

February 11, 2018 AM
Pastor Ken Hepner

FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM:
6. “The Power of God to Change a Life”
Romans 1:16, 17

Introduction:

This morning as we turn our attention to the Word of God we doing a study of the theme: “Friendship Evangelism.” That is simply a fancy term for seeking to help our friends, family members, people in our sphere of influence to come to know Jesus Christ our Lord. Helping others to come to know Him is a significant part of our task we have been given to do as His people, our **Marching Orders** that have stood for 2000 years. This 2000 year old calling now resides in you and me!

Matthew 28:19, 20 *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

What we are really talking about is the central issue of our Christian faith, what it means to know and walk with Jesus today. The truth is relatively few people have the gift of evangelism, enabling them to walk in the Holy Spirit’s gifting to lead others to personal faith in Christ. But each and every child of God has been called by God to our **Common Calling to Make Disciples**. This is one of the things that is absolutely non-negotiable for the followers of Jesus.

In this specific message today, we are looking at how the truth that who God is and how God feels about each one of us personally, can powerfully impact a person’s life. One of the things that just breaks my heart as a pastor is that there are lots of people out there who have bought into a view of the nature of God that is absolutely untrue.

One of the things I think we can agree on, as we begin our thought processes today, is that our world system is pretty much built on **a philosophy of life that revolves around the Essence of Sin in the human heart, which is Self-Interest!** It is expressed in our heart to be selfish and self-expression, a kind of “do your own thing, have it your own way” philosophy of life. Therefore, what our world system actually believes stands in direct opposition to who God is and what God desires for our lives.

Our world system, the culture we live in here in North America, has given us a picture of God that is about as wrong as it can be, when one takes the time to compare it with what the Bible actually tells us about the Lord God. The popularized picture of God is that He is one of or a combination of three things:

1. The divine watchmaker – portrays a God who made the earth to run all by itself and withdrew to leave His creation to fend for itself, watches us from a distance, and He hasn't been heard from since.
2. The cosmic killjoy – is a straight-laced, prudish God who never smiles, laughs or rejoices, and He sure doesn't want people to have any fun either, so if anyone does have fun in life God is angry at them.
3. The angry judge – is a portrait of a God who is angry, aloof, and punitive, who is just waiting for each one of us to make a mistake so He can swing into action and punish us for our indiscretions.

The Apostle Paul took the time to write a letter to the church family in the city of Rome in order to explain who God is and what He had done in Christ Jesus to come to the rescue of **People** whom He has **Loved with an Everlasting Love**. I am convinced Paul had in his mind promises from the Old Testament prophets about the unfailing love of God.

Isaiah 54:10 *“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.”*

Jeremiah 31:3 *“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”*

Psalms 6:4 *“Turn O Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love.”*

Psalms 86:15 *“But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”*

Paul wrote a tremendous word to us all, regarding the **Truth of the Gospel of His Kingdom**. The truth is that God is for us and wants very much to work His loving and cleansing grace in our lives, because of Jesus, which Paul alludes to in the words of Romans 1:16, 17.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; 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.’”

The gospel of His Kingdom is the story of the Lord Jesus Christ coming to earth specifically to enter into the human condition and to bring to us the gift of eternal life. He came after us in reaching love and mercy because He looked at our condition and saw our need of a Savior, someone to come to our rescue.

He saw our **Helplessness** to do anything about lasting and permanent life change. He saw that in spite of our best efforts we cannot do the good we want to do. He saw that even if we could do

good from here on we could never do anything to make right or to take away any of our failures, so He came to be our **Helper**.

He felt our **Heart – Cry**, the longing that is deep in each one of us to know Him who is beyond us, to be cleansed completely and able to walk with the One who created us for Himself.

He became our **Hope** of becoming what we truly want to be. There is no other religious system of thought or belief that enables the adherents to pervasively deal with our sense of having and failed ourselves and God.

Let's consider carefully today what Jesus our Lord did by coming to this earth as our Suffering Servant, as John the Baptist said, "*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" The failures we have done in life the Bible calls sins and Scripture clearly says Jesus died on our behalf on the cross in order to pay the penalty our sins deserved, "*For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Romans 6:23

I Peter 2:24, 25 "*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*"

I Corinthians 15:56, 57 "*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Consider four things with me please, from these awesome words Paul wrote so many years ago, yet which ring with such relevance and authority for our lives today. You and I may be a message to someone in our sphere of influence who will never pick up a Bible and read it!

I. The Gospel of His Kingdom is a Universal Call:

Romans 1:16a "*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because **it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes:***"

One of the things that our world system has put on Christians and therefore, on Christianity, is that we are "intolerant" of those who differ from us. That is simply untrue and about as far from the reality of things as it can be. Paul writes in this wonderful text that Jesus Christ came and died to make it possible for everyone to believe. **The Gospel call to come to know God in Christ Jesus is a Universal Call to All People!**

It is so important for us to understand that God loves all people everywhere with an everlasting and drawing love. The Gospel of His kingdom is a universal call, there is no one excluded from the **Searching and Reaching Heart** of God the Father for His people. God the Father longs to have each and every person who has ever lived, lives now, or will live in the future to come to know His grace and mercy in Christ Jesus.

There are some schools of Theology that teach their followers that God has elected some people to be saved and others to be lost. They teach that the atoning work of Jesus on the Cross was

limited to those whom God knew would believe in Him, turn to Him, and experience the gift of His salvation! Our Church family does not accept this because we see the nature of God and the Word of God very differently. We believe God loves all people and desires all people to turn to Him and be saved!

Isaiah 45:22 “**Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;** for I am God and there is no other.”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his One and Only Son, **that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**”

I Timothy 2:3, 4 “this is good and pleases **God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved** and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

II Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**”

Our responsibility is to simply accept His terms of **Owning** our sins, **Confessing** them, and **Putting Our Faith** in Jesus our Lord, what He did to pay the wages of our sins on the cross, to be our Savior.

The person who has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior believes that God has acted in Christ Jesus on our behalf to deal with the sin issue in order to make it possible for all who believe and receive Him to become the sons and daughters of God.

II. The Power of God for the Salvation of All Who Believe:

Romans 1:16a “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes:”

Notice with me that the power to change a life is not in me, that is, in my disciplines, my will power, or my determination to be a better person. The power to change a life resides in who God is and the fact that He loves each and every one of us so much that He will work in our heart, soul, mind, and will to **Transform us By His Power!**

The power to change resides in God, not in me! What the Scriptures teach us is that the Holy Spirit of God must do a work of His saving grace in all of our hearts, souls, minds, and wills. He must act in us to transform us by coming to live in our hearts, minds, and making our spirits that were dead in sins alive to God. **The gift of new life is a Miracle of Saving Grace in the human heart!** This is called the Doctrine of Regeneration – our spirits that were dead in sin are made alive by the Spirit of God coming to live in us!

John 1:12, 13 “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to be children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

Hebrews 7:25 *“Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he ever lives to intercede for them.”*

II Corinthians 3:18b *“we are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”*

Titus 3:5 *“he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.”*

And notice with me that the power of God to change us, the **Gift of Salvation** is available to **Everyone who Believes** in what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. This word salvation is a powerful word picture – sodzo – in the original language, meaning, “To salvage from wreckage,” “to find and restore to usefulness what was once very valuable.” What a picture of what God wants for every one of us! He wants us to fulfill the purposes and beauty that He created us all to be!

The Lord Jesus dove into the ocean of human need and spiritual darkness and did a saving, salvaging, restoring work in the human heart and soul. What Jesus did for us He did alone, once and for all who believe Him and receive Him as Savior and Lord!

III. The Gift of Righteousness:

Romans 1:17 *“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.’”*

Paul chooses his words very carefully. He says that in the message of the Gospel of His Kingdom of the heart there is a righteousness from God revealed to us all. This is not something we can earn by our own merits, but is rather the **Gift of God** in Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the Scriptures the gift of righteousness isn’t placing the emphasis primarily on what we do or don’t do, that is the keeping of a list of acceptable or unacceptable attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors. The gift of righteousness denotes **Right Standing before God!** This right standing before God is sheer gift of loving grace. It is bestowed on all who believe and are justified by faith in His grace in Jesus Christ our Lord!

Romans 3:21 – 24 *“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.”*

Romans 5:1 *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Philippians 1:9 – 11 *“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure*

and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.”

One more key thought about his gift of righteousness we receive by faith in Jesus. Again, there are some schools of theology that teach us the gift of righteousness is **Imputed** to the believer. What that means is that God simply sees the person as righteous because he looks at the person through Christ. That is not what we believe.

We believe the gift of righteousness is **Imparted** to the believer by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit who comes to live in our lives and does a work of cleansing in us, giving us a righteous heart by faith in Christ alone. We enter into a relationship with the Spirit of Jesus, confess our sins and our self-interest and He cleanses us and makes our hearts pure. **We don't believe we will achieve perfect actions in this life, but God can give us a heart full of His love!** He pours out into us a deep longing to know more and more of His cleansing presence!

IV. It is Activated in our Hearts By Faith:

Romans 1:17 *“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 shall live by faith.’”*

The fourth and final thing I want you to see with me is that this gift of righteousness that we receive in Christ Jesus is only activated in our hearts by faith that is to **Believe in our Hearts** in what Jesus did on the cross that it was for me that He **Died to Sin and Lives in Righteousness!**

The words “believe” and “faith” are twin sisters, coming from the Greek word “pistis,” which is rooted in the word “peitho,” meaning, “to be firmly persuaded, to be absolutely convinced, to entrust one’s self to something, to have one’s mind completely made up.” We are not talking about a “blind leap of faith” here when we talk about trusting in what the Lord has done to deal with our sins. We are talking about embracing what God says in His Word as Truth, and believing that He has the **Power to Fulfill Every Promise** He has made!

II Corinthians 1:20 *“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken through us to the glory of God.”*

In his letter to the Ephesians 2:8, 9, the Apostle Paul says that faith is the gift of God that must be welcomed and released back to him: *“For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

Note very carefully what Paul says in that awesome text. He writes, “It is by grace that we are saved through faith which is bestowed on us as the gift of God, not by works!” There is a sense in which we are saved completely by the grace and the mercy of God; Sheer Gift! But there is also a sense in which we are responsible to believe and receive the living Word of the living God by faith. **Note the words: By God’s Grace through our Faith!**

The Biblical teaching is that God works in our hearts and we are called to consistently choose to surrender our hearts to His working. In the text we studied last week from Philippians 2:12, 13 we saw that we are all called to *“continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose!”*

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6. "The Power of God to Change a Life"

Romans 1:16, 17

Introduction:

Our topic for the first part of 2018 is "Friendship Evangelism," a term meaning to care deeply about the spiritual lives of people we love.

Right before Jesus went back to heaven He left His followers specific **M** _____
O _____: Matthew 28:18 – 20, Acts 1: 8. The Biblical call to **M** _____
D _____ is non-negotiable.

In this message we are looking at how God feels about each one of us and how knowing the truth can change our lives! Lots of people have been taught errors about who God is!

The world system we live in has built a philosophy of life that revolves around the
E _____ of **S** _____, **S** _____ -**I** _____!

The world system believes in one of three erroneous theories about who the Lord God really is.

The Scriptures teach us God was motivated to send Jesus into the world to redeem us because He **L** _____ us with an **E** _____ **L** _____. Isaiah 54:10, Jeremiah 31:3, Psalm 6:4, Psalm 86:15

Paul wrote a tremendous word to us all, regarding the truth of the **G** _____ of His **K** _____, Romans 1:16, 17

The Lord God came after us in reaching love and mercy because He saw our need of a Savior: Our **H** _____, our **H** _____ -**C** _____, and He became our **H** _____.

Let's consider carefully exactly what Jesus did when He came to be our Suffering Servant, our Savior. I Peter 2:24, 25 and I Corinthians 15:56, 57

I. The Gospel is a Universal Call: Romans 1:16a

The Lord Jesus came to make it possible to believe. The Gospel of Christ Jesus is a universal **C** _____ given to **A** _____ **P** _____.

The truth is no one is excluded from the searching and reaching heart of God! There are people who believe God elects some to be lost and some to be saved. They teach that the atoning work of Jesus is limited to the saved.

We do not accept that teaching! We believe God loves all and reaches to all!
Isaiah 45:22, John 3:16, I Timothy 2:3, 4, II Peter 3:9

II. The Power of God for the Salvation of All Who Believe: Romans 1:16

The power to see our lives change does not reside in us. It resides in God who acts in Christ Jesus to **T**_____ us by His **P**_____!

The Holy Spirit must do His work in us, because the new life in us is the **M**_____ of **S**_____ **G**_____ in the human heart! John 1:12, 13, Hebrews 7:25, II Corinthians 3:18, Titus 3:5

The power of God to save us is available to **E**_____ who **B**_____ in what Jesus has done for us. The word Paul used for “save” is the Greek word “sodzo” ...

III. The Gift of Righteousness: Romans 1:17

Paul chooses his words carefully. He says there is a righteousness from God revealed in the Gospel. It is the **G**_____ of **G**_____ to us in Christ Jesus.

The gift of righteousness denotes **R**_____ **S**_____ before God. And this right standing is all sheer **G**_____. Romans 3:21 – 24, Romans 5:1, Philippians 1:9 – 11

Some people believe the gift of righteousness is **I**_____ to the child of God; that is God simply sees the person as righteous in Christ Jesus.

We believe the gift of righteousness is **I**_____ to the believer in Christ Jesus as the Holy Spirit comes to live in our lives.

IV. It is Activated in Our Hearts by Faith: Romans 1:17

The gift of righteousness is activated in our hearts by faith. What that means is that we **B**_____ in our **H**_____ what Jesus did was for me personally. We believe Jesus died to sin once for all and lives in righteousness!

We are called to embrace the truth that God has the **P**_____ to **F**_____ every **P**_____ He has given to us. II Corinthians 1:20, Ephesians 2:8, 9

There is a sense in which all of saving is of God: Sheer gift! But there is also a sense in which we are called to work with the Spirit of God as He brings the Word alive to us, believe it and receive it! Note the words by **G**_____ through **F**_____! Philippians 2:12, 13

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. Do you think most Christians really understand the fact that we are all called to make disciples and that it is non-negotiable calling from Jesus?

2. Read together aloud Matthew 28:18 – 20 and Acts 1:8 and discuss what Jesus tell us as His followers we will do as we walk in the Spirit.

3. Our culture's picture of God as aloof and angry stands in stark contrast to how God reveals Himself in Scripture. What does the Bible teach about how God feels toward all people?

4. Do you think people believe God loves them and has reached to them in Christ Jesus, longing for them to respond to His Gospel message? What prevents them from seeing God as He really is?

5. Why is it important for us to believe that Jesus Christ came to the rescue, that He gave His life for all people?

6. In the Gospel of His kingdom God reveals that He longs to powerfully work in all of our hearts transforming us by His indwelling Spirit. Do you think this is widely understood and believed in the Church today? Why or why not?

7. What is the difference between imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness? Why is it important to know the difference between the two?

8. Why is it important for us to know that God has saved us by grace through faith and that it is the sheer gift of God? What is our part in salvation?

9. Read together aloud II Corinthians 3:10 through 4:18 and discuss insights you have about God's transforming power available to us through the Holy Spirit.

10. How does the belief that Jesus died for all of the people in our sphere of influence impact the way we pray and the way we choose to bear witness to them?