

The Gospel of God
Part 1
Romans 1
Pastor Charles Price

Well Good Morning! If you have got a Bible with you I am going to read this morning from Romans Chapter 1. There are some Bibles in the pews, slightly different version to the version that I am using but you can follow with me.

Romans Chapter 1. Romans 1:1:

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God – the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead; Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Go down now to Verse 16:

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

“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.’”

Now keep your Bible open there.

Eleven years ago we went through the book of Romans in about a year, I think it took us, to get through it. Many of you of course were not here in those days and many of those of you who were have probably forgotten.

And I am not going to repeat what we did last time, but I believe that the truths and the key themes of this letter to the Romans are so important and so vital that we need to revisit them.

And I am going to do so in a way which I trust will be fresh. It won't be as long as last time. We are going to pick out some of the key central themes that are vital to us today.

Paul, when he wrote this letter, had never visited the city of Rome. But when he returned from his third missionary journey on his way back to Jerusalem he wrote them a letter and said to them that he felt his task in the part of the world in which he had been mainly operating was finished - that is, his ministry in places like Cilicia and Galatia and Asia Minor and into Greece.

And he said, “My intention now is to expand to the country of Spain. And I have been looking at a map and I see that about halfway from Jerusalem to Spain lies the city of Rome. So I am going

to come then and visit you. I don't want to build on somebody else's foundation; I just want to visit you, to encourage you, as I travel on to the country of Spain."

Now this makes his letter different to every other letter that he wrote. In all his other letters he is writing to people he knew except his letter to the Colossians (he had never been to Colossae when he wrote to them).

And many of the churches he was writing to were churches he had founded and so he is writing to them pastorally to answer questions, to resolve problems, to correct errors (which was his primary motivation in writing to the church in Colossae even though he had never actually been there), to give them instructions, sometimes to reprimand individuals. And these were his motives for sitting down and writing those letters.

But he had none of those reasons in writing his letter to the church in Rome. And so what he does is he systematically and comprehensively sets out what will be his message when he comes to Rome - in other words, what is the substance and content of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He introduces this letter in Verse 1 by saying,

"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God."

That is a phrase I am going to use as the title for this series: The Gospel of God.

What exactly is it? And in this letter he gives us the most systematic and the most comprehensive statement of it that we find in the New Testament.

And this morning I want to look at his summary statement in Verse 16 and Verse 17 of Chapter 1.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

"For in the gospel..."

Let me just pause there a moment.

Supposing I were to ask you to close your Bible, get out a piece of paper and a pen and finish what you think that sentence would say.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, the power of God for the salvation of God for everyone who believes..."

"For in the gospel..." what?

Well I don't know what you might write, but we might write, "For in the gospel a means of being forgiven is proclaimed." Because we recognize our greatest need is to be forgiven before God.

But actually you would be wrong.

We might say, "For in the gospel a means of getting to heaven is made available to us."

But actually you would be wrong.

"For in the gospel power to live is being imparted to us."

But as a summary of the gospel, you would be wrong.

All those of course have their place and are true ingredients in the big picture. But when Paul chooses to summarize what this gospel is, of which he is not ashamed, which is the power of God for the salvation of all those who believe, he says it in Verse 17,

"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.'"

The gospel, says Paul, is about the righteousness of God, and a righteousness being experienced on the grounds of faith.

And so salvation according to the book of Romans is not primarily a salvation from guilt to innocence; it is not primarily a salvation from hell to heaven; it is not primarily a salvation from death to life. It is primarily a salvation from unrighteousness to righteousness.

Now of course forgiveness is the cause of that. So that is essential.

Heaven will be the consequence of that. So that is essential.

Life in place of death is the means to that. So that is indispensable.

But the actual substance is that the righteousness of God is restored into human experience – whatever that means – and we will be begin to talk about that a little bit this morning.

Now of course these other aspects are important to us, but they must not be confused with the main purpose.

If we take a secondary aspect of the gospel and we make it the central issue of the gospel we will inevitably distort what it is and not adequately understand the purpose of our salvation.

Just by way of illustration, supposing my wife Hilary was going to visit her mother in England. And you turned up at our home just as she was leaving the house, and you say to her, "What are you doing?"

She could say several things. She could say, “I am going to get into the car.” That would be true.

“I am going to go to the airport.” That would be true.

“I am going to fly to England.” That would be true.

“I am going to go back to my roots.” That would be true.

But although they would all be true, none of them are the purpose of the exercise. “I am going to visit my mother” would be the whole object and purpose.

And we can become very taken up with aspects of the gospel that are important (and we must understand them) and miss the whole point.

You see if we see the gospel as being all about being forgiven and being cleared of our guilt, we will see it basically as getting forgiven and then kind of waiting until you get to heaven, and in the meantime hanging around with Christians to stop you getting contaminated, getting sprinkled every once in a while with some kind of disinfectant to keep you clean, and then one day you will roll up in heaven.

If we see the gospel as being all about going to heaven when we die - and interestingly Paul, in his exposition of the gospel in the book of Romans never, ever mentions going to heaven. He only actually mentions heaven once – he speaks of the wrath of God being revealed from heaven. He never talks about this as the place we are going to (though we are).

But if we see that as being the primary point, then as long as we have got our ticket tucked into our back pocket and we have got the security that when I die and if I get hit by a bus this week I know where I am going, we won't understand what is the objective today for today, and tomorrow for tomorrow, and the next day for the next day.

The whole point of the gospel is that men and women, boys and girls, may be reconciled to God, restored to relationship with Him, in order that the righteousness of God, which is being revealed, may be appropriated and experienced, a righteousness, says Paul, that is by faith.

Now this word righteous and righteousness repeats 44 times in the book of Romans. Therefore it is a central key ingredient in what Romans is about.

Now I want to look at two things this morning. First of all, I want to look at the fact that in the gospel a righteousness is revealed.

And then we will look at the fact that in the gospel a righteousness is received.

Those are two different things. It is revealed and then it is to be received.

First of all, in the gospel a righteousness is revealed. And Paul says that in Verse 17.

“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed.”

Now the righteousness of God is the moral character of God. The Bible speaks of Him being a righteous God. That kind of phrase occurs several times. And it is referring to His character; it is referring to who He is, to what He does and why He does it.

And it encompasses all His moral attributes of love, of kindness, of justice, of wrath, of mercy, of judgement, of patience. But these are not only attributes to be seen in God and responded to in admiration and worship and awe.

It becomes much more personal than that, because the righteousness of God was intended to be intimately connected with the human race. Because back in the beginning when God created, He said in Genesis 1:26,

“Let us make man in our image and in our likeness.”

“Let us make a creature in such a way that this human being, when you look at him, will express what God is like, in Our image, in Our likeness.”

Now theologians have debated what exactly is the image of God. And I think we can work it out by deduction fairly easily because there are evidently certain things that are true of God that are not true of human beings.

And these are what we may call His non-transferrable attributes. He does not transfer them to anybody else; they are uniquely His own.

For instance, His omnipotence – the fact that God alone is all-powerful. We are not. He doesn't transfer that attribute to us.

That He is omnipresent, in all places at all times. That is not true of us.

That He is omniscient – that means He knows everything there is to know. He hasn't given us that privilege.

That fact that He is immutable, that He never changes. That is not true of us.

That fact of His eternal nature – He had no beginning, He had no end. That is not true of us.

These are attributes that remain unique to God and are non-transferrable to His people.

But there are attributes that God chose to impart to human beings when He made them in His image.

We may call these His transferrable attributes. And they have to do with His moral character.

God is love and we are intended to be loving. God is kind and we are intended to be kind. God is just; we are intended to be just. God is merciful; we are intended to be merciful. God is righteous, is the word that sums up all those moral attributes, and His intention is that in our moral character and behaviour, the righteousness of God's character will be seen in human beings.

And so if you and I were a fly on the wall in the Garden of Eden when He created Adam and Eve and placed them there in His image, He would have looked at them and seen what God was like.

The way Adam treated Eve would have been with tender love and gentleness because God is loving and tender and gentle.

The way Eve treated Adam we would have seen what God is like, we would have seen her kindness.

The way they handled the animals in the garden; we would have seen what God was like.

Because in human character and behaviour was to be revealed the moral character and behaviour of God Himself. That's what it means to be in His image. That's what His righteousness is.

However there is a problem – there is a major problem. You look around our world; we do not show what God is like.

In fact, later in Romans 3:10, a verse we will look at on another occasion, it says,

“There is no one righteous, not even one.”

And the story is, of course, that our first parents fell in disobedience, became separated from God, and the whole human creation fell and no longer show what God is like.

Let me illustrate this to you. And I want to use your imagination for a moment, and imagine that deep into space, on the other side of the Milky Way (that's big enough), on the other side of the Milky Way, there was a planet that was not unlike our own.

And on it was life and one species of that life was a highly intelligent creature. And these intelligent beings were smart enough to know that there must be a creator God somewhere behind their existence. But they have no knowledge of who He is or what He is like. He has not revealed that to him. They don't know, is He good, is He bad, is He indifferent? They don't know.

And in the course of time, imagine that these creatures develop a sophisticated civilization, more sophisticated than our own, and it included space exploration.

And in their surveillance of the universe they discover that on the other side of the Milky Way there is an inhabited planet orbiting a sun. It is called earth. And what is more, as they piece

together the increasing bits of information that they discover about those creatures on planet earth, they discover something utterly incredibly: that there is a creature on that planet that was made in the image of God.

And they say to themselves, at last we can find out what God is like. If there is a being created in the image of God and if we could somehow get to know those beings, and get to observe them and spend time with them, we would know what God is like.

And so they develop a space craft, they train their astronauts, and they send them on the journey to earth.

(Now you need a good imagination because we are too far away from anybody to travel - from our nearest star would take nearly 3000 years to get here at a million miles an hour. So they are not going to make it. Imagine they find a few black holes and time is irrelevant there and you can just slide down a few.)

And supposing they were able to come to earth to see what human beings are like in order to discover what God is like, and supposing they landed last night on the shores of Lake Ontario. And they get out of their spacecraft and they look around.

“Now at last we can find out what God is like.”

And the first thing they do is pick up a newspaper. I have with me this morning this weekend’s Globe and Mail. They arrived last night; this is the paper they pick up, let’s say.

And they look at the front page with the heading: “Syria’s Lost Children. They have escaped a brutal civil war but their scars will haunt them for years to come and maybe haunt us too.”

And the inside article talks about the physical and deep psychological scars in the now thousands of children in refugee camps outside of Syria who have been exposed to and seen with their own eyes the most terrible atrocities and which will be, says the writer, a breeding ground for the next wave of terrorists in twenty years from now.

And they read this and they say, “Is God like that?”

They turn to Page 2 and there is an editorial. An editorial is on the rise of atheism endorsed by the writer of this editorial and saying how that unbelievers are winning the war (ironically it’s what she says), the war of reason over religion. And she says, “We, the unbelievers, are winning the war.”

Now this dear lady is not as informed as she thinks she is because she makes an assumption here that churches in Toronto are all in decline. Now fortunately her e-mail address is given after her name so I am going to invite her to come here one Sunday morning – I am, I really am.

But they read this and they say, “Atheism? Atheism? You mean the non-existence of God? Is God suicidal? What does this mean?”

Page 3: one article: “Consensus close on weapons stockpile.” And it talks about an agreement entered into recently regarding chemical weapons. And the anticipated 900 tonnes of chemical agents stored in different locations and the incredible difficulty not only of locating them in a number of different places, but handling them and removing them and getting them out of circulation without doing damage in the process because they are lethal and just a little bit has been used so far. There’s 900 tonnes sitting, waiting. You could destroy the world with it.

And they read this. “People killing their own people in such an agonizingly painful way?”

You go further inside and you find that in a foreign country four men have been sentenced to death for the brutal raping of a woman on a bus and for her murder.

You find another story of what they describe as a small-time drug dealer, if there is such a thing. It is never small-time when you are destroying people’s minds and destroying people’s lives. But anyway, they call him a small-time drug dealer. But he got shot in the neck and killed.

And these people throw away the paper in disgust. “Is this what God is like?”

They find some general statistics of how human beings behave, about the high percentage of people who, in the course of their lives are unfaithful to their marriage partner, who stood solemnly in front of a whole group of people and said, “Forsaking all others I take you only”, and they were lying through their teeth.

Is this what God is like?

Well they discover half the world goes to bed hungry every night and the other half is struggling with a pandemic of obesity.

And as they begin to accumulate some of this information about human beings their faces fall and their hearts sink and their fears grow and they say to each other, “Let’s go home as quickly as we can” and they get back into their spacecraft and they go back to their home planet.

Meanwhile everybody on their planet is awake to see them come home. And when they land their spacecraft every news camera is focused on the door. And as they open the door and step out of their craft, microphones are pushed into their face and somebody says, “This is the most momentous event in our history; tell us what God is like.”

And they say, “He is a monster. We wish we had never gone. He is selfish, greedy, He fights, He destroys, He abuses women, He kills, He lies, He cheats, He even denies Himself. He reneges on His promises.”

You know something? This is the measure of our sin because having been created in the image of God, we were created to portray truth about God in the way that we live and the way that we behave. And sin is the measure to which we fail to portray the truth about God.

Sin is telling lies about God in the way that we behave. And if the righteousness in human behaviour is portraying truth about God, then unrighteousness in human behaviour is portraying untruths about God.

Now you say, well you picked the worst examples. You deliberately opened this newspaper and found the worst stories. I didn't have to go far, by the way – Page 1, Page 2, Page 3, had to jump then to Page 5 – that's true. I picked the worst stories to make my point.

But having said that, if somebody came to you and said, "What is God like?" would you say to them, "Well, I can show you that very simply – just follow me for a week. Just watch the way I behave and interact with people. Listen to the things that I say. In fact, I will give you access into my mind, into my motives. And if you will follow me for a week and you will watch me and listen to me and hear my thoughts and examine my motives, at the end of the week you will know exactly what God is like."

Would anybody here dare say that to somebody who wants to know what God is like? I doubt it.

So what are you saying?

You are saying, "I am a sinner. If you want to know the truth about God, please don't look at me. I mean I can manage to be well behaved on Sunday morning but don't look at me when I am not aware you are there."

So why did God send us a Savior? What is the job description for His mission? What is the heart and substance of the gospel?

Well Paul's summary statement is this: in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith.

Now where is it being revealed?

Well it is not being revealed just in what we may call propositional truth – that is, sort of bullet points about God. It is being revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

You know when Saul of Tarsus was converted on the Damascus road, he went to the house of a man called Ananias. And Ananias told him this - he was told what to say to him by God and he told him this:

"The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from His mouth." [Acts 22:14]

He is the Righteous One. He is the embodiment of the righteousness of God as, in fact, Adam had been before the fall.

Now propositional truths about God's righteousness, statements about it, had already been given under the old covenant. God gave us facts about His character. God gave us the law, and the law reveals the moral righteousness of God.

Moses said that because in Deuteronomy 4:8 Moses spoke to the people and said,

“What other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?”

These laws, these Ten Commandments, and all the other peripheral outworking of them that were given to Moses on Mount Sinai; this says Moses, are righteous decrees and laws. They represent what God is like in His moral character.

And within them is the need for atonement, which represents His justice.

Within them is a provision for atonement, which represents His mercy.

And all the laws and decrees that God revealed to Moses express His righteousness in a legal documented propositional set of statements.

But this righteousness of God is no longer now in propositional form because that left people aware of what God is like, but completely incapable of responding to that in any meaningful way.

And so now the righteousness of God is revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. That's why in Verse 2 of Romans 1 in his introduction Paul speaks. He says that he is an apostle set apart for the gospel of God. He qualifies that –

“The gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures”

(In other words, this has its beginning way back in the Old Testament Scriptures)

“...regarding his Son.”

That's what it is all leading to.

“...regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David.”

So He was human.

“...and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God.”

So He was divine.

And Paul brings together in his introduction here that this One to whom all the Scriptures that have gone before has been pointing, is both human and divine. For procuring our salvation, a man, a human was necessary, but only God was a possibility. A human was necessary because he had to represent the fallen human race – only a fellow human being could do. So He had to be human.

But He also had to be God because He had to be a sin-less substitute and One whom death could not hold, as Paul also says in his introduction.

“He was declared...to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.”

And this human/divine man, both fully human and fully divine, came not only to do the work of saving us, reconciling us to God, but to be Himself the source of that righteousness in human beings.

That’s why the goal of the gospel is that we are being transformed into His image. Not by imitation but by His presence within us, being Himself within us, expresses His own character in us.

And that leads me to the second point. If the first point is that in the gospel a righteousness is revealed, my second point is that in the gospel this righteousness is received. Not only revealed, so we stand back in awe and wonder, but it is received.

Let me read again Verse 17:

“In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith

That is, it is obtainable.

“It is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”

This is now to be received and to be lived because the gospel is not just declaring God’s righteousness, which God had done in the law right from the Old Covenant, or demonstrating God’s righteousness, which He had done in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, but delivering God’s righteousness into human experience.

And the rest of Romans expounds this, and we will be talking a lot more about the outworking of this.

But it is not by a determination. It is not by simply discipline. It is not by resolution that we might experience and begin to live in the righteousness of God. It is a supernatural work. It takes Christ Himself to make the Christian life Christian. It takes God Himself to make men and women godly.

That’s why he says that this becomes operative, in Verse 16:

“It is for the salvation of everyone who believes.”

What does that mean?

Verse 17:

“It is by faith from first to last.”

What does that mean?

The second part of Verse 17:

“The righteous will live by faith.”

Later in Chapter 3 and Verse 21, Paul says,

“But now a righteousness from God, apart from the 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.”

It is enough repetition to get the point. It is to those who believe and it is by faith.

Let me just first say (and we will be looking at this later in the book, but it is important just to say it at this point) that there are two aspects to the righteousness of God.

One has to do with our standing. We may be declared righteous before God. That is what Chapters 1 to 4 of Romans are about. Theologians call it “imputed righteousness”. We don’t deserve it; it is imputed to us. We are clothed before God in this righteousness.

We will be looking at what that means on another occasion.

But the second aspect is not just that it is our position before God; it is also to become our practice. That is, that we are to behave in a way which expresses, through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, the righteousness of God. This is what theologians call “imparted righteousness”. That is what Romans Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 are about.

The first four chapters: the imputation of God’s righteousness to us.

Chapters 5 to 8: the impartation and practical day to day living the righteousness of God to us.

And these are available, says Paul here, through faith to those who believe. By believe he doesn’t just mean intellectual assent but he means that you appropriate it, you experience it.

You see it is never enough just to believe something. Believing in something in itself doesn’t do us any good.

If I was sick and was offered some medicine, I could believe that this medicine has all the properties needed to make me well.

I could read and memorize the ingredients that are listed on the container.

I could explain to anybody who came to visit me why this medicine will attack and reverse the causes of my sickness.

And I could put the bottle by my bed and for everyone who comes to visit me I affirm I believe in the ability of that medicine.

But of course believing that won't in itself do me any good at all. It will only do me some good if I appropriate it - that means if I drink it.

James, in the book of James, says, "You believe in God? It won't do you any good at all. Even the demons believe and they tremble," he said to them.

So just believing intellectually doesn't do us any good. And it doesn't do us any harm either. You know, just supposing I was told this glass was full of arsenic and if I were to drink just a sip of it, I am a dead man very quickly.

I might believe that to be true – I wouldn't even be frightened of this glass because though I might believe it to be arsenic (which I understand is colorless and flavorless); though I understand it to be arsenic and believe it is arsenic, believing it is arsenic won't kill me.

It will only do me some harm if I appropriate it, if I drink it. (And I think it's water.)

See, believing the gospel intellectually is important - of course it is. He that comes to God must believe that He is, but you have got to come to God, not just believe that He is. He has to be appropriated.

Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst."

You have got to actually drink the water. We have to appropriate. We have to experience Him. This is what it means to believe.

Here's what it means: that is comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, as Paul wrote there.

About two or three months ago I defined faith as being trust in an object for the purpose of allowing that object to do something for me.

You put faith in a chair; you let the chair do something for you. It holds you in place. You don't do something for the chair; you are letting the chair do something for you.

You put faith in an airplane, you fly through the air. You don't do anything to the airplane; you are letting the airplane do something for you.

You put faith in God; God is doing something for you. You are not doing something for God; He is doing something for you.

And so this coming through faith to those who believe is not a passive belief or agreeing with it or approving it, or because it is something I was brought up with and I am comfortable with it, or it gives me a sort of lifestyle that is quite convenient because of the social circle in which I live and operate. It is convenient to live Christianly because my family do and my friends do.

But rather it is an active experience of the presence and working of God.

Romans 5:5 Paul writes (and we will look at these verses later),

“God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given to us.”

That is more than just believing something. This is experiential. The love of God is poured into my heart. Something happens in me where sometimes the pouring out of His love is so rich and so full and so real.

As a man told me the other day, that when he came to discover that, “I had to ask God to stop because I felt I was just falling apart inside out of the sheer excitement of being loved by Him.”

You don't live in that perpetual ecstasy of course, but when you know it, you know it – you know it. And you live in the good of it.

Or as Paul wrote in Romans 8:16,

“The Holy Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.”

That is, the Holy Spirit within us testifies – that is experiential. That is not just believing. It is going beyond that; it is now an awareness of His presence within us, an awareness of the fact that something is going on in my heart that is not to do with my own will and determination. It is the Spirit of God doing something within me.

And this reconciliation to God, this experience of His love, this testimony of His presence is the source of our righteousness, that righteousness which is imputed to us positionally. We stand before God no matter what happens, clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And then this righteousness, which is imparted to us practically that we live out of this union with Him, where He in us gives us a different quality of life.

Now to get there we have to be forgiven, so there is that to talk about and we will. As a result we're going to heaven, but we are not going to talk about that because Paul doesn't because that will look after itself – we don't have to worry about that.

But getting into that relationship and living in the fullness of that relationship and knowing what it is, that where it actually happened on the cross, when I was crucified with Christ, but I am no longer dead; I am risen now to live in newness of life with Him.

What does all that mean? What does it mean the law of the Spirit of life sets me free from the law of sin and death? All those things are what works out and makes real experientially the righteousness of God in our experience.

So back to the text. Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." I couldn't care less that somebody writes that religion is on the way out.

In fact, it would be nice if it was (religion was on the way out), but real relationship with God has nothing to do with culture, nothing to do with being trendy or unpopular.

It has to do with men and women, boys and girls, experiencing the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed. We see it primarily in the person of Jesus Christ and it is a righteousness that is by faith, that is experienced. It is by faith from first to last, from beginning to end. In fact the righteous live by faith, is what Paul says.

And we will talk about that more in the next weeks, but I ask you this morning, do you know experientially the presence and the working of God in your life? Do you know that you are reconciled to Him? Not just because you prayed a prayer one day – that's important – but because experientially God is pouring out His love into your heart, the Spirit Himself is bearing witness with your spirit that you are children of God, and you know because you know, because you just know, because He is restoring His presence, and thereby His character.

And if you don't know that, maybe this morning you will just get alone with God somewhere and say, "God, I need to really meet with You. I acknowledge my need for You. I thank You for dying and rising again as my substitute that I might be forgiven, that I might be welcomed back as a clean person into communion with God and union with Christ."

And receive Him, the living Jesus into your life and His righteousness will be imputed to you. You will be declared righteous (we will see what that means later). And His character will be imparted to you. You will find in your heart a hunger and a thirst for righteousness, an appetite to be like Jesus.

Let's pray together.

Lord, I want to pray for those of us here this morning who may in some measure have a sense of uncertainty as to whether we really do know You. Some of us may have a certainty that we don't and we know we don't and we know we have no living fellowship with You.

Lord, by the Holy Spirit, as only the Holy Spirit can, draw us, we pray, to Yourself. We recognize no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit and therefore we ask You will open our eyes that understanding.

We know the natural mind does not receive the things of God; it is the Spirit who reveals them. Reveal them to us, we pray. And bring us into that union with Yourself, which is not based on any sense of pride or self-sufficiency, but out of humility, recognizing that You, the Living God, have placed Your Holy Spirit within us, made us alive in Christ. We may drink of that water from which we will never thirst and be equipped to live fruitful lives.