

Go



Bro. Ricky Cunningham

Romans 1:14–18

Here at Hardin we believe there are five purposes of the church. We gather, we connect, we serve, we give, and we go. So after coming home from Brazil and getting to go on our behalf, I get to share with you about us, as a church, going. I had the opportunity of sharing the first message in this series and I got to remind us of the responsibility we have gathering together here at Hardin on first day of a brand new week, Sunday, in honor of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we meet together, we display our identity because we are the called out people of God. We meet to carry out the agenda of God's Kingdom. He has given us the keys to the Kingdom, and whatever we do down here, it counts forever. Today we're going to talk about going, but instead of just calling it going, I want to call it scattering. We gather then we scatter. And we're going to talk about gathering and then scattering.

But before we begin, I just gotta share something happened to me the day before I left to go to Brazil. There was a man from Briensburg Baptist Church who dropped an envelope off to Sydney at the church wanting her to give it to me. He and I had talked on the phone and he asked if I would be willing to take something to Brazil to give to three of our team missionaries and one other person who I did not know. The reason this man wanted me to take these items to these four people was because

Briensburg Baptist Church went with us on a mission trip last summer and this man fell in love with our team and this other person who went with us to translate for him. So he dropped off this envelope and written at the top it said, "Pastor Ricky Hardin Brazil missions." And then it said, "Pastor Pedro \$50 Wollace \$50 Bruno \$50 Jonathan Aguiar \$100." And then it said "From George and Nancy." I agreed to take it. So because it had money, I thought I had better make sure it's right. I never actually took the money out but I looked in there and there was a \$100 bill and three \$50 bills, totaling \$250. So I have a backpack that never leaves my side because it's primarily got my passport and money, my personal money, and also the trip expense money I take when I go to Brazil. I don't trust leaving it anywhere but with me. So I decided to put this envelope beside my money and the church's money and my passport. But then something strange happened to me when I picked up that envelope—all of a sudden, I realized I agreed to receive something that wasn't for me it was for someone else. I felt this obligation come over me that I now owed this money to these four people. So I made a commitment to the best of my ability...while I was there I was going to deliver the money to them.

I arrived in Brazil on Saturday morning and guess who picked me up at the airport—Wollace all by himself—and I have this envelope in my backpack. Wollace picks me up, we hug, we get in his car, and he takes me to my hotel and drops me off, and he leaves. It hit me...I forgot to give him his money! This isn't my money; this is his! So he and his wife picked me up that night, and I've got my backpack with me with this money in it. We go out to a lovely supper and then he takes me back to the hotel. I take the elevator up to my room and in the middle of the elevator ride up it hits me...I forgot to give him what had been given to me.

Sunday morning, I get up and I'm going to go to church with Bruno and Kembely. Remember, Bruno's name's on this envelope too. I go to their church in downtown Manaus. It was an awesome church and we had an awesome time. Their church actually meets in a mall. After church, we walked through the mall and I'm thinking boy, this would be neat if Hardin had a mall and we had a church in the mall and you could just go shopping...I mean, it's not good for us guy's pocketbooks, but still! So

we're walking through the mall, having a good time, and we have a great lunch. Then, we get an Uber, I go back to the hotel, and they go to their home. Guess what? I didn't give them their money!

Sunday night I go to church with Wollace and Marjorie. Wow, it's a church that has over 12,000 people in attendance! They have four services on Sunday. I'm in a church service with about 3000 people, I'm sitting with Wollace, and we have a great time. We go out to eat supper again, I go back to the hotel, and guess what? I forget to give him his money. This is bothering me! How can I have something with me that belongs to someone else, but when I'm with them I don't remember to give it to them? So here's what happened. He picks me up on Monday morning to drive me to the airport because on I'm going to fly to Manaus without Wollace and Marjorie and I'm going to be in Parintins for five days before they come. I've told everybody on the team that I don't want anybody with me for these five days who speaks English because I'm going to navigate the whole city of Parintins by myself and try to speak Portuguese. But guess what was on my mind? I've got something that belongs to Wollace. So, before I got on that plane I said, "Wollace, here's \$50 that George wants you to have and here's \$100 that he wants Jonathan have. I don't know Jonathan but you do, so will you give it to him?" He said he would. I said, "Now when you give it to Jonathan, I want you to send me a picture. I want the \$100 bill in the picture so that I know you gave to him what was given to me that I'm giving to you, because this isn't yours; this is his." He agreed to do that.

Now, get this picture. Bruno and Kembely are flying on the plane with me because Kembely's mother lives in Parintins and they were going to stay with her, but I won't be seeing them for those five days because I wanted to do this on my own, but I'm on a plane with them now, and guess what? I forgot again to give them their money! Five days go by and it's now time for the RBBI. I start teaching the book of Romans, and all of a sudden, a thought hits me...in my backpack right beside me, I've got Bruno's money. So I just call a timeout, I say to Bruno, "Bruno, I have \$50 that I owe you. Can I give this to you now?" He says yes and we announce to everybody what I'm going to do and I go over, get out the backpack, and give Bruno

his \$50. Pastor Pedro is sitting in the back. He's on this list. It never goes through my mind to give Pastor Pedro his money at the same time. Pastor Pedro is a great friend of mine! Can I tell you when I gave Pastor Pedro his money? I never did. I mean I did, but I was in the airport getting ready to fly home and I was leaving some of the church trip money with Wollace for Hardin Brazil to do ministry in the next few months, and I see the envelope and it's still got a \$50 bill in it. Pastor Pedro and Luiza had flown with me on the plane from Parintins back to Manaus the day before so they could see their children, we said goodbye at the airport, and it never went through my mind I had something that belonged to him! So now, guess what I have to do? I called Pastor Pedro on the phone (I had a conversation with him in his language of Portuguese!) and I said, "Pastor Pedro, George from Briensburg sent \$50 with me. I was supposed to give it to you, but I couldn't remember to give it to you. Is it okay if I leave it with Wollace and let him give it to you?" He said yes.

My envelope is empty because I was entrusted with something that wasn't for me it was for someone else; that reminded me of the Apostle Paul. Let's open our Bibles to Romans chapter 1 verses 14 through 18 and hear what he has to say to the church this morning. Now, before we read the whole text, look at verse 14. The ESV says, "I am under obligation..." The King James, New King James, and other translations say, "I am debtor..."

Scripture

"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.' For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

Paul said I'm a debtor. He's introducing himself to the church at Rome. He's never been there, never preached there, but he wants to go to preach

there after he's dropped off an offering in Jerusalem. He wants to go preach to the church at Rome that he might have some fruit there, but ultimately, he wants their support in taking the gospel to Spain. He tells them he feels an obligation to come and share with them. The King James says Paul said I'm a debtor. Now, most of the time when we think of someone being a debtor, we think of someone who's borrowed something like money from someone else, a bank or person, and now they're in debt until they repay that loan. Normally, there is a payment schedule for that person to pay back, and then one day they are relieved of the debt when everything is paid. But I think we agree spiritually that's not how Paul's using this phrase. I think he's using it as I used my story earlier. Paul believes he was entrusted with something, and the reason he was entrusted with something wasn't for him only but it was given to him for other people...and it made him feel like he was a debtor. He needed to give to others what God had given to him, and that was the gospel. He lived his life with an obligation so that when he met people, he just questioned—is this a person to whom I'm supposed to give what's been given to me, which is the gospel. Wow... Can I ask you this question? As a Christian, do you believe you've been given the gospel, and do you believe it wasn't just given for you but it was given for others? Do you feel a sense when you meet people—is this someone I should give what I have too, because it's really for them and that's the reason it was given to me? Or do you never think about that? This is really serious.

Paul said I'm eager to preach the gospel. This word, preach, is not what we normally think of. This is not the word that means to stand in front of a group of people and deliver a message that you've prayed over, that you've studied from God's Word, and you believe as the pastor of a church or as an apostle, you have a word for an audience. This word basically means to share, to publicize, which means to make known, to proclaim, to just announce good news. Wow...is this exciting? Paul's eager to share the good news. Now, we know what the good news is, right? The good news is Jesus. Paul, when writing the church at Corinth, defines the gospel basically as the death, burial, resurrection, and appearance of Jesus. The good news is God so loved us that He sent His Son in a body like ours to take on sin. And after 33 years, He condemned sin in the flesh, was

tempted like we are, yet not one time did He sin so that He could ultimately go to a cross and die our death. And as the Son, face the wrath of God, pay our penalty, and break sins power. Then after making atonement, dying, being buried, three days later rising again. That message has been entrusted to you and it's been entrusted to me just like it has the Apostle Paul. When we receive this good news, when we receive this gift from God, it wasn't for us only; it was for others. So here's the question. How many of you feel that obligation? How many of us honestly get up and feel like we owe something to somebody?

I went to Brazil, not just to teach the book of Romans, I went to Brazil and for the first time realized that I was a debtor. Not to God, but to Pedro, to Wollace, to Bruno, and to Jonathan, because a man who loved them gave me something that was not for me but was for them. How many of us have that sense as a believer that God has given us the gospel, but He didn't give us the gospel for us He gave us the gospel for someone else—and we live looking for opportunities to share that, make it known, publicize it? How many of us have had the opportunity, but we were so locked in on something else that when they leave, we thought... *Oh man, I blew it!* Please tell me this is happening to you. We can't just gather, we can't just connect, we can't just serve, and we can't just give; we scatter, and we scatter for a purpose! And that purpose is to give to others what God has given to us.

Paul says I'm eager to share this good news, and then he's going to give us four reasons why he's eager. Here's the first thing he says, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel." Now, I've never thought a great deal about that phrase because I didn't believe Paul was ashamed of the gospel; I thought that's just something he said. But maybe there were times he was ashamed of the gospel. I mean, why would you say this if you didn't struggle with that a little bit? Here's what I think Paul knows. I think Paul knew there were times when we Christians truly are ashamed of the gospel. I mean, we're ashamed to tell it to our dad, we're ashamed to tell it to our granddad, we're ashamed to tell it to our boss, and we're ashamed to tell it to our best friend...you've been there before. After he

drops off this love offering, Paul is eager to get to Rome because he's eager to go to Spain, and he's eager because he's not ashamed.

Now, why would Paul have been ashamed? I think there are two reasons. He tells us this in 1st Corinthians chapter 1, verses 23 and 24. When Paul talks about the sharing of the gospel and the proclaiming of the gospel, he talked about how the message was foolishness to the Gentiles and it was a stumbling block to Jews. Can I be totally honest with you? This is really a foolish story. If it was not for God's Holy Spirit empowering this message, I don't think any of us would believe this. That there was a God who loved His creation so much that He sent His Son in a body just like theirs to take on sin. And to redeem them, God put Him on a cross and put all their sin on Him so that He became a sin offering. And then God turns His face from Him and pours His wrath down upon Him so that He suffers the eternal consequences of Hell! The one who had never done anything wrong would pay for a bunch of sinners where there's none good, no not one; there are none righteous. There's not one who seeks Him, there's not one who loves Him; they all hate Him. Then He died, but He got back up and then went back to His Father's right hand side. We're ashamed of that sometimes. We're ashamed to tell someone that if you believe that message you come into our right relationship with God...we don't tell it. We will amen it in here, but then not talk about it at the plant, not talk about it in the showroom, not talk about it at the ball game. It's a stumbling block. To tell the Jewish people that their Messiah died and that death on the cross means there are no works we can do—it's complete trust in Him not in ourselves, and we're not under law now we're under grace—the Jew just couldn't fathom that! So many Christians would not tell the Jew, because they were ashamed.

Now what did Paul say in verse 24? There's another group. There's the Jew who the message is a stumbling block to, the Gentile who it is foolishness to, but then he said, "...but to those who are called, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God." See, the reason Paul is not ashamed of the gospel is because he knew there was a group who this message would not be foolishness to, it would not be a stumbling block to, but it would be to them the power of God for salvation. Wow! And that's what he says here,

"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 to the Gentiles." See, it's not to one group of people, it's not to one race of people—it's to everyone everywhere, and this good news that we've been entrusted with is the power of God! It's the power of God to bring a sinner to a full and final salvation, where one day he's just like Jesus and he has a glorified body, and he lives with God forever and ever! But before then, while he's still here, God justifies him. God brings him into a right relationship with Himself and then begins to sanctify him until the day he dies, moving him further and further away from the image of Adam and more and more into the image of Jesus Christ, and that's the good news we've been given! It's the power of God! It's the key to the Kingdom that unlocks a brand new life for that person who believes the message! That's been given to you and it's been given to me, and it wasn't given to us just for us—it was given to us for them, amen!

Paul says, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith *for* faith..." Whoa! This gospel that we've been entrusted with, do you know what it reveals? It reveals the righteousness of God. Those of you who study the book of Romans before, you know that righteousness of God is used three different ways in Romans. There are times it's referring to an attribute of God, referring to that God is righteous. God's just, God always does what's right, can't do what's wrong, ever. So it talks about His very nature, this very attribute He has...He's righteous. But then, there's another time where He's talking about the saving activity of God...how God makes a man right with Himself in His Son Jesus. And then there's another time it's being used towards talking about the divine accomplishment of God. I want you to catch this—the divine accomplishments of God are when God transforms that sinner into a saint. He does not leave him as he was, but He makes him brand new. It's not a work of man it's a work of God. I want you to listen to me. We've been entrusted with the good news of how God makes a man right with Himself. And when God makes that man right with Himself, it reveals that God is righteous to do it! And when God does it, He doesn't leave the sinner as he was; He transforms him into a saint of God. Wow...that's the message we've been entrusted with! It's been given to us, but it's been given to us for someone else.

So, why do we need to deliver it? Why do we not need to just gather; why do we also need to scatter, and why do we scatter more than we gather? Because verse 18 says the wrath of God is already being revealed, right now, against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. Here's what this is teaching. Yes, we know there's going to be a future aspect of wrath where God judges man in sin for sin and he's separated from God forever and ever in a lake of fire, but man's already under the wrath of God right now—that's a sinner. Do you know what the wrath of God is according to Romans 1? God lets sinful man be as sinful as he wants to be. You and I at the church look around at an believer and wonder why God's letting him get by with what He's getting by with. Listen, he's not getting by with anything. He's already separated from God and God has backed off. God's turned him over to his sinful ways and letting him be as sinful as he wants to be. So the reason God wants us to share what's been given to us with that man is so that he can be saved from that. He can be saved from being a sinner. He can be saved from a life that's as sinful as it wants to be because God knows there's tragedy in that life for that person. Do you know who He uses to bring the good news to him? You and I.

See, here's what we know. I gave the money to the men, but it wasn't my responsibility to account for how they spent the money; it's theirs. We're just called to share; that's as far as we can go with a person. I used to not share because I thought it was my responsibility to convince them to believe, and if they didn't believe it was on me. God opened my eyes a long time ago that that's not true. Are you listening to me? We've been entrusted to give the good news. We do not cause the person to believe or not believe—that's between them and God. We what we believe is that whoever confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believes in their heart that God raised Him from the dead, they will be saved. Because with the heart one believes to righteous and with the mouth confession is made to salvation, for whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. We also believe this—can they call on whom they have not believed—no. Can they believe in whom they have not heard? No. Can they hear without someone being sent? No. We are sent.

If I understand Scripture correctly, Paul says no one seeks God. None is righteous, no not one. God's not telling the world that He's raised up a church, so go to church. He told the church to go to the world; He didn't tell them to come to us. Oh, we're ready here at Hardin, it's the home court advantage—come to Hardin on Sunday morning and we going to tell you about Jesus. No. We tell them about Jesus where they are, in their home, in their business, at our work, at a ball game, on a vacation. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of God. You've been entrusted, I've been entrusted...we've been entrusted with the gospel, which is the power of God! When shared, it reveals how God makes a man right with Himself, and that reveals that God is righteous to bring a sinner into a right relationship with Him and not leave him as he is but transform him into a child of God, a saint of God!

So, we believe in the great commission—make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching all things He has commanded us. Then we have this promise. It doesn't say I will be with you always even to the end of age; it says I *am* with you always. Now, can I just be honest here? If we go back to Acts chapter 1 and Matthew chapter 28 and read those great commission accounts, we are the end of the earth here in Hardin. We were not Jerusalem, we were not Judea, we were not Samaria, we weren't Europe, we weren't Africa, we weren't Southeast Asia, we weren't Japan, and we were in Australia. Do you know where we were? We were the end of the earth. But praise God, the gospel got here, amen? Now what do we do? Do we just want a better life, or are we about us? Or do we turn this thing around and take the gospel, starting in Hardin, and we go to Marshall County, to Calloway County, we go to Graves County, we go to Henry County, Tennessee...and you know that county on the other side of the river up north of there? Yeah, we go there too. We go to Brazil, we go to Nicaragua, we go to Africa, we go to Southeast Asia, but we don't choose here or there; we choose both.

So, when we scatter in just a few minutes, here's who I want you to have on your mind, who I believe God may have given the gospel to you for. I learned this when we used CWT to train ourselves on how to witness here as a church. I believe this comes from a man named George Thompson

who was an evangelism professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He died of cancer in 1980. He came up with this little thing called Concentric Circle of Concern. I just want you to imagine your life being in a little circle and there are some people around you called your immediate family. Then there are some people around them called your relatives. There are some people around them called your friends. Then there are people around them called your neighbors. There are some people around them called your associates. Then there are some people around them called your acquaintances. Then there are a whole lot of other people you come in contact with but you do not know them; they're just person X to you. Is it possible that God gave the gospel to you to give to a family member, or a relative, or a friend, or a neighbor, or an associate, or an acquaintance, or a person that you do not know but you're going to meet this week? Is it possible? Are you going to live like it? Are we going to do more than just gather, connect, serve, and give? Are we going to scatter and just share this good news that's been entrusted to us? So, I want us to pray for ourselves.

I almost forgot to give Pedro his money. \$50 doesn't sound like much to me or you, but that's big in Brazil. I don't want Pedro living without what was given to him that was given to me. I want to tell you what's on my heart in a fresh way. I don't want anyone else in my life living without what I'm supposed to give to them that was given to me, and that's the good news. So can we pray for a family member? It might be a relative, it might be two cousins, it might be an aunt. Is there a friend, or neighbor around the corner? That person we've been working with for twenty years who we talked about basketball and football and baseball and family with, but never Jesus. Yeah. Maybe it's that person who takes our credit card at Walmart, at Culver's...you know, that person we run into at the bank. We don't really know them, but we're acquainted. Can we ask God to lay them on our heart and just see? It may not, but let's just see if what's been given to us we're supposed to give to them. And then that person X...you know, that person who comes into our life, and wow, all of a sudden there's just an opportunity! We don't normally do this kind of thing, but we just sense that we really need to because the conversation is letting us talk to you about what we've been given, and we share it. Or possibly, person

X isn't in just Calloway and Marshall County, or even Kentucky. They could be in Brazil or Nicaragua or Africa. Person X may even be a nation Do you know what God just might impress upon you in the next few weeks as you pray? A short term mission trip. I know it's completely out of your comfort zone. I get it. Or possibly, He's calling you and your family to move to a nation so that you can share the good news of Jesus.

I have just one final question. Have you been entrusted with the good news? Then will you share it? The next time we say we are sent, we're all going to be reminded that we gather to worship on Sunday, but then Monday through Saturday we scatter to share what's been given to us. I can't tell you how good it feels to come home with an empty envelope. I can't tell you how good it feels when you share the gospel. Don't make this about whether they believe or don't believe; make this about sharing the gospel. That's all we're called to do.