“The Gift That We Need”

10/22/2017

Romans 5:12-19

Please find with me the first chapter of the Book of Romans.

I’d like to begin with a blessing. Ephesians 1:3 *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: …”*

Christians are blessed with every spiritual blessing because we are “in Christ.” And one of those blessings, maybe the greatest, is the blessing of the Gospel.

The name Thomas Hooker will likely only ring a bell with you today if you have studied CT history? Thomas Hooker has been called “The Father of CT.”

He was Pastor. And the most well-known sermon he preached, Rev. Thomas Hooker preached to his congregation in Hartford, CT on May 31, 1638. He preached a sermon from Deuteronomy 1:13 titled “The Foundation of Authority.”

That was May 1638. Then, the following year, just six months later, in 1639, on January 14th, the direct result of that sermon was our CT constitution. You see, Thomas Hooker and the Christians from three CT towns; Windsor, Hartford, and Wethersfield, created a document called “The Fundamental Orders of CT.” Our state, folks, finds its roots in a sermon; in Thomas Hooker’s sermon. On January 14th 1639, we were established as a self-governing state where the people of CT decided who’d lead and govern them.

But here’s the bigger blessing. The Fundamental Orders of CT began with a preamble and eleven orders (laws). And, because this was the first written constitution in our country, these words became the prototype for the Bill of Rights in our U.S. constitution. That’s why, by the way, we’re called “The Constitution State.”

Here are the first few words of that first CT constitution.

“For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God by the wise disposition of his divine providence so to order and dispose of things that we the Inhabitants and Residents of Windsor, Hartford and Wethersfield are now cohabiting and dwelling in and upon the River of Connectecotte

and the lands thereunto adjoining; and well knowing where a people are gathered together the word of God requires that to maintain the peace and union of such a people there should be an orderly and decent Government established according to God,

to order and dispose of the affairs of the people at all seasons as occasion shall require; do therefore associate and conjoin ourselves to be as one Public State or Common-wealth; and do for ourselves and our successors and such as shall be adjoined to us at any time hereafter,

enter into Combination and Confederation together, to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also, the discipline of the Churches, which according to the truth of the said Gospel is now practiced amongst us;

as also in our civil affairs to be guided and governed according to such Laws, Rules, Orders and Decrees as shall be made, ordered, and decreed as followeth: …”

There then follows a list of the eleven orders by which our State lived under in those early days.

Can you see the blessing? The blessing is the original intent of the formation of our state was that we “maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

 Sadly, in our present day, both our state and our nation have strayed a long ways from that January 1639 event. But, really, what we’ve proven is that an America without God, without the Bible, and without the LORD Jesus Christ, the Savior, cannot govern itself. We try. But the evidence is now overwhelming.

We are no longer a state commissioned to and committed “to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

So, what is it that made our state’s constitution such a powerful blessing that it became the prototype to our U.S. constitution? And the answer is the Bible. Rev. Hooker believed the Bible was his final authority; the Blessed Word of God.

Would you find with me Romans 1:17 and see that blessing again. *“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”*

I’ve titled today’s sermon “The Gift That We Need.” Shall we pray?

An interesting event occurred in Peru a number of years ago with a Wycliffe missionary and his wife. They had taken a projector and a copy of the “Jesus Film” to show in a Peruvian village. By the way, the “Jesus Film” has been shown to nearly one billion people in some 200 countries around the world. As they neared the village, a terrorist group called “The Shining Light” intercepted them and wanted to take their vehicle. Along with the vehicle, they took their projector. But, they did not harm the missionaries. So, as they began to cart their belongings away, the missionary suggested they also take their film “The Jesus Film.”

A while later, someone from that terror group contacted the missionary to tell him that he was one of those who attacked them that day. He also said that he and his gang had watched the Jesus Film seven times. Some of the group had come to Christ and now this man was coming to apologize and tell them that he too was now showing the Jesus Film and evangelizing the Peruvians.

[Found on [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org) “Study of Romans 1:17-18” by Greg Herrick in which he quotes Wendy Murray Zoba, “Bill Bright’s Wonderful Plan for the World,” *Christianity Today*, no. 14 (July 1997), 24; as cited in Larson, *Choice Contemporary Stories and Illustrations*, 103].

Someone has appropriately said that Romans 1:17 is explained in the entire book of Romans.

There is only one thing in the world that reveals the righteousness of God. Romans 1:16 *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”*

There are at least two reasons you should never be ashamed of the Gospel.

One, because it’s the power God uses to save someone from their sins and from the condemnation of Hell.

Two, because it uncovers the righteousness of God for us.

Do you see the word “therein”? Here’s what it means, “in that place.” If I said to you that “the insurance coverage we have on our Church building covers both the building and all the contents therein,” you would immediately know that what is inside this building is what is meant. Here Paul uses it to refer to “what’s inside the Gospel.”

Now, what is it that’s inside the Gospel? The Righteousness of God. That’s what’s inside. You should never be ashamed of the Gospel because God’s righteousness is found inside it.

The righteousness of God. So, what is it?

First, God’s righteousness is the condition of being right; every time in every circumstance. Here’s what the Bible teaches about God. Psalm 92:15 *“… there is no unrighteousness in him.”*

Can you recall the title that Jesus called His Father in the prayer He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane? He prayed “O Righteous Father” (John 17:25). This is what the LORD is like.

Righteousness is a central concept to two things: your understanding of God and your understanding of the Gospel. The LORD’s character is righteous. You and I will sometimes do right and other times do wrong. We are capable of doing right and doing wrong. God’s not like that. He’s only capable of doing what is right; or what is fair; or what is just.

He always lines up with His own moral law. To say He’s righteous is to say that He never violates a single law. He is morally right. There’s no sin in God. And so there’s no guilt in God. But it’s more than that. The LORD has a perfectly holy heart. All of His thoughts; all of His words; all of His actions are just and fair. God loves righteousness. Psalm 11:7 says this. *“For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; …”*

And as a righteous Person, He and He alone has the right to judge. And as a righteous Person, He does judge. He must judge you and me and He’s right every single time. So, that’s what righteousness means.

Now, haven’t you found that sometimes when you’ve told someone the Gospel, they give you the impression that they know better than you; that they can stand in judgment of the Gospel? But, they can’t. The only Person Who can judge whether the Gospel is right or wrong is the LORD. The only Person Who can judge whether we are doing something right or wrong is the LORD. You see, if the LORD isn’t righteous, then the Gospel is useless.

Let me give you an illustration. Do you remember the time Abraham tried to dissuade the LORD from judging Sodom and Gomorrah? Turn back to Genesis eighteen and you’ll see how well Abraham understood righteousness. Genesis 18:17 *“And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; (18) Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?*

*(19) For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. (20) And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;*

*(21) I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. (22) And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.*

*(23) And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? (24) Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?*

*(25)**That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (26) And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.”*

Then, when he couldn’t find fifty righteous people in the entire city, Abraham says “How about You not judge the city if there’s 45 righteous people in it? And then how about You not judge the city if there are forty? And then thirty? And then twenty? And God was even willing to hold back His judgment if there were ten righteous people in the city.

And we all know what the LORD had to do to the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? He had to judge them; severely, and with fire and brimstone. Why? Because He’s righteous and the inhabitants of those cities were anything but righteous. Because a righteous God must act justly and fairly with everyone every time. So, not only does God love righteousness. He hates sin.

Psalm 145:17 *“The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”*

First, then God’s righteousness is the condition of being right; every time in every circumstance.

Second, the only way God can save you and me is by giving you His own righteousness.

Folks, the crowning achievement of the effect of the Gospel on the human race is this. When anyone believes the Gospel, at the very moment he believes, he becomes as righteous as God Himself.

Listen closely to what the LORD says in Jeremiah 23:6 *“… and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.”*

He is righteous. And the only way for you and I be saved is for God to make you as righteous as He is. That’s how the Gospel affects us. And the only way for that to happen was by the Father letting His Son become unrighteous.

II Corinthians 5:21 *“For he [the Father] hath made him [the Son] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*

Can you see why the Gospel is the only answer to your sin? Can you see why “therein” refers to the righteousness of God? The LORD Jesus had to become unrighteous so that He could take the punishment *you* deserve for *your* sins. And the moment you repent and believe the Gospel, at that very minute, you aren’t just forgiven for all your sins. You are made the righteousness of God. You became as righteous as God Himself.

And, according to the Bible, Jesus is your righteousness.

In I John 2:1 we read this about Jesus. *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: …”*

So, what is the gift you need? He is the Gift that we need. When you trust in Christ, when you believe the Gospel, Christ, the righteous One makes you righteous.

I Corinthians 1:30 *“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: …”*

At the moment of your salvation, you were made righteous. Everything from Romans 1:18 and forward spells out this one fact. God by the Gospel of His Son makes you righteous. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. He is able to make you something that you could never attain in a million years of trying.

Here’s how Isaiah describes it. Isaiah 61:10 *“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”*

On the day you believed on Jesus, God placed you into a new set of clothes. He put a robe of righteousness on you; something as beautiful as groom all decked out for his wedding and as a bride all decorated in her jewels.

Do you remember what the LORD did for Adam and Eve on the day of their salvation? He clothed them.

 And listen, as Paul describes himself in his new relationship with the LORD. Philippians 3:8 *“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,*

*(9) And be found in him, not having mine own righteous-ness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: …”*

Who would imagine, but God Himself that a sinner condemned and totally lost in spiritual darkness could find such a wonderful reality!

Finally, Romans 3:21 *“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (22) Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; …”*

It’s been some time now. But a long time ago (that’s back in the eighties), we had a very large family and so we had a very large car, a station wagon, a Ford LTD Crown Victoria station wagon. I’m sure the reason someone sold it to us is because we got maybe seven miles to the gallon with it in those days.

Janet and I and our five children took a trip to Canada to see her family, which we did every year for some twenty years. And we had just got this beautiful Ford LTD station wagon. So, we’d gone to the DMV and got new license plates for it.

But, something surprising occurred on our way back home. As we crossed back into the United States from Canada, we were stopped at the Border and Customs Office. We were not allowed to enter the United States. Why? Because, as it turned out, our new license plate had, at one time, been the exact same plate number as a stolen car. And the Border Police, for a long while, were convinced we had stolen the car; Grand Theft Auto.

Now, let’s suppose you’ve been accused of Grand Theft Auto and are now standing before a Judge in the Superior Court here in CT. And what kind of Judge is this Judge? He’s a righteous judge. He’s a judge who’s right. And you are in the wrong. He’s got a righteous character. You’ve got an unrighteous character. You’ve broken the law.

And, imagine this. The judge must judge you because you’ve broken the law. He must render a judgment upon you. Yet, he wants to be merciful towards you. So, instead of putting you in jail, he decides to hand you a very stiff fine. Then he, says “You are free to go.” And, by his grace, not only pays your fine. He also, declares you completely righteous.

That’s a picture of what the Gospel does.

So, you see, the gift you need is the gift of righteousness.

And the only escape you have from your sinful condition is to have God’s righteousness applied to you. That’s what Paul means when he says that the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. Practically speaking, there is no escape from your condition as a sinner. There is nothing you can do to stop being unrighteous.

And that’s where the Gospel becomes the only answer for your unrighteous life style.

You see, the salvation God provides is *His* paying a debt you earned; but could never pay off. Jesus Christ came into this world so pay your sin debt. And then, by His death, you can become the recipient of His righteousness.

So, how have you responded to that love? Have you believed on Christ? If not, why not?

Romans 1:16 *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.”*

You’ve broken every one of God’s Ten Commandments and you are in dire need of a free gift. I am offering that free gift to you today. If you will repent of your sin and believe on Jesus Christ today, you will be rescued; and rescued for eternity.

You see, the only place where God’s righteousness is revealed is in the Gospel.

So, today is the day of salvation. You need to deal with yourself, your sins, and the Savior today. What do you need to do? You need to Repent and to Believe.

* To Repent = I change my mind about God, Christ, my sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe = I simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for my sins.

Here’s the Salvation Prayer*. “LORD, I admit that I am a sinner and deserve judgment for my sins. I believe Jesus died in my place on the Cross to remove that judgment. Please save me today. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”*

Shall we pray?

Now let’s sing Hymn # 343 “Amazing Grace”

Here’s a simple outline of the entire letter.

Outline of the Book of Romans. [Dr. Robert Mounce]

1. Introduction Romans 1:l-17
2. The unrighteousness of all humankind Ro. 1:18 - 3:20
3. The righteousness only God can provide 3:21 - 5:21
4. The righteousness in which we are to grow 6:1- 8:39
5. God's righteousness vindicated Romans 9:1 -11:36)
6. How righteousness manifests itself 12:1 - 15:13

Conclusion Romans 15: l4 - 16:27

More testimonies

Professor Karl Barth (1886-1968), Swiss Professor who had been raised in the liberal theological seminaries in Germany, wrote this about the Book of Romans. *“Let God Be God.”* He was learning what the Book of Romans was all about *“that God, the living God, had come to deliver perplexed, self-contradictory men like himself from their sins through the power of Jesus Christ.”* [Found on [www.jermiah.org](http://www.jermiah.org) “An Introduction To The Theology of Karl Barth”]. Karl Barth had a huge influence on a man named Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Outline of Romans

Here’s a quick look at this first chapter.

1. Paul’s greeting to the Romans 1:1-7
2. Paul’s prayer for the Romans 1:8-12
3. Paul’s commitment to come to Rome 1:13-15
4. And Paul’s focus; the Gospel of Christ 1:16-17