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ROMANS 1:1-17

Romans Series: How God Changes People

[PRAYER] Lord, I'm asking you to reveal yourself to people here. Not only this morning, but in their daily lives. Lord, we want to see you at work. I'm praying that you'll reveal your power to us. We will give glory to you and worship you. Lord, I'm asking that you'll reveal your power through the people here at Calvary Chapel, but also just in and around so we can see it happening. Encourage us in our faith as we watch you at work. Make that obvious to us as we live our lives. I'm asking also that you would provide every person here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope an opportunity to share their faith in the next few months, and I pray that they would be prepared to do that when that opportunity arises. Lord, we're praying that you would extend our borders and allow us to reach out to people that we don't even know yet. In the midst of all that, we know that you and connecting with you is the most important thing in our lives. So this morning, Lord, we're coming here to connect to you through the fellowship as we get together with other believers. We're coming to connect to you through worship. We come to connect to you as we look at your word. So we ask that you would teach us, grow us, help us understand more about who you are today. In Jesus' name, amen.

You should have received one of these when you came in. I am praying that every person at Calvary Chapel Living Hope will have an opportunity to share the gospel with someone. Now the opportunity doesn't mean you'll be able to take it. If you don't know how to share the gospel, the opportunity will come to you and you won't know what to say. So I want to prepare you to know what to say.

You don't know what the question is going to look like. Sometimes the question is, "What do they believe over there at that church?" Or sometimes the question is, "How does a person become a Christian?" Or sometimes the question is, "What do you believe about God?" Sometimes you invite the question by saying, "Can I share with you about what the Bible says about salvation?"

When that opportunity comes up, I want you to know what to say. So over the next five weeks I'm going to share one piece of information every week. It's represented on these five cards.

The first piece of information is the source. If you're going to share the gospel or the message of salvation with someone, you want to be able to say three things right off the bat. One, that God created us. Two, that God loves us. And three, that God is holy. That's going to set the stage for where we're going on the next cards in the next weeks.

Now you can elaborate on that. The fact is that God created every one of us with a God-shaped hole. So there is this longing that we have for God. Some people perceive that as a longing for spirituality of some kind, so they go after different things to fill that hole. But God has created a God-shaped hole inside of us. He is the one who created us. He created us to have relationship with Him.

God loves us. When He created Adam and Eve, He created them for fellowship so they would fellowship in the garden. God wants to have that kind of a relationship with us. He loves us and He cares about each one of us in our specific needs and issues. God loves us. Very important to understand that love that God has. That's going to drive us to the rest of the message here. God loves us.

The third part of the first card is that God is holy. He's perfect. He's separate. He's different than we are. He's not just a person, a man that is better than us. He is very different in that He is holy. Now you take those ideas of love and holiness, you have a problem. God wants to be close to us, but He's holy and we have a problem and so it creates this problem. That's going to lead us into the rest of the plan that God has.

But you have to understand here, when we talk about the source, where does salvation start? In Christianity it's different than any other religion. Christianity starts with God, not with man. It's not man trying to find God and I found this through this means or whatever. It's that God starts the process. So it's the source that God is drawing us to. So when you're sharing the plan of salvation, you're sharing the message of the gospel with someone, you want to start with the idea it starts with God. God has created us, God loves us, and God is holy.

The story will continue next week. Much of the story we're going to understand as we study the book of Romans and read through the book and understand what it says. Because the book of Romans is a book that will introduce us to the theology of salvation and what it looks like in a very practical way.

So will you please open your Bibles to Romans 1:1. Today we're going to look at Romans 1:1-17. We're introduced to the book of Romans. This will be a good introduction to the book of Romans. Paul's introducing it. We're going to learn from his introduction what the book is all about and try to grasp that for ourselves. In the midst of that we'll gain some practical applications for our own lives.

Romans 1. Now Romans is the sixth book of the New Testament. It's after the gospels and after Acts and then you hit Romans. The book of Romans is the first of the epistles of the New Testament that Paul wrote.

Out of all the epistles, they are organized this way. Maybe you didn't know this, but the epistles are organized in a very interesting way. They're organized by size, not by topic. Romans is the biggest, the longest of the books and that's why it's first. Anytime you have a first and second, then you're looking at the first of the books. The last one they wrote was Philemon, a little short book that he wrote. But they're organized by size.

So we come to the book of Romans and in Romans 1:1 we start out with the name of the person who wrote it. His name is Paul. Let me read verse 1. *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.*

It's written by Paul. Now when we say it's written by Paul, what we mean is that God used Paul as the writer. So he wrote it down and it's 100% Paul. It's his ideas. He's thinking about what the people in Rome need, what his passion is, and he's writing all those things down. At the same time, the Holy Spirit is guiding Paul's hand, so it's 100% God as he's writing things down. So when it comes out, it's scripture. It's not just Paul's ideas but it's God's, designed for us to understand. It's 100% God, 100% man.

The writer is Paul, a man who got saved. But he was already a guy who was religious. I believe that there are a lot of people in our community who are religious who aren't yet saved, and they need to understand what it means to be touched by Jesus Christ. Paul was a religious guy. He was a passionate guy and God saved him. He was on the road to Damascus to kill Christians. He believed that what he was doing to please God was to eradicate the Christians and their beliefs. So he's on his way to Damascus and God stops him in the path and meets him in a personal way.

It's very interesting. We could go around here and find out how each person came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It became more than just religion for you, more than just a list of things to do or a passion. It became a personal relationship like it did with Paul. If you've never experienced that personal relationship, for you it's just some kind of religion, then you're going to want to understand this idea of salvation because it is about getting to know Jesus Christ personally.

Now he found Jesus on the road to Damascus and he tells his testimony, he gives a story to tell the story to King Agrippa. So I want to look in the book of Acts and I want you to see the story that he shares about his conversion experience. This is the writer to the book of Romans.

He says to King Agrippa – *About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads."* Goads are pointed sticks that keep the oxen going in the right direction.

So he's using an analogy. Paul, how can you keep doing this and working against your conscience? The conscience prompts us and pricks us to do what's right. The conscience ultimately is designed to help us see we need a Savior, and God has placed the conscience in each one of us. "How long can you keep being pricked by all of this and trying to get off track?" is what He's saying. So He's using an analogy to challenge Paul because inside of Paul's heart he has a conscience.

He uses the word conscience more than any of the other writers of the New Testament. The conscience is very important to Paul, so God speaks to him and touches him in this area. How can you *kick against these goads?*

Then I asked, “Who are you, Lord?”

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” the Lord replied. “Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of (two things) what you have seen and will see of me.” Two words. A *servant* and a *witness*.

We’ll talk about *servant* in a moment, but the word *witness* implies that you saw something yourself. When you go to court and you testify, you don’t say, “Well my neighbor told me...” No. When you testify in court as a witness you testify about something you have seen and something you have heard yourself. That is why you are a witness. So when we use the word *witness* in our faith we’re talking about sharing the message of what Jesus has done inside of our lives with someone else. We are witnesses of what God has done and we are seeing what God continues to do. So we witness that and we share that. That’s what Paul was ordained to do. But he says also that he’s a *servant*.

Now go back to Romans 1 in your Bibles there and notice the second word. We’ve only covered the first word in the book of Romans so far, *Paul*. Now we go to the second word because Paul describes himself with three different words, which are all illustrative for us. I think all of us could describe ourselves with these three words when we are following Christ. Number one he says a *servant of Christ Jesus*.

Now the word *servant* there is the word *doulos*, which has a very interesting history in the book of Exodus. You see, God set it up so the Hebrew people were prevented from being slaves of each other. They could be a slave for up to six years, but after six years that was the maximum amount of time that they could be a servant before they were freed to go. They would be freed at that point to not be a servant.

But there were some cases in which a servant would say, “I don’t want to be on my own. I really like being under this master, so therefore I would like to voluntarily be a servant here.” That’s what a *doulos* is as opposed to the other words for servant – a voluntary person who becomes a servant on purpose chooses the master. There was a ceremony performed in the Old Testament for this kind of a person who became a voluntary servant. So this word now is used by Paul to describe the relationship with Jesus Christ.

I don’t think our pilgrimage in our lives is to find freedom. Our pilgrimage is to choose the master. We have to choose the master that’s going to dictate our lives. For some their master is their checkbook because they can’t seem to get themselves out of their financial problems. For some people their master is some substance of some kind. But when we choose Jesus Christ to be our master then, as Paul says in this passage, he’s a *servant of Jesus Christ*, then we find the freedom that God wants us to have. So he’s talking about that.

First of all he’s talking about slaves. Now this was a common theme for them in the Roman Empire. One writer I read said there were approximately 60 million slaves throughout the Roman Empire. Everybody had a slave. If you were anybody then you had some kind of a slave. So they understood this idea of slavery and it became this interesting concept to bring into Christianity to describe our relationship with the Lord.

We describe Him as the Lord, which means boss. So He's the Lord, we're the slaves, and he's describing that relationship. That's the first way that he characterizes himself as he's writing the book – *a servant of Jesus Christ*.

Second thing he says is he's *called to be an apostle*. The impression here isn't that he decided to be an apostle, but he was called from the outside. Now that's an important concept. We'll see it in verse 6 as well because the Bible says that we too are called. That's what you're going to see in verse 6. We too are called.

Now that's going to be important as you're thinking about sharing your faith with other people because you have to understand that it's not you who saves people, it's God who calls them. All you do is provide some information so they can understand this God that's already calling them in their hearts. God calls them out. There's something going on in every person's life. There's a calling that's taking place and they're being called to God. Some people bury that, cover it up, try to fill it with other things, but ultimately inside of every person is this need for a God in their hearts. They're called by God to receive the plan of salvation, which they don't even know about, and that's why it's important for us to be able to share it.

So Paul describes himself as *called to be an apostle*, and thirdly *set apart for the gospel of God*. The word *set apart* is marked off with boundaries. Our lives are marked off with boundaries. There are some things we do and we don't do because we're set apart. That idea of being set apart makes us who we are as believers. Paul's saying, "I'm set apart, I'm different, I'm not like everybody else." We're not trying to fit in; we're trying to please God in our lives. So that's how he describes himself in verse 1.

Now the setting, let me just give you some background here. Paul is writing this letter from Corinth, a city that is known for its worldliness. A lot of sexual innuendos going on, a lot of promiscuity sexually, a lot of self-pleasing attitude that exists in the book of Corinth. So as Paul is writing his book to the Romans (that he hasn't even met yet), all he has to do is go out his front door or go to the marketplace and he can see some of the challenges that are involved in the culture. He's going to write about some of those things as he writes to these people.

Now he's going to write this letter. He's in Corinth for about two years. He writes the letter, sends it with Phoebe. By hand she's going to carry it to Rome. He mentions twenty-six people mostly at the end of his letter that he knows personally already there. He's never been to Rome, but he knows twenty-six people.

I would suggest that's true for many of us. We know Christians all over the place, that we're often connected to them. That's an important part of understanding the family of God. It's a big picture.

He knows twenty-six people there. He's not going to get to Rome for three more years. The recipients of the letter are the Romans.

The city of Rome, about a million people, is not only the political center of the kingdom, it is also the economic center, it is the entertainment capitol that exists there in Rome, but it's decaying morally. So there are a lot of interesting similarities between American culture and the Roman Empire and how the Roman Empire fell. You see some of those similar things in American way of life that are just fascinating. You might consider looking at those. But the idea here is that Paul is relating to the Romans in a world that is very similar to ours. Focus on self, getting ahead economically, dealing with all kinds of issues in their culture, moral issues. So that's who he's writing to.

He says in verse 1 (I'm going to read the verse again) – *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.* So he's introducing the subject matter of the book here when he talks about the gospel of God.

The word gospel means good news. It's the word *euaggelion*. It doesn't mean good advice; it means good news. We're not sharing with people just some advice that we heard that we think you ought to consider. We're sharing with them the good news that God wants to have a relationship with you. That is the message of the gospel. God wants to have a relationship with you. That's the good news of the gospel and he's going to share that with them.

He's going to define the gospel in verse 2, so look at verse 2 with me. *The gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.*

I want you to see that the gospel that we're talking about is not just ideas that come from a church. They're not just ideas that come from you. So when you share the gospel with someone, you want to say something like this. You want to say, "Let me share with you what the Bible says about having a personal relationship with God."

As it says here, he's defining the gospel, *the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.* It's the Bible's instructions on how we can have a relationship with God. It's not just the Bible's instructions about how to live life in a moral way or how to be righteous. It is God's instructions that are in the word about how to have a relationship with God. That is the gospel described in verse 2.

It is a theological book. As we're going to go through, we're going to see it's a theology on what salvation is. We're going to understand that and see how people change as we go through the book of Romans.

It's not like some of the other books. In 1 Corinthians the book is about dealing with a problem in the church. Galatians is about dealing with a problem. Paul isn't writing to the Romans to deal with a problem they're experiencing; he wants them to understand the gospel, what it is, what it does, and how it will impact their lives. So chapter 1 is going to deal with the human condition and we just go right through to see the grand plan of God.

I would suggest we all look good on the outside, but there's something inside of us that needs to be addressed and that's the sin nature. So you might look at someone and say, "Boy, I don't think they're going to be interested in the gospel. They're pretty successful." I don't care how

successful people are; everyone has a God-shaped hole that needs to be filled with Jesus Christ. Everyone has that need. It's clearly defined in here.

As we go on to further describe the gospel, verse 3 says – *regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, (verse 4) and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

So this is a very particular gospel. This is not just an idea about how to feel better or how to get close to God in general. This is a very specific God that we want to get to know and has a plan for yours and my life. So he's sharing about that plan and he wants to tell them.

You see, Paul is so excited about the gospel and what it has done for his life and how he hears about it all over the world (we're going to see that), that he just wants everybody to know it. He has the message. The message is how big salvation is, how important salvation is. Every person needs Jesus.

Verse 5: Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake.

So this is a faith response. This isn't just about knowing something in your head. This is about believing in something and living it out in your life. It's a way of life, a faith response that he's saying.

Verse 6: And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

Do you see back in verse 5 – *through him we received grace.* The idea of grace is that it's a free gift. *Charis* is the word there. It's free. It costs everything that you have, but it's free. You don't earn it. You can't get there by accomplishing a certain list of rules. He wants the readers to know that it is by grace. Every day we get up if we recognize the significance of grace in our lives it really empowers us to enjoy what God has done. He's given us His salvation that's based on that grace.

Notice there in verse 6 – *and you also are among those Gentiles who are called.* They are called. There's something drawing them from the outside and that is exactly what happens when we share our faith with someone else or we share the faith with someone else. We're sharing with them info, but we're recognizing that God is doing something deeper inside of their hearts.

I think that frees us up greatly. We don't have to save people, but they do need to hear the message. Some people believe that if they're going to share their faith, what that means is smiling more and opening doors for people. Now I think that's good that we're being kind to people, but that's not sharing the faith. That may open the door to share the faith, but people need to know the message. The message is that Jesus Christ provided the way for you to have a relationship with God. God wants to have a relationship with you. That's the message of the gospel that he's sharing here.

Verse 7 tells us who the epistle is written to. He says, *To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people.* So he's writing to Christians. Do you see that? He's writing to the Romans as Christians to help them understand this salvation, just like we are trying to understand the salvation ourselves so that we can be empowered to share the message with others.

But I like the way they're characterized. They're *loved by God*. I hope you view yourself that way. I'm *loved by God*. That God cares about me, He loves me, He's concerned about me. *Loved by God and called to be his holy people.*

The word *loved by God* is the same word used in the baptism. Do you remember when the voice came out of heaven during Jesus' baptism and said, "*This is my beloved Son.*" That word, *beloved Son*, that's what it's saying here. That's the same word. We are the ones *loved by God and called to be his holy people.*

Some of the versions say *saints*. I want you to see the word *saint* is a word used here to describe us who've chosen to follow Jesus Christ. You may not ever have a statue made in your name or anybody praying to get rid of the storm based on your name, but you are a saint if you ask Jesus Christ into your heart. A saint is a holy person.

But you have to understand what holiness is. It's not that we're perfect in all the things we do. It's we're set apart because of what Christ has done for us. He has made us holy.

The gospel here is a beautiful picture of what God has done for us and we're going to understand what that looks like as we continue on through the book and read what God has to say about it.

Well that's the people he's writing to in verse 7, *to all those in Rome* who are Christians.

Verse 8 says, *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. All, every one of you.*

It's really fun to hear how God is working all over the world and what God is doing. I really enjoy getting to see what God is doing all over the world. In my work with the National Center for Biblical Parenting I'm often connected with people outside of America.

This week it was a guy from South Africa who responded to me and said, "I'm outside of your sphere of influence in America, but I'm interested in parenting." I wrote back to him and I said, "We're ministering in Cameroon, we're ministering in Kenya, we've got a guy from Nigeria coming to America next month. You're not outside. You're a little further than all of those being in South Africa, but you're not outside of our sphere of ministry." So he wrote back that he's so grateful because God is doing a work in their church and they want to disciple parents. It's just fun to see what's happening all over the world.

I met this week in a Skype session with a husband and wife team leading a church in England in the Deptford district of London. They want to develop disciples through parents in their church. So I met with them for an hour, and I'm guiding them through and understanding what that looks like.

Paul is saying here that the Romans' faith, what's going on in Rome is being reported all over the world. God's doing some great things in Rome and good things are happening there.

We hear about what's happening in Brazil and we're going to participate in that. God is doing some amazing things in Brazil. We're going to have a mission trip. Go there, learn some more about it, encourage them, and good things will happen.

In the National Center for Biblical Parenting we have an outreach part of our organization that does missions work. This next month we have invited four people from Jordan to the United States, given them scholarships to come to the United States, and the one guy from Nigeria that you already met, Samson. They're going to be trained to take parenting ministry back and disciple parents somewhere else in their countries, in their own languages.

So it's really fun to see people working all over the world, and that's what he's saying here. *I thank God through Jesus Christ* because I'm hearing and the whole world's hearing about what's going on in Rome and how good things are happening there in the church and people are getting saved. God is doing some good things there in the church (that he hasn't even visited yet).

Verse 9: God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times. Constantly remember you in my prayers at all times and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

I want to come to you, but I just want to focus in on the part on the prayer there. Paul wrote another book, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and he says those words that we sometimes have a hard time understanding – *pray without ceasing*. I'd never get everything done if I prayed without ceasing. We have a hard time comprehending that. The idea is always be in this attitude of prayer. Those same words, *pray without ceasing*, are used in this passage. He says, *I constantly remember you in my prayers*. I am praying without ceasing for you. That's the idea that he's communicating there. Prayer is the engine that's driving the mission that Paul has.

In this place he's sharing that he has a constant desire to come and visit them. I want to go to Rome. I want to see what God is doing there. That's the headquarters of a lot of things that are going on. I want to come and visit you guys. That's what he's saying in verse 8.

Verse 9: God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

Verse 11: I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.

We're going to talk about spiritual gifts when we come to Romans 12 and the purpose of spiritual gifts. Because God has given you one. When you accept Jesus Christ into your life, you have a spiritual gift. God wants to empower you to use that gift.

Notice what it says the purpose of the gift is. *I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gifts to make you strong.* The purpose of spiritual gifts is to build up and make other people strong.

That's not the only part. He's not just thinking about the gift he's giving. Verse 12 – *that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.* There's a mutual encouragement that's going on here.

So when we serve together here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope, God is giving you a gift and you're building up other people, they're building up you, and there's this thing that takes place that's really supernatural, it's amazing. I just want to encourage you. You have a gift and if God has empowered you with that gift, you want to use that for His kingdom. The primary goal is to build others up.

Some people build others up by teaching. Maybe it's teaching here or teaching in the Sunday school. Sometimes people are building up others by encouraging them and coming alongside and praying for someone. Maybe you're building someone up by serving and doing some service tasks or caring for someone during the week and taking a meal to them. But the purpose of spiritual gifts is to encourage the mutual building up of the church of Jesus Christ.

Verse 13. *I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.* I've been prevented from coming to you, but I plan to come to you because the gospel is so ripe and I want to come and be a part of that with you.

I love verse 14. The first word there says *I am obligated. I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.*

I want to talk about the idea of being obligated for a moment. We all have obligations. Every time you buy something else, you have another obligation to keep it going. If you buy a computer then you're obligated to keep that computer going. Every time we make a commitment, we're obligated. We're obligated to go to work or school. When you start your first term at school this fall, you'll become obligated as of the first class meeting because the teacher will give you all the obligations that you need to do. And then you will feel uncomfortable all the rest of the term until you get them turned in because obligation is an uncomfortable feeling. That's what it is. It's an uncomfortable feeling I have inside that I have something that I need to do.

I want to encourage you to have an uncomfortable feeling about the gospel. You have an obligation to pass that gospel on. Paul is saying I have an obligation to preach the gospel. But every one of us has an obligation to pass that on to a hurting world, to people who have a calling inside of them, that God is calling them out, and they need to hear the message of the gospel. We all have an uncomfortable feeling inside of us, that sense of obligation that says, "I really need to

share this with people.” People are waiting. We need to have that internal sense of “I need to share it with them.”

So Paul is saying, *I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.*

Now Paul can only do so much. He’s obligated to them and he wants to do something, but he can’t go there. He planned to go there a number of times; he just can’t get there. But he does what he can do. He picks up a pen and he starts writing to them because he’s obligated to share with them.

I just want to suggest that maybe you wish that you could do this and you wish you could do that, but you can’t right now. But you can do something. For Paul it was picking up a pen and writing a letter and sending it off to them. We can all do something out of this sense of obligation. So Paul does this and he shares the message with them.

Now comes verse 16. Verse 16 is the key verse for the whole book. When we come to verse 16 it reminds us so much of what God wants for us when it comes to this idea of the gospel. It says, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.* I am not ashamed of the gospel.

It’s interesting because our world wants to shame us because we’re Christians. We have to overcome that. We have to come to the place in our lives when we realize I’m not ashamed of the gospel. I know that everyone has this God-shaped hole, even though they may be stuffing it with something else or they may ignore it or they may even think it’s silly. The message of the gospel is a real message everyone needs. It’s fascinating to watch the power of God work for the salvation of people. Wow. That is so amazing.

That is one of my prayers that God will reveal His power through us and among us, so that we will have this confidence inside that this is the message and we will not be ashamed to pass the faith onto someone else, to share this gospel that God had. It is good news. It is the good news that God wants to have a relationship with you and me. It’s a powerful message and it’s this power of God that we want to connect people to. It’s the power of God that we need to get connected to because as we see God at work and we see the power of God working, then we say, “Wow. I’ve got to share this with somebody else. I want other people to know what’s going on.”

I want to read verse 17, which concludes this section. It’s leading us into the next whole passage, but I want to read it anyway as part of this week instead of next. This week it says in verse 17, *For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed.*

So the whole gospel story, we’ve only talked about the source in our cards today, but as we’re drawn to the other cards we’re going to see in *the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

We're going to learn what that means. It's not a righteousness as external, it's a righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus Christ. It's a powerful change that takes place.

I've been reading a book by Jim Cymbala called *Storm*. He's written a number of great books. Jim Cymbala is the pastor of Brooklyn Tabernacle in Brooklyn in New York City. He tells this story that was touching to me.

One Sunday when he was done preaching, he was tired and he sat down. As the service was concluding, people were mingling, he just sat down on the stage with his feet dangling off the stage and he loosened his tie. As he did, he saw a man sitting in the pews there. They have cushioned seats there because it's an old theater. But he saw an old man there and he recognized the man as a homeless man. Where they minister that's often the case that homeless people come in.

So he got up and he went over to the homeless man and asked him, "Where do you spend the night?"

He says, "In an abandoned truck."

"How long have you been on the streets?"

He said, "Six years."

Jim Cymbala has a whole team that works with the homeless in their area. He could've called on the deacons or someone else. But he took out his wallet; he was going to give some money to the guy. And the guy says to him this: "I don't want your money. I want the Jesus that you're talking to. Because I know if I keep on doing what I'm doing on the streets, I'm going to be dead soon." Jim Cymbala started crying because he realized that he had something that he had overlooked that this man needed.

Here's a pastor, a preacher who had a message of the gospel and that's what this man wanted, that's what this man needed. Not the few dollars that he was going to give instead. It just made a marked impression on him about the value of the gospel.

This man got into a sober living place, he overcame his addiction, and a few months later gave a testimony in front of the church and shared his own personal story. As Jim listened to that, he said, "Man, that guy could be a preacher." So they started working together and he started discipling him. This man became an assistant pastor in a church in New Jersey. I don't know who he is or where he is, but he became an assistant pastor.

Here's a man on the streets, needed the gospel of Jesus Christ, and when he got that gospel it changed him from the inside out and God is using him powerfully in ministry today. There are people right around us who need the gospel of Jesus Christ. Everything looks good on the outside, but inside they have a God-shaped hole and they need the message. Who's going to share with them? God has entrusted us with the obligation to not be ashamed of the gospel but pass that on to others so that they can get the picture of who God is.

It's just amazing. When you think about the grace of God and the amazing part of that, it's just stunning for us that God has entrusted us with that privilege. He could've just saved people without other people, but he chooses to use people like you and me to pass the message along.

We'll continue developing this, but I'm hoping over this period of time God will give you a passion and a desire and an opportunity to share the faith, share the gospel message with others.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I ask that you would provide an opportunity for each one here to share the gospel message. We thank you that you make us witnesses because we've seen what you've done in our own hearts and what you do in other people's lives as well. Lord, when the opportunity comes, we ask that you'd make us ready for that so that we could be used as your vessels to share your message with others. Thank you so much for your grace in our lives that transforms us. It truly is amazing. In Jesus' name, amen.