

Be Ready

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Preacher: Dr. Dan Curry

[0 : 0 0] All right, church, I want to introduce to you my friend Dan Curry. He is our Area 9 Texas Baptist representative.

And more than that, he has become a friend to me over the last few years from when I was working down at Southwestern Seminary. And I think we golfed together at some point, and that was fun. But I've gotten to see his heart for the Lord and for ministry, and he's been a good advisor and voice in my ear, and I'm very grateful for our relationship.

But he is our Area Representative for the Baptist General Convention of Texas from Fort Worth, I think, all the way up to Wichita Falls. And there's probably a lot of other area in there as well.

But he serves a lot of churches, a lot of pastors in that way, and we're grateful for his service. Got probably close to 50 years of ministerial experience, and is a graduate of Wayland Baptist University.

He got his master's degree and doctorate from Southwestern Seminary and served for about 24 years or so as the pastor of South Oaks Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas. He's currently an interim pastor for a church in Arlington, and we're grateful for him taking this time to come up here and be with us this morning.

[1 : 1 3] So y'all open your Bibles and be ready to hear what the Lord has given Dan Curry for us. Thank you, Sam, for the introduction.

And it is a joy to be here today, and it is a wonderful opportunity for me. I have driven by this church so many times, or driven by Henrietta, and thought about this church so many times through the years because my family lived and my parents lived out in Kittiquay, Texas, out near Esteline.

And if you're going that direction on 287, you know where Esteline is because it is a speed trap. And so everybody knows where that is. But yes, I am the area rep for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and so that's a mouthful, okay?

And that being a mouthful, years ago we kind of shortened that to the BGCT. All right? Well, then other organizations began to have alphabet names, you know, and we were going, maybe that's not a good idea anymore.

And so the last few years we have been branded, we've branded our name as Texas Baptist. And so that's who we are.

[2 : 3 6] It is the Baptist General Convention of Texas, but we go by the brand of Texas Baptist. And you're a part of us as Texas Baptist. In fact, churches all across this state, over 5,000 of them make up Texas Baptist.

And you are a part of us through your cooperative program, Giving. And this is budget time, or you just passed your budget or sometime recently, and many of you probably looked up there and said, cooperative program giving.

When are we ever going to get the cooperative program paid off, you know? Well, hopefully never, all right? But anyway, that money is funneled through Texas Baptist, and there it goes and does ministry and missions across the state and across the world.

And so it is a great thing. We're very thankful that you're a part of that. And I just represent one aspect of that. We have nine area reps.

We try to be, you know, a representative for Texas Baptist to the 5,000 churches that are part of us. We also try to be a resource person for the pastors and staff when they have a thought and going, where can I turn for some advice, or where can I turn for support?

[4 : 02] Where can I turn for maybe some training in something like evangelism or something else in, you know, church growth or something?

And we have those resources for that. And then my favorite part of my job is this. I get to meet pastors and be their friend and be their encourager.

I like the idea of being their Barnabas, to come alongside them and encourage them, pray for them, and when they need some support, they know they can call me and I can be their friend.

And so that's the part of the job that I like the most. And I've got to be that with Sam and I appreciate Sam, you know, not only turning to me occasionally and calling me and being that kind of, being able to minister to him in that way, but he's also ministered to me in my times of difficulty.

And so it is a mutual thing. And so it's great to be here and it's great to be a part of Texas Baptist. And we're very thankful for your gifts as to Texas Baptist.

[5 : 17] And so enough about Texas Baptist. Y'all didn't come here today on this last Sunday of the year to hear just about Texas Baptist. I have hopefully a word from God for you today.

And so I hope that you will turn with me in your Bible or look it up on your device or today in Romans chapter 1.

We're going to be looking at a passage of Scripture there today. Romans chapter 1. And we're going to begin in just a moment in verse 13. Romans chapter 1, beginning in verse 13.

The text today, talking about being ready, is sort of one of my favorite texts.

But it has a little history. I felt called to preach when I was in junior high. But when I turned about 15, my dad, who was a pastor of a church out in West Texas, at that time, he was pastor at First Baptist Church, Ropesville, which is just outside of Lubbock.

[6 : 31] And dad came to me and he says, son, do you think you're ready to preach? I go, whoa, you know, I just lost words. I don't know that I am.

He says, I think you ought to preach this next Sunday on Sunday night. And he says, so think about that for a day. And I did. And he says, are you ready?

And I go, well, I don't know. He says, do you know what you want to preach on? I go, no, I don't. He says, well, let me give you an idea. All right. And so he chose this text for me.

I read the text. He read the text to me and I looked at it. I read the text. I started going over the text. My dad had, you know, a library of books. I started looking at all those things, you know, resources.

And because my dad said, son, this is a really rich for, these are rich verses. This is really good stuff. There is lots of great stuff here.

[7 : 34] And so I began to look for all that great stuff, you know. And so I studied all week long, prepared, had an outline, had everything ready for Sunday night.

I had this passage of scripture and he says, you know, I was thinking of what my dad said. This is really rich. It's a lot, got a lot of rich, good stuff in it. And I got up and I, and I preached.

And it was the best seven minute sermon. Anyone could ever have. Well, my dad was correct.

There's a lot of things in this passage of scripture. And I hate to tell you this morning, my sermon is going to last longer than seven minutes. And we're not even going to get to it all today.

We're not going to get to everything in this text, but it is really rich. It is really good. And it is a good way to start out a new year with thinking about being ready.

[8 : 38] And so let's look at the text today. Paul writes to the church at Rome and he says, I do not want you to be unaware brothers that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the Gentiles.

I am under obligation both to the Greeks and to the 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 just shall live by faith. There is a lot to meet here. A lot for us to chew on today.

And before we really get into all of what is in this text, let's think about for a moment who wrote this text. Who shares this with us?

[9 : 56] Who is he sharing it to? It is Paul, the Apostle Paul. If we remember, the Apostle Paul was not always the Apostle Paul. He was also known as Saul.

Remember? Saul, who was the Pharisee. Saul, who was the persecutor of those early Christians. He was Saul, who was there when Stephen was stoned, and Saul kept all the garments while he egged those on to throw those stones at Stephen and kill him.

It is this Saul who was assigned to go to Damascus to destroy those who were a part of the movement called The Way.

Those who were followers of Jesus Christ. That was his responsibility. He was on his way to Damascus in Syria to do just that.

And on that road to Damascus, he encountered the Lord in a large, bright light. And his life was transformed.

[11 : 02] He immediately recognized that he needed Jesus Christ in his life. And when he finally got to Damascus, God sent someone to share with him how he could have Jesus in his life.

And Jesus comes into Saul's life. And we know some of the rest of the story. He becomes the Apostle Paul. He becomes the greatest missionary of the Gospel.

He, we look at our New Testament and realize, you know, as Paul writes to the churches where he helped start and helped influence, we find over half the New Testament is accredited to the Apostle Paul writing to us.

So we find here, this is who writes this. This is the person who is sharing with us today this thing, if he says, I was obligated to share the Gospel.

I had this obligation. He had an obligation, I think, partly because he looked back on his life and he realized, I tried to destroy the church.

[12 : 11] Now I have this obligation to make sure that Jesus Christ is known. I have a debt to pay. A debt to pay. I want to tell you today, if you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, somewhere in your life, someone shared with you how to come to know Jesus and you have experienced that today in your life.

You have experienced his forgiveness. You've experienced the freedom that Jesus Christ has given. you've experienced the full life that Jesus Christ wants you to have in your life today.

Then you have also an obligation, a debt to pay. The question is, are you ready?

I grew up in a time when, as a kid, that it was very important.

Anyway, I joined Boy Scouts when I was 11 years old and I've been a Boy Scout ever since. I'm still a Scout at heart, okay? I love the organization.

[13 : 22] I'm not, you know, I'm very supportive of the organization. I know that they've made some weird decisions lately and all those kind of things, but the Boy Scout organization, the Boy Scout things they taught have really made an impact in my life.

And if you're a Scout or know anything about Scouting, you know that there's a motto that goes with Scouting, and it is, be prepared.

Not a long motto, just be prepared. Be prepared. And it is, be prepared for everything that might come your way. Be prepared. The question is, are we prepared when it comes to sharing the gospel, this debt, this obligation we have as believers, are we prepared to do what God wants us to do?

Well, Paul, I think, shares with us here some hints in how to be prepared, okay?

The first way that we can be prepared is this. We need to be proud of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[14 : 41] Now, you know, I use that term, you know, we are proud of the gospel message. But let's, what is, those are real biblical terms, churchy terms, you know, gospel.

We use it all the time. Do you know what it means? What is the gospel? The term, gospel itself, means good news. Well, okay, so we're proud of the good news.

Good news implies that there's bad news. Okay? Let's look at the bad news first. The bad news is this. The bad news is this.

Found in Paul writing here, Paul's writing in Romans, he tells us what the bad news is. The bad news is that we're all sinners. Romans 3, 23, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

That's bad news. We're all sinners. We all fall short of what God wants us to do in our life. All of us do that. We fit that mold. Let's don't get high and mighty because we go to church every week.

[15 : 50] We just really need to realize that we're all sinners, you know, okay? Now, that's bad news to some degree, but we can look around and go, well, everybody else is a sinner.

Well, Paul goes on and he says the wages of sin is death. Whoa. Wages. What we deserve, what we should get for our sin is death.

Wow. Well, that verse goes on and he says, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. There is bad news there in that because we're all sinners, we deserve death, but he also tells us there is, there is some relief here.

He says, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. We don't have to die, but it's through Jesus Christ. Now, how is that possible?

Well, Paul doesn't leave us in the hole there. He tells us in Romans 5, 8, he says that Christ died for us. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

[16 : 56] While we were undeserving, he died for us. And then, in Romans 9, and 10, and 11, he tells us the way that we can receive this gift of God, of eternal life, the way we can be found, forgiven, and free in our life, the way we can experience full life is to make a commitment to Christ, to follow Him.

Okay, folks, that's the gospel. That's the gospel. It is good news. The good news is, even though I'm a sinner, Christ died for me.

I don't have to live in that any longer. I don't have to live there any longer. I can be forgiven. I can have a full life, an abundant life, in Christ.

We need to be proud of the gospel. Are we proud of the gospel? We excited about the gospel? We excited about the fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross for us?

We excited that He shed His blood for us on the cross? Are we excited about the fact that we don't have to die? Are we excited that He can give us full life? We need to be proud of the gospel.

[18 : 17] That's the first place to be ready in this new year. Let's get excited about the gospel. But Paul doesn't stop there.

He goes on and he says that we should also understand the power of the gospel. For he says, it, the gospel, is the power of God for salvation.

It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. It is the power.

The Greek word power there is the word dynamo, dynamite, dynamic. You get the idea? All those are English words that we've taken from that Greek word dynamo and used, but it is the ideal of great power.

Exciting power. Explosive power. There is power in the gospel. Power. Here's the, the power comes in the fact that I can't change.

[19 : 28] But you know what? God can change me. He can change me. We enter, we come to the end of the year, we begin a new year, we begin to think about resolutions we make every year.

I, you know, I don't know where you are in your resolutions from last year. Last year, I, I began the year and I had just one resolution, okay? Uh, and that was, I, I was resolved to lose 20 pounds during the year.

I resolved to do that. Well, I, I'm just going to tell you, I'm just not very good at that, okay? I'm just not very good at that, you know? I, I am doing better this year because, you know, but, uh, I will tell you, I've had the same resolution for about 10 years.

And I haven't got there yet. And the reason is, not that it's impossible to lose 20 pounds, but me doing it on my own, eh, not real good at that.

You know? In fact, you know, there was a couple of years I got to December the 1st and I was going, okay, how am I doing with my goal to lose 20 pounds? And I would go, whew, I only have 25 more to go.

[20 : 50] You know? You, you see, we, we think we can change our life. And most of the time we don't have the power to even figure out how to lose 20 pounds.

Much less get rid of the sin, the guilt in our life. Or to get rid of all the temptations that Satan throws our way, pulls.

He knows our, he knows every button we have. And he pushes those buttons. We, we think we can just handle that on our own.

We can't. We need the power of the gospel. We can look at just the, the life of the apostle Paul and see the power of the gospel.

Paul, the persecutor of the, of the early church. Paul, who was, he was at that time named Saul, he was the persecutor of that early church. He was destroying the church and God, what, changed him.

[22 : 01] He becomes the greatest missionary of all times and the writer of over half the New Testament. How'd that happen? It happened by the power of God.

When I moved to Arlington back in 1992, my, my daughter who is very, she's extrovert to some degree. She began to meet all the girls in the neighborhood that were her age.

I mean, every one of them. Within about a week or two, you know, we had three or four girls coming to our house all the time from the neighborhood. One of those girls, the name was Rebecca and Crystal found out, figured out really quick that Rebecca didn't go to church very often and so she invited Rebecca to go to church with us.

And so Rebecca started going to church with us and on the way to church, occasionally I would have to go, Rebecca, we don't say that at church. We don't say, we don't use that word and because Rebecca's language was not necessarily the greatest.

She had incorporated some terms that she had probably heard from her dad. Okay? Well, you know, I wanted to get to know the parents of these girls that Crystal was bringing around and so one day I went over and met Rebecca's dad.

[23 : 18] He was out in the garage, his garage. He had a really nice garage. I mean, he had a really, now he didn't park his car in his garage or his truck but he parked his Harley in his garage.

He had a place for his Harley. He had this nice floor, it had been painted, he had a nice love seat there in his garage, he had a big screen TV, he had a little wet bar over here on the other side and his Harley.

Okay? And when I went over to see him, he was messing with his Harley. He had, you know, sort of a, well it was a t-shirt with the sleeves cut off on it.

Alright? And his shorts and his sandals on and he had tattoos all over his arm, on his legs, everywhere. Going, oh wow.

So I met Bob. You know, I told him who it was. It was kind of cold. Like, meeting ice. Okay?

[24 : 25] Just cold. Everything just, immediately after I told him what I did, there was just this block just between me and him and, you know, and he just didn't say much.

You know, on my walk back from his house to my house, I was going, you know, okay, I just don't even know if God can fix this. I don't know if God can ever change Bob.

Just don't know. Me of little faith. Because, within a month or two, Rebecca got saved at church camp.

And, Rebecca had to be baptized. Wanted to be baptized. So, Bob came to her baptism. He came to see her baptized.

That was the first time he had been in church in who knows how long. And, then, every time the youth did something, you know, Rebecca would give a testimony or something.

[25 : 34] He was there on Sunday night. He'd come. And, then he realized on Sunday night we were kind of casual at the church. Not, well, just not on Sunday night. He just didn't know.

But, on Sunday night we were especially casual. We were meeting in a sanctuasion. You know what a sanctuasion is? A gematorium. And, and every Sunday night we had to pick up the chairs and stack them and all those kind of things.

And, we had this saying, you know, at, at South Oaks we stack them seven high. All right? And, so, we even had t-shirts made. You know? Said South Oaks and on the back of them it says we stack them seven high.

And, it was talking about the chairs. And, and so, Bob loved to come because after church nobody paid much attention to him. He'd be stacking chairs. And, then he'd sneak out. Okay? Well, one night on Sunday night I had noticed there was a difference in Bob.

And, so he was coming out the door and I grabbed him. I said, Bob. I just looked at him and go, when did you get saved? And, he looked at me and he says, preacher, about three weeks ago what you were preaching, you know, I was preaching through Romans and he's going, he said, I got to looking at what you were preaching and I went home and I studied it some more and I, I just asked the Lord to come into my life.

- [27 : 03] And I go, well Bob, I can see the difference in your life. And he goes, well, there's a true difference in my life. well, I said, Bob, you need to be baptized.
- Ah, yeah, I know. But I'm an old man. I wasn't that old. But anyway, he felt like, I'm old. I can't be, I said, Bob, you need to be baptized. You need to be able to share with the world that you've been, been saved and you do that through baptism.
- And so, I baptized Bob and, and man, you talk about somebody who was excited about being baptized. He was excited. Well, long story short, that's been about 25 years ago.
- Bob is still very active in South Oaks Baptist Church in, in Arlington. He has been on the finance team many, many times because he is just really good at those kind of things.
- He serves now as the topper Sunday school teacher and has been teaching for about 15 years. He is a great man.
- [28 : 10] In fact, this week, he contacted me, talked to me, you know. Now, looking at him, you go, he's had another life. See, I gave up.
- But you know what? There is power in the gospel. There's people in your life right now. There's people here in this community you've given up on.
- But you know what? God has not given up on them. There is power in the gospel. Paul says that power of God, it is the power of God for salvation.
- Salvation from sin. Salvation for eternal life. Salvation. salvation. Then there's a third thing that we also need to, if we're going to be ready, we need to be proud of the gospel.
- We need to understand there is the power of the gospel. But there's a third thing. We also need to understand we need to live out the gospel in our life.
- [29 : 21] We need to live it out. Paul writes it this way. He says, for it is the gospel or the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith as it is written.
- The righteous shall live by faith. See, I grew up in a Baptist church. I know about Baptists. Okay?
- We often, not always, not everyone, but we often have this tendency as Baptists and as believers and all those kind of things.
- we think, okay, now that I'm saved, I've got to live by these rules. All these rules. Really?
- Where do you find that? It says here we shall live by faith. Faith? We all have a list.
- [30 : 18] I'd say it. Baptists are bad about our list. You know, you can't drink, you can't dance, you know, all the cants, you can't do this, you can't do that, can't do all those kind of things because you do all those kind of things then you ain't a believer.
- You can't do all those kind of things. We have lists. We have all this kind of stuff. You know? And, we have to live by faith. And what we've done is we've traded away the freedom that we have in Christ and we just put chains on ourself.
- We need to understand that we need to live by faith. How did we get saved? We get saved by our works? No. We did not get saved by our works. We didn't deserve anything. We were sinners. There's no way we could save ourself.
- But we think now we have to live that way. No, you don't. You live in this freedom that God has given to you. Because here's the thing.
- Here's what happens. A person gets saved and they think, oh, now I've got Christ in my life. I've got God in my life. And God begins to transform that life.
- [31 : 21] He begins to change that life. He does. And then Satan comes along. He tempts and he moves. And the first thing you know, a person has made a mistake. They've sinned.
- In their life. And they're going, okay, I'm not sure this works. They've given up. And now they feel guilty because they've got their sin in their life.

And they're going, and what do I do about that? I'm going, they're going, and Satan loves to use that. They're going, you can't talk about your faith. You can't talk about the gospel.

You can't talk about that because look at that sin in your life. because you feel guilty.

I don't know if you've ever noticed small children, when they do something wrong and you get on to them, they immediately stop looking at you. Immediately they, you know, you get on to a two-year-old, three-year-old, you get on to them and say, son, you shouldn't be doing that.

[32 : 26] They're not looking at you. Why? Because the relationship is broken because they have sinned. They have broken something.

They've broken the relationship. And when we sin, we break that relationship with God. Now, it doesn't mean we're not saved, but that relationship is hindered. Just like a child. A child that disobeys their dad is still a child.

Disobedient child. How do they come back? They come back the same way through faith. And when they have faith, in what?

They have to have faith that they are going to be saved, that they're going to be forgiven. And they come back and go, hey, yeah, I blew it. I messed up.

I messed up, God. Can you forgive me? Well, yes, because when God died on the cross, He not only forgave our sins in the past, but in the present, but all those in the future.

[33 : 28] We're saved by faith, friends. And what Satan likes to do is going, now you can't share the gospel. You can't do that because you've got this sin in your life. No, get rid of the sin.

See, Satan wants to use it going, don't share the faith. Don't share the gospel. Don't do that. Don't do it because you've got this sin in your life. And really what God wants you to do is get rid of the sin.

And how do you do that? You just say, God, I've got this sin in my life. Can you forgive me? And what happens is, even a child, when they go, Dad, I'm sorry.

And the dad goes, all of a sudden, that's fine. I'm going to forgive you. I forgive you. All of a sudden, that child will stop looking down and make eye contact with their father because now that relationship is mended.

That's what it means to live by faith. So my challenge for you today is if we're going to be ready here in this last challenge is this.

[34 : 38] We need to get rid of the sins in our life, lift up our eyes to Jesus Christ, renew that relationship with God so that we can complete the obligation, the debt we have to share the gospel.

Are you ready? I have a good pastor friend, Sam Cliff, and Cliff is a pastor of the First Baptist Church in Cleburne.

And he's a pretty neat guy. He's got a lot of energy. He was a high school coach and God called him to ministry.

Now he's a pastor of First Baptist Church in Cleburne. But he's still got the energy of a high school football coach just buzzing around. I just love to call him. I go, Hey Cliff, you know, I go, How are you doing?

He goes, I'm ready. I mean, he always says that. I go, Cliff, how are you doing? I'm ready. I said, Ready for what? Ready for whatever God wants me to do.

[35 : 51] I'm ready. Wow, I like that. I like that kind of spirit. That's the spirit we need. That's the spirit First Baptist Church Henrietta needs.

That's the spirit the believers in this church need to spread the gospel in this community in 2025. We need to have that kind of spirit that says, You know, I'm ready.

I'm ready. I'm proud of the gospel. The gospel has power to change people's lives. It has the power to mend their lives. It has the power to give people full lives.

It has that power to do that. And Satan is not going to keep me from doing it because I am going to continually live by faith by trusting him.

Can you do that? Let's be ready. Some of you have been in church as long as I have. Maybe not as long as I have, but 50 something years, 60 years, 70 years, nearly 70 years, Sam.

[36 : 51] I've been in church. There is this old song. It's in the hymn book. Ready. Ready to go. Ready to stay. Ready my place to fill.

Ready for service, lowly or great. Ready to do his will. Ready to suffer grief or pain. Ready to stand the test. Ready to stay at home and send others if he sees best.

Ready to speak. Ready to think. Ready with heart and mind. Ready to stand where he sees fit. Ready his will to find. Can you say, today, today, today, I'm ready.

Would that be, could that be your motto for this year? In 2025, could you say, I mean, the Boy Scouts, it's, I, be prepared. In this church, in this time, could you just say, my motto is, be ready.

Be ready. And I'm going to be ready. Let's stand with heads bowed, all right? Our Heavenly Father, Lord, you know the hearts of those that are here.

[38 : 03] And Lord, those who need to respond to your will today. And Lord, we give you this invitation. We give you this time. And give this, this opportunity for these to make a, a decision and to respond to the gospel and to respond to the challenge that they have been given.

And so, Lord, we ask that as we give you this invitation, that your people would respond in obedience to you.

In Jesus' name, amen. Sam is going to be right here at the front as we sing this time and sing this song. And this is the time to respond.

I am a thorough believer, in this, that every time that we hear God's word, he demands a response. Now, it doesn't mean that you need to come down every Sunday and grab Sam's hand, but maybe sometimes you do.

But you shouldn't leave here today without saying, God, this is how I'm going to respond to your word today. So, during this time, as we sing together, you think about how you need to respond to the challenge of God's word today.

[39 : 16] All right, Sam. Thank you.