

96-06-21a

That's right. As we prepare to study the Word of God this evening, let's take a moment to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit without whom this entire endeavor doesn't bear fruit. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you as always for the privilege that we have of living in this age, the wonderful standing that we have in Jesus Christ and the tremendous opportunities that you have made available to us through him.

We pray that tonight as we look into your Word, as we study this letter that Paul wrote to the Romans, that God the Holy Spirit will take these things and make them meaningful to us, make them applicable, help us to see the ways in which our lives and our thinking can be transformed by these things so that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work and will walk in a manner that's worthy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We ask it in his name. Amen.

If you are here tonight, you have come on a good night because we are going to bring ourselves up to date on what Paul has communicated in the first six chapters of Romans and we will continue our study in chapter seven. As we have observed in the past, Paul had never been to Rome. He hoped to visit there.

He knew that there were many believers there. There had been Jewish synagogues full of both Jewish believers and Gentile proselytes, Greeks and Romans and others who had come to faith in the God of Israel in the Old Testament sense. They had worshipped there in Rome.

They had a background in the Old Testament scriptures, many of them. And then along came this new piece of information that the Son of God had come and had been crucified in Jerusalem, that there were new things in the wind in terms of worshipping God and understanding the plan of God and so forth. And this news began to drift through the Roman Empire.

The New Testament gospel of Jesus Christ was spreading and those who had been Old Testament believers found themselves faced with this new truth. And many of them accepted it and recognized that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and was the culmination of the plan of God for salvation. However, this created a little bit of a problem because most of these folks had grown up and had learned their religion under the law of Moses.

It was observing feasts, offering sacrifices, reading the Torah and observing the law. And even the Gentiles who came to faith were brought into the fold, as it were, and were trained to think like Israelites and to live like Israelites. So one of the major difficulties that the apostles faced in the early days of the church was not only communicating the truth about Jesus Christ and salvation through faith in Him, but also that there was a new order.

There was a new phase of God's plan that had a new dynamic for life. It was no longer guided and mandated by the law of Moses. Righteousness in God's eyes has always been by faith.

That was witnessed in the law and the prophets, but it wasn't really a prominent theme in the Old Testament. And it certainly had been completely obscured by the legalism and the hypocrisy that had characterized so much of Jewish life. So the apostles were faced with trying to get this across, that there was a righteousness from God that didn't depend on anything you did.

It didn't depend on following this set of rules. There was no external measuring standard by which you could look at someone or look at yourself and say, I am righteous. I'm righteous because I offer sacrifices.

I'm righteous because I keep the feasts and so forth. That was all out the window. Well, our natural human tendency is to take the easy way.

And if you think about it, it's a lot easier to adhere to an external code than it is to accept inner transformation. And this prevails all the way down to the present day. It's easier to maintain church attendance and give an offering or a tithe and attempt some evangelism a few times a month and engage in other actions that are a part of our external standard of righteousness.

It's an easier thing to do than to meditate on the Word of God, to ignore the opinions of people, the opinions of Christianity at large, the opinions of family and friends and co-workers and so forth, and concentrate on God doing His work in our soul. It's a difficult thing. It's hard to remember.

We're material, visible creatures and that's how we operate. The same thing was true in Rome. The same thing was true in Paul's day and that's why he writes this letter.

This letter is designed to hammer on our skull, chapter after chapter after chapter, and say, wake up! Righteousness doesn't come by what you do. Righteousness is put in you because of what you believe. It is faith in the truth that God reveals that puts us in the place to be declared righteous by God.

So what I'd like to do is bring us up to date on what we've covered in Romans. One of the great difficulties in studying a book like Romans, as with Hebrews and some of the other deeply theological books, is that we tend to start well and then lose our momentum and start postholding on verses and on concepts and we do wide categorical studies which are great in themselves, but we lose sight of what Paul was saying, the flow of the argument, the thrust of his message. And so in our study we are endeavoring to keep sight of the flow of thought, the big idea that's in this letter.

After all, it was a letter, it was written to a congregation and it was read at one sitting. People sat, someone stood up and said, we got a letter from the Apostle Paul, let me read it to you. He gives his greetings, he says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, it's the power of God for salvation, the Jew first and also the Greek, and then he gives that gospel in the next many chapters.

Didn't even have chapters back then. So we want to try to maintain that flow. So let me first of all review, I've given you these before, but what I've done is to take each of the chapters that we've studied thus far, which is six complete chapters, and summarize the thrust of that chapter and then select a key verse that gives us the essence of the argument and gives us the flow of the argument.

The key verse of the book, if you had to pick a single verse in Romans, some people would pick Romans 3.23, the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Some might pick Romans 6.23, actually I think I just quoted 6.23, 3.23 is all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Did I say that right? They're mixed in my mind.

There are many verses, Romans 8.28, all things work together for good. Romans 12.1, there are many wonderful verses in Romans. The verse that I have selected is the one that Paul puts right at the beginning of the theological section of the book, which is in chapter 1, verse 16, I am not ashamed of the good news of Jesus Christ, I'm not ashamed of the divine truth about Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God for deliverance.

You notice I have changed a couple of words there, instead of gospel we're talking about the divine truth about Jesus Christ because that's what the gospel is. It is the power of God for deliverance and in many passages we have seen that when soterios and its relatives are used in the New Testament it is often used for deliverance. We saw this in Colossians chapter 1, Christ died to deliver us from this present evil age.

Now that's a thought, isn't it? We think Christ died to save us from the lake of fire, Christ died to snatch us from the sea, from the judgment and condemnation of God, but it says that Christ died to deliver us out of this present evil age and that's the very same word, deliver or salvation is the very same word. There is a salvation in time, there is a salvation or a deliverance that you and I can experience today and tomorrow and the next day that goes beyond our ticket out of the lake of fire. That is the reason for which Christ died.

The deliverance that we experience at the moment of salvation is not the goal, it's the means to an end, it's the first step. We've talked about recruiting in the military. When you recruit someone and you get them to sign on the dotted line and they sign up for a two year hitch or a three year hitch, the military service involved, whether it's the army or the navy or the marine corps, they don't say, well, let's wipe the sweat from our brow.

We got another one signed up and that's the end of the business. That's just the beginning. Signing and joining, that just gets you started.

That's day one, point one, where your civilian identity will be destroyed and your military identity will be created. It's the same thing in the Christian life and we make such a mistake in Christianity today by making a goal out of evangelism. This would be like the marine corps saying the mission

of the United States Marine Corps is to recruit, period.

It makes no sense. We recruit and it's an important part of what we do, but my goodness, the doctrines of amphibious warfare and the protection and defense of the United States at home and abroad and so forth is the goal, that's the mission. To be the quick reaction force for the nation and so forth.

And that recruiting that we do is the means to an end and we take those people who sign on the dotted line and they become a new creature. Old things are passed away and all things are become new. We've got to tear down old ways of thinking and make it new.

New priorities, new responses, new views of authority and self-control and so forth. And that's the way the Christian life is. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds and that is true deliverance because once we start thinking and acting in accordance with God's plan, we find huge vistas of fruitfulness and meaning and genuine prosperity in life that partake of the eternal, that partake of the divine and that's why it is called eternal life.

We so often think of eternal life and the word eternal speaks to us of duration. How long is it going to last? It's going to last for eternity, it's going to last forever. But we've seen over and over again in the New Testament that the term eternal is not a term of duration, it is a term of quality.

It partakes of the eternal, it partakes of the divine. When you see eternal life, think quality, don't think duration. Okay, so our key verse, this good news of Jesus Christ, this divine truth about Jesus Christ, it is the power of God for deliverance.

How are we delivered from circumstances? How are we delivered with regard to people? How are we delivered with regard to financial pressure or authority pressure or the pressure of circumstances, the pressure of the bills, the pressure of the job, the pressure of the family or the friends or whatever it may be? Where does deliverance come from? Deliverance comes from divine truth. That is the power of God for deliverance. Now does it deliver everyone? Is every believer in Jesus Christ delivered from the powers of this age, from sin, from operational death, from the abuse of other people and so forth? Is every believer delivered automatically as a result of salvation? That's not what this verse says.

It says it is the power of God for deliverance for everyone who is trusting, for everyone who is believing. It's a present tense. It's a status quo.

It's a pattern of life. Are we trusting the Word of God? Of course, to trust it, you have to know it. But the object of faith is the Word of God and the theme of this book has to do with righteousness by faith.

We have to understand what faith is. Faith is trusting a propositional truth. We have to know it and trust it.

That delivers and that makes us righteous. So that's a key verse. Another great verse that is very close to the first in importance is chapter 2, verse 29.

In terms of a key verse for the book of Romans, you have a difficult time getting away from chapter 2, verse 29. He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God.

We think, well, what's this Jewish and circumcision business that doesn't pertain today? It really does because what is Paul talking about? For the Romans in that day, righteousness and religion meant Judaism. To be a part of the crowd, to be accepted in the circles that belong to God, that was being a Jew. He says if you want to be religious, if you want to be truly spiritual, if you want to be righteous in God's eyes, it's not what you do on the outside.

Think about this. It's a pretty obvious fact that we have inner motivations and we have outward actions, right? A single outward action can be produced by many people who have a variety of motivations. You can pick almost any activity.

Let's take something really obvious like passing an offering plate in a church, and as it goes down the row, people drop money in. The same action, someone digs in their pocket, pulls out a five and drops it in the plate. Person A, what's their motivation? They know that the church is engaged in ministries that they support, that they believe are a part of the plan of God, and they say, I am excited about the opportunity to participate in this way, in this ministry.

I can't go and be there. I can't go in and run the plow myself, but I can contribute financially and I believe in the goals and in the ministries of this organization, of this church. That's a motivation.

Person B, plate comes to him, pulls out a five, drops it in the plate. What's his motivation? Well, you know, person A just dropped a five in the plate, and if I just pass the plate and don't drop one in, it's going to be kind of awkward. People are going to think, well, I'm not supporting the church, I'm tightwad, there's something the matter with me.

So rather than be thought to not be spiritual or not be as righteous, in it goes. Plate comes to person C. Person C has been listening to a lot of Christian media and they think that put your tithes into the storehouse and God will open the windows of heaven and blessing will come down. Erroneous truth, a desire for one's own gratification, it's kind of like not much different than buying a lottery ticket.

I'll put this in, maybe God will put a new dishwasher on my doorstep next week. So, different motivations, the very same action. So now, if we start applying a standard to this and saying who is righteous, let's try an external standard.

Let's try a standard that looks on the outward. We could say that anyone who contributes to the

church must be righteous. Well, there's an obvious flaw there because two out of the three people we've just looked at are completely thinking about themselves and have no mind for God, aren't applying any divine truth at all.

So, when it comes to righteousness, man looks on the outward appearance and God looks on the heart and it's the inner standard that counts. Well, when we take an absurd example like that, it's easy to see. What about our lives? Why do we do what we do? Do we do what we do to be seen by men? If we do, we're just like the Pharisees.

Jesus said they have their reward. They were seen by men praying on the street corner wearing sackcloth and ashes. That's all the good it did.

There's no impact in this life and there's no impact in the next. And that's why God's standard is internal. That's what Paul is trying to get across.

And so, when he says in 229, he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not from men but from God. That tells us something. We have to be willing to do without the praise of men.

If you decide to pursue the inner standard, men aren't going to necessarily see your righteousness. You may refrain from putting money in the offering plate. And the reason you refrain is you're on a budget and after you have observed the priorities that are a part of your responsibility as a husband and as a father or as an individual who has obligations that must be met, you may not be in a position.

God hasn't given you a surplus that can be given to the church and it's not the time. It isn't the circumstance in which to contribute monetarily to the church. And if you did it, you would be irresponsible by owing someone something that you are not able to pay.

And the Bible clearly says, owe no man anything, which means if you're on time payments, don't get behind. It doesn't mean to never take out a loan, but it means be faithful in what you have promised. And if by giving to the church, you know, some people say, well, God's going to open the windows of heaven.

I'll just put my whole paycheck in there. And I'll expect God to bless me. Of course, nothing happens and then they can't pay their bills.

So what are we talking about? Praise not from men, but from God. We may refrain and someone may think we're wrong. Someone may think we're wrong because of some other decision that we make.

Some of us have been in communities where there was not a good teaching church that had fellowship that was based on the right things and was oriented to the plan of God in the right way. There may be an entire community where such a gathering of believers does not exist. And by

going to a church, it may create strife and contention.

It may create tension in your own soul and it may interfere with your relationship with God instead of enhancing it. And if that's the case, we may need to make the decision to not attend an organized assembly. Well, people may look at you and say, oh, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together and so forth.

And judging by that external standard, find you at fault. Well, you have to make a choice. Whose praise are you looking for? If you're dodging out of church because you're lazy or because you have no concern for spiritual things, because you don't like the conviction of the Holy Spirit or the rebuke and correcting and instructing of God's Word, God knows that and discipline will follow.

But if your motives are good and if you are pursuing your relationship with God, sometimes that may call for separating from an assembly rather than participating. And only the believer and God know all of the ins and outs of that transaction. Whose praise is not from men but from God.

Now, this is a hard truth and a lot of people want to judge and want to disciple and want to declare each other and declare themselves to be righteous or unrighteous by what we do. And Paul says clearly in 2.29 here that that is not the standard in this phase of God's plan. Now, there's another key distinction.

We've talked about what salvation means. We've talked about what gospel means. We've talked about where righteousness comes from.

There's another important thing to keep in mind as we review Romans, and that is what law means. It's easy to sort of put ourselves in a comfortable place and say, well, these legalists, these mosaic law keepers, that's a big problem that I certainly don't have. I'm not worried about eating pork or putting tassels on my garments or shaving the corners of my beard and so forth.

So this is for them. This is for the people in the past or something, and it doesn't apply to me. Law, and you can use this as Sam's informal definition of law in the book of Hebrews, or in the book of Romans, and probably everywhere in the New Testament, law, when we see it here in Romans, is any standard, any standard of righteousness that is based on an overt activity, based on what you do, based on behavior, based on appearance, based on your status in life, based on your function in life or functions that you perform, based on your participation in things, based on tabooism, things that people think are unsatisfactory.

I have mentioned before that I, as a boy, attended a church where there was a big thing about children's games that had dice in them, such as Monopoly or Mousetrap, and some of these where you rolled dice, and dice were a tool of the devil, and anybody that had dice was unholy and partaking of all kinds of vice and evil, and so these people, when they were given such a game or got such a game for their children, would take the dice and throw them away and get a spinner. Get a piece of cardboard with an arrow and spin that, and that would provide the

numbers to play the game. So dice were evil, spinners were good.

Law is any standard of righteousness that's based on your overt activity, your behavior, your appearance, your status, your function, your participation, tabooism, or other external criteria, good or otherwise. Some of these criteria are perfectly good, however, law is talking about a standard that's based on the external. You may say we don't want any flaming perverts in our church, people who are overtly and blatantly pursuing some evil lifestyle.

Lifestyle and external behavior is still law. It's a standard on the external. Whether it's a good standard, whether it's a false standard, it's still law, and that's any standard that's applied by people.

Another word for this is legalism. Notice the qualifier here, that this is a standard of righteousness. We sometimes have church discipline, don't we? We sometimes have people asked to leave and not return from a fellowship, or to leave and not return to a function within a fellowship because of lifestyle or because of some overt activity.

But if you stop and think about it and think about this definition, we are not trying to discern whether or not they are righteous. We are discerning whether or not they are engaged in evil. That is a standard for weeding out evil, it's not a standard for declaring one righteous.

There is a difference. And law is an external standard for righteousness. We're not talking about the external behavior that we observe and perceive to be in the category of evil and take action on.

That is a standard for weeding evil out and separating from those things that need to be separated from. But when we use external behavior as a criterion for righteousness, that is law. So, when we see this, every time you see law here in Romans, think, what kind of standard of behavior do I hold people to and decide that they're a good person or that they're a great Christian or that they're spiritual? What kind of standard do people hold me to? What kind of standard do I hold myself to? Do I think that if I attend Bible class every time the doors are open, I am righteous? That's an external standard of behavior and it's law.

And Paul is careful to tell us that righteousness doesn't come through law. Now, as we go through here, let me just review quickly our first six chapters. Chapter one, the summary of that chapter, the wrath of God falls on all those who suppress divine truth.

If you suppress the truth in unrighteousness, God's wrath is going to fall on you. That's the message of chapter one, once we start that theological section. And that stands to reason.

God's gone to great trouble to reveal himself in nature and in what has been created. Even unbelievers know that he's there. His eternal power and deity have been made manifest.

And if people suppress that and hold it away from themselves, they're going to come under the judgment and the wrath of God, and rightfully so. And we can all amen that. Those terrible people that reject God when he's gone to such pains, they ought to be condemned.

And we chime in with Paul and we say, look at this, and God turns them over and they deserve it. Look at this terrible pit and this descending spiral of reversionism and misery that they go into. If they suppress the truth about God, they deserve everything they get.

And so we're right in there saying amen every time Paul adds another point there in chapter one. And our key verse is chapter one, verse 18. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth and unrighteousness.

118. That's great. And Paul gets us all in his corner.

We're cheering him on. And then we come to chapter two. Believers who reject the word of God will also experience God's wrath, woe.

Chapter two, verse one. You, oh man, who are busy judging these other people, are coming under the same condemnation when you practice these same things. And what's he talking about? Suppressing divine truth.

Believers who reject the word of God will also experience God's wrath, specifically at the judgment seat of Christ. The key verse here is chapter two, verse five. In accordance with your hardness.

And when he says you, second person, he's talking to the believers in Rome, isn't he? That's who he greeted in chapter one. You, your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. And that is the judgment seat of Christ.

I suspect, sadly, that there is going to be a lot more judgment than there is reward at the judgment seat of Christ because most of us as believers never get the message that's in this book. Most of us never figure out what Paul is trying to tell us here in Romans. And there's going to be a lot of fire.

There's going to be a lot of judgment. There's going to be a lot of weeping at the judgment seat of Christ. Notice, as we've pointed out before, in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath.

This is something that accumulates. The wrath at the great white throne judgment for rejection of Jesus Christ is absolute. There's one criteria, faith in Christ.

There is one judgment, the lake of fire. This judgment at the judgment seat of Christ is relative. How often, how much did you reject? How much and how often did you trust? Some of the

people we think are first will be last.

Some of the people we think are last will be first. You're treasuring up for yourself. You're accumulating wrath.

And in the same way, of course, we can accumulate gold and silver and precious stones. Chapter 3, the law of Moses reveals man's sin. If you're hung up on the law and you think the law is a great standard of practice for life and for religion and for righteousness, stop and think.

The law of Moses, the purpose of it wasn't righteousness. The purpose of the law was to reveal sin. Faith in Christ reveals God's righteousness.

So you see the contrast there. The law of Moses reveals man's sin. It's man-oriented and shows our deficiency.

Faith in Christ, faith in the truth, this is not rejection of the truth, not suppressing the truth, not ignoring the truth, but accepting it and seeking it, meditating on it, living by it. Faith in Christ, faith in that truth reveals God's righteousness. Our key verse here is chapter 3, verse 20 through 22.

Therefore, by the deeds of the law, remember what law is, by deeds that people think will make you righteous, no flesh will be declared righteous in his sight. For by the law is the knowledge of sin. Anytime you set an external standard, sooner or later you're going to fall short of it.

But now the righteousness of God, apart from law, is revealed. It's witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. Now this has often been linked with salvation, that we have the imputation of righteousness at the point of salvation, and this is what delivers us from the lake of fire.

But keep in mind the flow of the argument here. We're talking about the Christian life. How do you live as a believer in a way that pleases God? Point 1, the wrath of God falls on people who reject the truth.

Point 2, that includes believers. Point 3, how can you avoid that? Don't follow the law. The law reveals sin.

Faith reveals righteousness. Chapter 4 gives us an illustration. Abraham was declared righteous as a result of faith in God's promise, not works.

People say, oh, but let's go back and look at the Old Testament. What about my scriptures? What does scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness. And the key verse there is chapter 4, verse 13.

The promise that he would be heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. God made Abraham a promise. You're going to inherit

the world.

You're going to have seed that's innumerable as the stars, as the sand. You will be a blessing to many nations. Through you, the whole world will be blessed, and so forth.

Notice, as we saw when we went through chapter 4, this is not the promise of salvation that Paul is using, is it? If Paul's argument has to do with salvation, why doesn't he say Abraham was saved through faith? Abraham believed God and received eternal life and deliverance from the lake of fire. This is a promise to a believer. Abraham had been a believer for years, 60, 80 years maybe.

He'd been a believer when God made this promise about having a son. He was 100 years old when this promise came. And when he believed that promise at age 100, it was credited to him for righteousness.

This is living righteousness. This is pleasing God as a believer. And Paul is using this as an example because that's his subject.

Now, does this make a difference to us? Why are we here? What are we doing breathing air and taking up space on the planet? What's the point? Are we just here to get by? Are we here to eke out some sort of a meager existence and avoid misery and have some semblance of stimulation and happiness and grow old and die? That's not the point at all. We have such a tremendous opportunity as believers to reflect the glory of God, to have God create righteousness in us, and it comes through faith. So there could be no important subject in what Paul is communicating here.

So he illustrates it from Abraham. Chapter 5, Paul takes a new tack. He says this is confusing for people who have lived their lives under the law.

And they say, but I've always tried to be righteous by keeping the law. Remember the rich young ruler that came to Christ and he said, Master, what must I do? And Jesus said, well, you've got the commandments. Love the Lord your God, love your neighbor as yourself, and so forth.

And the rich young ruler says, I've kept all these commandments from my youth. And then Jesus says, well, go and sell all you have and give it to the poor and come follow me. And, of course, he could not.

And does it mean that to be a good disciple we have to give away all of our worldly goods? Not at all. It reflected an attitude of heart that said, well, I basically am looking for the comforts of this life. I'm not willing to set those aside for pleasing God, for being declared righteous in God's eyes.

If I can have them both, great, but if I have to do without one or the other, I'd rather do without the righteousness and have the material blessings. And that's a hard choice for us because a lot of us have issues of security. We have issues of desire.

We have issues of comfort that we believe are central to our well-being and our happiness. And we're not willing to lay those on the table and say, if necessary, those can go away in the interest of pleasing God to the utmost. But that is a choice that sooner or later we have to make or be willing to make.

So Paul is trying to get these points across and he says to these folks who think, well, but I've, wrongly of course, but I've always thought that I gained merit in God's eyes by my obedience, by my keeping of the law. And Paul introduces an idea here and he says, look, righteousness comes by proxy. Righteousness comes through another person, not through what you do.

And this is a strange concept because people think, well, I'm condemned because of what I do and I'm righteous because of what I do. And Paul says both of those are wrong. You're condemned because of Adam.

And this is what we have in chapter 5. By one man sin entered the world and death through sin. Death passed on to all men because all sinned when Adam sinned. So sin and death and condemnation didn't come the first time we committed a sin.

It came through Adam. We got that by proxy. We got that through someone else.

And in the same way, because we had no say so, we were born sinful and corrupt and that stuff all came through another. Don't expect that salvation and righteousness and life are going to come any differently. In the same way that all of these bad things came through someone else, all of these good things are going to come the same way through someone else.

So in chapter 5 we really have two ideas. One is that sin, condemnation, and death came through one man, Adam. And the flip side of that coin is that the opposites of those, if you have sin, condemnation, and death coming through Adam, you have the reverse, which is righteousness, approval, and eternal or divine life coming through one man, Jesus Christ.

So the triple threat there, sin, condemnation, and death came through Adam. The answers to all of those, righteousness, approval, and eternal or divine life, life that partakes of the eternal, comes through one man, Jesus Christ. Therefore, it doesn't come from our own work.

It doesn't come that way at salvation, and it doesn't come that way after salvation. It never comes through what we do. The key verse here is 5:17.

If by one man's offense death reigned through that one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through one, Jesus Christ. He compares the bad things that came through Adam and the good things that come through Christ. And you can apply those principles at salvation, which is the common interpretation, but Paul's point here is that that applies in life.

That applies for believers now. Don't expect your righteousness to come through what you do. Now this throws a major wrench into a lot of what we practice as Christians today.

Personal discipleship, promise keepers, active ministries and evangelism that motivates by guilt, that motivates by pressure, that misstates the mission of believers in this age, that misstates the purpose of being a believer in this age, and that seeks to make an impact in someone else's life. Now, let me hasten to say that having an impact in someone else's life is a wonderful thing. It's a great thing and it's a part of the plan of God.

However, it is not a means of righteousness and it is presented in many circles today as a means of righteousness. It is a result of righteousness. It is a result of faith.

It is a result of inner transformation when it is genuine. And it is a work of God. It's coordinated by God.

It is timed by God. It is powered by God. And it is sustained by God when it comes as the result of righteousness by faith.

If we make it the goal rather than allowing it as a fruit in our life and when we start to measure ourselves or measure others by the amount of impact that we have had, we run contrary to everything that Paul is teaching us in this lesson. And whether consciously or unconsciously, that is a prevailing attitude in our Christian culture today. You hear it.

You read it. It comes up in conversation. It comes up in personal discipleship.

It comes up in sermons and in books and everything else. And it is a very subtle thing because obviously God works in people's lives and God uses other people to work in people's lives. But we have to keep track of what is a cause and what is an effect.

And if we go directly to seeking to have an effect in someone else's life, it will not be powered by God. It will not be coordinated by God. The power of the Spirit and the power of the Word will not be there.

And it will be wood, hay, and stubble. So that is why he says here that these things come through Jesus Christ. And that is why this verse that we just pointed out, 517, in the same way that through one man's offense death reigned, and we think in the life of a believer of operational death, isn't it awful to have lived a 24-hour day and have nothing eternal to show for it? We have been transformed into eternal creatures and we have the opportunity to partake of the divine and partake of the eternal and make an eternal difference.

And yet we concentrate on the mundane and the immediate and the things that please us or the things that impress others. And we can look back at the end of a day or even a week or a month and realize that that is an irretrievable piece of time that we have nothing to show for. We wasted

it.

Its purpose was not accomplished. It doesn't matter if we paid the bills. It doesn't matter if we got tasks accomplished.

If there was no faith, if there was no progress in our relationship with God and our function in God's plan and purpose, we might as well have not lived that time. It's a waste. And so here in 517 he says, those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness.

Righteousness is a gift. It's not earned. It's not deserved.

It comes when we trust God. It comes when we operate by his priority. God says it's more important to worry about what you think than what you do.

So I'm not going to care if someone thinks bad of me because I take this course of action or I operate in this particular fashion. I'm going to ignore their opinion because I know that God is pleased by this. This is a part of the divine standard and mandate for this age.

And that's more important to me than what people think. So I'm going to hew to the line and let the chips fall where they may. That is receiving the gift.

That is operating according to divine priorities and ignoring human standards. And it takes some thought. It takes some decisions on our part.

We have to be willing to be misunderstood. We have to be willing to be ill thought of. We have to be willing to be misjudged and not sweat it.

And not sit there and stew and fret and I'm not getting the respect I deserve. And don't people understand that I'm really a wonderful believer and I'm really a fine person and I really do have love and caring and I really do care for the lost and I really do have a heart for the sick and afflicted around about us and so forth. I just wish people could understand that.

I've got to do something to get them to understand that I'm really a better person than they think I am. As soon as we start thinking in that mode, we're running totally 180 degrees out of everything God is telling us through Paul here. We have to be willing to accept the gift and not try to establish or defend our own righteousness.

And you will notice that every time we get on the defensive, we're going to start looking for things to do. We don't ever look for things to think, do we? We don't ever look for a new attitude. We look for how can I impress this person with the fact that I'm really good, I'm really okay, I'm not what they think I am.

And we have to go to actions because that's the standard and the law brings death, operational death in our case. The second point in chapter 5 is that, and both of these points are designed to

sway someone who has grown up on a system of works, who has cut their teeth on a standard of behavior. So on the one hand he says, look, these things come by the result of the work of another.

In this case, Jesus Christ. It doesn't come by what you do. And the second point that he makes in this chapter is, look at the way God's grace works.

God's love and grace delivered us from eternal judgment and death when we were his enemies. We hadn't done a thing. In fact, we had done everything to anger God, to bring on his wrath and his judgment.

We were completely hopeless and helpless and useless and evil without hope and without God in the world. And Christ came and God made salvation possible. He did all of that for us when we were his enemies.

Now that we are believers, now that we have been entered into the fold and we have standing in Jesus Christ, do you think that now you can somehow generate something that's going to please God? It's going to work the very same way. God's love and God's grace are going to deliver us in circumstances and redeem us and justify us and vindicate us. God did all of those things for us when we were in the worst possible shape.

Now that we're his children, he's only going to do more than that by that same love and by that same grace and with the same lack of action and deed on our part. And the key verse for this in chapter 5 is our verses 8 and 9. God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God didn't put a standard on us and say, well, if you'll jump through X, Y, and Z, I'll save you and have us do some actions.

Christ came and died. It was Christ's action that saved us. Much more than having now been justified by his blood, we shall be delivered from wrath through him.

We will be delivered from judgment at the judgment seat of Christ, from discipline in this life and loss of reward in the next. We will be delivered now by the very same Christ, the very same gift of grace, the very same love and grace of God that saved us will declare us righteous and will give us a life that counts eternally in God's plan. You try to get across the beauty of a cathedral or some other landscape and you take a picture of it and you show someone the picture, but it just doesn't do it justice.

When you went and visited the mountains and you saw this vast, beautiful snow-capped mountains and great green valley and so forth, but the picture just doesn't get it across. You need that third dimension. Well, one of the ways that you can do that if you're restricted to two dimensions is to give several different views, to show it from several different angles.

We do this in engineering. When you're trying to draw a part, you show the front and you show

the top and you show the side and you get an orthographic drawing and you keep turning it in different aspects to get a sense of what it's like in three dimensions. Divine truth partakes of dimensions that we don't have access to.

And so a lot of times when God is communicating that truth to us, he'll present it in several different ways. He'll turn it and let us see it from slightly different aspects. And some people take a superficial reading and say, well, this is contradictory.

I turn it this way and it looks round and I turn it this way and it looks like a figure eight, so it's a contradiction, when in fact God is trying to give us the full-orbed perspective on that particular truth. That's what Paul is doing here. All through Romans, what is the point? Stop thinking that what you do is what makes a difference in God's plan.

What you do is going to flow naturally out of what you think. And if what you think is faulty, what you do doesn't count. It's hypocritical, it may look good to people, but God's not pleased.

So we have to focus on what we think. Well, guess what? We're going to find out tonight in chapter 7 that we don't have the power to change what we think. So now here is a great dilemma.

Righteousness depends on what we think. We know that and we don't have the power to change it. We can change what we do.

We can conform, but we can't change the thoughts and intents of our heart. We are corrupt and we don't have control over it. So this presents us with a grand dilemma because in this age especially, the whole point of God's plan is life is thought.

You are what you think. So that was the message in chapter 5 and we just finished chapter 6 recently. The point of chapter 6 is Christ.

Christ is the great crux of the plan of God. So much so that we're going to pause here and take our break and when we come back, we'll finish our review by covering what we have seen in chapter 6 and then we will cover chapter 7. And Lord willing, we will get an answer to the question, how can I change the way I think? We'll pause now here and take our break.