

Title: "Spiritual Formation in Higher Education: A case for grace-filled service delivery from the book of Romans."

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Abstract:

Spiritual formation is one of the recognized benchmarks of higher education that is Christian (Maddix and Estep, 2013). Ministry to students in Christian higher education is more of mentoring by faculty members than didactic delivery of academic content in classrooms. Students catch the everlasting gospel through the lifestyle of their teachers than through the materials taught to them. This concept paper proposes a grace-filled approach to service delivery in higher education as the most efficient and effective method. Three aspects of the gospel of righteousness by faith in Christ Jesus; justification, sanctification, and glorification are explored through the book of Romans. This exploration is applied to character regeneration, character sustenance, and character transference in youth and young adults in higher education. Changed lives that are prepared to face the realities of life from the grace-filled leadership and mentorship of Christian teachers are the resultant outcome.

Introduction

The book of Romans is an incarnational embodiment of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ delivered by proxy through the Apostle Paul to the Christians in the city of Rome. The church was not one of those started by Paul, since he claimed he had never been to the city and was planning to visit. Romans 1:6-9. Yet, because of a strong desire to impact some grace to the saints in Rome, Paul decided to write to them to encourage their faith in the Lord. The capacity to provide long distance mentorship and spiritual formation for a growing church is testimony to the power of the Gospel as enunciated by the Apostle Paul. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to propose a model of spiritual formation for Christian Higher Education in the mentoring of young students seeking academic and professional training.

Literature Review and Definition of Terms

Spiritual formations, Christian spirituality in higher education, Christian education and mentoring have been used interchangeably in the literature on spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is one of the recognized benchmarks of higher education that is Christian (Maddix and Estep, 2013). Lamport and Forrest define spiritual formation as the process of coming to grips with human finiteness and developing an understanding that human sufficiency is in Christ (Forrest & Lamport, 2013). Dallas Willard, (2002) defines Christian spirituality as that which, “arises out of an inner transformation accomplished through the purposive interaction with the grace of Christ.” Christian mentoring has been proposed as a method of fulfilling this goal (Wakeman, 2012). Discipleship is another terminology that is proposed for fulfilling the same mission (Beard, 2015). Lamport & Yoder, (2006, p. 66) suggest “the ultimate goal of Christian education as people fulfilling God’s desire by loving him, loving others, and fulfilling the cultural and redemptive mandates.”

Theories of Spiritual Formation

A number of theories and models have been proposed for understanding how spiritual formation works in Christian education. Prominent among them are the transformative learning theory of adult education (Marmon, 2013, Kang, 2013), divine pedagogy (Gresham, 2006) and body of Christ as ecosystems models, (Lowe & Lowe, 2010). The creation-fall-redemption-consummation Christian mentoring model (Wakeman, 2012) and the Gospel in Romans Pauline model (Forrest & Lamport, 2013) provide a biblical model to situate the discussion of spiritual formation in Christian higher education. This paper will be pursuing the course of the Gospel in Romans Pauline model for the purpose of understanding how spiritual formation takes place in Christian higher education.

The Gospel in Romans model of Spiritual Formation

Forrest & Lamport, (2013) applied the writings of Paul in the book of Romans to spiritual formation for online students because Paul’s audience was a long distance church in a place he, Paul had never been before. This current article focuses on applying the book of Romans to the structure and as well as content of spiritual formation for higher education. Describing the book of Romans, Stedman, (1967) remarked,

The Epistle of Paul to the Romans is undoubtedly the most powerful human document that has ever been written. It is pure gold from beginning to end. This is the book that lit the fire in Martin Luther's heart and brought about the Protestant

Reformation, changing the history of Europe, as well as the world.
(p.1)

David Guzik, (2013), provides a portrait of the book of Romans through testimonials that support the posture of Stedman about the impact of the book on everyone who has encountered the text:

- a. Martin Luther praised Romans: "It is the chief part of the New Testament and the perfect gospel . . . the absolute epitome of the gospel."
- b. Luther's successor Philip Melancthon called Romans, "The compendium of Christian doctrine."
- c. John Calvin said of the Book of Romans, "When anyone understands this Epistle, he has a passage opened to him to the understanding of the whole Scripture."
- d. Samuel Coleridge, English poet and literary critic said Paul's letter to the Romans is "The most profound work in existence."
- e. Frederick Godet, 19th Century Swiss theologian called the Book of Romans "The cathedral of the Christian faith."
- f. G. Campbell Morgan said Romans was "the most pessimistic page of literature upon which your eyes ever rested" and at the same time, "the most optimistic poem to which your ears ever listened." (p.1)

Clement of Rome, a contemporary of the Apostle Paul, further establishes the authenticity of the book of Romans as a reliable text for character development and spiritual formation through an eyewitness reference. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, (1871) attest that,

The genuineness of the Epistle to the Romans has never been questioned. It has the unbroken testimony of all antiquity, up to Clement of Rome, the apostle's "fellow laborer in the Gospel, whose name was in the Book of Life" (Phil 4:3), and who quotes from it in his undoubted Epistle to the Corinthians, written before the close of the first century. The most searching investigations of modern criticism have left it untouched. (p. 1)

Following an analysis of the book of Romans, Forrest & Lamport, (2013) suggest eight practices for offering spiritual formation from a distance:

1. The ground of spiritual formation is the gospel.
2. The authority of spiritual formation is Scripture.
3. The impetus of spiritual formation is transparency.
4. The means of spiritual formation is dialogue.
5. The location of spiritual formation is community.
6. The motivation of spiritual formation is encouragement.
7. The basis of spiritual formation is prayer.
8. The impetus of spiritual formation is accountability. (p. 116-118)

Within the context of establishing the ground of spiritual formation, Roman 1:16 becomes the thesis of the book of Romans and the basis for Paul's spiritual formation to the Romans (Forrest & Lamport, 2013). Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." This statement therefore places the spotlight of spiritual formation on the gospel as the avenue for transmitting the virtues of Christianity through the influence of faculty (teachers) on their students in higher education institutions. The goal this article sets out to achieve is to place the gospel as the standard for spiritual formation. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is touted by Paul as the

power of God for the salvation of all who believe. This power is available to Christian adult teachers to successfully transfer to students within the course of their lives as students on the Christian campuses.

Applying the Gospel in real life in Higher Education

How does one proceed to apply the virtues of the gospel in spiritual formation?

Gresham (2006) suggests “divine pedagogy” the manner in which God teaches the human race as a template for spiritual formation in Higher Education. Within the context of divine pedagogy is incarnation pedagogy that highlights divine adaptation, divine accommodation and divine condescension as postures that a Christian teacher may take in reaching students with the message of the gospel. Just as God adapts the gospel to our individual contexts, accommodates our differences and condescended to our level, so also is the Christian teacher called upon to reach students with the gospel. The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) requires that “The program shall provide opportunities through which the student may grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity, and public witness.”

Lowe and Lowe (2010, p. 86) The gospel is expected to transform the lives of everyone it touches. How then is transformation achieved?

An analysis of the book of Romans reveals the three elements of the gospel, justification, sanctification and glorification; the gospel that captures Paul’s teachings for the spiritual formation of the young believers in Rome just as it does for spiritual formation of young students today:

1. **Justification**, (Dictionary.com, 2015) “the act of God whereby humankind is made or accounted just, or free from guilt or penalty of sin.” In other words humanity is declared righteous before God. This answers the question, “how does a person get saved into the kingdom of God?” Romans 1:16-17 to 5:9-19.
2. **Sanctification**, (Dictionary.com, 2015) “to make holy; set apart as sacred; consecrate.” This answers the question, “how does one deal with sin and overcome sin in the life of a believer?” Romans 5:17-23 to 8:1-39
3. **Glorification**, (Dictionary.com, 2015) “a glorified or more splendid form of something, the act of glorifying, the state of being glorified, and exaltation to the glory of heaven.” This answers the question, “how does a Christian glorify God in the environment one finds himself or herself?” Romans 12:1-12 to 16:20

A combination of Gresham’s Divine Pedagogy and the Pauline gospel message of salvation by grace through Jesus Christ in Romans, arms the Christian teacher with the right tools for engaging students in spiritual formation. Adaptation, accommodation and condescension as typified in Gresham’s divine pedagogy, requires that the gospel must have done its work of salvation on the life of the teacher (Gresham, 2006). No teacher can transmit the manifold grace of God through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to students without first experiencing it. As the saying goes that, “you can’t give what you don’t have.” Therefore experiencing the gospel is the first order of responsibility that each teacher in Christian Higher Education must encounter.

Gresham (2006) further argues that “the incarnation of divine truth in the life of the instructor and the instructor’s ability to assist students in discovering and incarnating that truth in their own lives” is the role of spiritual formation. As Huerwas (1985) puts it, “the primary task of being educated religiously or better christianly, is not the

achievement of better understanding but faithfulness.” (p. 187). Christian spiritual formation calls for faithfulness from the teacher passed on to the student. Paul’s witness to the Church in Rome was a strong profiling of the gospel of Christ as something worth living for. The elements of “power of God” and “salvation” speak to the basic needs of individuals looking for a sense of worth, value and belonging in the world.

How then is this incarnation process conveyed through the writings of Paul in Romans and expressed in the lives of the teacher and student? In the Justification, Sanctification and Glorification continuum the teacher finds a meaningful platform for spiritual formation and discipleship journey.

Justification:

Four aspects of Justification present the first movements in the spiritual formation process:

1. **The Personal Testimony of the Teacher.** Paul’s exclamation of delight in the efficacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ in his own life is the first movement in the journey. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” Romans 1:16.

Application: Every teacher needs to have a firsthand encounter with the Christ of the gospel. Without a living encounter with the God of the gospel, there cannot be an authentic witness to the power of the gospel in life of the person. The ability to testify to the power of the gospel on an individual level and to be able to transmit this witness to students being mentored is evidence of the efficacy of the gospel. Personal testimonies shared in classroom settings where appropriate, online blogs, or small group tutorials, can be a powerful tool for living out the truth of the gospel before the students.

2. **Sin is an equal opportunity enslaver.** The truth of humanity’s need of a Savior from our inherited sinful nature is made crystal clear in Romans. Paul equalizes every member of the human race with statements such as, “as it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God... for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:10, 11 & 23.

Application: The humility of knowing that teachers and students alike are equally in need of a Savior is a vital movement in the spiritual formation process. Anyone in higher leadership positions and places of authority over students are encouraged to express the reality of the depravity of human nature. Sinfulness and the tendencies of the human mind to crave things of the flesh should be acknowledged just as Paul does in Romans 7. There is no one with holy flesh. Sinful thoughts, propensities and inherited traits challenge the best of us, if and only if we are willing to admit it. Therefore sin is to be publicly denounced, never excused, but never treated as exclusive only to some “evil” persons. In the classrooms and campus interactions, conversations are to be grace-filled, each person letting it be known that “but for the grace of God there goes I.”

3. **Justification and Forgiveness have been offered to all humanity.** The best part of the story of redemption is the aspect that presents the love of God displayed in the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ as the full and final payment for satisfying the righteousness as well as the wrath of God. This payment covers the sin debt of “good people” who feel deserving of it, as well as the most-wicked person living. “And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.” Romans 3:24 & 6-8& 18.

Application: Because God through Jesus Christ has forgiven us, we freely forgive those who offend us. Colossians 3:13. We live a life of grace toward everyone within our sphere of influence. As teachers we give grace to our students and teach them to forgive one another just as God forgave us before we could ask for it.

4. **Justification confers on the believer a change of status - the rights and privileges of son-ship in the family of God our heavenly father.** Jesus by His death and resurrection offered all humanity the privilege of being heirs to the throne of God. “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to son-ship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” Romans 8:14-17. For the new child of God, Justification confers peace (reconciliation) with God, access to His grace and hope of His glory that removes all guilt and shame. The fullness of the love of God and the impartation of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, are added benefits of justification. Romans 5:1-5.

Application: God has no grandchildren. All those who accept the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ, become the children of God. The teacher and the students are children of the heavenly father on equal standing before the throne of grace. Teachers need to express mutual respect to their students, as they want to be respected by their students.

From Justification the movements shift to sanctification, which proffers a solution for new believers who are challenged by the reality of living in a world active with the temptations of sin, the flesh and Satan.

Sanctification:

Sanctification is the process of being made fit for service as a child of God. To sanctify is to set apart for holy use. It also means being consecrated to God for His service. A believer, who is justified by God and therefore imputed with the righteousness of Christ, lives in Christ through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The holiness of the Holy Spirit, through a daily seeking and learning makes the believer a carrier and reflector of

the image of God. The growth movements in Sanctification flow directly from that of Justification. There are also four motions in Sanctification process:

1. **The sanctified believer has a new motivation for obedience to the revealed will of God – The sacrificial love of God.** Paul invokes the love of God as the only motive and prime mover for a response in obedience to all of the revealed will of God. He equally invokes the love of God as the power for victorious living. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Romans 5:8 & 8:35-37.

Application: Three things the teacher has to give the student:

- i. The **reason** for obedience comes from an appreciation for the love of God in Christ Jesus. The believer is motivated to obedience whenever the love of God comes to remembrance. “The love of Christ constrains us.” 2Corinthians 5:14.
 - ii. The **desire** for obedience comes from the love of God. Realizing that the love of God is guaranteed to the believer no matter what puts a desire to respond to God in love in the heart of the believer.
 - iii. The **power** for obedience comes from the love of God. Victory and the grace to conquer all odds are supplied through the love of God.
2. **A sanctified believer has a change of masters – From Sin through Satan to Righteousness through Jesus Christ.** Previously before conversion the unbeliever had Sin for a master, but now in Christ Jesus there is a new king reigning on the throne. The power of Jesus Christ the new master gives the sanctified believer the inner strength to live for God. “Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.” Romans 6:16-18.

Application: Sanctification comes through a daily prayerful surrender to the rule of the new master and a neglect of the old master. “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:13. The role of the teacher/mentor is to encourage the young believer to spend time meditating in the word of God for spiritual nurture. The word of God sanctifies and purifies the heart changing it into the very image of God. John 17:17 & 2Corinthians 3:18

3. **A sanctified believer experiences and exercises a “no condemnation” life in Christ Jesus.** “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.,” Romans 8:1. The “no condemnation” posture to life removes the sense of fear, guilt and shame from the believer’s life. It confers on the believer the responsibility to treat others with a “no condemnation” attitude as well. Since God does not condemn us, we can offer the gift of “no condemnation” to others.

Application: Sanctification comes from refusing the accusation of Satan and affirming the justification of Jesus Christ on a daily basis. “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” Romans 8:33-34. The role of a teacher/mentor is to reject the traditional low life condemnation view of younger believers by older ones and instead paint a constant picture of God’s justification in the life of the young believer.

4. **A sanctified believer has victory over sin, flesh and worldliness because of Jesus Christ.** Romans 7:24-25. Struggling believers like Paul already know the challenges sin and the flesh pose. Such persons do not need others to drive home the point beyond what it is. “For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.” Romans 7:18-20. The secret of Paul’s success over habitual sins of the flesh is found in total surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ, whose power works wonders.

Application: Teacher/mentors need to affirm the reality of struggle with sin and the flesh as long as humanity remains our current reality. No teacher should act as though they were ignorant of the struggles the student/mentee may be having with sin or worldliness. Jesus Christ overcame the battle against the flesh. He transferred that victory into the accounts of all who trust in Him for the salvation and sanctification of their souls. There is victory in Jesus Christ as Lord. Counseling and small group sessions with other students may provide the needed guidance for the new believer.

From the Sanctification movements the emphasis shifts to glorification, which is the final outcome of spiritual formation of any type. The goal of spiritual formation is reproducing the image of God in the lives of the new believer.

Glorification:

Glorification is the process whereby a believer becomes a mirror of the glory of God in the world. The Glorification process also has four movements. How does a believer become a specimen of the glory to God in daily living? How does the believer manifest in daily life the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:16? “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” The ultimate glory of God will be revealed in the lives of the believers when Christ returns. In the meantime, Paul in the book of Romans calls believers to manifest the glory of God as sons and daughters of God. “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory... for the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. Romans 8:17-19. The process of glorifying God in our lives may not be sequential yet it may be visible in the following movements:

1. **Glorifying God - Witnessing to the power of the gospel through personal life transformation** - rather than worldly conformity through the renewal of the mind by the word of God. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to

God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:1-2. The Apostle Paul could testify to the transforming power of the gospel in his person life. A former persecutor of the Church, his life was radically altered from extreme brutality against the Church to absolute humility among all people. The story of his conversion is narrated in Acts 9 and Galatians 1.

Application: The teacher/mentor is the Jesus Christ the student is looking for in the world. The lifestyle postures, mental and physical attitudes showcase to the students what Jesus likely to look like. “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” 1Corinthians 11:1 Teachers cannot tell students to “do as I say but don’t do as I do.” The teacher is the mirror of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ to the student.

2. **Glorifying God - Acknowledging and using the gifts of the Holy Spirit to benefit the body of Christ.** Romans 12:3-17. Operating in the gifts as a service to God and humanity. Humility is the first order of duty in the body of Christ. No one is to esteem themselves greater than any other in the Church, hence a need to esteem the spiritual gifts of all believers as viable gifts to bless the whole of humanity.

Application: The teacher/mentor’s role is to assist the student to recognize and develop the spiritual gifts God has endowed the person with. A spiritual gifts inventory form may be employed for this purpose. Such a gift is to be trained and opportunities for internship given to practice the use of the gift for the glory of God. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” 1Corinthians 10:31 A teacher therefore becomes a facilitator of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the life of the student on a daily basis.

3. **Glorifying God - Becoming responsible and law-abiding citizens in compliance to the civil authorities.** Paul’s call to believers in Rome to obey civil authorities was a call to serve God with their lifestyle of obedience. “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God...” Romans 13:1-3.

Application:

Teachers and mentors have a unique responsibility of directing students to see God’s hands in civil and school authorities. Rules of societal law and order are divinely inspired to protect the children of God on the earth. Obedience to these authorities is therefore by extension obedience to God.

4. **Glorifying God - Becoming non-judgmental of other believers in their personal convictions about spiritual expressions of life.** “Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters...” Romans 14:1-23. “Do unto others as you would have them do to you.” Luke 6:31 Humility and selflessness come hand in hand in the life of a believer. The ability and capacity to relate to others without judging them based on their differences be it on the basis of race, gender, religious persuasion or any other categories. Being able to see others as God sees them makes the process of witnessing to the power of God in one’s life easier and more authentic to the hearers. Treating others fairly as one

would prefer to be treated is another level of glorification that draws attention to the character of God through the life of the believer who displays such a trait. In a world where many take advantage of vulnerable persons, it is worthwhile to know that deferring to another in a dispute over apparent differences of opinion is perceived to be a source of witness to the glory of God.

Application: A believing teacher by being respectful and caring of the needs of non-believing students and fellow teachers gains a reputation for being a caring and concerned person among the members of the institutional community. Students learn from such teachers by watching and observation rather than through words. Courteous conduct and honoring relationships enhance the life of the students in relating to fellow students who are different from them.

Enhancing Mentoring Relationships – Five Practical Steps

There are many other ways faculty/teachers may explore in providing spiritual formation for college/university students. The five approaches include, posted office hours, conducting life groups or small groups, and posting devotional materials online for the class to see. The other two are, providing a prayer request and testimonies forum via email or other online platforms and inviting students to worship services where the faculty member is actively involved.

Posted Office Hours

Teachers who choose to provide mentoring relationships with students may have posted office hours where students can visit for specific counseling and prayer times. Such hours are best set for daytime periods to allow for decency and avoidance of ethical issues in Teacher-Student conduct. (Author's personal example)

Life Groups/Small Groups

Life groups or small groups provide community for spiritual and social growth of young believers. Such groups may be formed around books of the Bible or other spiritual themes that are of interests to students and faculty members. Teachers trained to function as group facilitators and life coaches to the students will have a great impact for the gospel leading such groups. (Brooks, 2015)

Posting devotional materials for interaction and comments

Christian teachers may post devotional materials on Social Media sites where students can interact and place comments for one another and for the teacher to provide direction. Facebook, Twitter and other sites present platforms where groups may interface with one another for spiritual formation. (Forrest & Lamport, 2013)

Prayer request and testimonies forum

Teachers are better served in their efforts to provide spiritual direction for students when they provide avenues for students to post prayer requests and testimonies of answers to prayers. This may be facilitated through online posting on a Facebook account or by direct email to a list serve. (Forrest & Lamport, 2013)

Worship Service attendance – monitor and guidance

Teachers who serve as worship leaders/pastors on university campuses may provide guidance to students who attend same worship services. The author has observed from past experience as a university campus chaplain that students value adult presence in worship services. Students in need of counseling and pressing prayer needs approach the author for guidance. (Author's personal example)

Conclusion:

Paul in the book of Romans employed the gospel as the template for teaching the elements of Christian living in a secular world. The same ancient text remains potent as the source of teaching teachers how to raise godly students in a university or college setting. Understanding the gospel of grace as it is revealed in the life of Jesus, his death and resurrection provides the tools for shaping twenty-first century Christians into the image of God. Spiritual formation makes disciple-makers who motivate others to live and promote a grace-filled lifestyle. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." Romans 1:16-17

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