

Rebuilding the Foundations - Romans
Part 4
“Restoring the Righteousness of God”
Romans 1:16-17
Pastor Charles Price

I'm going to read two verses to you this morning from Romans Chapter 1. If you've been here in recent weeks, you will know that we have begun to look into this letter, which Paul wrote, and which contains the most systematic explanation of what the Christian message really is. I want to come to a key element this morning verses 16 and 17. This is what he writes in Romans 1:16-17:

“I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes first for the Jew and then for the Gentile. 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.”

There was once a guy with a t-shirt that had four letters on it: B A I K. Somebody stopped him and said, “What does that mean?” He said, “It stands for ‘Boy, Am I Confused.’” The other guy said, “We don't spell confused with a K.” He said, “Well, that shows you how confused I am.” But you see, there's a lot of confusion about something I want to talk to you about this morning, and that is: ‘What is the primary purpose for being a Christian?’ If we understand this, everything else about the Christian life will make sense, and everything else about the Christian life will function the way it's supposed to function. But the problem is, many of us, it seems to me, haven't grasped this primary purpose of the Christian message.

Let me read you again from Romans 1:16. Paul says, “I'm not ashamed of the gospel.” And here's why: “It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” This gospel, he says, is the power for salvation. But what exactly is the nature of that salvation? Well, in Romans 1:17, he says, “For in the Gospel...” Now let me pause there. Supposing if you have got a bible this morning you'd close it at this point, or just look up at me. Or if you haven't got a Bible, how would you finish that sentence? Paul says “This Gospel, I'm not ashamed of it, it's the power of God, for in the Gospel...” There are certain things that happen. How would you fill in that sentence? Well I don't know. You might say, “For in the gospel, a means of forgiven has been proclaimed.” And you know something? You'd be wrong. You might say, “For in the gospel, a means of getting to heaven has been made available.” And you know something? You'd be wrong. You might say, “The gospel is a means of finding power to live is available to us,” but you'd be wrong. That isn't what this sentence says. It says, “For in the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith.”

According to the Book of Romans, salvation — and that's the word Paul uses there —salvation, is not primarily a salvation from hell to heaven. It is not primarily a salvation from guilt to innocence. It is not primarily a salvation from death to life. It is primarily a salvation from unrighteousness to righteousness. Now, of course we need to be forgiven, so that's part of it. As a consequence, we go to heaven, so that's part of it. As a means, we receive life, so that's part of it. But the actual substance of the gospel is that the righteousness of God is restored into human experience.

Now let me explain that this morning. Because, the word 'righteous' is probably not a word that we use very frequently, and it needs definition. It is a common word, in this letter to the Romans, in fact Paul uses the word 'righteous' or 'righteousness' 44 times. Now, when you're writing a short book like this and a word that is not an everyday word keeps cropping up, you get the idea, "This is probably what the book is about." And I want to talk about it in these three headings:

I want to talk about the expression of righteousness, because in Romans 1:17 "In the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed." Well what is being revealed? What do you mean? What is righteousness? Well in this book of Romans it is defined actually in two ways. First it is defined in relationship to God. This verse, Romans 1:17 says, 'the righteousness from God'. If you look at Romans 3:5 it talks about God's righteousness, something to do with his own character. Romans 3:21 talks about a 'righteousness' from God. Romans 3:22, 'a righteousness' from God. etcetera. So clearly, righteousness has something to do with God in the first instance, but interestingly it also has something to do with people. If you look in Romans 4:22 sometime, Paul talks about Abraham. And Abraham believed God in an impossible situation, and it says, "it was credited to him as righteousness." And then in Romans 4:24, he says 'But this is also for us' to whom God will credit righteousness.

Now, the word 'credit' is what we most frequently use in relation to our bank accounts. We have a credit and debit section. Crediting is adding something to your account. Now, he says that God adds righteousness, whatever it is, to us there. And in Romans 5:17, he speaks of those who receive God's gift of righteousness and reign in life through Jesus Christ. Righteousness has something to do with God, but it is also something that is credited, he says, to human beings. Now righteousness essentially is the moral character of God. It represents who God is and how God behaves. It's his moral character.

Now, although this is true of God, primarily, it was not designed to be something exclusive to God. It was intended also to characterize human behaviour, because we're told in Genesis 1:27 that when God created human beings, he said of them, "Let us make man in our image." Now, of course, the big question is: "What is the nature of the image of God in human beings?" And theologians have debated this continually, but it seems to me fairly straightforward. We can work it out by deduction because there are certain things that are true of God that are not true of human beings who are made in his image.

In other words, there are some incommunicable attributes, we will call them. There are things about God he does not communicate to human beings. For instance, God is omnipotent; that means he is all powerful. Now, human beings are not. A few may strut around as though they are, but they're not. God is omnipresent; this means he's in all places all the time. That is not true of us. God is omniscient; this means he knows everything there is to know. That is not true of us.

I read about an advertisement in a local newspaper one day, which said all 38 volumes of Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica for sale. Reason for sale: Husband knows everything. But actually we don't. God does, but we don't. God is immutable; that means he never changes. We change. We grow older, we get better, we get worse. God is totally the same.

We are not in his image in that sense. God is eternal. That means he has no beginning, has no end; we have a beginning. Now these are the incommunicable attributes of God, which he does not share with human beings.

But then there are his communicable attributes. There are things which are true about God that he does share with human beings, and they're all to do with his moral character. So, for instance, the Bible says, 'God is love,' (John 4:8) and we were intended to be loving. God is just. We are intended to be just and fair, and children from a very early age have a very quick sense of what is fair. We were created to be fair, to be just. We were created to be merciful. God is merciful. We have been created to be that way. God is kind. We were created to be kind. And all these are expressions of his righteousness because righteousness is the moral character of God.

So, when he created Adam in the beginning, his purpose was that Adam would be a physical and visible expression of what God is like in his moral character. If you and I were a fly on the wall in the Garden of Eden and we saw the way Adam treated Eve, we would have seen what God was like.

He would have been kind because God is kind. He would have been gentle because God is gentle. If he saw the way Eve treated Adam, we would have seen what God was like. The way they handled the animals in the garden, the way they patted the dog, stroked the cat, fed the guinea pigs, cleaned out the chickens. We would have seen what God was like. Because to be in his image means you look at the image and you see what the real thing is like. That's what the word image means in this context. Now, the image of God in human experience is the righteousness of God in human experience. However, if that is the way we were created, clearly something has gone wrong. Because if you look around at most people today, you don't see very much of what God is like.

And so, my second point is the 'Suppression of Righteousness.'

If the expression of righteousness is God's moral character, and which were intended to express, then the suppression of righteousness is very evident. As Romans 3:10 says, "There is no one righteous, not even one." There's not one man, one woman, one boy, one girl anywhere, says Paul, who shows you what God is like.

Let me illustrate this, in a way that I hope will help to clarify the point I'm making here. At the beginning of the year 2000, a national newspaper in Britain — over a ten-week period — published ten magazine inserts, which were titled: 'Chronicles of the Future.' The idea of these magazines were they would seek to project what might happen in the 21st century. Each magazine was devoted to each decade of the 21st century, and I kept them. I keep these kind of things.

One of the projections in the third volume which dealt with the twenties was that in the year 2021, there would be the discovery of an extra solar planet that supports living beings. They called it: "Eden in the Ursa Major Constellation." The Ursa Major Constellation, as you may know, is part of what we call the Big Dipper. You can see it in the north sky at night. Well, of course, this is purely their own speculation. But just supposing there was such a planet, and it

was inhabited by intelligent creatures similar perhaps to you and me; you anyway. But they had no idea of what God was like, but they were intelligent enough to realize we didn't just happen behind us, there is the mind and the intention of a creator. And they've become very developed and sophisticated, scientifically, and technologically, and they make huge advances. And one day they discover that across the universe there is a planet, one of several orbiting a star and this particular planet has living creatures on it. We're talking about Earth, of course. And as they further investigate this, they discover that there is a creature on that planet who is created in the image of God. And they get very excited. "We have always wanted to know what God is like," they say. "At last, here's the opportunity of finding out...if we could get to Earth, if we could visit that creature that was created in the image of God. At last, we could begin to know what God was like."

So, I want you to imagine that they developed means of intergalactic travel and they select their best astronauts, and they sent them on a journey to Earth. Now I know, of course, that this is completely unrealistic. The nearest star, and this is the nearest sun, doesn't include planets, is 4.3 light years away from Earth. Light travels at 300,000 kilometres per second. That's about seventy and a quarter times around the world every second. If we could develop space travel that travelled at 1,000,000 miles per hour, which would be pretty incredible, then it would take 2,881 years to go from Earth to our nearest neighbour outside of the Solar System. And 2,881 years is about 90 generations.

Then when they got that, they'd have to come back again. So, it would be a 5,500 round trip. I was talking to an astrophysicist recently who said, 'the idea of travel outside of the Solar System is actually impossible simply because of the huge distances involved and the many thousands of years it would take to get to any nearest habitable planet, if we could find one anywhere.'

But forget that. Just use your imagination now, and that they did this. That there was a planet, and they decided that if these intelligent creatures decided they would visit Earth, they find a few black holes to slide through where time becomes irrelevant, and they arrive here. Just imagine they arrived on Earth, this weekend with one goal: To find out what God is like by discovering what people are like who are created to be in his image.

They arrive this weekend, and they discover that the world right now is obsessed with a tyrant who is feared to be developing the capability of detonating nuclear explosives arbitrarily to kill thousands of innocent people. And they say to themselves, "Is that what God is like?" They turn on the news and they see the continuing intifada in Israel with a never-ending cycle of violence and death and revenge, and they say to themselves, "Is that what God is like?"

I was on an eight-hour flight across the Atlantic yesterday, and I began to read on that journey a book on the fall of Berlin in 1945. It's a recent book that's been published. It talks about the Russian advance from the east through East Prussia, and as they advance through that territory, almost every German woman in the countryside was gang raped by the soldiers. They came across Auschwitz in Poland, then unknown to the wider world, and they discovered where over 1,000,000 Jews died in the gas chambers, and they say, if they look over my shoulder and read that book, "Is that what God is like?"

They came closer to home, and they discover that we are aborting thousands of babies every year simply because they're inconvenient to us, and they say, "Is that what God is like?" And they get back in their spacecraft and they return back across the universe, and when they get home, the whole planet that they have left is waiting for them to return. When their spacecraft lands, every camera is on them and the whole population of their planet is waiting to hear what they have to say. They step out of the spacecraft, and somebody says, "At last you have come home. We've been waiting, waiting for this moment. Tell us what God is like." They probably say, "We're sorry we ever tried to find out. You see God, apparently, is totally selfish, greedy, and destructive. He kills, he lies, he cheats, he reneges on his promises."

May I ask you a question: "Is that what God is like?" You and I were created to reveal and express the character of God, the righteousness of God. And let me tell you what sin is: sin is a failure to portray the truth about God. Sin is telling lies about God, by the way we live, the way we work, the way we behave, the way we talk to each other, because we were created to be a revelation of what God is like. He created Adam to be a physical, visible expression of his own image.

But the tragedy is that there is no one righteous, and instead the way we live portrays falsehoods about God. We slander God by the way we live. Now, you might say to me, "You've picked out the worst examples. We're not all like that." Well, you're right, I picked out the worst examples for effect.

But let me put a challenge to you: if somebody came to you and said, "What is God like?" would you dare say to them, "If you want to find out what God is like? I'll tell you what to do. Just spend the next two weeks with me. Follow me, watch me, listen to me, observe me and then the way I act and the way I react in the way I treat my family and the way I talk to my neighbours, in the way I talk about my neighbours, in the way I spend my money and the way I drive my car. By the end of two weeks, you know exactly what God is like."

Would anybody here dare say that to anybody else? What are you saying? I'll tell you what you're saying: You're saying I'm a sinner. Because sin is our failure to tell the truth about God. And the point for which human beings were created was that the character of God would be expressed through human experience.

But as Paul comes to the conclusion in Romans 3:10, 'there is no one good.' Doesn't matter where you look. There is no one good. "No one righteous, not even one." So, what is a gospel about? When you understand the reason why we were created, the purpose of the gospel becomes logical: it is to get human beings back to being what we were created in the first instance.

And that leads to my third point, the restoration of righteousness. He says, "For in the gospel, a righteousness has revealed. A righteousness that is by faith." That is, the gospel is about restoring the moral character of God into human experience. So, the real evidence: a man, a woman, a boy or girl is a Christian is not found in what they have to say about being a Christian. it's about how they live, how they behave.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who have no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Notice that he says this is in a nutshell what the gospel is about: Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, who was a perfect expression of his Father’s character, became sin for us, became as dirty as we are, for this purpose: that we might become as clean as he is, as righteous as him.

And this is the first priority of the gospel. The gospel is in the first instance, not about going somewhere, though I rejoice in the fact we are going to heaven, if you know Christ, because this life isn’t very long, so you better make sure there’s something longer than that. But in the first instance, it’s about being reconciled to God in order to be what we were created to be in the beginning. You see, if your car was broken down on the side of the road and you called somebody for help, and they came, pulled up behind you, what do you think their first question to you would be? You probably find it a little strange if they said as their first question, “Do you have a garage to put this car in when you get it home tonight?”

Now it’s very useful having a garage to put your car in, but that’s not the point. The point is: the car needs fixing. Once the car’s fixed, you can go home to your garage. But the issue of what you call the man, the reason why you need saving on the roadside, is to get the car fixed, not to tuck it in your garage at home.

That’s why, incidentally, becoming a Christian, going to heaven is a wonderful consequence, it is not the point. Did you know that in all the preaching of Jesus, never once was ‘going to heaven’ the reason for becoming a disciple? Never in the preaching of the Book of Acts — and there are 19 messages in the Book of Acts that are recorded — going to heaven was never once the reason for becoming a Christian. When Paul writes this book of Romans — the most systematic explanation of the gospel — he never even mentions heaven, other than the fact that he says the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, but he never mentions heaven as a place to which we’re going.

We’re going there, don’t misunderstand me, but that’s the product. That’s the consequence. It’s not the issue. The issue is getting the car fixed that’s broken down on the side of the road. And you see, ever since the Garden of Eden, the human race has been broken down. Paul says, “I’m not ashamed of this gospel, it’s the power of God,” the power to do what? To fix the car. To restore the righteousness, the image, the character of God that was lost in the Garden of Eden. That’s why in 1 Thessalonians 5:10, Paul says there that, “Christ died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live together with him.”

And when he says, “Whether we’re awake or asleep,” he doesn’t mean whether in bed or out of bed, but he means that whether we are alive, that is being awake or asleep, that is being dead because in the same letter, he talks about those who sleep in the Lord. So, he’s talking about being dead there. He says, now that Christ has died for us, whether they’re awake or asleep is irrelevant. Whether they’re alive or dead is irrelevant. Whether you’re on Earth or in heaven is irrelevant. He died for us, that we might live together with him, beginning here and now and then moving on, of course, into eternity in the future.

But sometimes our understanding is that Christ died for us so that when we're asleep, we can live together with him. And the result of that is, we have a Christianity in the meantime that becomes a bit of a drag. Because we want to go to heaven, so we've got to keep the rules and it's nothing more exciting than that. Whereas realizing the whole point is being reconciled to God, God — by his Holy Spirit — comes to indwell us and live within us, and we build that relationship with him, whether awake or asleep, on Earth or in heaven, we're living together with him, in union with him and his character — his image — is being restored into our lives and into our experience.

Now how does this happen? Well, in Romans 1:17, “For in the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last. As it is written, the righteous will live by faith.” I'm not going to talk specifically about that word faith; we'll do that another day. But in Romans 3:21-22, Paul says there, “but now a righteousness from God apart from law,” that is in not keeping rules that produces this, “has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”

Now, he says, this righteousness, this moral character of God, is restored into the experience of those who believe. Now what do we mean by believe? We can use that word in two ways. We can use that word to speak of something that is intellectual. Yes, I believe this, or I don't believe that. It is purely an intellectual issue. Or the word ‘believe’ can mean something that is experiential. Let me illustrate what I mean. Just suppose I asked you two questions, both questions are about what you believe, but you'll understand when I ask them that they are very different questions.

My first question is: do you believe in the Loch Ness monster? I'm sure you know all about the Loch Ness Monster. That's my first question. Now, my second question is: do you believe in aspirin? Now you recognize those are two entirely different questions. When I say, “Do you believe in the Loch Ness Monster?” What I mean is, “Do you believe that in Loch Ness in Scotland, there's a monster with a long neck and a couple of humps that disappears whenever people go looking for it and only reappears either on the very day you forgot to bring the camera, or when the pubs are closing, and people are making their way home at night, “Oh, I think I saw Nessie out there somewhere.”

Now I ask you that question, “Do you believe in Loch Ness Monster?” and you might say yes, you might say no. If you're Scottish, it's good for tourism. I have to tell you this, two of the pastoral staff in this church believe in the Loch Ness monster. One of them told me, “Because I have seen the video.”

But if I ask you the question, “Do you believe in aspirin?” It's an entirely different question. I don't mean, do you believe down in the local drugstore on the left-hand side, third shelf up from the bottom that some little white and blue packets and inside them are some little round white pills with a number that says 300, and they're called aspirin. I saw one yesterday. Do you believe in them?

I don't mean that at all because I know fine well that you know of the existence of aspirin. So, when I say, "Do you believe in aspirin?" What do I mean? I mean, very simply, if you get a headache, or you need your blood thinning, do you take aspirin? What I mean is, do you let it work? Now, listen, the Loch Ness Monster kind of belief in God is necessary, but it doesn't do anything for you in itself.

I say it's necessary, of course it is, because as the book of Hebrews 11:6, "He that comes to God must believe that he is." That's the starting point. You've got to believe that he is, but that in and of itself isn't going to do anything for you.

In James 2:19 we read, "You believe there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — And they shudder." So, James said, you believe there's one God? Well done! That would qualify you to be a good demon so far, because simply intellectual belief in itself, necessary as it is — in itself won't do anything for you.

You can believe that Jesus Christ is co-equal with his Father God, and co-equal with the Holy Spirit in the Trinity. You can believe that he became a man born as a baby in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. You can believe he lived a perfect life. You can believe he performed the miracles and taught the teaching that he gave. You can believe he was crucified on a Roman cross, that he was buried on the third day. That the tomb was opened, the stone was rolled away, that he was alive again, and ten days later he ascended to his Father. You can believe the whole package and never be a Christian.

You see, I could believe that there's an aircraft leaving Toronto flying down to, let's say, Florida to Orlando this afternoon at 3:00pm and I might feel I need a bit of sunshine. And you believe there's a plane leaving Orlando, leaving Toronto at 3:00pm. You can believe that it might even be true, but just believing it won't get you anywhere. There's no point going home saying, "I believe there's a plane leaving at 3:00pm this afternoon. I believe there's a plane leaving at 3:00pm. I really, really believe there's a plane leaving at 3:00pm."

That won't do you any good because believing something in itself won't do you any good, and actually, believing something in itself won't do you any harm, either. If I was told this glass had arsenic in it, and if I were to drink this glass, I'd be dead in ten minutes, it might be true, and I might believe it, but believing it won't kill me. It's not enough to believe.

But you see, what you believe simply intellectually in itself doesn't do you any good and it won't do any harm either. But it's the aspirin belief. It's the belief that says, "because it is true I do take aspirin every day. I was recommended to do so by my cardiologist. And I believe in aspirin. It works. Keeps me alive."

And when Paul talks about the fact that 'this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe,' he's not meaning that all those who can sign the creed with a clear conscience are Christians.

It's the aspirin belief that says, "Because it is true — because Jesus Christ is who he is and did what he did — I say, Lord Jesus Christ, come and do your work in my life." Because you see the

restoring of the righteousness of God is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit of God. When he comes to work within your life, one of the first evidences is, as Jesus said in Matthew 5:6, you discover a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Now, we're not made perfectly righteous in this life. There are two aspects to this righteousness, and we'll look at these later in Romans, but I will just very briefly mention them this morning, now as I close.

There are two aspects of this righteousness: First, we are declared righteous. Theologians have used the term 'imputation.' We have a righteousness imputed to us. That is, we are declared righteous. We don't deserve it. We are declared righteous by God.

Let me illustrate. I am not yet a Canadian citizen because I haven't been here long enough to even be eligible to apply for that. I am still a British citizen, and so when I come into the country, as I did last night, they kind of asked me awkward questions.

"What are you doing here?" "Well, I'm working at a church." "What kind of church is that?" "The People's Church?" "How long are you going to be there?" "Well, as long as they want me. Till they fire me?" "Well, according to this passport, it says that you are leaving the country on the 31st of August 2003." "Oh, that's right. Of course, yes. Yes, I'm only here till the 31st of August next year, then I am out, unless they extend my visa by then, which they might do because they did last year. I only had one-year last year and they made it two years and they can make it three years and then they give me a permanent one, if they like me, the government that is."

And, you know, I'm sitting there and the people behind me irritated because they want to through the line. In the next line where they have Canadian passports, they just show their passport and go through because that is their status. "This is my state, I'm Canadian, you have no right to keep me out. Thank you very much. Bye"

But they have every right to turn me back if they felt that I was in any way not qualified to be here. Now you see, this imputed righteousness is getting your passport that says, "You're righteous." Yes, you're a citizen of the king. Which is marvellous. We're clothed, we're told, covered with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's a picture which we'll talk about another time.

But then there is the imparted righteousness, the imputed righteousness — that is, you are declared righteous. You know, you're not, but you declared it by God. No condemnation against you anymore. But the imparted righteousness is this growing process whereby, as we are told in 2 Corinthians 3:18, 'from one degree of glory to another we are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory.' That is, we're being restored to the purpose for which we were created. The broken-down car on the side of the road is actually getting fixed. The car was made to go down the road at, 80, 90, 120 kilometres an hour. It's broken down, so we fix it. And the result of being fixed is the car begin to put onto the road again and begin to drive down the road. You can have a garage to keep it in at home, that's fine. But the point is that the car is functioning, and the point is that life is functioning. The point is we've been reconciled to God. The point is that Jesus Christ now, by his Holy Spirit, in us, like taking aspirin, it works. He works.

When my wife became a Christian University of Scotland, she knew nothing about the gospel before she went there, and she met a Christian, went to the Christian group on that university campus, and she became a Christian. And sometime later she heard somebody talk about heaven and hell, and she was scared. She said, "What have I got to do to make sure I go to heaven?" She responded, "You've got to become a Christian?" She said, "Phew, what a relief I'm already one." She said, "Is that also part of Christianity? This is better than I ever thought."

And the reason why Hillary has been such a great Christian from the day she was converted because she came to Christ for one reason: to get the car fixed. Because she was a mess and she knew it, and she said, "Well, Lord Jesus Christ, I understand I can be reconciled to God and God by his Holy Spirit instead of just being up there somewhere can come and live in me. And living in me He can impart to me strength and power, and he can change me." And he did. Then one day she heard about heaven, "What have I got to do to get there?" It's already part of the package. Phew! What a relief. But when I came to Christ, I didn't know this. I came to Christ basically because I didn't want to go to hell, and I wondered why the Christian life was a bit dull. Why it was a chore, until I began to understand the whole point of the Christian life. As I'm reconciled to God that he, by his Holy Spirit, might restore into me what was lost in the fall: the life of God that reproduces the character of God.

Is that why you're a Christian this morning? That's the reason why God saved you. The only reason if you're a Christian, the only reason he saved you was to get you back to what he created you to be in the first place. If you're not a Christian this morning, this is why you need to be one, because to not be a Christian is simply to have a car which is broken down. You can park it on the side of the road. You can paint it any colour you want. You can make it look as good as you like. You can have music blaring out of the stereo. You can do what you like with, but you won't go anywhere, until you get it fixed. You get it fixed by coming in humility and saying, "Lord Jesus, I realize I cannot be what I'm supposed to be apart from you. You died to reconcile me to yourself. You rose again to come and impart to me life and strength and power in order that the righteousness of God is restored into my experience."

No wonder Paul says, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God." But the power of God for what? "For in the gospel a righteousness is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith, that is to those who believe" (Romans 1:17).

If you're not a Christian this morning, you need to become one, and all you need to do is to let God know you're ready. "Please forgive me of all my past, my unrighteousness and come to live in me as my Saviour and Lord."

Let's pray together:

Lord, we're grateful this morning that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't just deal with our symptoms. We're very conscious of our symptoms of our guilt and our failure but thank you it deals with the cause: alienation from God. By reconciling us to you, by indwelling us with your Holy Spirit, and empowering us to live lives, to begin again, to portray something of the truth about God. Make this increasingly real for us, we pray. For we ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.