

# The "Christmas Gift" of Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, everyone. A warm welcome to you who are visiting, whether it be from university, catching up with family and friends on this holiday season. My name is BK. I have the pleasure of being one of the pastors here. So I'm going to ask you to open up your Bibles.

This may surprise you, but we are in Romans chapter 1. Here you thought I was going to take a break from Romans for a Christmas-themed sermon. Are both right? We are. So please turn your Bibles to Romans 1. If you do not have one, please raise your hand because you're going to want it. I want you to see the words that are in this text that God has provided for us. I want you to see this truth. If you have a phone, you can look it up on your phone.

Amazing. A lot of people used to say, you know, it's really not a real Bible unless, you know, it's in this book and paper. But when your eyes start going and you need to make letters seem big, phones are a godsend, are they not, for reading your Bible? I've got my friend, he's got like six of the same Bibles and you can tell his eyes are getting worse and worse as the fonts get bigger with each and every Bible. So listen, you guys all set for Christmas? Amazon don't deliver tomorrow, guys.

So now's the time. You'd better have it all straightened. I know for us, Christmas Eve, do you guys remember Christmas Eve last year? Roof caved in in the church and our house got flooded.

So we're kind of ahead of the game this Christmas Eve. So Danielle and I were saying, this is like the best Christmas Eve ever. All right, let's bring our attention to God, even though we've got a lot of good thoughts regards to Christmas, Christmas lights, festive music, and sweet Christmas baking. We still rely on the power of the Lord Jesus Christ here.

[ 2 : 08 ] Dear Holy Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for your son, Jesus Christ, who came. We thank you for this time where we've been able to use this time of celebration of your birth to extend it to family and friends, to enjoy a festive meal, to enjoy a festive time.

Father, we live in a world that even most recently, the Human Rights Council has declared Christmas to be somewhat racist or that it is not an inclusive holiday to which I am glad the government and the people of Canada have said, no, it isn't. It is a good holiday and we want this holiday. We want to use this time to come together. Father, nor do we want to make Christmas just a simple holiday where we take time off from work to spend time with family and friends, but I pray that even this morning as we get into the text of this sermon that we could truly understand the gift that has been given to us in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

So God, I pray that you would give my words power. May they give them truth. May you give us ears and hearts to hear this Christmas message. We ask these things in your name. Amen.

It's kind of funny because I was thinking what would be the perfect Christmas theme to preach on that we've all kind of heard in churches over and over again. But as I pondered upon the text that we are in in Romans 1 verses 16 to 17, if you'd like to turn there, this text that we've stated is the entire theme of this book of Romans that we're reading.

But not only that, it's the theme of the entire Bible. It is which upon everything hinges on and nothing centers more on the birth of Jesus Christ. Amen.

[ 4 : 15 ] As we are going to see, Jesus Christ is the son of God who was a long promised king, a long promised redeemer, a long promised rescuer.

But it's also possibly it tells us about the greatest gift that God could ever give us. Let's read with me just Romans 1 verses 16 at 17.

This is the Apostle Paul. He is writing this letter to a church in Rome. This church in Rome is made up of both Jews and Gentiles. And he says, I am not ashamed of the gospel.

And that word, I am not ashamed, he's using a method of speech to say, I glory in this gospel. For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

To the Jew first and also to the Greek. So it's an all-inclusive gospel. For in it, this is the gift, the righteousness of God is revealed.

[ 5 : 24 ] From faith for faith. And as it is written, he quotes a long prophet had written many hundreds of years ago, Habakkuk, the righteous shall live by faith.

Now, I need to give you a quick recap. If you haven't been here, just to help us understand where we're going. Paul has, I pulled out certain words that mean something. So Paul is glorying in a salvation or a gospel that brings total salvation.

It's that when someone's saved, they're saved from the past, present, and future. And it's done, it's guaranteed through God's power. It's a display of God's saving power. That the reality is, and guys, we know this.

And if you don't know this, I don't know whether you're horribly ignorant or wonderfully blessed. But the reality is, we live in an absolute broken world.

And we don't always see that living in the Western world, living in Squamish. It's a glorious place. But we do have people who now live here who come from parts of the world where murder, safety, living in places where your windows need to be barred.

[ 6 : 48 ] It's not normal. I remember my first year, my first year of university, college, I went down to states. I had a baseball scholarship down in Southern California. And a Hispanic family asked me if I'd like to come and spend Thanksgiving with them, which I accepted.

And it was odd to me to see in a neighborhood bullet holes in cars and in the garage. And every single window where I had this Thanksgiving dinner had bars on the house.

I'm from Northern Ontario. I had never seen anything like that. It was like third world. Like I soon learned, when you drove, there's certain exits you get off on.

And there's some you never, when you get off that exit, chances you getting back on aren't very good. And that's normal. But for us in Squamish, what are we worried about?

But my friends, there is an absolute broken world that exists out there. And we need to be rescued from it. Mankind, as much as we try to improve it, we can't.

[ 7 : 54 ] It tells us that we need God. We need a rescuer. We need someone to break us of our selfishness. To rescue us from our sins.

So in this passage, it talks to us that there is this gospel. There's this God's gospel. That God's plan brings total salvation. And when he saves us, he magnifies him.

Not us. And how he does it, it's found in God's word. We hear God's word. And the power of the Holy Spirit works in men to bring about this faith, this power.

And anyone can believe, whether they Jew or Greek. And if you haven't heard those sayings before, it means Jew and everybody else. Everybody else in that known world and in today's world can know this salvation.

Last week, I focused on two specific words. The first one was the word revealed. Look at verse 7. It says, For in it, and it's referring to the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith.

[ 9 : 09 ] And last week, I made the point that the gospel that Paul preached throughout the ancient world was not a new gospel. It wasn't a new message. That word reveal means to expose, to disclose, or to display.

It's almost to bring something into focus, or to clarify. Remember, I was just looking at some old pictures that I had published from an old digital camera.

You know, why bother, right? They looked really good on my flip phone. They don't really look too good. You know, they were so pixelated, right? But now we can zoom in.

But the heart of the message that Paul is preaching to these people 2,000 years ago is not a new message. But it needs to be revealed.

It needs to be clear. It needs to be brought into focus. And that focus is found in Jesus Christ. That birth of Jesus Christ, when he came from heaven, brought everything into focus.

[ 10 : 16 ] So if you look back at verses 1 and 2, it says, Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. Notice what he says.

Which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scripture. He says, so the clarity that we are now seeing in Jesus Christ was preached before.

We just didn't understand. But it was promised before. And the righteousness of God, this gospel that Paul speaks about, is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

The reality is, when we think of Christmas, my friends, this text is the bow on the top of the Christmas story.

This is the bow. This is the beauty. It is that moment when we tear off the wrapping paper of the gifts that we received. And it's staring at us.

[ 11 : 18 ] The righteousness of God. Now, for you who might be unfamiliar with that term, righteousness of God, feel no shame in that.

It's an interesting term, and many people are confused by it. But in essence, the righteousness that man has always struggled is, we want to earn that righteousness.

We understand this is a broken world. And I think we can admit we're a part of the brokenness.

Amen? We are. No matter how good you are, there are certain things you've done raising your kids that have consequences.

There are certain things your parents have done to you, whether good or bad or misaligned or not, that are consequential in your life. You know, and we see in some of those things develop patterns of brokenness.

Patterns of we try to do better, but it just doesn't always seem to work out that way. But there was this guy named Martin Luther, who ended up being the father or birthing the Protestant church.

[ 12 : 41 ] When he read these words, the righteousness of God, he thought that was something he had to do on his own. He had to earn it for himself. It's like he knew God had this wonderful, great Christmas present, but he had to do something to get it.

He understood that God was good, that God was pure, that God was holy, that God was righteous, and God was loving, but he knew there's nothing in me that's lovable.

And he was very much correct. But he wrongly thought that he was the one who had to clean himself up to be right with God.

So we started thinking, what could I do to make things right? And I'm going to read to you from his text. And I said this yesterday, or last week, just a quick quote.

He says, When I was a monk, I wearied myself greatly for almost 15 years. I did daily sacrifice. I tortured myself with fastings, vigils, prayers, and other righteous, rigorous works.

[ 13 : 49 ] And he says, I earnestly thought that I could acquire my righteousness of my own. He says, but then he became angry because even all those he knew, there was somewhat wrong in them.

He knew his heart wasn't right. And he's like, how could this placate this holy God? And he said, even in my best days, my works are like filthy rags in comparison to God's righteousness.

And then as I concluded last week, he understood that salvation was a gift of God for the guilty, not a reward for the righteous.

You see, salvation was a gift of God that is not something that we earn.

Salvation was a gift of God is not something that we do to please God. He understood it was about understanding what God did for him. You see, the gospel, the good news given to us through Jesus Christ is about God's perfection, his flawless character, and his unwavering commitment to holiness.

[ 15 : 16 ] The gospel that he freely offers us this righteousness is a gift wrapped in swaddling clothes, which we find lying in a manger. This is ultimately what Christmas is all about.

Christmas isn't about having a bunch of good feelings. Christmas isn't about wishing peace on earth and goodwill to men.

Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ when God came down and walked among us. In Christmas, we witness the righteousness of God stepping into human history.

Picture this for the moment. The creator of all things, the cosmos, the universe. He is called the king of kings, chooses to make his grand entrance into this world.

He doesn't choose a castle, he chooses a stable. He's born of a virgin, a poor teen virgin, married to Joseph, who don't even make it back to their home city of Nazareth.

[ 16 : 37 ] They're in Bethlehem. And on that day, the one who Scripture tells us upholds the universe with his word lies in a manger, whose birth is celebrated by shepherds.

This, my friends, is the revelation of God's righteousness in the most unexpected package. It is a righteousness that comes from God and it is a righteousness that, believe it or not, satisfies God.

The manger was not just a cradle for a baby. It was a throne for the king of righteousness. The question, and I asked you a question last week, and it's a question that Luther asked, is how is a sinful man made right before a holy God?

And to answer that question for you, that is how it's, do we receive the righteousness of God? The way for us, all people, are who are, we can be made holy through God's righteousness.

It's there. It's in Jesus. The question I have for you this morning is, how do we receive this wonderful gift of God? God, this God that lays in this manger, this baby, and everything he stands for, how does that come into my heart?

[18:18] How does that influence and change me? How do I accept that? The answer is found in verse 17.

Take a look with me. So in it, the righteousness of God is revealed, and that gospel is pointing to Jesus, is revealed from faith.

Faith. What is faith? What is meant by the word faith?

I know it sounds easy, but what do we know about faith? Faith. So first of all, let me tell you something.

Faith is not something that everyone possesses. Everyone does not have faith. Because otherwise, everyone would be justified.

[19:18] So Paul is talking about a very specific type of faith. It does not exist in every person.

But, it is something that every man and woman can possess. Now for the first little while, I want to, to help us understand faith, I want to help you, or demonstrate for you, what faith isn't.

Because we're really confused about what faith is. A lot of people believe that faith is something that I can generate in myself. That if I really try hard enough, and really bring it up, and believe something can happen, it even means ignoring reality, and accepting, what's the opposite of reality?

It's not unreality. Disreality, we'll call it. I'm making up words as we go. But you know what I'm working, right? Well, there's this reality. Belief and faith isn't about believing in something that isn't true.

It's not that we park our mind. It's not like we have a Bible, and it's filled with tales, and faith is calling us to believe these stories that aren't true. No, faith is the opposite.

[20:42] The faith that speaks in the Bible is relying on something that is true and real. If you ever know anything about the Mormon religion, they believe that faith is something that you create in yourself.

If you just think hard on it and trust your feelings, therefore it must be true. So if I have this bottle of liquid that I want to believe is water, but is obviously some kind of acid, and I drink it, my faith can actually change that reality.

That's what they really believe. That's what really believe. Good thing I know it's water. Right? So the question is, can we create faith?

Can I choose to have faith? Well, here's another thing. Faith is not adhering to mathematical principles. So here, what does this mean? How many people have used an airplane here?

Most of us, right? You've flown on an airplane. Now, if you found out that airplanes crash one out of every time, 20 times, would you still fly on an airplane?

[21:59] Those are still pretty good odds, are they not? How about one in 50? Would you still fly? How about one in 100?

One in 100 flights crash and everybody is killed. Are you still flying? Probably not. Right? It would depend on how bad you want to get to that other end.

Planes crash 1.19% or 1.19 in every 100,000. What that means is 0.0000119% of the time, planes fly.

That's why we fly. It's not because we have faith that planes are going to work or we have faith that the pilot knows where he's going. We're actually, a lot of people argue that's faith.

You have faith in the plane. No, no, no. You're just measuring mathematical probabilities at that point and you think it's a pretty good bet, right? That's not faith. Faith, another thing that we know about faith, it's not for a special type of person.

[23:05] The Jews in the Old Testament believed faith was only for them but Paul has specifically state that Greeks can have it just as much as Jews can.

Faith is not if I only had more information than I would believe. You ever been there? We talk about that a lot. We have these books on apologetics. We want to give people, we want to convince them of the reasons to believe.

I'm going to give you a hundred reasons why you should believe in Jesus Christ. Sometimes those are helpful but you're still relying on mathematical probabilities again.

If I give you enough information, you will believe. That is not the faith that Paul is talking about.

There's a famous mathematician who said the reason was he believed in Jesus Christ was he says if I'm wrong about Jesus Christ but I live according to his morals at the end of the day and there is no God, doesn't matter.

I lived a really good life. But then he also stated but if I live against those laws and live for myself and at the end of the day there's a heaven and hell, man, he didn't want to risk those probabilities, right?

[ 24 : 25 ] He was a mathematician, Descartes. That's really not true faith either. You see, faith knows what it is doing. Faith is not unconscious.

It's not our subconscious. But here's the biggest conception of faith and I need you to hear me out this morning. Faith, the biggest misconception that many Christians believe that faith is a condition of salvation.

Did you hear me on that? one of the biggest misconceptions of the Christian faith is that faith is a condition of salvation. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved.

You've heard me say that. What people mean by that sadly is if we believe that it's a condition of salvation, that means that it's no different than the law.

If you remember in the Old Testament, if you believed you followed, if you followed the law, you would be saved. So a lot of people believe in the New Testament while Jesus, God, Jesus said, you know what, the law was too tough.

[ 25 : 41 ] I'm going to really make it easy on you. I'm just going to have Jesus Christ born in a manger, raised up on the cross, and just simply say, believe and everything will be okay. But all of a sudden, you've put a work in to receive this gift of Jesus Christ, this gift.

Now, if salvation were now simply believing in Jesus Christ, that would mean that God rewrote the way of salvation.

It's like, okay, the law was too tough. I get it. So how about I just rewrite it this way so that faith becomes the new law because it's easier and simpler.

Now, if you weren't here last week, you're handicapped because one of the points that I made is that when Jesus Christ lived on earth, he fulfilled the law. Remember all that?

He had to fulfill the law. He still has to live by the law. But the reason we know that we're not, salvation doesn't come by our faith, it's because Ephesians 2.8 tells us, for by grace you have been saved through faith.

[ 27 : 08 ] And this is not your doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast.

Do you understand there's a tension I'm teaching you right now that has endured in Christian history. If we believe that my faith, that I actively put into place to believe in God, that becomes a work that I'm saved by how I believe.

Do you get me with that one? All right? It can't be that because if it was because of my faith, then I'd be earning my salvation and I could boast about it.

So let me give you a quote. It says, faith, and this is the true measure of faith, faith is the contradiction of everything that is meritorious in man.

What I mean is the law was all about earning rights with God, points with God. Faith is the exact opposite of that.

[ 28 : 22 ] Faith is the contradiction, as Martin Lloyd-Jones said, he says, the negation of every tenancy in himself to say that his merit is enough.

He says, if what you call faith has not pushed out of your life every sense of worthiness you ever have, you do not have faith.

I'm going to read that again. I know I'm playing with your minds a little bit. It's a complex thought. But if what you call faith has not pushed out of your life every sense of worthiness you ever had, you do not have faith.

So that means if there's something in you that you think you merited God's favor, whether it was through a work or through your mom or your dad, or you came to church, if you have any sort of any ounce of faith in that, that's not saving faith.

Because God said it only can be the righteousness of God, right? So the question is how do we get that? Right? But we've always been taught to believe that it's through our faith.

[ 29 : 41 ] But that is never how Paul defines faith for us. You see, if faith has anything to do with you, it's a work. And that would mean there's something you did.

And Scripture is clear that faith is a gift of God. It is something you have or you do not have. So the question is, for some of you who are novel theologians and you like to think about Calvinism or free will, this is the ultimate question.

Can I choose to believe? Can someone choose to believe? There's an argument that exists in Christianity that we have free will.

Can I choose to believe? Can I choose to have faith? Most of us would say at some point we made a choice, right?

But Paul in 1 Corinthians says, now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God. that we might understand the things freely given to us by God.

[ 30 : 51 ] And we impart this in words, not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

Therefore, the natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are folly to him, for he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerning.

What that means is, faith is a spiritual thing, and if God hasn't given me faith, I can't understand it.

Are you with me on that? So I'm actually not choosing to believe. God has given me the faith to believe. Are you with me on that?

I know it's kind of funny, but it's something that God has to freely give us to believe, and that gives us an understanding of spiritual things.

[ 32 : 00 ] God has to believe. See, this verse that I just read to you, Paul exposes the problem with free will, that without God giving you the faith to understand, you will never understand.

You cannot see the choice in front of you to even make that choice. To put it very simply, you need faith to believe.

It is only the man or woman who has faith that can see it. It is only the man or woman who has faith who accept it. It's only the man or woman who has faith who can glorify in it.

And it's only the man or woman of faith who can rejoice in it. So how am I saved? I say ask God for faith.

Pray to the Lord to have mercy on your soul that you can understand these things. Pray for faith.

For faith is a gift of God. It's to implore the king of this world.

[ 33 : 11 ] You can have understanding that Jesus Christ sent his son to die for you. You know you might not be bad and wicked and stolen and burnt some house down, but you might have burnt something down in hatred, anger, frustration.

There might be a part of your life where you live for your glory and not God's glory. You have really good kids so you can show up the neighbors that your kids are better than their kids.

My house is better than your house. My lawn is browner than your lawn, right? Only in Squamish.

the only thing you can do, my friends, is you can understand these things that I've told you, but to God, to give you that faith, to earn God's righteousness, you have to ask him, Lord, give me faith, for faith is the instrument by which we receive God's righteousness.

Faith is the instrument by which we receive God's righteousness. Our faith doesn't justify us, that would turn it into a work and you'd be able to boast about it, but the faith is given to me to believe.

If you were here and you're with a family member and you know they believe, and you can ask them more questions, but the question I would ask you is just simply pray to the Lord, Lord, give me this faith to believe.

[ 34 : 47 ] Now, note what else he says about this faith. Continuing in this verse, it says in verse 17, he says, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith.

Now, what does faith by faith mean? Believe it or not, it's not a poetic phrase, it's essentially a road map for the Christian life. We begin with faith.

Faith has given us, but faith that God's righteousness is a gift we cannot earn, but it's an acknowledgement of our need, it's an acknowledgement of our brokenness that essentially says,

God, I can't do this.

But it doesn't stop there. It's not a one-time event. Faith is a continuous way of living. It's waking up each and every morning saying, God, I trust you with this day.

I trust you with this day. I trust you with this day even when my feelings want me to do the opposite. Even when I think my good common sense is telling me to do this.

[ 35 : 54 ] Even when I have all these fears that are overtaking me that I don't believe I'm worthy enough, I'm not good enough, we just say, God, I trust you with this day.

It's navigating the uncertainties, the joys, the heartaches, and truly saying, God, I trust you with this day. It's not a one-time decision, it's a lifestyle.

And what grows our faith is every day as we walk in this faith, our understanding of spiritual thing grows, does it not? There's many people here who have silver hair and who've walked with the Lord for a long, long time.

And God seems to bring situations into their lives that we would say, I would never be able to survive that. But they can tell you quite clearly, God is good.

Trust him. You see, it is only the man or woman who has the gift of faith, who sees the righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ, can get it.

[ 37 : 08 ] like I said, how do you get this gift of faith? You ask, you pray, you cry, you ask for God's mercy.

Lord, help me. Lord, I offer you nothing. You are everything. God's mercy. I offer you to God's mercy. Now, note this last phrase of this verse, the just shall live by faith, this quote from this Old Testament apostle, that word just means to be justified, to be made right with God, that when God looks at you, say he's a judge, he sees you as completely innocent.

It says, the just shall live by faith. The one who's been made just by the work of Jesus Christ on the power of the cross gives you that faith.

See, God's redemptive plan has always been about faith. As one author wrote, this declaration speaks not merely of a momentary belief, but a lifestyle characterized by unwavering trust in the promises of God.

The righteous are not those who rely on their own merit, rather they are those who live in continuous dependence on the righteousness provided by God through faith in his son.

[ 38 : 39 ] Our society is absolutely contrary to this, does it not? It lifts up those who pull up their boot straps and make it on their own.

Even in the worst possible times, you can do it. The gospel message, it's interesting when with the gospel we see the word humility, which Jesus Christ uses, was considered an insult at the time that the Bible was written.

Oh, that guy Cam Cairns, he's a humble guy. What a jerk. Right? But we know it's a self-effacing guy. We know it's someone who gives his credit to God, who says, I only go therefore by the glory of God.

So how do we live this faith out over Christmas? Let me bring it back. I'm going to let you guys in on a secret. I'm not really that naive enough to know that Christmas is perfect.

And for some of us, Christmas can be a challenge. It can be a challenge of loneliness, but more than anything else, it can be a challenge to our faith.

[ 40 : 01 ] This world posits this somewhat, this allure where everyone's going to experience these incredible blessings can be trying on us.

It can be trying for those who desire things to be perfectly right. Right? Some of us like perfection. We're trying to create a mood or an atmosphere.

And when things don't work out, perhaps it's the broken Christmas lights. In our house, we found out it's the special ornaments that got chewed up by the dog.

Right? The burnt cookies. Could be someone gave you a fruitcake. Let me ask. What's with fruitcakes? Right? It's not a blessing. That's a sign of unfriendliness anyway.

Then we're supposed to get together with people who are family. Let's be honest. Family's challenging. But sometimes we have family members that aren't there with us anymore. we can't have everyone that we loved to be with us.

[ 41 : 06 ] We have old memories that we want to recreate and they can't be created. It's hard. And I don't even think I need to mention the financial pinch that Christmas places on us.

But if I can assure you of one thing, it's this. Faith thrives in the mess. Faith thrives in the mess.

Faith is not about having everything together. Faith is about trusting God in the midst of chaos. So whether you're stuck in holiday traffic or the plane doesn't get there on time or maybe the turkey is a little dry.

When you're navigating the complexities of the family gathering and your uncle talks about that one thing nobody else wants to talk about, that's your faith moment. It's saying God, I trust you to bring joy in the mess to bring peace in the chaos.

Notice it doesn't say I trust God to bring peace. Sometimes it's impossible to have peace. But it is possible to trust God to bring you joy in the chaos of life.

[ 42 : 30 ] I think the perfect example is Mary and Joseph. On the news that we are to receive that they had a child coming to them and you knew a couple of years ago I preached through this.

The culture would not have been very friendly to them. Scholars believe that Joseph purposely went to Bethlehem to get out of the family pressure on Nazareth.

Just think about it. Mary says I'm having a baby, I'm having a baby. Oh my goodness, it's a daughter out of wedlock. Right? That's not a big surprise nowadays but back then you're living in these family tribes all of a sudden, wait, we're asking this one girl into our tribe that already has a child?

Joseph, how can you trust that? Like you're responsible for the growth of our tribe and you're bringing in this unworthy woman? And then she says no, no, no, no, no, I didn't cheat on Joseph. Trust me, trust me, trust me. Well, how did it happen? Oh, the Spirit of God came upon me and I got pregnant. Now you got a looney tune woman living in your house.

[ 43 : 40 ] What's worse? Right? Like that's massive pressure that they had to deal with. In fact, Matthew tells us that Joseph wanted to put his wife away for divorce.

So much so was he so adamant on it an angel had to appear to him and say that's not going to happen. This is Jesus.

What did they have to do? They had to put faith in the midst of overwhelming chaos. Amen? Amen? they had to trust Jesus at the very beginning.

There's one thing that I'm trying to bring to point from this book of Romans is that as we approach Romans, we must or approach Christmas, we must recognize that it's not a random event, but it's the culmination of God's faithfulness to his promises.

We're going to look at some of his promises tonight. From the Garden of Eden to the prophets foretelling the coming Messiah, God's plan unfolded with absolute precision.

[ 45 : 02 ] Dare I say perfection? Christmas is the fulfillment of God's covenantal promise, promise, a promise that required faith on the part of Mary and Joseph, faith on the part of the shepherds, faith on the part of all who encountered the Savior.

In the birth of Jesus, God revealed his faithfulness to his covenantal promises. The righteous shall live by faith and in Christ, faith finds its ultimate expression.

What I find incredible about this story, this event in history, it's that it's not just history, it's personal. It's personal.

It's just not about knowing a sort of facts in our heads. It's literally crying out, God, I want that faith. For those of you who do not know Jesus Christ as your own Lord and Savior, my prayer for you is that God will truly reveal himself to you in such a personal way that you will truly have faith, that you will ask for it and believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and will be saved, that you will have an understanding of God's ultimate love for you, that God calls you to his family.

And for those of you this morning who are members of the family of God, I pray that you may live with the confidence that you are not earning your righteousness, you're receiving God's righteousness.

[ 46 : 48 ] As you face your challenges, you live them by faith, trusting in God who gave us the greatest gift, the gift of Jesus Christ, which we celebrate, the birth of his son, tomorrow on Christmas Day.

Let's pray. Dear gracious Lord and Heavenly Father, I know there's a level of complexity to what I spoke about today, but I pray that you make it clear that to us that faith is not something we generate in ourselves, but we're dependent upon you again.

Last week we learned that we are dependent upon you for your righteousness, and we are dependent upon you for your faith. This Christianity is a strange thing.

It's really about emptying ourselves of everything that we think is good in us, that God would be pleased, and asking him for his righteousness and the faith that he freely gives to those who ask. Father, for those who are here that do not believe, I pray that they would generally ask you to reveal yourself to them in a real personal way, a way that is a part of their story.

[ 48 : 09 ] Father, our stories are all unique. My faith simply came through the divorce of my parents that caused me to ask, God, I need you.

For some, it happened in the moment of health needs. For others, marriages were struggling. For some people, others asked for it because their children were hurting.

And others had financial needs that they knew they could never solve on their own and finally gave it to you. And you promised to make all those things right, but more importantly, you promised to make our relationship with you perfect once again.

And we all have this spark of the Almighty in us. You created us in your own image. We know what righteousness is. We know what unrighteousness is in this world.

We have a whole world that is so wanting to fix what's going on in Israel because we know it's wrong. People, children are dying. But the methods that they want to make this righteous are just as evil as the unrighteousness that we see.

[ 49 : 26 ] Let's create peace by killing more people. Wow, did we ever mess things up, Lord.

Father, I do pray for the Jewish nation to call themselves to faith in you, to believe that you are indeed the Redeemer, the Messiah, who has long since promised that we rejoice in the prophecies of the Old Testament.

And we accept them here as Gentiles, Greeks. For those of our Jewish brethren who have believed in the name of Jesus Christ and understand that Yeshua is the one long promised, may you continue to bless them and bless their testimonies of righteousness as they teach this truth to a lost people.

God, you go before us. Our lives are not mysteries to you. We don't need to explain how badly we've messed things up.

And some of us, we don't need to explain how someone else messed up our lives. You know these things and you're willing and ready to give us faith to believe in you and a faith that will help us grow and find joy in the sin of this world.

And all of God's people on this eve of Christmas day said, Amen.