

Main Idea: The gospel of Jesus Christ truly is a *world* changing message. And the text that God used to transform Martin Luther, Romans 1:16-17, indicates we must do three things with this message.

- I. Understand the gospel--It's God's News (16a).
  - A. Our hope is in Scripture alone (not human opinion).
  - B. Our hope is in grace alone (not human merit).
  - C. Our hope is in Christ alone (not human contribution).
  - D. Our hope is in faith alone (not human effort).
  - E. Our hope is in the Spirit alone (not human production).
- II. Unleash the gospel--It's God's Power (16b).
  - A. The gospel involves power.
  - B. The gospel involves a purpose.
  - C. The gospel involves people.
    1. Saving faith is marked by belief in a specific person.
    2. Saving faith is marked by belief in a specific event.
    3. Saving faith is marked by belief which results in a specific response.
  - D. The gospel involves a plan.
- III. Unveil the gospel--It's God's Revelation (17).
  - A. It is a message about Righteousness.
  - B. It is a message about Faith.

The Bottom Line: Let's make sure the text that changed the world changes us.

Today is Reformation Sunday. It's called that because of an event that happened some 500 years ago that changed the world. The Sovereign Lord did a work to revitalize, to *reform* His Church.

During the centuries that preceded, the Church of Jesus Christ had gradually become dark with an institutionalized form of godliness promoted by the Roman Catholic pope and hierarchy. God, however, chose to use a Catholic monk as His initial instrument to launch the reformation.

John Piper has written a helpful eBook entitled, *Martin Luther: Lessons from His Life and Labor*, and I'd like to invite Piper to share with us this morning about Luther, his conversion experience, and the text that God used to bring it all about.

Martin Luther was born November 10, 1483 in Eisleben to a copper miner. His father had wanted him to enter the legal profession. And he was on the way to that vocation at the University...

In 1502 at the age of 19 he received his Bachelors degree, ranking, unimpressively, 30th of 57 in his class. In January, 1505 he received his Master of Arts at Erfurt and ranked second among 17 candidates. That summer the providential Damascus-like experience happened. On July 2, on the way home from law school, he was caught in a thunderstorm and hurled to the ground by lightning. He cried out, "Help me, St. Anne; I will become a monk!" He feared for his soul and did not know how to find safety in the gospel. So he took the next best thing, the monastery.

Fifteen days later, to his father's dismay, he kept his vow. On July 17, 1505 he knocked at the gate of the Augustinian Hermits in Erfurt and asked the prior to accept him into the order. Later he said this choice was a flagrant sin — "not worth a farthing" because it was made against his father and out of fear. Then he added, "But how much good the merciful Lord has allowed to come of it!" We see this kind of merciful providence over and over again in the history of the church, and it should protect us from the paralyzing effects of bad decisions in our past. God is

---

\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

not hindered in his sovereign designs from leading us, as he did Luther, out of blunders into fruitful lives of joy.

He was 21 years old when he became an Augustinian Monk. It would be 20 more years until he married Katharina von Bora on June 13, 1525. So there were 20 more years of wrestling with the temptations of a single man who had very powerful drives. But "in the monastery," he said, "I did not think about women, money, or possessions; instead my heart trembled and fidgeted about whether God would bestow his grace on me. . . For I had strayed from faith and could not but imagine that I had angered God, whom I in turn had to appease by doing good works." . . . "If I could believe that God was not angry with me, I would stand on my head for joy."

On Easter, April 3 (probably), 1507 he was ordained to the priesthood, and on May 2 he celebrated his first mass. He was so overwhelmed at the thought of God's majesty, he says, that he almost ran away. The prior persuaded him to continue. . .

For two years Luther taught aspects of philosophy to the younger monks. He said later that teaching philosophy was like waiting for the real thing. In 1509 the real thing came and his beloved superior and counselor and friend, Johannes von Staupitz, admitted Luther to the Bible, that is, he allowed Luther to teach Bible instead of moral philosophy — Paul instead of Aristotle. Three years later on October 19, 1512, at the age of 28 Luther received his Doctor's degree in theology, and Staupitz turned over to him the chair in Biblical Theology at the University of Wittenberg which Luther held the rest of his life.<sup>1</sup>

There's the backdrop. Now let's move to Luther's conversion experience. Piper continues:

Luther dates the great discovery of the gospel in 1518 during his series of lectures on Psalms. He tells the story in his Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings. This account of the discovery is taken from that Preface written March 5, 1545, the year before his death.

I had indeed been captivated with an extraordinary ardor for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. But up till then it was ... a single word in Chapter 1 [: 17], "In it the righteousness of God is revealed," that had stood in my way. For I hated that word 'righteousness of God,' which according to the use and custom of all the teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they called it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner.

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the Decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteous wrath!" Thus I raged with a fierce and

---

<sup>1</sup> John Piper. Martin Luther: Lessons from His Life and Labor (Kindle Locations. Desiring God Foundation.

trouble conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." There I began to understand [that] the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which [the] merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. Here a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me...

And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word 'righteousness of God.' Thus that place in Paul was for me truth the gate to paradise.<sup>2</sup>

And so, with the transformation of a Roman Catholic monk, God began the reformation of His church, which quickly spread throughout Luther's Germany, to Calvin's Switzerland and France, and beyond, eventually to the world.

What text did the Lord use to set this reformation in motion? I want us to marvel at it this morning, the place that Luther said was "the gate to paradise," Romans 1:16-17.

Brothers and sisters, sometimes we forget what we have. We have a life-changing message. Actually, it's more than life-changing. It truly is a *world* changing message. And the text that God used to transform Martin Luther indicates we must do three things with this message.

The gospel is, by definition, good news. *Godspel*. That's the old English word. It means "Good Story."

Just what is this "good story"? Many don't know. Indeed, many who think they know, even church goers, don't really know. What's more, many who DO know what the good story is are failing to respond appropriately to this knowledge. So, if we know it, what should we do with the good news of the gospel? What MUST we do with it?

Paul answer these questions for us in Romans 1:16-17. In Romans 1:16-17, the apostles, by personal example, challenges us to do three things with the good news.

- I. Understand the gospel--It's God's News (16a).
- II. Unleash the gospel--It's God's Power (16b).
- III. Unveil the gospel--It's God's Revelation (17).

#### I. Understand the gospel--It's God's News (16a).

Verse 16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..."

When Paul wrote those words, he was in Corinth. He had a three month wait for a trip to Jerusalem to take a love gift to the church there. He had never been to Rome, and did not know many of the Christians there. In verses 1-7, he shared what made him tick, that being the person of Jesus Christ. In verses 8-15, he shared his obligation to the gospel, the message of Christ that he had been preaching now for over 20 years.<sup>3</sup> And though he was almost 60 years of age, he makes it clear in this letter that he wasn't done yet.

In verses 16-17, Paul introduced the theme of his letter. This book we call "Romans" is all about the gospel, the good news. It's a treatise about the righteousness of

---

<sup>2</sup> John Piper. Martin Luther: Lessons from His Life and Labor (Kindle Locations 188-193). Desiring God Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> He was converted around 35 AD and wrote Romans around 57 AD.

God, who needs it, and what God did to provide it. How can sinful people like us be made right with a holy God? That was the question that plagued Luther, and Paul devoted the first 11 chapters to answer that question. And once reconciled to God, what difference should the righteousness of God make in practical living? Paul explained that in the final 4 chapters of the book.

Here's the first thing we must do with the good news. We must understand it. We must understand that it's something *God* did, which is why I'm calling it *God's* news.

It was God's good news changed Paul's life. Ponder his testimony carefully, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." If you know anything about Paul, you know that he was bold, confident, and courageous, not in himself, but in the gospel.

Think of the background of this statement. It came from the pen of a man who once was lashed and thrown into prison in Philippi. Why? For the gospel. He had also been chased out of Thessalonica. And why? Again, for the gospel. Later he was smuggled out of Berea, for the gospel. He was laughed at in Athens, for the gospel. He was pummeled with rocks in Lystra, for the gospel. The Greeks in Corinth said he was a fool, because he believed in the gospel. The Jews hated him everywhere he went, due to the gospel.

Yet what does he say here? "I am not ashamed of the gospel." Or stated positively, "I am proud of the gospel. I am confident in the gospel."

Those are staggering words, for by all rights, the gospel is an offensive message. The gospel says you are not a good person, like you're inclined to think, but a sinner, a helpless, God-offending sinner. And the gospel says that you can't do anything about it, for your good deeds are like filthy rags to God. And the gospel says that God did something for the world, namely, He sent His Son who is the only way to be reconciled back to God. Not one option among many, but the only option.

That's an offensive message. So when Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel," he is contrasting our natural tendency. Naturally speaking, we will be tempted to be ashamed of the gospel. We'll be inclined to clam up, to be fearful, to be intimidated by people, to hide the gospel, because it's offensive.

How do I know that? I know it because of something Paul wrote to his friend Timothy. Timothy was a lot like us. He was timid. Paul gave him this counsel in 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 11-12, "Stir up the gift of God...For God has not given us the spirit of fear...Don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord...Be a partaker of the afflictions of the GOSPEL according to the power of God...Unto which I am appointed a preacher...For which cause I also suffer...Nevertheless, I am not ashamed."

There's that same statement, "I am not ashamed." Let me say it again. Humanly speaking, we have cause to be ashamed. The gospel is offensive. To people who don't know Christ, the gospel irritates. And when people are irritated, they often lash out and attack. They lash out at the bearer of the good news. That means, if we are serious about spreading the good story, we can expect opposition. Suffering is inevitable. Intimidation is real.

Perhaps you're wondering, "How can I get rid of the fear? How can I be like Paul, and not be ashamed of the gospel?" The answer starts right here. We must *understand the gospel*. How will that help? Here's how. When we understand just how good this news is, it overcomes our fear. It puts fire in our soul.

So let's think for a moment about this gospel message, this hope we profess. What is it exactly? Our hope is in five things, five *solas* of the reformation, which implies also that our hope is *not* in five things.

**A. Our hope is in Scripture alone (not human opinion).** What authority does Paul cite again and again in Romans and in his other letters? Not his opinion, but the Scriptures. In verse 17 he cites from Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by faith."

And where did Luther discover the message that enabled him to stand against pope, counsel, and the established Church itself? It likewise came from the Scriptures, the Word of God.

In 1519 Luther nailed 95 objections (theses) to the church door in Wittenburg. On the basis of what the Bible says, he was opposing unbiblical church practices regarding the sale of indulgences. Piper explains what happened: "One of Luther's arch-opponents in the Roman Church, Sylvester Prierias, wrote in response to Luther's 95 theses: "He who does not accept the doctrine of the Church of Rome and pontiff of Rome as an infallible rule of faith, from which the Holy Scriptures, too, draw their strength and authority, is a heretic". In other words, the Church and the pope are the authoritative deposit of salvation and the Word of God; and the Book is derivative and secondary."<sup>4</sup>

To that Luther (and the rest of the reformers with him) said, *No! Our hope is in Scripture alone, not human opinion.*

**B. Our hope is in grace alone (not human merit).** Grace. Paul uses that term 21 times in Romans. God's unmerited favor and help. Paul talks about grace a lot because we don't initiate salvation. God does. And we don't finish salvation. God does. We don't meet God half-way. God calls us. God keeps us. God finishes what He starts with us, on the basis of His *grace*, His unmerited favor.

So the message we preach, the hope we offer people is theirs on the basis of grace alone, not human merit.

**C. Our hope is in Christ alone (not human contribution).** It's ironic that this very morning in various "churches" across our land, people will sing hymns that proclaim salvation by grace, yet hear sermons that present salvation by works. They'll sing the words of Isaac Watts, "When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride." And then they'll hear a man of the cloth tell them, "God loves you. Do your best, and some day you'll go to heaven."

My friend, God says "our best" is like filthy rags to Him (Isa. 64:6)! It's Christ alone who can rescue us. That's the note on which Paul begins this letter (1:3-4), "Grace and peace to you from...the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age..."

That's why the gospel cuts across all barriers (as Paul explains in Galatians 3:26-29). Race doesn't matter, nor economic status, nor gender. All people fall short of God's standard. And all people may and must come to God the same way, *through Christ alone*. There's a fourth characteristic of this message we hold forth...

**D. Our hope is in faith alone (not human effort).** Here's how we tap into God's gracious provision of salvation. *Sola fide*. Again, this is the message that set Martin Luther free.

When he was a monk, more than anything he wanted to be right with God. He spent sleepless nights in prayer and fasting. He confessed his sins everyday because he was told this would insure a right standing with God. One day, his monastic superior, Father Johann Staupitz told Luther to leave the confessional and not return until he had something really

---

<sup>4</sup> John Piper. Martin Luther: Lessons from His Life and Labor (Kindle Locations 14-18). Desiring God Foundation.

sinful to confess! But all Luther desired was to get rid of his horrible burden of guilt and shame. As he put it, "I...was perpetually in torment."

Luther knew that God demands righteousness from us. But try as he might, he couldn't achieve it, nor can we. We can't attain God's standard. For Luther, the light dawned one day when reading Romans 1:16-17, "I am not ashamed of the *gospel*, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who *believes*...For in the *gospel* a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is through *faith*..."

That's it! The solution is the gospel, and we benefit from the gospel *by faith alone*. We are rescued *sola fide*. In reality, it's not faith that saves us. Faith just plugs us into Christ who saves us (Eph. 2:8-9).

It's no wonder that Paul uses the word "faith" 42 times in Romans.

Romans 1:5 "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith."

Romans 1:8 "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world."

Romans 3:22 "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."

Romans 3:28 "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law."

So it's faith alone. We are made right with God (that's justification, the theme of Romans 1-5) based on what *Christ* did for us, not what we did (or didn't do) for God. There's a fifth key characteristic of this message.

**E. Our hope is in the Spirit alone (not human production).** One of the groups that most opposed Paul was the Judaizers. But they didn't *oppose* Christianity so much as try to *supplement* it. How? By adding some laws to the message of grace. Their message, simply stated, was Jesus *plus* obedience to the Law, Jesus *plus* human production.

The Judaizers haven't gone away.

Now is there anything wrong with adding to Jesus? Listen to Paul in Galatians 3:3 "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" The fact is, we become a Christian by depending on Christ alone. We live the Christian life the same way, by depending on the person Christ sent, the Holy Spirit.

It's the Spirit alone that enables us to please God in this life. Paul has much to say about the Holy Spirit in the letter of Romans, especially in chapter 8.

For example, consider Romans 8:11, "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

What's true of the message we preach, of which Paul said, "I am not ashamed"? A life that pleases God is made possible by the Spirit alone, not human production. This is our message.

And what must we do with this message? First, we must understand it, what it is, and what it *isn't*. Point one, understand the gospel, for it's God's news. That brings us to a second responsibility.

## II. Unleash the gospel--It's God's Power (16b).

Verse 16 functions like a pull-out telescope. There are four sections, and as we pull them out one at a time, we discover four aspects of the gospel.

**A. The gospel involves power.** "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ because it is the power of God." There's the first section of the telescope. The gospel is

God's power. The Greek word is "dunamis" from which we get our words "dynamic," and "dynamo" and even "dynamite."

The gospel involves power, inherent power. Specifically, it *is* the power of God. It can do what nothing else can do, even though it's offensive and unpopular, and even though it produces initial rejection. All we must do is to unleash it. More about that in a moment.

But why has God invested His power in this gospel? Here's why...

**B. The gospel involves a purpose.** Here's the second section. "For it is the power of God, *for the salvation.*" Stop there. The gospel saves. That's its purpose.

Of course, this salvation is necessary because people are lost. From the first man, Adam, to each one of us, the problem is the same. We are paralyzed by and under the curse of sin. Our sins have separated us from our God. Our iniquities are like a great burden draped across our shoulders. We need help. We need *salvation*.

Thankfully, by nature, God is a saving God. He saves helpless human beings through the gospel. It is the power of God unto salvation. As the hymnwriter put it, "We have heard the joyful sound, Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Spread the tidings all around, Jesus saves! Jesus saves!"

So the gospel involves power and a purpose. Thirdly...

**C. The gospel involves people.** Section three, "For it is the power of God for the salvation of *everyone who believes.*" Who does the gospel save? Everyone? No, not everyone. There's a qualifier mentioned. Everyone who believes.

Believes what? That's a critical question. It's not a generic, abstract belief/faith that Paul has in mind here. Faith is only as good as its object. When someone says to you, "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe something," remind them that the Bible is very specific about this, about the *content* of saving faith.

What must a person believe in order to be saved? He must believe *the gospel*, the objective news of what God has done. And just what has God done? That's what Paul tells us in pointed terms in Romans 1-11.

As we scan Romans, we learn that saving faith is marked by three specifics.

#### *1. Belief in a Specific Person*

4:3 "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."

4:5 "But to him that works not, but believes ON HIM that justifies the ungodly..."

Saving faith is faith in a specific person, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 16:31 says, "Believe ON the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."

#### *2. Belief in a Specific Event*

What event? Romans 3:22-24 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus..."

So genuine faith is belief in the specific event of redemption. And redemption is rooted in the historical accomplishments of Jesus, namely His perfect life, His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead..

#### *3. Belief which results in a Specific Response*

What response? Romans 10:9-10 tells us, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

So if faith is genuine, if it is *saving* faith, there will be a tangible evidence that involves a person's mouth. What will a person with saving faith do with their mouth? They will *confess Christ as Lord*.

But it's not just empty lip-service. Something will happen in the heart, too. What's that? To be saved, you must *believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead*.

So this is no flipant response. It's no mere intellectual assent. It involves the volition, a life-changing decision of the will. Romans 9:33 says, "Whosoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed." (also 10:11)

So saving faith is very specific. It involves a specific person (Jesus Christ), a specific event (the death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ), and a specific response (repentance and belief in the person and work of Christ).

So there's our telescope, so far. The gospel involves **power** (it can change your life today). The gospel involves a **purpose** (it saves; which implies we need to be saved; which implies prior to being saved we are *lost*). And the gospel involves **people** (people who exhibit a very specific faith).

Let me ask you something personal. Have *you* exercised that kind of faith? Speaking from the heart, I must say this. You are fine people. Some of you are very reputable, upstanding citizens. But what I have just described may be foreign to you. Perhaps you have never exercised this kind of faith. If you want to be saved, you must, and I invite you to do so today.

**D. The gospel involves a plan.** This brings us to the fourth section of the telescope. Notice the end of verse 16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: *first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*"

To Paul, there were two categories of people in the world. Jews (of which he was one), and non-Jews (Greeks). The Jews are God's chosen people. What does that mean? That they're all saved. No. It means that God chose a man named Abraham and made an eternal covenant with him and his seed. He blessed Abraham's grandson, Jacob, with 12 sons, which in turn became the nation of Israel. His plan was to use this chosen nation to bring hope to the world through sending the Messiah.

So when Paul evangelized, he followed this pattern, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. Where did he nearly always go first when he entered a city? To the synagogue. The gospel was to the Jew first. Notice the priority of the Jews (2:9-10).

In God's sovereign plan, He has given the Jews a special position, a special priority. In what sense are they privileged in God's redemptive plan? In three ways.<sup>5</sup> First, they are God's chosen people (11:1). Second, they are custodians of God's revelation (3:2). Third, they are the people through whom the Messiah came (9:5). Jesus Himself emphasized in John 4:22, "Salvation is of the Jews."

And so the gospel went first to the Jews. For the first ten years or so of its existance, the church was essentially Jewish. But not exclusively. Notice the offer is universal. "To the Jew, and ALSO to the Greek." The gospel transcends ethnic barriers.

So here's the point. Since the gospel is God's power, what should we do with it? Don't be ashamed of it, rather, unleash it! Proclaim it, knowing, it will do what the Sovereign Lord intends it to do, namely, save a people for His glory.

We live in a power-hungry age. Wiersbe points out that power was the thing Rome boasted of, too. Of course, Rome had conquered the world, yet inspite of her power, Rome became a weak empire.. Weak morally. The philospher Seneca called the city of Rome a "cesspool of iniquity," and the writer Juvenal called it a "filthy sewer into which the dregs of the empire flood (Wiersbe, 517).

---

<sup>5</sup> Observation by the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

Now do you see why Paul wasn't ashamed of the gospel? He knew he had in his possession the one thing that could truly transform men's lives! So do we, and our responsibility is the same. One, we must understand the gospel--it is God's good news for a helpless world. Two, we must unleash the gospel--it is God's power.

Why are we seeing so few people saved in this community? You say, "Salvation is of God." That's true. Yet if I read my Bible correctly, Paul says the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The gospel is powerful! The gospel saves! There's no problem with the gospel. Maybe, just maybe, the problem is we aren't proclaiming it as we ought.

Let's be honest. Are we sharing this message with our friends and neighbors? Are we telling the people of this community about Christ?

Several years ago I heard Jim Cymbala share this. Years ago, when he first started out as a pastor in Brooklyn, when he saw the millions of people all around him in desperate condition, and when he saw nothing happening, he prayed something like this, "Lord, I can't coast along. Show Your greatness to this needy city, or take my life."

I fear we have lost our sense of focus. Why are we here? It boils down to one sentence. We are here to know Christ, and to make Him known to others.

One more. Understand the gospel. Unleash the gospel.

### III. Unveil the gospel--It's God's Revelation (17).

Verse 17, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed..." Notice that. The gospel is God's revelation. It reveals something. According to verse 17, the gospel is a message about two key themes.

**A. It is a message about Righteousness.** "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed..." Wiersbe suggests that verse 17 is the key verse of the entire letter. In it Paul announces the theme: "the righteousness of God." The theme of righteousness appears over 60 times in the letter.

The righteousness of God is what terrified Martin Luther. He thought he had to merit it, and then the Spirit of God opened his eyes to this truth. There's an alien righteousness that God makes available to sinners. Alien in the sense that it's foreign to them. Where's it found? In the gospel. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God.

Well how do we experience this alien righteousness? Verse 17 says it's a "righteousness that is by faith." There it is, the second theme...

**B. It is a message about Faith.** Verse 17 says, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by *faith* from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by *faith*.""

Friends, God's righteousness is unachievable by human achievement. Think about that. That statement is like a blow torch that negates all religious systems. Religion says, "There is a God, and I can reach Him by what I do." The Bible says, "There is a God, and He is righteous, and we are not. But He has made a way for us to be right with Him, one way, by faith in what He has done for us in Christ."

So there's the text that changed Martin Luther, that launched the Protestant Reformation, that changed the world, and that the world desperately needs to hear today. There are people all around us who don't really know who Jesus is, and what Jesus did for us. So the challenge before us is this.

*Let's make sure the text that changed the world changes us.* We must understand the gospel—it is God's News. We must unleash the gospel—it is God's power. And we must unveil the gospel—it is God's revelation.