



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 1:16-17

Romans

"Gate of Paradise"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Hello, it is a thrill to be going through the book of Romans. And we've come to a very important couple of verses in the text. We come to the end of the introduction, where Paul writes in verses 16 and 17 of chapter 1, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it sexual intercourse the power of God for salvation to everyone who believe, to the Jew first and also 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.'" May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to be here, where we can open the Bible and study it. And to study this particular text, what a privilege it is, what a glorious thing it is, because it reminds us of Your grace. We are by nature sinners, fallen, objects of wrath. And by all rights, by every standard of Your Law, we should be swept away in judgment, but by Your grace You have chosen a people, You have redeemed them by the blood of Your Son and through the work of the Holy Spirit, and the preaching of the gospel, You have brought them and are bringing them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ so that when that day comes and we stand before You and we see our Savior face to face, we will not take credit for anything that is true of us. We will give our trying God all the praise and all the glory.

And Father, we praise You and thank You for that, and we thank You for this text of scripture that reminds us of it, that reminds us of

Your grace, and informs us of the gospel, that it's all of grace, it's all through faith. It's through nothing of our own.

And so as we come to this text this morning, we pray that You would make it clear to us, that the Spirit of God would operate upon our hearts to make us receptive to Your truth, that we would understand these things and appreciate increasingly the gospel of Jesus Christ and the grace that is there.

So teach us this morning. Build us up in the faith. We look to You to do that, Father, because salvation is of the Lord, from beginning to the end. It's Your work, from beginning to end, and we must have that sanctifying and teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit this morning.

So we pray Your blessings upon us in this aspect of our life, this spiritual aspect. We pray that You'd sanctify us this morning. But we pray also, Lord, for the physical needs that we have, and we're dependent upon You for all the needs, the physical concerns of our life, and we pray You'd bless.

We think of those in particular who are sick or who are recovering from surgery. We pray Your blessing upon them. We pray for those that have gone out from our midst to minister. We think of Mike **Gendron**. We pray You'd bless him, with Rob **Zimms**, and pray that they'd have an effective ministry in Ireland. Give them protection, give them the power to preach and teach effectively; open hearts to receive Your truth there, and open hearts in this land and in this city and this neighborhood to do the same, as we go out from this place with the truth. May we speak it clearly. May we represent it in our lives effectively. May we be men and women who talk about Christ and live according to His standard. May it be seen in our lives. So make us effective witnesses and use our time together to that end.

We pray for our meeting this evening. We pray You'd bless it. We pray that You would bless each individual who participates, as we remember our Lord, as we remember His death for us and the life that we have in Him, remember why He came, what He sacrificed to gain

our life, our salvation, and remember that He's coming again. May we look forward to that day. May we live in light of that day. May we redeem that we have, because He's coming again. This world is passing away.

So, Lord, we pray You would bless our time this evening, bless our time now as we study together, and bless our time as we sing our final hymn. May it prepare our hearts well for our time of study together. We pray these things in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] When Christian went out of the city of destruction at the beginning of *Pilgrim's Progress*, he left with a deep sense of dread and a heavy burden of sin on his back. Someone named Evangelist has pointed him to a wicket gate across a field where he would find relief from his sin.

So Christian set off for the little gate. But it wasn't long before he met Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who told him that that was an easier way to get rid of his burden and sent him to his friend, Mr. Legality in the town of Morality. Christian went, but soon he found himself more burdened with guilt and more terrified. It was then that Evangelist again found him and redirected him toward the wicket gate where the cross stood.

That was John Bunyan's way of showing that the world and religion are, for many ways, that seem right, but are wrong. They are what Paul called another gospel, which is not another. They are different gospels. They are false gospels. They are no gospels at all.

There is only one way. There is only one gate, one gospel, and it is the gospel that Paul and the Apostles preached, the gospel of the Old Testament prophets, the one that Paul gives in Romans chapter 1: 16, 17. These are important verses. They're important because they are the gospel and they are important because they state the theme of the book of Romans.

In fact, many commentators have said that the rest of Romans is an explanation of this text, and it was a text, it was a message that was greatly needed in Rome. And Paul was eager to visit the city, as most

people in his day were. Everyone hoped to visit Rome at least one time in their lifetime, to see the symbols of imperial power, just as a lot of people today would like to go to that place and see the magnificent sites.

In fact, the first visit I took to Europe, back in my college days, involved a trip to Rome. My friends and I spent a couple of cold and rainy days in Paris, and then we traveled on to Rome. It was nice. It was sunny. It was warm. We hiked around the city. We found the forum. We found around in the Colosseum. We had a great time.

Paul's motives for going to Rome were very different from mine. His interest was not tourism. It was evangelism. He wanted to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the capital of the empire, the seat of Gentile pride. He wanted to do that; he needed to do that. He told the Roman Christians in verse 14, "I am under obligation."

His obligation was to God. He was a debtor to grace with a great responsibility. He was an apostle. Now, he had been called as an apostle to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Both to the Greeks and the Barbarians.

So Rome was the natural destination for Paul. But going there was not a burden to him. It was his obligation, but not a burdensome obligation, a duty as an apostle, but one that he said he was eager to undertake. He had prayed about it. He had planned for it. But he wanted to do it, wanted to go there, because not just it was an obligation, but it was his great desire to do so. That's the attitude of a true servant.

Hudson Taylor was that. He was the great 19th-century missionary to China. And once someone said to him that he had given his life to the Orient because he loved the Chinese. And Mr. Taylor listened to that for a moment and then he answered, "No, not because I love the Chinese, but because I loved God."

That's true of God. The love of God, love of Christ, is the motive for all that we do, or should be, and it makes us eager to do all that we are to do, all that we ought to do. Even difficult tasks won't be

a burden for those who love the Lord and desire to serve Him out of that love.

Well, ministering in Rome would not have been an easy task. And what Paul looked forward to in going to Rome was certainly a challenge. But verse 16 explains his readiness to do that, his eagerness to go to that city, to preach there, for, he says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." And of course we would never have thought that Paul was ashamed of the gospel, but he knew that we often are. And he took faced the temptation, which at times may have been strong for the apostle.

Paul was a sophisticated man with a rich heritage, a brilliant, well educated man. He was a Jewish man, but not just a Jew, as he told the Philippians. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He knew his history. He knew his pedigree. He knew the tribe from which he came and it was a long line of distinguished individuals that were in his family, and yet he faced a world that thought his message and his life were nonsense.

The Jews, he said, the gospel of crucified Messiah, is a stumbling block, and to Gentiles, he said, it's foolishness. Told the Corinthians that he and the apostles were fools for Christ's sake. That's how the world looked upon him.

And no one is indifferent to insults. The apostle Paul was no different, and he had many. Faced a life of that. The Jews had thrown him out of their synagogues. The Greeks have laughed him out of Athens. He was beaten and stoned for his beliefs and didn't suffer reproaches with insensitivity. No one does.

But Paul was more than willing to suffer the shame and the stones and ridicule for Christ, because the gospel is true. It is good news. It is the promise of life to a dead world. Why would anyone be ashamed of that? Because we value the world's opinion, that's why. We want its approval, even though its approval is worthless, and even though its approval will fade very quickly and counts for nothing.

Paul knew the temptation, but he wasn't taken in by it. He had long since ceased to be enamored of the world. It had been crucified to him and he to it. Now, he was eager to preach the gospel in Rome, because he wasn't ashamed of it. And he was eager to preach it, because he knew that people would be saved by it. In fact, saved only by it.

That's the fourth reason that Paul wanted to preach in Rome. He was obligated. He was eager. He was not ashamed, because fourthly, he said, it is the power of God for salvation. And that gave Paul courage to go into the strongholds of the unbeliever. Of himself, Paul had every reason to be reluctant and to feel inadequate. Who was he to enter mighty Rome and proclaim Jesus Christ to be Lord of all and Savior of the world? Those were titles that were frequently used of Caesar. Nero's subjects hailed him as Savior of the World. And Paul was going to go into his capital and proclaim that a crucified Jewish carpenter was the true God and Savior. That took courage.

And from all appearances, Paul was an unlikely hero. According to an ancient description of him, he was a small, unattractive man. He was bald and bowlegged and had a hook nose. He had bad eyesight, we think. The Corinthians had complained that he wasn't a very gifted speaker. And in an age when people valued rhetoric, valued oratory, that was a real liability.

But Paul could go fearlessly, because he, one, was called to go. That was his obligation, as an apostle to the Gentiles, but could go eagerly, courageously, because the power is in the message. It's not in the man. The gospel is, he says, the power of God for salvation.

Now, the Romans understood power. They had it and they had used it to defeat armies and enslave peoples. They ruled the world and put it in bondage. Now, Paul's power was different from that. It is power that frees from bondage. It delivers people from the power and the penalty of sin. That is the power of the gospel and that is the greatest power in the universe.

Rome could capture people, but it couldn't change them. The gospel does that. People are saved eternally through its preaching. They become new creatures. They are forgiven of their sins. They are reconciled to God, made children of God, given the Holy Spirit permanently. And with that, an inheritance that is everlasting and cannot fade away. We're given eternal life through the preaching of the gospel.

When Evangelist pointed Christian to the wicket gate, he gave him a message written on a scroll, and the message was, "Flee from the wrath to come." Judgment is coming on the world. That is what Christian dreaded so much. And so Christian left his home there in the City of Destruction, crying out as he ran, "Life, life, eternal life."

That was Paul's message. That's the message of the gospel - eternal life. Escape from the wrath to come. Rome couldn't give the world a message like that. It had messages. It had messengers. It was a city that had philosophers. It had moral teachers. In fact, one of the greatest moral philosophers of the ancient world, Seneca, was living in Rome at that time. He was the teacher of the emperor. He was Nero's tutor.

And what was the outcome of Seneca's moral instruction? Nero murdered his own mother, murdered his brother, murdered his wife, killed Christians, and ordered Seneca to commit suicide. There's no power in philosophy. There's no hope given in philosophy. Rome had nothing that could change men and nothing that could change men's destiny. But Paul did. Paul had the gospel, which is the power of God for salvation, for eternal life, and, he says, for everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. In other words, it is a universal message of a worldwide salvation, salvation for all kinds of people.

First, to the Jew. Not because the Jews are more deserving of the gospel than Gentiles are. Not because the Gentile is more needy than the Jew. Paul will make it very plain in the remainder of this chapter, through chapter 3, that Jews and Gentiles are equally fallen and equally needy. Paul means it is to the Jew first, because

historically it came to the Jew first. The promises, the oracles of God, were given to Israel. The church began on the day of Pentecost when the gospel was given by Jews to Jews. Jerusalem is the cradle of Christianity. But then the gospel spread from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria, and from Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the world, to the Gentiles. It went from the Jew to the Gentile, because it is equally a message for both.

In fact, when Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost, he declared that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Everyone without exception who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That's the promise of the gospel and its universal appeal. It is for everyone, regardless of race, regardless of nationality, regardless of guilt. The guiltiest sinner and the strangest foreigner who believe in the gospel, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, will be saved. It is for all without distinction. No other message in the world has that appeal and has that power.

And the reason the gospel has the power to save is given in verse 17. "In it," Paul writes, "the righteousness of God is revealed." The righteousness of God. That's the great theme of the book of Romans, and the rest of the book is an unfolding of it. The righteousness of God is what all men lack, but what all men need if they are to have salvation. The righteousness of God. It's important.

But what is it? What is this righteousness of which Paul writes here? Is it God's attribute of righteousness? Is it His perfection, His rectitude, or is it His gift of righteousness? Is it something we do something for God or something done for us? The answer to that question transformed Martin Luther and began the reformation, and it happened with this text, Romans 1:17.

Toward the end of his life, Luther recalled how as a monk the words "the justice of God," or, "the righteousness of God" struck terror in his soul. He understood those words to mean the attribute of God's righteousness, His rectitude, His perfection. What God requires us to produce in order to gain His approval.

And in Luther's mind, God was a severe God. His standard is strict. He felt that deeply. Luther grew up seeing representations of Christ in stained-glass windows and in Medieval pictures, a frown on His face, sitting on a rainbow, with a sword, ready to judge the sinner. And Luther knew that he was a sinner. He knew that sword would fall on him unless he had that righteousness that God required, and so he worked to gain it. He struggled to achieve a life that would meet God's standard and His acceptance. He did so with prayers and fastings and vigils and good works. He filled up his life as time with this. He worked earnestly to obtain this.

In fact, later in his life Luther said, "If ever a monk got to heaven by monkery, I would have gotten there." But he didn't. He couldn't. And all his attempts at righteousness proved futile and left with a troubled conscience and a deepening sense of doom. He knew that for all that he had done, all of his efforts were fruitless, and he still stood before God without any merit that would please God.

And in his despair, became mad at God. He said he didn't love this just and angry God. He hated him and he murmured against him. Yet, he wrote, "I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant." What does this verse mean? So he continued to study Romans 1:17, meditating on it day and night in his study in the tower in Wittenberg, until he began to see the connection between God's righteousness and personal faith. Then, he wrote, "I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness, by which through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us through faith. Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates."

What Luther realized was the righteousness of God is not the attribute of God's righteousness. It's not His rectitude. It's not His perfection which He requires us to produce in order to earn or gain our entrance into heaven, it is the righteousness that God gives when we believe in Jesus Christ.

Now that becomes clear as Paul develops this theme throughout the book. He states the theme here. He spends the rest of the book developing the meaning of that theme. For example, in 3:21, he writes, "The righteousness of God is apart from the Law." So we can't produce it. It's apart from the Law. It's something that we cannot achieve through our works.

And then in 5:17, he calls it the "free gift of righteousness." So it's apart from our effort. It's apart from our deeds. We can't earn this. It is a gift of God. Then in verse 19, he tells us how it was obtained for us. We have this gift. How did it become to be a gift for us? And he writes, "Through the obedience of the one," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, "the many will be made righteous."

The righteousness of God then is the righteousness of Christ, which he has, first of all, because of who He is as the Son of God. As the eternal Son of God, He is holy. He is perfect. He is without sin. But He obtained that holiness, that righteousness, for us by His perfect obedience as a man and His ultimate act of obedience of dying on the cross as the substitute for sinners. He took our guilt Himself and was punished in our place. That's what He did as a substitute on the cross.

He became what Paul will later call a propitiation for our sins. Meaning, He satisfied God's justice. He satisfied the claims of the Law that are against us, and having fully satisfied them in His death, He turned away from the sinner God's wrath. The righteousness of Christ, His perfection and payment of sin become our possession when we believe in Him.

Paul speaks of this elsewhere and he sums it up quite nicely in Philippians 3:9, where he writes, "And may be found in Him," that is, that Paul himself may be found in Christ, "not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."

It's not our righteousness. It's a gift. At the moment of faith, God freely forgives the sinner and gives him or her the righteousness

of Christ. He gives us right standing before Him. He acquits us of our sin. He justifies us. He declares us to be righteous before Him. He, as it were, clothes us in the righteousness of Christ, which is what the reformer spoke of as an alien righteousness, not something we produce. It's a gift. It's given, and that's what we need.

That's what we must have, because we are not righteousness in and of ourselves. All of sin and fall short of the glory of God, and we can't make up for that. We can't change ourselves anymore than a leopard can change its spots. We must be changed. We can't produce a life of perfection. That's what God requires, and so because we can't give that to God, God gives that to us in the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness that comes on the basis of faith, through faith alone. Only that's sufficient, and that, as I said, is a free gift. That's what Paul calls it.

When Luther finally understood that, it changed his whole understanding of the Bible. What had filled him with hate now filled him with love. This passenger of Paul, he wrote, became to me a gate to heaven. That's what the gospel is, the gospel of free grace is a gate to heaven. It is the true gate of paradise, what Bunyan called the wicket gate.

It may seem small, it may insignificant, and in the eyes of the world it is foolish idea of a Jewish carpenter being the Son of God, that someone dying on the cross, which was to the Romans, the most shameful a way a person could die - it was despicable to them - and that person could be a savior?

No, you want to see a savior, look to the throne or Rome. Look to Caesar himself, with all of his pomp and glory and his armies. That's a savior. Well, they look at the cross and you hear the message of the gospel and they call it foolish. But that foolish message, that wicket gate, Paul says, is the very power of God under salvation to everyone who believes.

Now that is a gospel that man could never think up. And he never did. Man has never dreamed of a gospel like that. Man's religion

has always been a works religion, one of personal merit. Go back to the very beginning, when those two sons, those two brothers, Cain and Abel, brought their offering to God. And the one that Cain brought was the fruit of the ground, that which he had produced, that which he had grown, and that's what was rejected by God, but that has been the religion of the world, the natural religion from the beginning.

They are all kinds of religions. They have all kinds of ceremonies that may differ from one another. They may build their temples or their synagogues with different kinds of architecture, but they're all the same. They're all merit religion. They're all works-oriented religion, religion that gains God's approval by the works of the worshipper.

That's not the gospel that Paul preached. A gospel that man could never think up, never dream up. The gospel, the good news of salvation by grace, a free gift, is, Paul said, revealed. It's from the mind of God. It has been graciously made known to sinners and it is received by them. It is revealed, Paul says, from faith to faith.

That is the means or the instrument of obtaining the gift of righteousness - faith. And Paul lays great stress on it here in this text, the expression "from faith to faith" has been interpreted in a number of ways. And I suspect, if you've been reading through the book of Romans or you pondered these verses that we're looking at, you've wondered, "What does that expression mean, 'from faith to faith,'?"

And the number of ideas have been given, and many of them good. Augustine, for example, explained Paul's meaning to be from the faith of them who preach it to the faith of those who obey it. So it is from the faith of the one who preaches to the faith of the one who believes. Others have explained it in terms of spiritual growth, from one degree of faith to another, and that's a true idea. We find that idea in the book of Romans and we could support that from 2 Corinthians 3:18, of being transformed from glory to glory.

But I think the easiest explanation and the one that is consistent with that Paul is stating here and throughout the book of Romans is to

understand Paul is giving emphasis to faith. "From faith to faith" is an intensive way of saying by faith alone, entirely of faith, from start to finish by faith.

The salvation revealed in the gospel is received by the sinner through faith alone. Well, that being so, and Paul putting a great deal of emphasis upon faith, we might ask the question, what exactly is faith? And we could answer that it's the opposite of works and it's been illustrated as a hand that is open to receive the gift of righteousness, the gift of salvation, not open to do work to gain it, but simply to receive what it could not obtain by itself.

And that's a good way of illustrating it, but I think we could explain it as a single act that consists of three parts or three elements. The first is knowledge. Faith consists of knowledge. Faith involves the intellect. There is content and understanding to faith fundamentally. And the content of saving faith is the revelation of what God has done in Jesus Christ. It's the gospel. It's that which is made known and it is a specific content. It's not just anything. God's not pleased with belief in whatever or in some nebulous idea about Himself. It's very specific.

The gospel is specific content and it must be understood before this can be saving faith. That it must be also accepted as true. It's not enough to simply know what it means and understand it, because many non-believers know what the gospel is. They can explain it. In fact, there are professors in universities and seminaries who are liberal in their persuasion, who probably understand it as well or better than most Christians. And they can explain it very clearly what the gospel means, but they don't think that it's true. They don't believe that it's true. They understand it, but they don't accept it, and so a second part is necessary, and that is ascent.

Knowledge and then ascent - acceptance of it. A person must acknowledge that the content of the gospel is true. Yes, they would say, Christ is the Son of God who became man, lived a perfect life, was crucified, according to the scriptures, and was raised from the

dead. And those who believe in Him, who believe that He is the Son of God and man - God and man - who died in our place and was raised from the dead, those who believe that and trust in Him, they are saved.

Well, that's ascent. That's agreement. That is the recognition that the content is true. That's necessary. That must be there for this to be saving faith. But again, that's not enough. The devil knows that. He knows the gospel. He knows that it's true. In fact, James tells us that demons also believe and shudder. Why do they shudder? They tremble because they know what the gospel is and that it is true. And yet, they're not saved. So it involves more than knowledge and ascent. There must be a third aspect for faith to be saving faith, and that is trust.

Commitment to this truth, reliance to it. Christ is not only recognized as The Savior, but recognized as My Savior. So faith is intellectual, but it's also volitional. We not only understand it, we exercise our will and apprehend it, appropriate it.

This is something a person must do. If a person is to be saved, that person, he or she, young or old alike, must understand and believe the gospel. Ultimately, it is of grace. Our minds are enlightened and our wills are enlivened, but we are responsible to do it. And when it is done, the believer is justified, declared righteous, forgiven, and accepted by God at that moment as a child of God, as a son of God forever.

Augustus Toplady put it well in his hymn "Rock of Ages."  
"Nothing in my hand I bring/Simply to Thy cross I cling/Naked, come to Thee for dress/Helpless, look to Thee for grace." We come helplessly, we come trusting. That's how we approach the cross. It is a coming. It is a looking. That is saving faith. That is what Paul emphasizes here, and Paul is not alone in that. This emphasis on faith is taken from the Bible. This is not some novel idea that Paul has dreamed up. This is not Paul's gospel, as opposed to someone else's gospel. It's not a gospel that Paul has as his own. And Paul demonstrates that by citing scripture to prove the truth of what he is

saying. He quotes the Old Testament; he quotes Habakkuk, the prophet, from Habakkuk, chapter 2:4. As it is written, he said, "But the righteous man shall live by faith," or the just shall live by faith.

The book of Habakkuk was written against the background of impending judgment. Habakkuk was complaining about wickedness in Judea, wondering why God allowed the wicked to oppress the righteous. God answers him and says in effect He wasn't allowing it. He was dealing with it. Evildoers will be punished. The Babylonians are coming. Which troubled Habakkuk. Now, how could God use the heathen to punish the Jews? We're bad, we're doing bad things, but we're not like the heathen. We're not like the Babylonians.

God told him that the Babylonians would be punished too. The proud will perish. But, He says, the righteous Israelite would live by his faith. It has always been that way. Paul's gospel is Habakkuk's gospel. Habakkuk's gospel is Isaiah's gospel, David's gospel, Moses' gospel. From first to last, life, salvation has always been by faith. That is how we obtain the blessing of God. That was the great truth that Luther grasped after much searching.

A lot of things happened in Luther's life during that time of searching that led up to his understanding of this great truth. During his long spiritual struggle as a monk, he went to Rome on a pilgrimage. He was actually sent there on church business, but for him, it was a pilgrimage. It was a turning point in his life. He went eagerly. He traveled south from Germany, over the Alps, and across the Italian plains. And when he finally came within view of the city, he lifted up his hands and he greeted it as Holy Rome.

He entered the county with devotion. He visited all of the shrines and churches and relics. But as he did, he discovered that Rome was really not so holy. He found the church materialistic, its priests worldly. Then when he visited the church of Saint John Lateran, something significant happened.

In the church, there is a stairway, thought to be the stairs on which Pilot judged Jesus. They're called the Scala Sancta, which

means "the holy stairs." And the church promised that whoever climbed the staircase on bare knees would receive remission of sins. So people seeking forgiveness crawled up those staircases, saying their prayers, doing penance. They do it to this very day. You can stand there and watch this happen. The stairs, however, are covered with boards, because over the years so many pilgrims have ascended them and worn down the stairs.

And Luther was one. He went up the staircase in order to free his grandfather from purgatory. But as he crawled up each step saying his prayers, he kept hearing the words of Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith." The just shall live by faith. We don't live by works. It's not by acts of penance. It's not by stair climbing. The just shall live by faith.

When he reached the top and stood up, his confidence in a religion of works was completely shaken. And when he finally understood Romans 1:17, he took it as the foundation of his theology. Salvation is by God's grace. It is a gift. It cannot be earned. We cannot do enough to win God's favor. We can only receive the righteousness of Christ that He gives. We live by faith.

Lose that, Luther said, and all Christian doctrine is lost at the same time. That's true. If we lose the gospel, if we lose the message that salvation is by faith alone and Christ alone, by grace alone, it affects every doctrine of scripture and we lose it all. It's only in the gospel what Luther called the true gate of paradise that offers salvation and is effective.

Well, have you entered into that gate of paradise? Or are you seeking to earn your salvation? Are you at home in the town of Morality? Are you living with Mr. Legality? Are you seeking to obtain a salvation by your own effort, by your own works? Are you thinking that you can enter into heaven by the things that you do? It can't be done. As Luther said, if it could've been done, he would have done it. It cannot be done. If it could be done, if we could work our way into

heaven, if our deeds are sufficient to gain God's approval, He never would have sent His Son into the world to die for sinners.

The very fact that Jesus Christ came and Jesus Christ went to the cross of Calvary is the proof that the only way of salvation is by His shed blood. Only by His infinite sacrifice could our sin and our guilt be paid for and removed. Christ did that so that all who believe in Him might have life forever.

Well, that's the gospel that Paul preached. That's the theme of the book of Romans. If you're here without Christ and you don't know Him as Savior, may God help You to understand that and to believe that, and you who have believed it, rejoice in what you have in Jesus Christ. That's the grace of God. He gave to you what you could not produce for Him, at great cost.

That's nothing to be ashamed of. May God cause us not to be ashamed of the gospel, but to be bold for the gospel and to go out from this place, proclaim it to others and live a life that's consistent with that. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your goodness and Your grace. We thank You for the gospel of Jesus Christ. What Paul has set forth here, what he was not ashamed of, and yet, Father, we must confess that very often we mind ourselves ashamed of the gospel, because it's foolishness to the Gentile. And people stumble over the idea of a Christ that could save and dying such an ignominious death as that on the cross.

And yet we know that only in that way, only by a violent, shameful death could sin be atoned for so our salvation be gained. And it was at the cross. We thank You and praise You for that and pray that You would give us a deep appreciation of the grace of God and what you have accomplished at the cross, and may we go out from this place and be bold witnesses for you. We pray these things in Christ name. Amen.