. The entire human race is guilty, Jew and Gentile alike. It has sinned against the light that God has given it and it is under His wrath.

Paul concludes this first portion of the book with the statement in chapter 3:20, "By the works Old Testament he Law no flesh will be justified in His sight." Man is guilty. There is nothing that he can do

to save himself. And by all rights, this is where the Bible should end, leaving mankind doomed. But it doesn't. What man cannot do, God does. That's the gospel, and so by God's grace we are able to read on. And following the hopeless words, "No flesh will be justified," we read, "but now." That has been called one of the great adversatives of the Bible. All is darkness, all is doomed, but now, Paul writes, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been manifested. It has been manifested in the cross of Christ, which Paul explains in terms of propitiation and redemption.

Romans 3:21-26 give a condensed form or statement of the gospel, which Paul then expands upon in the chapters to come. Christ's death has satisfied God's justice for the sinner. And it has turned away His wrath. That is propitiation. It has saved us. It purchased us out of sin it united us with God. That is redemption. And what Christ accomplished is received by the sinner through faith as a free gift. That is the method of salvation. It is God's gift, bought for us by Christ at the cross and it is received by us through faith.

Now, that raises an objection, probably a Jewish objection. Paul faced many of these and he repeats these objections throughout the book. When Paul wrote this, he did not write this off the top of his head. This is a book that was composed over many, many years, much after much thought, after much discussion, as Paul traveled across Asia and Europe, entering into the synagogues and marketplaces and teaching these things and having discussions and debates with people. Questions were raised and Paul brings those questions out, questions that naturally arise as these doctrines are taught. And evidently a Jewish objection was stated, to the effect that to say that a person is saved apart from the Law by faith alone contradicts the Old Testament and the Law.

So in chapter 4, Paul demonstrates that the salvation that he speaks of has always by grace through faith, never by means of the Law. In the Old Testament, people looked forward in time to the Savior to come, to the Deliverer to come. And Paul supports that, first

in chapter 4, with the example of Abraham, the father of the Jewish race. And then secondly with the testimony of David, Israel's greatest king. Both were saved apart from the works of the Law. Abraham was saved before the Law was ever given, over 400 years before Moses was ever born.

God justifies not the righteous, Paul says, but the ungodly. Men do not perform works, good deeds to the point where they gain God's approval, where they come to a point where they merit the declaration that "You are just in my sight." That cannot be. That cannot happen. What happens is the ungodly recognizes his or her ungodliness, cries out to God, puts his or her faith in the Savior, and that is when God justifies the individual, declares them to be righteous in His sight, innocent before Him, in conformity with the Law.

Well, that is what Paul develops in chapter 4, and in chapter 5:1-11, he gives some of the consequences, or blessings, or justification. We have peace with God, the assurance of salvation, and hope, he says, that will not disappoint.

But how can God justify the ungodly? What is the method of justification? That is what Paul explains in the second half of Romans 5:12-21. The answer is imputation. It is an important word in an important passage. God imputes or God reckons the righteousness of Christ to be ours. On the basis of what Christ has done, He pronounces us just. He pronounces us to be right with Him. That's chapter 4.

In chapter 5, he explains how God can do that. And Paul develops this by means of an analogy between Adam and Christ. They are the two central figures of human history, and the human race divides into two groups because of them. People are either righteous or unrighteous. They are either saved or unsaved. They're either characterized by sin and guilt, or they're characterized by faith and obedience.

And the origin of this great divide in the human race is these two men. Adam is responsible for fallen humanity; and Christ is responsible for redeemed humanity. Adam's disobedience brought

condemnation and death; Christ's obedience brought justification and life. Adam represented all of his people, the whole human race, so when he disobeyed God, when he sinned and fell, his sin was imputed to all he represented.

Now this is a concept, an idea, that we're familiar with, because of our form of government. We understand representation. We elect men and women to go to Washington to be our representatives, and they represent us in the House and the Senate, so that when they cast a vote, their vote is our vote. What they do, we do by means of our representative. And our representative in the Garden of Eden was Adam. He was a perfect representative. We couldn't have had a better representative. He was a perfect man. He represented us better than we could have represented ourselves. But he fell. He sinned and his sin was committed in our place. It was in effect our sin, because it was a sin of our representative, and so we became guilty. Because of Adam's sin, all men fell.

Christ is the remedy. He is the second representative man. He is the second or the final Adam, and His obedience, His righteousness and death are imputed to all that He represented. And so all of them are raised up because of Him, and through faith, justified.

Now, justification is based on the work of Christ, and it is undeserved. It is all a grace. And that salvation, which is absolutely free to the sinner, magnifies by that fact the grace of God. That's how Paul ends chapter 5. But that raises a question.

Because if salvation is, as Paul says it is, free, absolutely free, apart from work, apart from any effort on our part, if it is due solely to the work of Christ, won't that lead to license? Won't that lead to sin, to indulgence in sin? That's the question that Paul answers in chapter 6, where he begins dealing with the subject of sanctification, the change that God produces in the lives of those whom He has justified.

In fact, in chapter 6, 7, and 8, Paul explains the power of the gospel, that which he spoke of in chapter 1. And he explains that by

stating in chapter 6 that we who are justified are dead to sin. Not that we don't sin, but that the power of sin has been broken in our lives. In chapter 7, he explains that we are dead to the Law. It can't condemn us any longer. And then in chapter 8, he explains that we are alive in the spirit. Our union with Christ has brought about new relationships. We're no longer servants to sin, but servants to God. We're no longer under the Law, which reveals, provokes, and condemns the sin in us. We are free from the Law and now we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

That makes us more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. That's what Paul says at the end of chapter 8, where he states that nothing can separate from Christ. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, and that's how he concludes the first major division of the book of Romans. That's the gospel. And Paul was not ashamed of it. It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

But what about the Jew? What about Israel? What happened to that nation, God's chosen people? They don't believe the things that Paul teaches here. They don't believe the gospel of grace and faith. How is it that the Jewish people did not understand that? How is it that the Jewish people rejected their Messiah? What about God's covenant with Israel and the promises that He made to them? Did God's word fail in regard to Israel?

That's the question or questions that Paul takes up in chapters 9 through 11. It is a kind of parenthesis in the book, and yet fits perfectly with the emphasis Paul has put on the sovereign grace of God and salvation. In chapter 9 Paul explains that God's word has not failed. No one is saved because of his or her parents. No one is saved because of physical descent or ancestors. No one is saved because he or she is a Jew by birth. Not all Israel is Israel, he said. Not all Jews are saved Jews. They never have been. God has always worked in grace according to His purpose and election.

And Paul gives examples of that from Abraham and his descendants. He chose Isaac instead of Ishmael. He chose Jacob instead of Esau. This is the classic chapter on the doctrine of unconditional election. We read, for example, in verse 14-16, "What shall we say then? There's no injustice in God, is there? May it never be." In other words, this choice that God makes, this sovereign choice of choosing one and passing over another, that some would say that's unjust, that's unfair, Paul says there's no injustice in that. This is the way God works. This is God's prerogative. Verse 15, for He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy; does not depend on what we do. No man seeks for God, Paul says. There's none righteous. If it depended on what we did, none would come anyway. All of this, this great salvation, depends wholly and completely on the sovereign grace of God. He has mercy on whom He has mercy.

He goes on to explain that He blessed Moses, who was His elect one. Moses was given mercy. He hardened Pharaoh, one of the un-elect, or the non-elect, to show His glory through that great Egyptian king. It's all there in the book of Romans chapter 9. Unconditional election is a doctrine of the word of God. And it is clearly stated in Romans chapter 9, but it is often, very often, misunderstood and mischaracterized. Election does not eliminate the need of faith.

The election of God, unconditional election, does not eliminate human responsibility. Everyone is responsible - everyone. And in fact, election is the reason that people act responsibly. It's the reason that people believe. The elect have been chosen by God to salvation through faith, not simply to salvation. That's a misunderstanding of the doctrine of election. We are chosen for salvation through faith. We are chosen to believe,

And in chapter 10, Paul emphasizes the necessity of faith. Verse 13, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Faith

occurs with the preaching of God's word. And Israel heard. But Israel didn't believe. The Jews failed in their responsibility. They had great opportunity. They heard the prophets, generation after generation. Great opportunity. In fact, Paul quotes God in verse 21 to that effect. "All the day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." Did **they got come** because God's word failed? Not at all. God was patient with His people. He stretched out His arms all day long. That's His patience, and His people refuse to come, because they were obstinate and disobedient.

So as Paul explains in chapter 11, because of their disobedience, because of their rejection of the Messiah, Israel is under judgment at the present time. It is a partial hardening that has come upon the Jewish people.

That's not the end. As Paul writes in verse 29, the gifts and the calling are irrevocable. God has made promises to Israel and He will keep them. Those promises are irrevocable. That is the future for Israel, for the Jewish people. All Israel will be saved, Paul writes, in verse 26.

God will take away their sins. They will believe. In fact, Paul's ministry among the Gentiles was to that end. Because as he explains, the conversion of the Gentiles will result in jealousy among the Jews and faith as a result of that. And so Paul ministered earnestly, diligently, among the Gentiles, knowing that that effort, that work, would bring about in time the conversion of the Jews, which would bring, he says, the greatest blessing of all upon the earth.

So that's the future for Israel. The last section of Romans, chapters 12 through 16, is largely applicational. It deals with the outworking of Christianity and the Christian's daily life. Begins with the call for the consecration of our bodies and the renewal of our minds. Chapter 12:1, 2, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of

your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

We're always faced with choices in this life. We are faced with the choice of following the fashions of the world or conforming to the will of God. And for the Christian, there's really only one choice, and that's conforming to God's will. The chapters that follow, Paul states God's will for His people in regard to all their relationships, since the gospel changes lives, justified people are to live justly. They are to live righteously. They are to work out their salvation in fear and trembling. And Paul explains that in regard to our relationship with God, our relationship within ourselves, that is in our personal life, and he explains this in regard to our public relationships, our relationships with others, our enemies; our relationship to the state, to the government, to the weak, the immature Christian. All of these relationships are developed in the chapters that follow.

And then Paul concludes the book in chapters 15 and 16 with information about his plans to visit and go on to Spain, visit the Romans, and then go on to Spain to preach the gospel, and then he gives greetings to the Christians in Rome from some other friends there in Corinth.

So chapters 1 through 8 are largely doctrinal. Chapters 12 through 16 are largely applicational. And in between, chapters 9 through 11 area parenthesis, answering the question what happened to Israel.

But all of that begins with the first verse of the first chapter, where Paul identifies himself in three ways, which show that he was well qualified to write everything in this book. He begins by calling himself a servant. He doesn't tell us about his B.A. and his M.A. and his Ph.D. from the universities of Tarsus and Jerusalem. He begins with the humblest title and the noblest title a person can have, bond-servant of Christ Jesus, slave to the master. Which is to say, he is, first of all, a Christian. He was like those men and women in Rome to whom he was writing. He was saved. He had been redeemed. He had

been ransomed, as Peter said, from this futile way of life, just as they had. He'd been made a child of God. Fundamentally, that's what he is. he is a bond-servant as a result of God's grace, so that he is no longer his own man. He was a servant of Christ, who he told the Galatians, "loved me and gave Himself for me."

So Paul gladly served Him. Paul loved Jesus Christ and had as his chief golden life to serve and glorify Him. And so first and foremost, he says, "I am a servant of Christ." Secondly, Paul describes himself as an apostle. An apostle is literally one who is sent as a messenger. It has that general meaning, but here it has a specific meaning, the official designation of both the special office of apostle in the church and spiritual gift. Paul says that he was called to that office. He was appointed to it. He was given the gift. He didn't seek it. Paul did not have as his desire, his ambition, to be an apostle in the church. Christ chose him for it.

Paul wasn't converted by the agency of other men. People and John didn't teach him the gospel. He was converted by the direct agency of Jesus Christ. So he was not indebted to the other apostles. He was an apostle in his own right, equal to the others. In fact, he was the apostle most greatly used of God in the spread of the gospel.

So in writing this, he was reminding the Romans. Now, he did not write as an ordinary man. He is an ordinary man. He is like them. He's a servant of Christ. He's a child of God, just as they are, for the same reason that they are - by God's grace and God's grace alone. But by God's grace, he has an office. He has the position of apostle. So this ordinary man was not writing as an ordinary man. He was writing as one who had been given authority by Christ, and his message was to be received by them as God's word.

Finally, he was set apart for the gospel of God. This was not a description of his pre-destination to salvation, as in Galatians 1:15. The same word is used in both texts, and there Paul wrote that he was set apart from his mother's womb. Now here, he is describing what happened when God called him to be an apostle. He was dedicated by

God to that task. It was God's act. And that itself is an expression of the grace of all.

Of all the men that God would dedicate, set apart as an apostle, Paul, Saul of Tarsus, was the least likely, the least deserving, it would seem. A brilliant rabbi, he loved Judaism and hated Jesus. He thought he was a heretic and devoted his will and his energy to destroying the name of Jesus Christ, persecuted the church; he arrested Christians, men and women, mothers and fathers. He put them in prison and put them to death.

And as he was on his way to shed Christian blood in Damascus, Christ stopped him on that Damascus road in a blinding light, saved him, and set him apart to preach the gospel. That's the reason that Paul was the preacher of sovereign grace. He had experienced it in an unmistakable way. And so he was able, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to write this book about amazing grace. And that's what it's about, and grace that produces amazing changes.

Godet, who called the book of Romans the cathedral of the Christian faith, also stated that probably every great spiritual revival in the church will be connected as effect and cause with a deeper understanding of this book. Well, may God give that to us. May he give revival to us, to this church. That is my prayer for myself, as I study the book of Romans, and my prayer for you, as you yourselves study it, that God would bring about revival among us. And who knows? Maybe there's someone here, like Martin Luther, religious but unsaved, who will be affected by his or her studies in this book.

Earlier I mentioned some who were - Augustine and Wesley. John Stott, in his commentary on the book of Romans included an account of the conversion of a more modern figure, Dumitru Cornilescu. Now that account was interesting to me, because Mr. Cornilescu was a Romanian, whose ministry I became acquainted with years ago when I first traveled to Romania.

He was an orthodox priest. He was born in the 1880s. And while he was studying in the orthodox seminary in Bucharest, he longed for

spiritual reality. They did not have that in the orthodox church and he longed for it. He knew something was missing.

And so he began reading evangelical writers and he decided to translate the Bible into modern Romanian. He began the work in 1916 and finished it six years later. As he translated such text as "There is no one righteous, not even one, all have sinned; the wages of sin is death," he was deeply disturbed. He was a monk; he was translating the Bible. That's good. He thought himself to be a righteous man, but he read there is no one righteous and that meant that he was not righteous.

But he also read that sinners are justified freely through Christ and he came to see that God has done everything through Christ for salvation, that on the cross God purchased for sinners forgiveness. He said, "I took this forgiveness for myself. I accepted Christ as my living Savior." And from that point on he was assured that he belonged to God and that he was a new person.

He published his translation of the Bible in 1921, which became the standard text in Romania. He began preaching the gospel of faith alone and Christ alone. People began crowding into the little chapel where he preached and many were saved. The father of one of our members, **Chebon** Constantinescu, was greatly influenced by Mr. Corenilescu. He was an orthodox priest at the time and he left that priesthood and began to minister in the church and Bucarest for many, many years. Many people in Romania were influenced by this man. And so it wasn't long before his influence attracted atten. His life was threatened and he was exiled by the orthodox patriarch in 1923. Never returned to Romania. He died in Switzerland some years later, but his influence is still felt in that country today.

That's the power of the book of Romans. It changes lives, because it's the word of God. It is the gospel. If you're here this morning without Christ, this is what you need. You are a sinner. You are not righteous. You may be good in my eyes, you may be a good citizen, but you are not righteous in the eyes of God. You are lost and

in need of the Savior. And the only Savior there is Jesus Christ. God has done everything in Christ for salvation. He has sent Him forth as the propitiation for our sins.

On the cross, Christ became the substitute for sinners. He bore the penalty in our place and He satisfied God's justice, and having satisfied His justice, He turned away His wrath against all who believe in Him. So believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're here without Him, look to Him, trust in Him. The moment that you, you are saved and saved forever. May God help you to do that and help all of us who have done that to rejoice in the salvation we have, rejoice in God's grace, and live lives that express it and bring honor to Him. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your goodness and Your grace, and we thank You for this magnificent book, this cathedral of the Christian faith. And as we examine the details of it over the weeks and the months to come, may we be blessed greatly by it. What a privilege to possess it. What a privilege to read it and to study it.

Give us diligence in that. We might understand what it is we believe. We might know the great doctrines of the Christian faith, that we might understand thoroughly the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we might be able to effectively proclaim it to others and live it correctly before them. We pray these things in Christ name. Amen.