

## **THREADS: The Gospel and Personal Evangelism**

The Sufficiency of Christ and the Necessity of Faith

Dr. David Platt

July 20, 2008



### **THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST AND THE NECESSITY OF FAITH Romans 3:24**

As you find your seats, if you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Romans 3. We're going to dive this morning into the next two threads of the gospel as we're talking about how God intends for the gospel to be naturally woven into the fabric of our everyday conversations, how evangelism, proclamation of the gospel can be more than just awkward, abrupt, in your face conversations.

Someone gave Caleb a new matchbox car this week, bright orange Home Depot #20 Tony Stewart race car, and we have hardly been able to keep it out of his hands and Friday we were playing around in the den with his cars and his trucks and he had this matchbox car in his hand and he got a little excited and he kind of whirled around and all of a sudden the matchbox car came flying out of his hand and there was no time to respond. Tony Stewart was headed right toward my face and all of a sudden this matchbox car was implanted into my forehead. If you look really closely you can see the number 20 right here.

This is the kind of evangelism we're trying to avoid. When they least expect it, nail them with the gospel. That's not our goal. We're talking about how the gospel, which is a confrontational message, can be communicated day in and day out in our homes, in our neighborhoods, in the places where we work with coworkers, with kids, casual acquaintances.

Last week we looked at the first two threads in the gospel in Romans 1-8, the character of God and the sinfulness of man and I told you there'd be a quiz this week and so I want to see if you remember those threads. We talked first about the character of God and what we said about God was that He is the what? Okay here we go, don't let this be too discouraging a moment for the pastor here alright? God is the just and gracious Creator of all things. All right, and we talked about the sinfulness of man and we said that we are each created by God but we are all corrupted by sin.

So we've seen the character of God and sinfulness of man in Romans 1-8. I want us to dive into the next two threads this morning, particularly in this passage in Romans 3:21-31. It's what we talked about last week, those two threads, the character of God and the sinfulness of man, are really platforms so to speak from Romans 1:18 all the way to Romans 3:20. We spent most of our time looking at verses in those contexts and played out in the rest of Romans. I want us to see what happens right after in Romans 3. It's one of the most remarkable transitions in all the Bible, one of the most important passages in the Bible when it comes to the gospel. Look at verse 21. Paul writes:

*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, 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. There is no difference, 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. God presented him*

*as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

*Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law (Rom. 3:21-31).*

### **THREAD #3: THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST**

#### **Jesus alone is able to remove our sin and reconcile us to God.**

Thread number three, the sufficiency of Christ, and what the gospel teaches us, especially in Romans 1-8 is that Jesus alone is able to remove our sin and reconcile us to God. Jesus alone is able to remove our sin and reconcile us to God. What's really interesting is that from Romans 1:18 to 3:20, you hardly see Jesus mentioned at all. In fact I think He's mentioned once in the middle of chapter 2 in there. You hardly see Jesus mentioned at all. It's the character of God and the sinfulness of man. But then you get to this transition in verse 21. He says, "A righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known...this righteousness from God," verse 22, "Comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."

Now I point that out because this is huge for our understanding of the gospel and personal evangelism. In order to have a proper understanding of who Christ is and what Christ has done, we need a proper understanding of who God is and what man has done. Paul didn't jump right into here's who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. Before he started telling us about who Jesus is and what Jesus had done, he told us about God is and what man has done.

This is huge because we don't see the need for Jesus until we realize that God is the just and gracious Creator of all things and we have rebelled against Him, we are separated from Him, and we are dead without Him. It's not until we realize those truths that we will begin to grasp the significance of who Christ is. This is so important because many people, if not most people, in our culture today struggle with the idea that Jesus is the only way to God and many people would argue the unjustness of that point, saying there are many roads that lead to God and Jesus is not the only way. He is one of a variety of ways. Anyone who says that, even in this room, in the culture, anyone who says that has an unbiblical understanding of God and man.

Because when we realize how holy God is and we realize how sinful man is, we realize that there is a chasm here that cannot be bridged by just anyone or just any way or just any system. The whole picture of God and man points us to Christ and the more we understand God and man the more we will see why, how, who Christ is and what Christ has done is exactly what we need for salvation. Christ has done more than just dying on the cross. The cross is the apex of the sufficiency of Christ but there are more facets to the gospel than just the cross. I want to show you three of those facets.

## **Jesus' Life Displayed the Righteousness of God**

First, Jesus' life in each one of those things separates Jesus apart from every other person. Why He would be the only way, why this thread we're saying He alone is able to remove our sin and reconcile us to God. Number one, because His life displayed the righteousness of God. His life displayed the righteousness of God.

What we need is to be made right with God. Verse 22 says that we have a righteousness from God that comes to us through faith in Jesus Christ. The picture that Scripture gives us of Jesus is a picture of perfect righteousness. He kept the law of God completely. We are lawbreakers. He is a law keeper. That sets Jesus apart from every other person on this planet in all of history. We are all lawbreakers. He is the law keeper.

In fact, go over to Romans 5:18-19. I want you to see how Paul develops this in a contrast between Adam and Jesus. Look at Romans 5:18. He's contrasting here the one man, when he talks about sin he's referring to Adam, the one man when he talks about salvation he's referring to Jesus. Listen to the comparison, 5:18, *"Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men,"* we talked about that last week, because of Adam's sin we are all condemned. We are all dead without God because of Adam's sin. *"So also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men"* (Rom. 5:18). He makes it even clearer in the next verse. *"For just as through the disobedience of the one man,"* through the disobedience of Adam, *"the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man,"* through the obedience of Christ, *"the many will be made righteous"* (Rom. 5:19). The only way we can be made righteous is through the obedience of Christ.

Go over to 8:1. This is when Paul is talking about our victory over sin in this life because of the Spirit of Christ in us, and I want you to listen to what he says in the first four verses of Romans 8. Verse 1, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,"* so everything that's about to be said applies to those who are in Christ Jesus, *"because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,"* listen to verse 4, *"in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit"* (Rom. 8:1-4).

In other words, the righteous requirements of the law can be met in us when the Spirit is in us and you find out later in Romans 8, it's a reference that if anyone has Christ in you then you have the Spirit of Christ in you.

So the picture is the only way we can be made right before God is through an alien obedience, through the obedience of someone else, through the obedience of Christ, and this is where we see, here even in Romans 8:1-4, those two facets of who Christ is that are fundamental to understanding the gospel and you've got it there in your notes.

A reminder here, Jesus is fully man. He is fully man. You saw it in verse 3, *"God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering"* (Rom. 8:3). You go back to the very beginning of Romans. I know we're flipping around a lot but we're trying to get a bird's eye view of Romans 1-8. Go back to Romans 1 and see how Paul from the very beginning of this book started with an introduction of the humanity of Jesus and this is key. It says in verse 1:3, he's talking about Jesus and says, *"...regarding his Son, who as to His human*

*nature was a descendant of David.*" This is huge. Jesus had to be fully man in order to identify with us. He had to be made in our likeness. He is fully human.

At the same time, second, He is fully God. Even here in verse 3, the picture of the Son as a preexistent eternal Son, but then you get to verse 4 and it says, *"And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God"* (Rom. 1:4). That's a title used all through the New Testament to refer to Jesus' humanity and deity. *"By His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 1:4). You just look at the titles that Paul is attributing to Jesus from the very beginning of Romans. He is from the seed of David. He is the Son of God. He is the Messiah, the Christ, and He is Lord.

What we're seeing is humanity and deity all over the place here. He expounds on this even greater, Philippians 2:5-11: *"Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness"* (Phil. 2:5-7). He is fully God, fully man. As such, He fully displays the righteousness of God. No one else in all of history can make that claim. That's huge. If He doesn't fully display the righteousness of God, then His death on the cross has no significance for redeeming our sin. So we've got to see His life.

### **Jesus' Death Satisfied the Wrath of God**

Not just His life though, second, his death. Jesus' death satisfied the wrath of God. This is where you come back to Romans 3:24, some of the most beautiful words in the book of Romans, maybe all of the New Testament. *"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. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood"* (Rom. 3:23-25). That phrase there, "a sacrifice of atonement," some of your translations use a word called "propitiation." Some of you have notes that send you to the bottom of page that says the literal meaning here is God presented Jesus as one who would turn aside His wrath, taking away our sin.

That's the picture of what it means for Jesus to be a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood. Paul goes on to develop this all throughout Romans, references to how the death of Christ takes away our sin. Let me show you a few of them. You might underline them. Chapter 4:25, I want you to see how Paul just brings back over and over in front of us the death of Christ takes away our sin. Romans 4:25 listen to what it says. Paul says, *"[Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins,"* he died for our sins, *"and was raised to life for our justification."* Very next chapter, 5:6 *"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:6-8). And then listen to how he develops that. Verse 9, *"Since we have now been justified by His blood,"* by His death, *"...how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him!"* (Rom. 5:9). Jesus' death satisfies the wrath of God, *"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son,"*—how are you reconciled to God? Through the death of His Son—*"...how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!"* (Rom. 5:10).

We are reconciled to God only through the death of Jesus. You get to chapter 6, you look at verse 3. It says we are baptized into His death. You get to chapter 6:5, he says, *"If [you] have been united with Him like this in His death,"* verse 8, *"We died with Christ."* You get over to chapter 8, verse 32-34, it says the same thing. It's pointing to His death over and over again. The only way to be reconciled to God is through the death of His Son.

Now this is when we need to remind ourselves, we need to reiterate this. We need to reiterate this over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over again. What was it about Jesus' death that makes it possible for everyone in this room to be forgiven of your sins? What was so significant about what happened on that cross that makes it possible for all people in all history to be saved from their sins? Why was that so significant?

I'll remind you that we are not saved from our sins because Jesus was falsely tried, and sentenced to death by Roman persecutors. We are not saved from our sins because they put a crown of thorns into His head. We are not saved from our sins because they beat Him, and mocked Him, and scourged Him, and spit upon Him. We are not saved from our sins because they nailed nails into His arms and feet, and hung Him on a wooden cross. We are not saved from our sins because of all the torture they inflicted on Jesus—all the things we highlight when we think about the cross.

We remind ourselves at this point when we see Jesus in the garden before He goes to the cross and He is sweating blood and He's cowering down and He's praying, "Let this cup pass from me." What is that a reference to? We saw this a couple months ago, Isaiah 51:17 and 22 both talk about the cup of the wrath of God. Jeremiah 25:15—a cup filled with the wrath of God towards sin. Revelation 16:19 talking about a cup filled with the fury of God's wrath—this imagery of cup and the wrath of God.

What saves us from our sins, what Jesus was sweating blood about was not a wooden cross and Roman nails. We know that since Jesus did that, there are thousands of people who have been martyred, killed as followers of Christ, that went to crosses and burned there and they went there singing and they were not more brave than Jesus was.

What He was going to the cross to do was to bear the infinite wrath of a holy righteous anger of God towards sin, hatred of God towards sin. You say, "Anger, hatred?" Yes, if God is righteous and holy and He loves all that is righteous and holy then He hates all that is the opposite and ladies and gentlemen we are the opposite.

You do not say the Father looked down and saw all of the things those soldiers were doing to His Son on the cross and He couldn't bear to look at it, He turned away. He did not turn away because He saw what they were doing to Him. He turned away because He saw your sin and my sin on His Son and He could not bear to look at it. When you think about the cross and that one holy moment and all the righteous holy torment of a wrathful God comes down on sin in one moment and Jesus drinks every drop of that cup and He turns it over and He says, "It is finished." That's what happened at the cross. Jesus satisfied the wrath of God that was due us. He was pierced for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities and it pleased the Lord, pleased the Father to crush Him instead of us (Is. 53:5,10). His death satisfied God's wrath that was due me and you.

### **Jesus' Resurrection Demonstrated the Power of God**

His life displayed the righteousness of God and His death satisfied the wrath of God. Jesus' resurrection demonstrated the power of God. Paul talks about this from the very beginning. "He was declared with power to be the Son of God, by His resurrection from the dead," and he mentions the resurrection of Christ over and over again (Rom. 1:4). We saw it just a moment ago, chapter 4:25. "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." The verses we were just looking at in 6:4, "We were buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Look at 6:9, "We know that since Christ was raised from the dead," praise God, "he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for; but the life he lives, he

*lives to God.*" Chapter 7:4, "...my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God." Chapter 8, look at verse 11, "...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." This is the gospel. The Spirit alive in you is the Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Jesus demonstrated, satisfied the wrath of God in the cross and He demonstrated the power of God in the resurrection.

Ladies and gentlemen, He has done everything that is necessary for our salvation. There is nothing else that needs to be done. There's nothing else that needs to be done. You don't need to be a member of a church for salvation. You don't need to be a good person. You don't need to be a good mom or dad or get this or that or this or that right in your life. Jesus Christ has done everything for your salvation and there is nothing else that needs to be done. He is sufficient. He is wholly completely sufficient.

We come here this morning, we are stained by sin. We're stained by pride, by lust, by all sorts of impure thoughts. We're stained by sexual immorality. We're stained by greed, stained by selfish ambition and vain conceit. We're stained with guilt and shame all across this room and Jesus takes it all. He takes it all, all of your sin, all of your sexual immorality, every impure thought, every sin, every piece of guilt and shame in your life. When you see the cross, see Christ in all of His perfect righteousness taking all of your sin upon Himself and see Him rising victorious over that sin in the resurrection. All praise be to Jesus. He is sufficient. Jesus alone is able to remove our sin and reconcile us to God.

#### **THREAD #4: THE NECESSITY OF FAITH**

##### **We are reconciled to God only through faith in Jesus.**

Thread number four, the necessity of faith. We're reconciled to God only through faith in Jesus. It's one thing to know what we just talked about regarding Jesus. It's an entirely different thing for those truths to be appropriated in our lives for salvation. The demons know those things. How are they appropriated in our lives, how do they become real, a reality in our hearts? Do they transform us?

Paul tells us it's all by faith. You look at Romans 1:17 and this is one of the theme statements of the whole book. Paul says, "...in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last." What does that mean? It means only, altogether, completely by faith. "Just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Rom. 1:17). Paul gives us that picture and then in verse 18 he starts talking about the wrath of God and basically builds the case from 1:18, this is what we talked about last week, all the way to 3:20 that there is nothing we can do to be righteous before God. Nothing we can do. In fact, he closes that whole section out in Romans 3:20 and he says, "...no one will be declared righteous in [God's] sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."

In other words, you try to make yourself right before God, the more you try, the more you'll see you can't do it. The better you are, the worse you see you are because you can't live up to it. There's nothing, nothing, nothing you can do to be right with God. It's what Paul develops from Romans 1:18 to 3:20.

And then we get to this transition point in verse 21 that we've read and I want you to see the word that keeps cropping up over and over and over again. You might even circle it every time we see the word "faith". Verse 21 said, *"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through,"* what? This is the audience participation part of our program—*"comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 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. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through,"* what? *"Faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have,"* what? *"Faith in Jesus"* (Rom. 3:22-26).

Even if you're not following along, just guess faith and you'll have it right, every time there's a pause. Verse 27, *"Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised,"* in other words, the Jews, He's going to judge every Jewish person by what? *"By faith and the uncircumcised,"* every Gentile person, that pretty much takes care of anybody, He's going to judge Gentiles, *"through that same,"* what? *"Faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law"* (Rom. 3:27-31).

Then what he does in chapter 4 and we're not going to read through the whole chapter, but what he does is he reaches back into the Old Testament. He takes Abraham and he brings him into the New Testament and he says Abraham, you look at verse 3, *"What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited him as righteousness.'" That is why he was credited as being righteous before God. It was credited to him as righteousness that he believed, that he had faith, and Paul builds on that all throughout.*

You go down to verse 16, *"Therefore, the promise"—that was given to Abraham—"comes by faith."* So what he does is he builds this whole picture of Abraham being justified by faith, Abraham having righteousness credited to him because he believed God, because he believed the promises of God, because he had faith. But then what's so cool is you get to the end, we've read this a couple times already today, go to verse 22. It's talking about faith and Abraham. He says, *"This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.'" But listen to this. "The words 'it was credited to him' were not written for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead"* (Rom. 4:23-24). The whole picture is believe, have faith, and that's why you get to this triumphant pronouncement in chapter 5:1 that says, *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The picture is faith dominates this. Now we've got to be clear on what faith means here because just like we talked about with the character of God, you mention God in our culture today and you've got all kinds of ideas about who God is. You can't assume anything. I believe the same thing is true with faith. People have all kinds of ideas, even in the Church, have all kinds of ideas about what faith is and there's a faith that leads to salvation and there's a faith that doesn't lead to salvation.

### **Faith Involves Turning...**

So what is the Biblical faith, saving faith that is being talked about here, a faith that leads to salvation? I want to show you two facets of it in Romans. Faith involves first, turning,

turning. What happens in chapter 4 and 5, he develops this picture we are justified by faith alone. Then you get to 6:1 and listen to what he says. He builds this case of being justified by faith and then he says, *"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life"* (Rom. 6:1-4). When you place your faith in Christ, when you trust in Him, that means you turn from sin. You don't live in sin any longer.

So faith is a turning first from our sin. You see this even clearer down in verse 11-14 in chapter 6. He says, *"...count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."* Faith, biblical faith, saving faith, this picture here, faith that leads to salvation, is a turning from our sin.

And not just from our sin, it's a turning from ourselves. This is the whole point of Romans. We can't manufacture righteousness before God. Now we at least mentally assent to that, "Yeah, okay that's what it means to be saved. You come into a relationship with Christ based on the righteousness of Christ." But then somewhere along the way we have bought into this idea that once we are saved, once we are justified before God, that somehow Jesus kind of picks us up and dusts us off and says, "Now go be righteous now, go try to make this thing work," and that's not the gospel and this is the whole point of the gospel.

The gospel is we've not only turned from our sin, we've turned from ourselves and there is absolutely nothing we can do in ourselves. There is a complete inability in you and me to be righteous before God, not just at the point of salvation, but today in our salvation. It's what Paul talks about in Romans 7:14-25 when he says, *"We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do"* (Rom. 7:14-15). And he sees this war going back and forth within him and you get down to verse 24-25 and he says, *"Who will rescue me from this,"* battle, and he says, *"Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*

So what it means to have faith in Jesus, it means to turn from sin. You don't live in sin any longer. Christians, we don't live in sin any longer. We've been set free. Faith is turning from sin and turning from ourselves. We don't try to manufacture the Christian life. We can't do it. That's the whole point. That's why we were saved. We were saved from ourselves. It's turning from but it's also turning toward. If you're going to turn from something you're going to be turning towards something else. So it's a turning from sin and ourselves and it's a trusting.

### **Faith Involves Trusting**

Faith involves trusting. Turning from sin, turning to Him, and He becomes our life, Jesus. We turn from sin and ourselves and we turn to Jesus. This is what it means to have faith in Jesus. He becomes our life. Look at 8:10-11. Listen to how he talks about this transformation that happens and look at the picture of trusting in Jesus Christ. Romans 8:10-11, *"...If Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 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."* When you see the character of God and the sinfulness of man and

the sufficiency of Christ, and you turn from your sin and you trust in the sufficiency of Christ, then He becomes your life.

Paul develops this in depth. Keep going to the right, Romans 10:9, a familiar verse to many of us. Look at Romans 10:9. This is faith that leads to salvation. Romans 10:9, *"...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. As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all,"* third time we've seen the word "Lord" in these few short verses, *"and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord,'"* fourth time, *"will be saved"* (Rom. 10:9-13).

So faith involves a turning and it involves a trusting in Jesus, a trusting in Jesus first of all as Lord, trusting in Jesus as Lord. If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, the dominant title for Jesus in the book of Acts and the book of Romans is Lord, is Lord. He's supreme. He's worthy, worthy of our entire life, worthy of all our submission. He is Lord. You don't find one place in Acts or Romans where it says accept Jesus as your personal savior. So why do we use it in evangelism? The gospel says confess Jesus as Lord, confess Him as Lord, as the one who is worthy of everything in your life. Trusting in Jesus as Lord, and *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be,"* what? "Saved" (Rom. 10:13). We trust in Jesus as Lord and we trust in Jesus as Savior. *"Confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead"* (Rom. 10:9).

Let me show you something really cool. I want you to look with me at the end of chapter 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 and I just want you to see how every single one of these chapters ends by talking about how Jesus is our Savior. We've read some of these verses at different points but I just want you to see the continuity here at the end of every chapter. Chapter 4:25 talking about Jesus, *"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."* That's how we're saved. You get to the end of chapter 5:20-21, it says, *"where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* He saves us and brings us into eternal life. Chapter 6:23, many of you are familiar with, *"The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."* You get to the end of chapter 7. I referenced this just a minute ago. Verse 24-25, *"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* He rescues us. He saves us. End of chapter 8, a verse we've looked at numerous times, *"...convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 8:38-39). We trust in Him as Lord and as Savior. This is faith right here. It all revolves around Jesus' lordship and His ability to save us.

Do you know this kind of faith? I fear that so few people today do. Even few in the church. There's so many of us who have prayed prayers and we've signed cards and we've walked the aisles. We've done all sorts of things but so many have never run to the feet of Christ and fallen on your face before Him absolutely helpless, absolutely hopeless, and cried out, cried out for Him to save you, not just from your sin so you can get out of the line going to hell and get in the line going to heaven, cried out for Him to save you and confess He is the Lord of everything in your life and abandon all things and say, "I need you for every breath I breathe. I need you for every good thing in me. I need to be saved from myself."

What we've done with that point of salvation in faith is we have inserted ourselves into it and say, "Check off this box. You pray this prayer, you repeat these words, you sign this card, you walk this aisle, you do this deal right here and then you're in and then it's set." It's in our desire for us to do something. Show us what we need to do in order to be saved and the point for salvation is we run to the feet of Christ as we realize we haven't anything we can do, nothing. If He doesn't save us we are damned forever. Until we come to that realization how can faith be real?

One of my heroes, George Whitfield, listen to his journal entry, "I began to fast twice a week for 36 hours together. I prayed many times a day and received the sacrament every Lord's Day. I fasted myself almost to death all the 40 days of Lent during which I made it a point of duty never to go less than three times a day to public worship besides seven times a day to my private prayers. Yet," listen to this, "Yet I knew no more that I was to be born a new creature in Christ Jesus than if I had never been born at all." He was fasting twice a week for 36 hours. He almost fasted himself to death for 40 days, seven times a day in private prayers, doing all of these things, and he had never trusted in Jesus for salvation, never come to faith to the end of himself. We are so easily deceived on this.

So I want to ask every child in this room, every teenager in this room, every college student, every husband or wife or mom or dad or single, every senior adult in this room, have you been reconciled to God? Have you been reconciled to God? Not have you prayed the prayer, signed a card, or walked an aisle, or done this. Get rid of the games. Have you been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus? Have you run to Him, fallen before Him, and confessed your all out need for Him, asked Him to be your Savior, confessed Him as the Lord of everything in your life? Have you been reconciled to God through that kind of faith and if not I want to urge you this morning, I want to plead with every child, every teenager, every college student, man and woman, be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus. You don't have to repeat anything after me. You don't have to talk to somebody. You don't have to go somewhere. You can run to Jesus. You can right now in your heart, right now do it now in this holy moment, in this moment confess your longing for Him to save you from your sins. Call out to Him. Cry out for Him to save you. Do it now. Do it now in your heart. Don't wait another moment. This is how we're reconciled to God through faith in Jesus. If you have never done that, if you have never trusted in Him, turn from your sin and yourself and trust in Him as Savior and Lord then I urge you do that, do that right now, right now. I invite you, I urge you to do that.

God we are so easily spiritually deceived. We pray that you would help us to know what it means to have faith in Jesus. Give us this faith God. We know that we cannot even manufacture faith. That is in and of itself a gift from you. God I pray in these moments right now that these would be holy moments for men and women and children all across this room and God we pray that you would hear our cries for salvation, hear our cries for salvation all across this room this morning and God, bring it. By your grace, freely by your grace, bring it through faith in Jesus. God we pray that you'll forgive us for trying to add to that, for thinking there was something we could do to check off a box and make that a reality. God we know that this reality can only happen from you and nothing from our initiative but all from your grace and your mercy in our lives and so we pray that you would save us by faith. We pray that people all across this room today would know for the first time that they are justified through you by faith in Jesus, reconciled to you through faith in Jesus, kids, moms, dads, senior adults, and everywhere in between. Thank you for doing all the work Lord Jesus and making salvation possible. We turn from ourselves and we trust in you. It's in your name we pray, amen.

These two gospel threads, sufficiency of Christ and the necessity of faith, added to the character of God and the sinfulness of man. Now remember the goal here is not just to talk about the gospel. It's to talk about how the gospel infiltrates our conversations on a daily basis, how the gospel permeates our minds and our mouths so that we share this gospel, continually share this gospel.

So these are the practical takeaways. This is where we're ending each week in this series and again the goal is to get your minds going, get you thinking about opportunities with your kids, your coworkers, your colleagues, neighbors, casual acquaintances, people you meet in restaurants, people you meet in the store. How can the gospel transform your conversations all day long, every conversation? If our life is Christ, if our life is consumed by the Spirit of Christ that means, don't miss this, if our life is consumed by the Spirit of Christ, that means every conversation we have is a spiritual conversation. Every conversation is a spiritual conversation. So how can we use our words to point people to the gospel?

### **SEWING GOSPEL THREADS...**

**Jesus alone is able to remove our sin and reconcile us to God.**

#### **Take Advantage of Every Opportunity You Have to Tell His Story**

Let's take these two threads. First, the thread Jesus alone is able to remove our sin and reconcile us to God. I want to encourage you this morning, this week in your life take advantage of every opportunity you have to tell His story, the life of Christ, the death of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ. I would ask you this morning, Christian when was the last time you told somebody about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Think about it. When was the last time you told someone else about the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? If you're straining to remember a time then I want to urge you to pray for an opportunity this week to tell His story and we think people already know that story. They know Mel Gibson's version of the story. They need to know the Bible's version of the story. So make your version the Bible's version and tell it. Tell His story. This is incredible news. Jesus lived and He died and He rose again. Pray, look for opportunities to tell His story.

#### **Talking About Jesus' Life...**

Now talking about Jesus' life, how can Jesus' life be woven in the fabric of everyday conversation? I want to encourage you to look for opportunities to highlight Jesus' example for us, highlight Jesus' example for us. Now I want to be careful here because Jesus is more than an example. There are a lot of people in our lives today, in our world today who look at Jesus as a good moral person, a good moral example. But he is not Lord and he is not Savior. That's not what I'm talking about. We don't talk about Jesus just as a moral person. At the same time He was human. We talked about this. He lived on this earth.

As a result, His life is an example that we can point to all the time. I love when I'm talking to people, whether they're Christians or non-Christians about hardships they're going through in life, to tell them about Jesus calming the wind and the waves, tell them about Jesus walking through a crowd of people, a woman who was hurting coming up and just touching Him and He stops in the middle of this crowd and He turns and gives this one woman His attention. I love telling people when they feel ostracized about Jesus coming up to a woman who was about to be stoned and calling them all away and saying to her, "Go and sin no more."

These are pictures and the more we talk about Christ—I think about times in the Middle East with Muslims talking about the prodigal son and the father who runs after his son. In

Muslim and Hindu India, telling stories about Jesus day in and day out to people who had never heard them before. The more we tell stories about Jesus, the more His beauty and His wonder are set before people and He is beautiful. He draws us to Himself with His beauty and His wonders. So tell stories about Him. Look for opportunities to do that.

Not just that; look for opportunities to acknowledge Jesus' work in us, Jesus' work in us. This goes back to what we were talking about last week. Credit the work of Christ in you, the work of Christ at work all day long in you.

I was with a family this last week and standing next to a husband who was standing over the bedside of his wife who was struggling with cancer and amidst the solemnity of that moment I looked at this husband and said, "I see such great strength in you," and he replies, "Anything that is strong in me now is because of Christ in me." That's gospel. That's gospel.

Talk about the work of Christ in us and look for opportunities to point of Jesus' identification with us. This is Hebrews 4. We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. He knows what it's like. This is the beauty of Jesus' humanity. He has been here. He knows how we feel when someone is weeping in hardship. Point them to John 11. Tell them about a day when Jesus came upon Mary and she was pouring out tears and her tears touched His heart and He wept with her. Jesus weeps with Mary. What an incredible picture that brings great comfort to Christians and non-Christians alike. This is the gospel.

Jesus identified with us when we are tired. He was tired. When we feel rejected, he was rejected. When we're treated unjustly, he was treated unjustly. Look for parallels, Jesus' identification with circumstances we go through and circumstances others are going through and talk about Jesus' identification with us. This is just to get your mind going. Think about His work in you, His example for us, His identification with us.

### **Talking About Jesus' Death...**

Now how do we talk about Jesus' death? I want to encourage you never stop emphasizing the gravity of sin, never stop emphasizing the gravity of sin. Again, I want to reiterate what we talked about last week with the sinfulness of man. Francis Schaffer, I want you to listen. This guy, I don't know if you've ever read Francis Schaffer, an incredibly sharp mind. He was asked the question what would you do Francis Schaffer if you met a modern man on a train and had one hour to talk with him about the gospel? You had one hour to talk with someone about the gospel, what would you do? He replied, "I've said over and over, I would spend 45-50 minutes on the negative to really show him his dilemma, that he is morally dead. Then I'd take 10-15 minutes to preach the gospel. I believe that much of our evangelistic and personal work today is not clear simply because we are too anxious to get to the answer without having a man realize the real cause of his sickness, which is true moral guilt and not just psychological guilt feelings in the presence of God."

It's what we talked about, what we've seen in Romans, the character of God, sinfulness of man open the door to see the sufficiency of Christ. So never stop emphasizing the gravity of sin. It seems negative and people will label you, people label me negative. Talk about wrath of God and righteous hatred of a holy God. People label that as negative. But here's the deal. We minimize sin, we minimize cross. You talk lightly about sin then you say Jesus took on a light load on the cross. You talk heavy about sin then you see the heaviness of the cross. We will never see how lovely the cross is until we see how deadly sin is.

Never stop emphasizing the gravity of sin and never stop talking about, never stop talking about your gratitude for Christ. Let me ask you a question, businessmen, businesswomen.

Do people you work with know that you are thankful for Christ? Do they know you're thankful for Christ? Do they know you're eternally grateful to Christ because of the way you talk about Him? He's your life. He's the one who gave you life, gives you life. With your kids, moms, dads, let your children see you speak with tears about your gratitude for Christ. Let them see you men weeping over your gratitude for Christ, mothers weeping over your thankfulness for forgiveness. Never stop talking about gratitude for Christ. Find ways to tell your neighbors that you need Christ and you're thankful for the cross.

### **Talking About Jesus' Resurrection...**

Talking about Jesus' death and then talking about His resurrection. This is where it gets really good. Speak about difficulties with hope. This is Romans 5:3-5. We won't turn there. *"We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."* We rejoice in suffering because we have hope.

Catch this. When you talk about difficulties, relational difficulties in your life or other's lives, when you talk about marital difficulties, when you talk about struggles with this or that, never talk like there's no hope. Don't talk about marriage, don't talk about relationships, don't talk about circumstances, don't talk about illness like there's no hope. We undercut the gospel when we talk like there's no hope. There's always hope. You say what if this illness is so bad there's no hope in this life? That's the beauty of it. Our hope is not dependent on this life. This is gospel. Our hope is an eternal hope. It's Romans 8. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us. This is the picture. In this hope we were saved. What we were saved to, to hope in eternal life, therefore that changes the way we talk about difficulties. We don't talk about difficulties cynically. We have the hope of Christ in us.

Speak about difficulties with hope and even when it comes to death, here's the beauty, speak about death with joy. Yes, you heard me right. Speak about death with joy. That's weird. The gospel says rejoice in death because Christ has conquered it. Don't worry about death. Don't worry about death. Don't worry about death. You believe that you don't have to worry about death, you live like you don't worry about death, you talk like you don't worry about death, you're an evangelist. You're proclaiming the gospel. You talk about cancer with joy, you talk about pain with joy, you talk about illness with joy, you talk about risking your lives to go to the nations with joy.

I'm not talking about superficial happiness. You always got a smile on your face and everything is just happy go lucky. That's not what I'm saying. There's an inner confidence and joy when the gospel is real in you, you know that with Christ, dying is gain. It's gain and so it's joyful. Speak about death, the joy, the life of Jesus, it changes the way we talk. The gospel must be a part of our everyday conversations in this way.

I want to encourage us, even when we get up the boldness to talk about something religious, we often talk about God but how little, how tragically little we talk about Jesus in the public square. How little we talk about Jesus, use His name and I want to encourage you to use His name, look for opportunities to talk about His name, who He is, and what He has done. There is power in that name. I promise. It's based on Scripture. There's power in that name, Acts 3:4, power in the name.

## **SEWING GOSPEL THREADS...**

## **We are reconciled to God only through faith in Jesus.**

### **Take Advantage of Every Opportunity You Have to Tell Your Story**

Okay this next thread: we are reconciled to God only through faith in Jesus. I'll fly through this. Take advantage of every opportunity you have to tell not just His story, I want to encourage you here to take advantage of every opportunity you have to tell your story. It's what we talked about last summer when we looked at that cross-cultural series. Every follower of Christ in this room has a story that we need to be ready to share at every moment. If you had a minute right now to tell me your story about how Christ has changed your life, could you maximize that minute? Be able to maximize it. If we're going to be good at anything, we need to be good at telling people what Jesus has done in our lives. He saved us from eternal damnation, that's important. So we're ready to tell people about that all the time.

### **Talking About Turning...**

Take advantage of every opportunity you have to tell your story, talking about turning, point to the forgiveness of Christ when people around you see their sin. All of our stories, just think about it, all of our stories of our encounter in Christ revolve around a time when we came face to face, we were confronted with our sin and we saw Jesus as the one who can forgive us, give us life. All of our stories revolve around that. So look for times when people around you, friends, family members, coworkers are coming face to face with their sin, when the Spirit of God, who is at work all around Birmingham, right now at this moment, who is at work all around your office, when He brings people to the acknowledgement of sin.

You think about the time when you came to that acknowledgement and somebody told you, somebody told you at that point, every single one of us, somebody told us that Christ will forgive us of our sin and so when you see someone being confronted by their sin, then for God's sake tell them they can be forgiven through Christ. Tell them and similar to that, point to the presence of Christ when people around you come to the end of themselves. Many of our personal stories revolve around a time when we got to a point where we realized the things we had sought in this world were not enough. They couldn't fill that void in us. We couldn't be satisfied by these things. We came to that point, we came to the end of ourselves, and we turned to Christ. We realized He was there and He would satisfy us, He would reconcile us to God.

So when you see people, and God will bring people into all of our lives across this room, He will bring all of our lives who are coming to the end of themselves through circumstances, situations, things going on in their life, when they come to the end of themselves, don't look at them and say, "Just believe in yourself." Don't say that. That's not gospel. Don't say, "Try harder, it's going to be better." Don't say that. That's not gospel. Don't say, "It's no big deal." Say, "Jesus is with you. He wants to satisfy you." Don't tell them to keep going down the road they're on. This is what so much of pop culture and pop psychology tells them. Try harder, do more, change this, change that. No, turn and let Christ change you. This is the picture: point to the presence of Christ when people around you come to the end of themselves. Let's not promote a self-sufficient, manmade way of fixing our lives. Let's promote a God centered, Christ centered, spirit made transformation of lives.

### **Talk About Trusting...**

Talk about turning, talk about trusting. Encourage people around you to see the lordship of Christ. I want to be careful here. We don't tell people to make Christ the Lord of their lives.

Why don't we tell them that? Because He is, it's not up to them. It's not up to me or you. Christ is Lord of all our lives. We don't tell people make Christ Lord. We point people to His lordship. We don't talk in this world about coincidence. We don't talk about luck. We don't talk about just things happening. We talk about Christ being Lord of every detail in our lives and Christ being in control of what's going on around and when somebody in our lives or when someone else, kid, coworker, neighbor is going through tumultuous times, point them to the lordship of Christ and say, "There's one who's in control and he knows exactly what's going on and He knows the future and He'll walk with you into every step of it." Point people to the lordship of Christ. That way when they trust in Christ they're not surprised to find that they're trusting Him as Lord.

Point to the lordship of Christ and lastly, urge people around you to receive the love of Christ. This is where we remember the gospel is not intended to be shared for information's sake. The gospel is intended to illicit response. I use that word urge there very intentionally. People say, "Well, I can't make someone do what they don't want to do. I'm not going to press the gospel on them." People say, "Well, I can't decide for them and so I'm just going to let them be, not call them to that." This is not the gospel. If we share about the character of God, the sinfulness of man, the sufficiency of Christ, but we do not call people to faith, urge people to trust in Christ, then we have not proclaimed the gospel.

Let me illustrate it this way. If I were to walk into a room and see someone I care, maybe in my family, with a gun to their head, I would not look at them and say, "Well, whatever you want to do. You decide what's best." I can't make the decision for them but I would get down on my knees and urge them, plead with them, don't do this, don't do this. Live. This is what we do when we call people to the gospel. It's not just life in this world that's at stake. It's what we're going to be talking about next week. It's life in eternity that is at stake and so urge people, just like earlier we talked about the necessity of faith. Urge to trust in Christ now. We do this with our relationships with our kids and our coworkers this is the gospel. It's urging people to receive the love of Christ.

## **The Challenge ...**

So here's my challenge, a challenge similar to last week. First, I want to challenge you to memorize these threads. Again, you can change the wording if you like, just keep it biblical. Memorize these threads, these threads of the gospel becoming a part of our minds and our hearts and coming out of our mouths. God is the just and gracious Creator of all things. We are each created by God and trying to tie them together. The picture we've got in Romans, we are each created by God but corrupted by sin. The only way—Jesus alone can remove our sin and reconcile us to God. The only way to be reconciled to God is by faith in Jesus. This is the picture. So memorize those and maybe some verses to go along with them.

Then second, I want to encourage you again to pray and look intentionally each day this week for opportunities to sew these threads. I want to challenge you to let the sufficiency of Christ and the necessity of faith in some way be a part of your speech each day this week and one thing you might do to help you in this, at the end of your day, before you go to bed, sit down with the notes from this week and the notes from last week, put them in front of you and think about every conversation you had that day. Think about every conversation and then think where were opportunities you missed where you could have sewn these threads. That will help you again thinking intentionally through how those threads can become a reality in your life and keep – some of you have emailed me stories

and told me different things this week. Keep doing that. Next week we'll come back together and we're gonna talk about the opportunities God gives us to put all these threads together when we see someone that we work with, that we live with, that we care about, see someone for the first time have their eyes opened to the beauty of Christ and the gospel.

God, we pray that you have been worshipped today and we pray that you will be worshipped as we scatter from this place and the gospel is sewn all across this city through your church. Help us to be the Church this week with the gospel that you've given to us. Help us to realize what it means to be servants of the gospel, sent out with the gospel, set apart with the gospel. Help us to realize why we're even here on this earth. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Permissions:** You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

**Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:** By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical. Website: [Radical.net](http://Radical.net)