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As we contemplate the opportunity to study God's Word this evening, let's take a moment to clear our hearts and minds of the distractions of the day and the various things that tend to distract us and go before the throne of grace and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for sustaining us through another week, for being with us and providing us resources in our souls as we have faced the circumstances and decisions of each day. We thank you for the great opportunity that we have in this life to fulfill the purpose that you have called us to, that we can in fact reflect the glory of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

It's such a wonderful thing that our hopeless condition has been remedied because of His faithfulness, because of His love for us and His coming and dying on the cross and securing our salvation. We thank you that as we live out the remainder of our lives here that we have such wonderful potential and such wonderful opportunities through your grace. We pray that our studies tonight will equip us to fulfill that potential and to reach the goal that you have set for us in this life, which is the Christ-likeness and the reflecting of His glory that we see in the pages of Scripture.

We pray that as we look at the things in Romans tonight, these truths will be clear to us and God the Holy Spirit can use them to transform us into the image of your Son, Jesus Christ. For we ask it in His name. Amen.

This is our second sojourn into the great book of Romans. We began a couple of weeks ago an introduction, which we will conclude this evening and it will prepare us to begin next time to address the doctrinal section of the book. As we discovered last time in looking at Romans, it is an epistle.

It's a letter that was written from an apostle to a group of believers. These believers met in more than one local church. We will see that tonight.

They were not evangelized by Paul or by Peter, but they had come into existence through the evangelizing, the telling of the good news of Jesus Christ from one friend to another, from one acquaintance to another, from people who had come to Jesus Christ in Israel and Jerusalem and then had traveled to Rome. And the Christian community in Rome had sprung up without any identifiable leadership, without any identifiable plan or structure. There is no record of any apostle making Rome a target and bringing huge numbers of people to Christ.

They had sprung up in the capital city of the empire and we know that many of the believers who were there had started out in other cities. Some of them had started out in Corinth or in Ephesus or in Jerusalem. And Paul is writing to them for a specific purpose and we're going to identify and confirm that purpose for ourselves this evening.

Let's review the first few verses in Romans chapter 1 to refresh our minds and to kind of see

where we're going. The letter begins, Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God, which he promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead. Through him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name, among whom you also are the call to Jesus Christ.

To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is really a wallop introduction and it is a foretaste of things to come in the letter because he packs an incredible amount of theology and information about God and about his attitude toward his calling and his purpose in these seven short verses. We're going to very briefly review a couple of things that we've seen to get our momentum started to continue through this chapter and through the remainder of our introduction.

First of all, I'd like to again direct your attention to what Paul says about himself. We saw this same concept when we looked at the book of Galatians when Paul went at great pains to point out that his apostleship wasn't a human idea. They didn't have an election.

They didn't draw straws to see who was going to go forth and evangelize. This was something that came from God. And Paul is going to do the same thing here at the beginning of this letter.

He wants to establish the foundation for talking to this group of people most of whom he has never seen. And so what we're establishing at this point in Romans is the purpose for writing the letter. And that's really important to understanding the rest of the letter.

And I would offer you the thought that in those areas where there has been divergence of opinion and divergence of interpretation in Romans which there has been great scads of different studies done that draw different conclusions and see different things in the book, I believe that one of the ways that that happens is by not establishing the context. We've seen in narrative, we've seen in epistles, any place in the Word of God, it's really important to have a grip on the context. Why are these words being said? What is the purpose? What problem is being addressed? What issue is being raised? Because we know this in our own culture and in our own communication.

Words can be taken out of context and be made to mean something completely different than what they ought to. They used to have these detective shows on TV, Mannix and Cannon and these guys that get slugged and knocked cold every week, week after week, and you wonder how can they possibly even think anymore after being knocked cold so often? But one of the plots that used to surface a lot in those was that someone had been recorded giving a speech and making certain statements and someone would take that tape and excerpt certain statements and string them together to say something completely different and then they would call up the victim of this hoax that they're going to perpetrate and they would play this amended tape and

this cut and paste compilation of separate statements and it would say something completely different than what that person would ever say themselves. And we sometimes, whether inadvertently or verterntly, do this ourselves.

We take verses out of context and many times we're substantiating a true principle but that's not what that verse was put there to say. And so our goal in our study of Romans and our goal in finishing our introduction tonight is to be sure that we know why this letter was written, what purpose Paul had in writing it, and in so doing, and I'm going to be referring back to that when we get to some of these passages that have received a number of different interpretations because that is the mark on the shoreline that is going to help us row a straight course. That's a little crew analogy there for those of you that are familiar with that.

We have to have something to look at to keep ourselves on a straight course and the purpose of this letter, what Paul is up to, is that marker. So one of the things that we take our cue from is what Paul says at the beginning of the letter and he talks about his apostleship. He's talking to a group that he hasn't met as a whole.

He knows certain individuals in this group but the bulk of the people he's addressing he's never seen, he's never been to Rome as an evangelist and so forth. And so he establishes the basis upon which he has any business even writing to them. He says, look, I'm an apostle.

I have been called to be an apostle by God. I've been separated out to this good news that I'm going to be communicating to you. I have a commission.

I have a warrant. I have authority to deliver this message to you by virtue of the fact that you are Gentile believers. That's my God-given mission is to preach the good news to those of you who are not Jewish.

And he says, I've been separated to this gospel of God which he promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. And right away this tells us something about the audience because we know that the group in Rome is largely Gentile with a minority of Jewish believers. However, Paul is going to quote copiously in this letter from the Old Testament, from the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was in existence at this time we call it the Septuagint.

They called it the Bible. In the same way that we call our English Scriptures the Bible, they had a Greek copy that they called the Bible. And Paul quotes from this right and left.

And he is assuming as he talks to these people right here that they know what the Holy Scriptures are, that they know who the prophets are, that they know who David is. He's going to identify Jesus Christ as born from the seed of David. And he figures they know who David is.

And he assumes an acquaintance with the Scriptures that tells us that these Gentiles probably had started out, most of them had started out as proselytes to Judaism and were acquainted with

the Scriptures because they had learned them in the synagogues. And they had associations with the Jewish faith and the Jewish culture and the Jewish religion for a number of years. And so these are not people who are necessarily fresh converts.

We're going to see some support for that idea tonight, but we'll have to take it on faith at this point. And that's why he begins this introduction this way. He says, I'm writing to you, Romans, and I'm continuing a message that began in the Old Testament that God began sending through the prophets.

And then he does a very neat summary and a reference to the entire plan of God here when he says that this gospel concerns Jesus Christ our Lord who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead. If you think about this, it's like a panorama. You look at Jesus Christ at the pinnacle of history, at the center of human history.

If you look back in the past, the promise was given as far back as Adam and Eve and became more and more revealed in the covenants to Abraham and through Moses and through David and the prophets and so forth. And the Davidic promise in particular began to give the specifics about the Son of God, that David's greater son would come, that there would be a shoot from the stump of Jesse that would come, that there would be a suffering servant who would atone for the sins of the people in Isaiah and in Ezekiel. And so in the Old Testament days and in the Old Testament scriptures, that's the origin, that's the look backward from where Paul is standing at the plan of salvation that God has brought about.

And that carries forward through Jesus' birth to parents who were in the lineage of David. And then he looks all the way through the ministry of Jesus Christ, through the cross, through his death and burial, to his resurrection and ascension. And he says that not only was he born of the seed of David according to the flesh, but he was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead or from the dead.

And that carries through the earthly ministry and resurrection of Jesus Christ and talks about the fact that because Christ is resurrected, he is alive at the present time, at the time of the writing of Paul, and of course he's alive today. And again, Paul assumes that these are facts in evidence, as you will. He doesn't sketch out the ministry of Jesus Christ.

He doesn't give the gospel at this point. He's laying this as the foundation of why he's writing. And he says, the gospel that I preach is this gospel.

It's the gospel of the Christ that was promised in the Old Testament. It's the gospel of the Christ that was raised from the dead. And this is not new information.

These are points of identification, points of common ground and common fellowship. What gospel is it that Paul preaches? Is it the gospel by which they were saved? Is it another gospel? Is it the

gospel of circumcision? Is it the gospel of Judaism made over in the image of Christ? And this identifies Paul not only as someone who's coming to them with a message, but it's the right message. It's the message by which they came to Christ because they are saints.

And that's what he substantiates in verse 5. It says, through him, through this Jesus Christ, we have received grace and apostleship with a view toward... We saw that preposition *ace* last time that's translated for here. But *ace* often means with a view toward, E-I-S. The reason this grace and apostleship were given to Paul was for the purpose of or with a view toward the obedience from faith among all the *ethnos*, all the ethnicities, all the nations, all the peoples, which is the Gentiles, for the sake of his name.

And we know that that's a reference to the glory of Jesus Christ. The reason Paul is writing and ministering and being an apostle is for the glory of Jesus Christ. And his specific responsibility are the Gentiles, the nations.

And he says, you all, you Romans, in verse 6, are among that group. You are also the called of Jesus Christ. You're among this group of *ethnos*.

And so he's basically told them why he has the right to write to them. They may have said, well, I've heard of this Paul, but what business does he have talking to us? He's never been here. Well, this is why.

He says, I've got a God-given commission specifically to you. You're included in my target group. He says, to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints.

Now, this verse 7 is hard to bring over into English, but there are three words there that are all in the same grammatical form. And the first one is beloved. This is *agapatois*, A-G-A-P-A-T-O-I-S.

And it's just a noun that means beloved ones. It has a genitive with it. Who are they beloved by? They're beloved by God.

So they are beloved ones. And then he calls them the called ones, *klatois*, K-L-E-T-O-I-S, *klatois*. And these are three parallel words.

They have the same weight, the same force, the same grammatical construction. They are beloved, they are called, and they are *hagiois*, H-A-G-I-O-I-S, which means, and this is the hardest one to render into English, we say holy or saints or sanctified, but the weight of the word means something that is separated out for a specific purpose, and in this case, a divine purpose. But it's marked out and set apart.

The things in the temple weren't used for common purposes. They were set aside for special use. We have china.

We have special dishes. We have special forks and knives that are made of silver that we keep in

a box, and we set them apart for special use. They're not ordinary.

They're not common, and we take special care of them. We use special storage and special cleaning and special handling because they have a specific purpose. They're the nicest things we have, and that's what this word *hagiois* means.

It means you're set apart for something special, and he puts all three of these words in parallel. Now, my question for you tonight is, what category of people in the human race do these three words apply to? Beloved, called, and set apart. Believers or unbelievers? I expect 100% on this quiz it is believers.

Now, this seems like an almost absurdly simple point, but I can tell you that losing sight of this point is what causes us to go astray in Romans. The letter is addressed to believers. It assumes that they are believers, and we're going to substantiate that and plant it firmly in our minds tonight so that we can refer back to that as our anchor to get through this book because that makes a big difference when you get to Romans chapter 2, when you get to Romans chapter 6, when you get to Romans chapter 7 and chapter 8 and chapter 9. It's critically important to understand who is Paul talking to.

Is he trying to evangelize them or is he trying to help them grow? Is he addressing salvation or is he addressing spirituality? They seem like very simple issues right now because we're not down in the dust and mire of wading through phrases and interminable sentences that last three or four or five verses, but we just have to make sure we have that clear. This is from a believer to believers. It is not an evangelistic letter.

He's not trying to get them saved, and that sort of flies in the face of all of our expectations. What is the book we use to get people saved? Romans. What do the navigators teach? The Roman road, Romans 3.23, Romans 6.23, Romans 8.28, and so forth.

And that's good, and there's nothing wrong with that, and we don't have to stop. But when we study this letter, we have to understand that that's not Paul's purpose. He's not trying to get people saved.

He's talking to people who are already saved. That's why he assumes that they know about David and the prophets and the scriptures and so forth. Okay.

First, in verse 8, after his greeting grace to you and peace, he says, First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. Now, this is a healthy example. I don't think we need to overemphasize this, but it does strike us that Paul is talking about a group, most of whom he hasn't met, and yet they show up in his prayers.

And this, by way of principle, lets us know that we can pray for those that we don't know. What is the basis for Paul's prayer? And the reason I say this is I have a personal thing, and I will label it

as personal, and you can assign whatever weight you want to it because it is a personal application and a personal understanding. I am somewhat hesitant when people come up and say, Please pray for Aunt Sally's nephew's cousin who is about to undergo gallbladder surgery in Walla Walla, Washington, because the principle is prayer is a place of application of the Word of God, and you have to have enough facts to be able to make an application.

Why should I pray for Aunt Sally's nephew's whatever? What am I praying for? What purpose can I establish? And in general prayers like that, we know that God's purpose is always evangelization of the lost. We know that it's always reflecting the glory of Jesus Christ, and we can construct a general prayer that will apply to just about anyone. But I cannot intelligently pray for healing.

I cannot intelligently pray for anything when I don't have enough facts to make an application from the Word of God. This may be someone who is under severe divine discipline. I will be praying into the teeth of the will of God.

This may be something that God is going to work out in an entirely different way and has an entirely different purpose, and this would be the equivalent of showing up on the battlefield with a radio and communications with an artillery unit and someone saying, Please send a fire for effect mission to this grid coordinate and not having any idea if there are friendlies or enemies or anyone there at all. Is this a waste of ammunition? Is this an effective target? We just don't assault a problem or address an issue that we have no information on. However, Paul here is praying for people that he's never met.

So what is the principle here? We're going to discover that although Paul has not been to Rome and is not acquainted with many of these people, he has quite a bit of information. He has many friends in this group with whom he communicates on a regular basis, with whom he has lived. We're going to find out that Prisca and Aquila are in this group at the current time and Paul stayed at their house in Ephesus when they lived in Ephesus.

They have been with him in Corinth. He is addressing them at the end of the book in the greetings because they are currently in Rome and apparently they are from Rome originally. And so he has got some information.

He has taken the temperature of this group and he has some information. In fact, he's going to give it to us right here. He says, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Their faith, and this is not the fact that they have come to Christ, this is their faith as believers. This is their Christian walk. It is not simply that people throughout the world are saying, my goodness, there's a whole lot of people that believe in Jesus Christ in Rome.

This faith is their reputation as believers in Jesus Christ. What have they thought and spoken and

done after salvation? Their reputation, it reminds us of what Paul says in some of the other letters like Philippians and Colossians where he says, I thank God for you because I have heard of your work of faith and labor of love. It's a very great parallel here.

And this faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. The simple fact of conversion and that knowledge going through the world is a fine thing but it doesn't have the impact that the life of a believer after salvation has. That's where the glory of Christ is truly reflected.

Paul can go to places in the world and preach Christ at first hand and he's not going to say, well, jump on the bandwagon. Everybody in Rome believed in Christ so you all believe in him also. It's their reputation as believers, the witness that is a part of this group's reputation.

He says in verse 9, God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers making request if by some means now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. Paul has a desire to be physically present with this group of believers whose Christian lives, Christian faith is spoken of in so many places. He says in verse 11, I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift so that you may be established.

And this is a different situation than what we might imagine. He doesn't say I wish that I may come to you so that those of you who have not yet come to Christ I may evangelize or I may reap the fields that are white for harvest in the rest of Rome where people have not yet converted to Jesus Christ. He's talking to the believers and he says you already have a reputation for faith and I want to come and impart spiritual things to you so that you can be established.

The vocabulary here is also interesting because these words translated spiritual gift are the ones that we find in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and 13 and 14. Pneumatikon for spiritual and charisma for gift. And the question immediately arises in our mind, well is an apostle a means by which spiritual gifts come to people? Are we talking about tongues and healing and prophecy and interpretation and so forth? Obviously not.

And this is another case where we have to not be overly simplistic in our interpretation and say well I saw where spiritual gift meant something in one place, it must mean that every place. Just as in our language I can use the word log to mean a record of events that took place on a ship or a record of events that was recorded by a computer program or what was left over when my tree blew down or any one of a number of other things. The context, the usage, what is being spoken of and the same thing is true here.

Obviously Paul is not going to come and manifest spiritual gifts as we think of them. This is a gift in the spiritual realm. He's not coming to bring them monetary gifts like he's going to go to Jerusalem to do.

He's going to take money to Jerusalem and that's a monetary gift, a material blessing. And we will

see that tonight as well. But he says I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift and here's the purpose of it, so that you may be established.

That is that I may be encouraged together with you by our mutual faith. And this is one of the benefits of fellowship. One of the great benefits of believers being face to face.

Now Paul can write this letter and send them some great doctrine. This is the greatest doctrinal treatise perhaps in the whole New Testament. And Paul is sending this without being there.

But he says there's something that can only happen when I'm there with you. When we are together face to face. And that is this special kind of encouragement and establishing in the faith that comes from sharing our faith each with the other in the presence of one another.

We can pray for each other. We can write letters to one another. We can communicate truth to one another in long distance.

But there are certain things that only come from fellowship. And all of us need establishing. All of us need encouragement from time to time.

And the fellowship and the presence of believers in our midst especially those who have a grip on the way the plan of God works is one of the places from which we obtain that encouragement. He says in verse 13, I do not want you to be unaware brethren that I have often planned to come to you but I was hindered until now. And his purpose was that he might have some fruit among you also just as among the other Gentiles.

Now, here's another question. What kind of fruit is Paul talking about? He says I've been among a lot of other Gentiles and I've had fruit and I wish that I could be among you and have some fruit also. It literally says that I may reap a harvest from you.

There are some people that I can easily imagine coming to this and saying that Paul wants to come there and pass the plate, pass the offering plate and reap a material harvest from among them. It's a fairly straightforward statement in the Greek where he says that I may glean something from you. And so our question is what is it that Paul wants to glean? Let me first of all give you a literal rendering or an idea of how the Greek reads here.

He says in verse 13, if I give you this straight out of the Greek, he says I've often purposed to come to you and was hindered until the present that some fruit I may have also among you as indeed among the remaining nations. And the word there is karpon, which karpos is the word for fruit, that I may have some fruit. Some of the versions that say reap a harvest and so forth, the New King James does the best job here.

He says that I may have some fruit also among you as indeed among the remaining nations. And the reason we ask ourselves this question is we've already established, at least initially, that he's talking to a group of believers. And we tend to be told a lot that fruit is converts.

And so is he saying I would like to have converts among you as also among the other Gentiles? I don't believe so. And we will see tonight seven reasons why that is. But this is fruit of a different kind.

This is the fruit that Jesus Christ himself talked about in John chapter 16 when he said I am the vine and you are the branches and it's my Father's will that you bear much fruit and that your fruit remain. That verse has also been taken to mean that we should go out and replicate and produce more people. I would argue even from the analogy, and this is a very simplistic argument, but this isn't talking about branches begetting branches.

This is branches begetting fruit. And if Christ simply wanted more branches, why does fruit even enter into it? I am the vine, you are the branches. And replication would mean more branches.

But this is something of a different kind. This is fruit. And what sort of fruit is it? Well, another reference that Paul makes to fruit talks about the fruit of the Spirit.

And we're going to see tonight that Paul's objective as an apostle is not only to evangelize. We don't want to diminish or to eliminate the conversion that was a part of Paul's ministry and is a part of the ministry of the gospel today. But we've talked before about the fact that recruiting is not an end in itself.

You recruit people to make something out of them, to accomplish a mission with them and through them. And Paul's focus is not on the recruiting end of it, but on the perfecting and completing end. And the fruit that is born is the fruit of a mature soul, a soul where Jesus Christ resides, a soul that reflects the glory of Jesus Christ, where God the Father comes and dwells and abides, where the fruit of the Spirit is being produced.

In other words, a soul that reflects the essence of God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and the thinking that goes with that, the perspective, the decisions, the priorities that were modeled by Jesus Christ Himself. That's the fruit that he's after. He wants to visit these believers.

He has often wanted to come to them and to impart to them a spiritual gift, gifts in the spiritual realm, the knowledge that he has obtained through his study of the Scriptures and his revelations from Jesus Christ personally. Paul has information for the Gentiles that he alone knows. He is the apostle to the Gentiles.

To him has been revealed the mystery of Christ in you, the hope of glory and so forth. And he wants to get to these people face to face and communicate it to them and impart it to them so that it will bear fruit in their souls. And that's what he's talking about when he says, I have often wanted to come to you, that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

He goes on in verse 14 to say, I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. This is another one of those places where we come to realize that when we see the word gospel in the writings of Paul, it's not talking about Christ died for you, believe in Him and be saved.

He's talking about the entire scope of God's plan for believers in the church age. The details of the ministry of Jesus Christ. You don't have to understand reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, retroactive current and ultimate positional truth and so many of the other things that we learn from Paul.

The reason he preaches those things is that they are a part of his gospel. The saving work of Jesus Christ and the decision to believe in Him for salvation from the lake of fire is the first step. But that's not Paul's primary emphasis.

That is the means to an end. And he says in verse 16, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. In it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.

As it is written, the just shall live by faith. And we have often looked at this verse and seen in it the elements of our initial salvation. And all of those things are true.

These principles apply equally to the initial point of our deliverance and our ongoing deliverance by faith in Jesus Christ. What we have to be careful to do is not limit it to that and say, well, that's a salvation passage. That's talking about getting people converted to Christ.

The same principle carries forward. It's a part of Paul's gospel to believers as well as to unbelievers. And we know that some of the words in our tradition have become freighted with one narrow meaning so that salvation means salvation from the lake of fire rather than deliverance.

Life means eternal life rather than an abundant life in the present. Gospel means Christ died for your sins rather than the whole realm of the doctrines of the Word of God that apply to us as believers. So in these two verses when he says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, this is more than not being ashamed of the message of salvation from the lake of fire and what Christ did for us on the cross.

It's not being ashamed of all of the principles that guide and empower believers in this age. The priorities that we set, the resources that we draw upon, the perspective that we have of life. He's not ashamed of that.

And we shouldn't be ashamed of it either. We sometimes tend to make a distinction between the gospel and accepting the title of Christian and not being ashamed of the principles by which we live or that we should live by where we make a decision, we set a certain priority, we do a certain thing with our children or a certain thing with our employment or a certain thing as far as where

we're going to live or how we're going to operate. People in our family, especially those who aren't believers, may come up in question and say, well, why are you doing that? That doesn't make good sense.

Anybody with prudence would do something different. Or people will impugn our motives and say, well, you're doing this for the wrong reasons. This is an unwise move.

And we sometimes offer an explanation for what we do that doesn't really address our true reasons. Our basic fundamental reason for doing what we do is that we want to honor the Lord and we want to be obedient. But we sometimes don't take advantage of the opportunity to make that statement when we're questioned.

Someone finds out we're going to do a certain thing and they say, well, how come you're not doing this and so on? And we say, well, my wife and I or my husband and I talked about it and we just decided that this would be a better course. And we sometimes even give human viewpoint rationalizations that will satisfy someone as to why we're doing what we're doing. But in our hearts and in our private discussions and our private thinking, there's really been a spiritual reason why we're doing what we're doing.

And we didn't really feel comfortable bringing that out. Paul says, I am not ashamed of the doctrines of Jesus Christ, of the principles that guide my life and my vocation. I'm not ashamed of that.

That's the power of God for deliverance. Not only at the point of salvation, but it's the power of God for deliverance in this life. When we face situations and circumstances, why is it that God can bless us? Why is it that we have capacity for life and capacity for love and capacity for happiness? It's because the principles that we learn from God's Word and that we live by that God the Holy Spirit makes real to us, count for something.

They deliver us out of this present evil age like we saw in Colossians 1. And we don't need to be ashamed of those. They're wonderful truths. And many times it's those truths that can enable the light of the glory of Jesus Christ to shine out of our lives.

And there's no reason to be ashamed. And so this is not just a verse that applies to missionaries or evangelists. This is a verse that applies to all of us.

There's no reason to be ashamed of the good news of our life in Jesus Christ. And we ought to be alert for the opportunities when someone says, why do you live the way you do? Why do you decide the way you decide? Why are your priorities what they are? To share that reason, it's because of the good news that I have in Jesus Christ. I know that I can do this and I have the promises of God to sustain me.

I have the grace of God to sustain me. And I'm confident and I'm relaxed and I'm happy. It is the

power of God to afford deliverance.

And I really like to translate soterios, deliverance, because it doesn't carry the same tendency to oversimplify that we have inherited with the word salvation. For everyone who believes. And this word believes is in the present tense.

It's not an heiress. It doesn't mean at the point of Gospel hearing, we convert and trust in Jesus Christ. This is everyone who is believing.

Everyone who is trusting. This is everyone who is in a current status of faith. It's delivering those who are believers, you can say here.

It is the power of God for deliverance for everyone who is a believer. For the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it, the good news, the doctrines, the truths, the wonderful principles and promises pertaining to Jesus Christ.

In those things, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, out of faith, into faith, it says literally in the Greek. And what it's saying is the faith by which you trust that those things are true and that they become a reality in your soul, in turn is bolstered and sustained and strengthened by those very truths. It comes from faith.

It's communicated by people who have already trusted in it and come to understand it. And it produces faith. A lot of people say, Oh, you know, I wish I had more faith.

I just don't seem to be able to trust. There are times when I know I ought to have confidence and I know I ought to be relaxed and I just don't seem to be able to have the faith. The wonderful thing about the truth of God is that it explains itself and it sustains itself.

One of the things that we have seen many times in Scripture is that faith is not just a wishing and hoping and an optimistic attitude about the future. Faith is a process whereby we look at a truth from the Word of God. The Word of God will say something.

It will put out a proposition on the table. It will say, If you do A, God will do B. God will never leave us. God will never forsake us.

God loves us like a father. We can never travel so far that God's eye is not on us or that His love does not surround us or that His provision does not sustain us. There are certain things that are absolute statements of truth.

Faith is the process by which we take those and say, Okay, that's my reality. So if we say, I have no faith, we probably aren't thinking of things to put our faith in. Faith has to have an object.

Faith is believing in something. And that's why we're here tonight. We're looking at the truth of the Word of God because that gives us something to believe.

And in looking at that and taking it for fact and taking it for truth, it alters the landscape of our thinking. It alters the way we think. We might be driving down the road.

I'm going to draw from my personal experience here. We might be driving down the road. Our car is running great.

It sounds good. We're flying down the road at a high rate of speed. And we have great confidence and we're relaxed and we're able to focus on other things and meditate and think deep thoughts and so forth.

Because there's a certain set of assumptions that are the basis of our view of reality. We say, I've got a good solid car. There's nothing the matter with it.

I can happily fly down the road at 65 or 70 miles an hour with no fear of danger, with no fear of imminent destruction. You can lay your hand down on the gear shift and feel that it's red hot and you can look on the dashboard and see that there's a light that's glowing orange or red. You've had two sensory inputs.

You've had two little facts come into your mind. There's a red light and there's high temperature on a piece of your car. And suddenly, the entire landscape of your mind changes.

All of your priorities change. Suddenly, it's not so important to get where you're going at 70 miles an hour. Suddenly, it's not so important to think deep thoughts or whatever.

With the inputting of a few things that we take for fact. Now, we don't know that anything is wrong, do we? There's a red light, but we believe, based on that red light, that there's no oil in the engine. There's high temperature on some part of the car and we say, there's probably a lot of friction because there's no oil.

And we draw a conclusion based on these facts and it completely shifts our priorities. We stop the car. We don't go where we were going.

We don't have the same level of contentment and easygoing mindlessness that we had a few minutes before. And why is that? Two tiny little facts that we take for reality and that we draw conclusions from change our life and change our priorities, change our decisions. That's what the Word of God is supposed to do.

As believers, when we look into the perfect law of liberty, when God, the Holy Spirit, makes it clear to us and we see facts and truths in it, it's going to have the same effect in our thinking. We're suddenly not going to consider things in this life so important. Without trying, we will no longer be as worried about the opinions of people or the security that's based on human things because these facts have come into our mind and we have a new perspective.

Well, why do we take them as facts? Why do we have sufficient confidence in what the Word of

God says to overrule what our experience and what our friends and what human viewpoint tells us? That's faith. Faith is deciding that that's going to be our reality. And it is faith in the truth that comes from God's Word rather than trusting in what the world tells us and what people tell us and what experience tells us and what common sense sometimes tells us.

That's what changes our life. That's what makes us different. That can give us the kind of reputation that the Christians in Rome had.

Their faith was known throughout the world. They lived differently than other Romans. They did strange, bizarre things.

They didn't worry about things that other people worried about. They didn't pursue things that other people pursued. They were thought to be strange and odd and different.

And people said, why is that? And they weren't ashamed of the Gospel either. And they said, it's because I believe in Jesus Christ. And I know that certain realities pertain to me that don't apply to these other people.

And that's my world. That's my reality. And God's glory in Jesus Christ was reflected out of those lives.

That's our opportunity as well. In that Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith just as it is written, the just shall live by faith. Now, right there is where we could draw a line and chop out the next fourteen and a half chapters of Romans.

Right here at the beginning of this paragraph where he says, I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. This is the beginning of the doctrinal section of the book. You can draw a line right across between verse 15 and verse 16 because that is page 1, paragraph 1 of Paul's doctrinal treatise.

His personal letter to the Romans has transitioned into his doctrinal book to them. His personal letter to the Romans is going to pick up over in chapter 15, verse 14. And if you want to, you can keep your finger right here in chapter 1 at verse 15 and turn over to chapter 15, verse 14.

And the thought flows almost without a break here. He says, I long to see you. I want to impart a spiritual gift to you to be mutually established by our fellowship and so forth.

And he says in chapter 15, verse 14, I am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with knowledge, able to admonish one another. But brethren, I have written boldly to you on some points reminding you because of the grace given to me by God. Now he's going to review some of the same things that he's just got through saying in chapter 1. This is grace given to me, my God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God.

Notice, he has just finished 14 chapters of doctrinal teaching to this group. And he says, let me

just remind you, the reason I'm writing to you is I'm a minister of the gospel of God. This 14 chapters that I've just written to you, that's the gospel of God.

If there's anything that ought to help us understand what the term gospel means, this is it. Fourteen chapters of the heaviest doctrine in the New Testament. Paul says, the reason I wrote this to you is to remind you that I am a minister of these things.

This is the gospel of God. I am a minister to you, Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Now, what does this mean? Offering of the Gentiles.

Well, let's step back because this is...