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*“Radically Missional”*

ROMANS 1:16-17

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## BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

If you are in Christ, consider yourself a sent missionary. You have a commission to make disciples everywhere you go until Jesus comes back. At Wildwood Church we believe in this commission, called the Great Commission, because Jesus called us to it and because the gospel which we proclaim has power to save people from their sin!

## INTRODUCTION

Professional speakers advise that you begin with a joke or a quip or a story to break the ice. One pastor famously asked, “Who brought the ice?” I’m about to jump into the most important two verses of the most important letter ever written. I hope the ice is already broken. Let’s get into it!

## ROMANS 1:16-17

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.” PRAY**

These are the theme verses for the whole letter. Not only that, but all of Paul’s life is summed up right here. All his aspirations, desires, purposes and plans find their anchor right here. **Romans 1:16** says, **For I am not ashamed of the gospel,**

To be **ashamed** of something is to disavow it, to deny it, to reject it. But it is more than that. It is also to shrink back from it. It is to marginalize it, minimize it, distance oneself from it publicly. To be **ashamed of the gospel** is to imagine that one can outgrow it, out mature it, no longer need it.

To be **ashamed of the gospel** is to embrace it timidly, “This is my truth, but not necessarily anyone else’s. What business do I have in telling other people they must believe the gospel to be saved?” They don’t want to “force their religion” on someone else, no one wants to be “holier than thou.”

To be **ashamed of the gospel** is to functionally believe:

1. People are inherently good –65% of evangelicals believe this
2. All roads lead to God; 56% of evangelicals believe it.
3. Only pastors and missionaries preach the gospel.

## NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

Paul was **not ashamed of the Gospel** Talk about an understatement! Far from ashamed of it, Paul was proud of the gospel. He boasted in Christ. He didn’t hold back when the message was unpopular or came at great cost. He was bold about the reality of man’s sin and God’s judgement. And he was clear that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

The world needs to hear this message because 100 out of 100 people will die and then stand before God as their judge and they will face His just wrath and be condemned forever because they have sinned against an infinitely holy God. But 100 out of 100 people who sincerely call on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

## DYNAMIC POWER

Paul continues in **verse 16, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.** The Gospel **is the power of God** The word we translate **power** is *dunamis*, from which we also get the word dynamite. Like dynamite, the gospel is dynamic –it has the ability to change.

Dynamite radically changes things! It is used to blast through giant boulders and mountains, even carving the faces of the former presidents represented on Mount Rushmore!

In the same way, the gospel is **powerful** and effective, it achieves what it claims.

It changes man's condition – from dead in sin to alive in Christ. From object of God's wrath to child of God. From enmity with God to peace with God. From doomed to saved.

The gospel is the power of God **for salvation to everyone who believes.** In the New Testament the term salvation means deliverance in both physical and spiritual terms. In Paul's letters, it means spiritual deliverance. It is specifically related to the final judgement that awaits us all on the last day when we give account for our lives.

## JEW FIRST AND ALSO THE GREEK

Interesting that Paul highlights **the Jew first and also...the Greek.** It goes to the Jews first because it began with the Jews. The gospel is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of God. It is the fulfillment of the covenants God made to the Jewish patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob. Jesus was the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. The Davidic king who would sit on David's throne forever!

Jesus was a Jew and the gospel was a Jewish story of redemption. But Jesus is also the fulfillment of the promise God made to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He is not just the Jewish messiah, He is the Savior of everyone who believes.

## REVELATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The gospel also reveals the righteousness of God. Paul continues in **verse 17, For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith...** What does Paul mean by that? The righteousness of God refers to God's just judgment of humanity and His just plan to make a way of escape from His judgment.

The gospel reveals what this **righteousness** is. It is God's righteousness, he is righteous with a "radical, heavenly righteousness" to use R.C. Sproul's language. This righteousness is everything God does, but especially in the context of redemption of sinners.

How can sinners be redeemed by a righteous God? How can we be made righteous when we are indeed unrighteous? Paul says the gospel **reveals the righteousness of God**, that is His perfect plan to save sinners. The gospel reveals how a holy God can forgive unholy people without making Himself unholy in the process. Namely, by sending His only Son to take upon Himself the sins of man and in an act of substitutionary atonement – Him dying in your place and mine – God's righteous wrath is satisfied.

## FROM FAITH FOR FAITH

The gospel **reveals the righteousness of God from faith for faith**. It has always been about faith and it always will be about faith. **as it is written**, Paul says, **“The righteous shall live by faith.”** That’s a quote from Habakkuk 2:4. That’s Old Testament language. And if you go back to where the story of redemption all began with Abraham, you’ll see it was all about faith even then. “And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” Genesis 15:6

Romans 1:17 is the verse that awakened Martin Luther as he prepared to give lectures on Romans. He found a manuscript of Augustine in which Augustine wrote this righteousness is not the righteousness we achieve for ourselves, but rather is Christ’s righteousness that is made available as a free gift of grace to all who believe.

He said, “I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by **faith**...the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith...”

As Paul said in Philippians 3:9, “righteousness...which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness *from God* that depends on faith.” And again in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might *become* the righteousness of God.”

Man’s chief problem is sin and separation from God. His chief need is salvation. There is one way to be saved: faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus declared in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

No person has ever earned forgiveness of sin and eternal life because they were good enough and no person will be spared the wrath of God except those who are made righteous with the righteousness of God by faith in Christ.

## 150,000 PEOPLE DIE EACH DAY

Every single day about 150,000 people enter eternity in one of two places: heaven or hell. That’s 2 every second of every minute of every hour, every single day. Jesus said narrow is the way and few will find it that leads to eternal life. Most of those 150,000 who will die today will not. Pause on that for a second. Most will not.

But you know the way. And you could show people the way. And the reason you know the way is because someone else showed you. What will you do with that knowledge?

Last December I asked Pastor Andy, our Missions and Outreach Pastor, to go away to be alone with the Lord for an extended period of time and to bring back what he believed the Lord would have for our church’s missions strategy.

He went away for about a week and came back with much more than a missions strategy. He came back with what eventually, through much prayer and discussion with elders and staff and the mission’s committee and congregants, has become the new vision for Wildwood Church.

## VISION: RADICALLY MISSIONAL

We’re going to hear from Pastor Andy in the business meeting as he lays out a little more detail related specifically to the missions effort of our church, but I am excited to introduce our new Vision: Radically Missional. Taking the Gospel across the street and around the world.

This is a vision of achieving the mission of our church in two strategic ways: equipping the saints and sending them out on mission. It is embracing the reality that every member of our body is a missionary.

It is a vision that we are compelled by Romans 15:21, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”

I'd like to direct your attention to the screens where we have a depiction of the mission of Wildwood Church. You may recognize the icons and terminology. The graphic depicts the entire mission of our church, represented in the concept of Connect4QC.

## THE GREAT COMMISSION

This is simply an expression of the Great Commission because every single church has the same mission – Jesus laid it out in His parting words.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

Our mission as a church is to go out of our building and proclaim the gospel to lost sinners. When, by the help of the Holy Spirit and the dynamite power of the gospel, they come to faith in Jesus we then make disciples of them, teaching them to obey Jesus.

The concept is simple: take the gospel everywhere you go. You are a missionary. Every member a missionary.

God so loved the world that He sent Jesus on the most epic rescue mission and Jesus sends His disciples on the same. Jesus said in John 20:21, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” The essence of what I'm describing is missionalliving. Conceiving of yourself as a sent missionary because you are part of God's set-apart and sent people.

Notice the cyclical nature of the mission – we make disciples who go out and make disciples. Notice now the right and left sides – equip and send. These two terms define our strategy. Our mission is achieved in each of these two functions. We're equipping to send and we're sending to equip.

## EQUIP THE SAINTS

The term “equip” is a doctrinal term that comes from Ephesians 4:11-16. “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry...” Ephesians 4:11-16

Jesus gave the church leaders to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Shepherd-teachers, elders, equip the saints by teaching the Word of God.

The “equip” function fulfills the tasks of connecting people to others through discipleship and to the church through partnership. This includes Sunday services and Bible Studies, Connect Groups, discipleship triads, weekday bible studies, retreats and conferences, family worship, fellowship opportunities, as well as informal times together for iron to sharpen iron.

Equip is what we do within. The church gathers to be equipped. And we are equipped to be sent. To live by the faith we proclaim and to proclaim the faith by which we live.

When the services or the studies or the fellowships conclude and drive away, you are a sent missionary; hopefully encouraged, strengthened & convicted to live on mission because of your time with fellow missionaries. If we do these things with no intention of being sent out, our gatherings are nothing more than socializing. So let's talk “send” now.

## YOU ARE SENT

“Send” comes from Romans 10:14-15 “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

Paul asks a rhetorical question: how will people hear the gospel and believe it if we are not sent out to proclaim it? This is an incredible opportunity the Lord graciously extends to us to partner with Him, taking the gospel to sinners who need the salvation we have been entrusted.

What has the power to change man’s eternal destiny? Not moralism. Not sentimentalism. Only the Gospel is the power of God for salvation.

The point of equipping someone is sending them out by connecting them to purpose through service. The height of discipleship is not greater knowledge, but greater service to God expressed in service to people. But we don’t just serve to serve.

We send people out with servant hearts *so that* they can connect people to God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We serve people so we can save people. Now, to be clear, God saves people, but I’m speaking like Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them...I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”

If we go into the nations with no intention of bringing sinners to Jesus and making disciples of them, with no intent to equip them, we’re just working or just vacationing. It’s good to work. It’s good to take trips. It’s good to go and enjoy the world. But if that’s all we do is enjoy it without engaging the lost in it, what’s the point?

Now watch this, Paul suggests we get to share in the blessings with those whom the Lord allows us to lead to Him! But that requires we live radically missional. Sadly, plenty of Christians die without ever telling a sinner how they can be saved from their sins. Imagine the blessings they miss out on!

Not here, Wildwood! I am convinced that the Lord is calling Wildwood Church to get “radically missional.” That we take the gospel across the street and around the world. That every member realizes they are missionaries, that their neighborhoods, networks, and the nations are their mission field. Wherever you are you are standing on the mission field. Will you join us in the mission? Will you live radically missional?

Blessings to you!

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