

## The Righteousness of God (1:16-17)

- Romans 1:16-17 describe the theme of the epistle: The Righteousness of God as Revealed in the Gospel.

### 1. The Gospel is the Power of God for Salvation (1:16)

- By saying “*I am not ashamed of the gospel...*,” Paul really meant “I am proud of the gospel.” Paul glories in the gospel and counts it a high honour to proclaim it. Paul was often persecuted when he went preaching the gospel of Christ in his missionary journeys. Yet he is still ready to preach the gospel in Rome (v15).
- Christians were often tempted to be ashamed of the gospel in the 1<sup>st</sup> century because of persecutions, scorn and ridicule for believing in the message of the gospel (1 Cor 1:23). A crucified Christ was a stumbling block to the Jews because the Jews thought of their Messiah in terms of an earthly deliverer against the yoke of the Romans. The gospel was foolishness to the Greeks, for the Greeks despised the simplicity of the message of the crucified Christ.
- Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because the gospel is the “*power of God unto salvation.*” The gospel saves sinners from the wrath of a holy God (1:18; Heb 10:31). If God does not save sinners, they will suffer the agony of eternal hell. It is God’s power at work in the gospel & not man’s. Salvation is not something that man can attain by their own efforts or good works (Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; Acts 11:18; 13:48). It is not man’s faith that gives the gospel its power; quite the contrary, it is the power of the gospel that makes it possible for one to believe. The power is entirely God’s.
- No message has a greater life-changing, eternity-altering impact than the gospel. The gospel can overcome any hardened resistance against God, no matter how sinful a person is. Only the power of God can overcome man’s natural tendency to commit sin and impart supernatural life. Paul himself was exhibit A (Acts 9:26)! God can take a lost sinner and save him by His grace and make him a new creature (2 Cor 5:17). When you believe the gospel, you will be radically transformed at the deepest level of your being. You have a new mind, a new heart, and a new will – to live for God.
- We do not have to make the gospel powerful; it is intrinsically powerful. All we do is present the gospel as God gives us opportunities. When it is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, it explodes in human hearts (Acts 1:8). It needs no help from man. The Gospel is not the power of God for everyone, but for everyone who believes. While the gospel is offered to all people, the reality of salvation belongs only to those who believe – ie. a commitment to believe and follow Christ. This is the sole condition to receiving salvation from God.
- The free offer of salvation is given to all men without distinction – Jews or Gentiles. All who believe the gospel, regardless of race, are promised salvation.
  - *To the Jew first* – The gospel came to the Jews first in order of sequence because God made a covenant with the Jewish people. The gospel came to

the Jew first chronologically, in order of time - to the Jews were committed the oracles of God - cf John 4:22.

- *And also to the Greek* – To all who are non-Jews, that is, to the rest of the world. Even in the OT, God promised that salvation was not going to be limited to one nation (Isa 42:6).

The Gospel is not given to the Jew first in point of importance but in point of time. It came to the Jews before it came to us. Salvation is available only through the gospel of Jesus Christ whether you are a Jew or Gentile. All is saved by the same gospel (Gal 3:28).

### 2. The Gospel Reveals a Righteousness From God (1:17a)

- God is righteous in Himself, and He demands righteousness. The Gospel reveals the righteousness of God which is given to all who believe. The gospel reveals how a sinful man can be made righteous before God. By the “*righteousness of God,*” Paul is referring to the righteousness that comes FROM God, which He gives to those who believe. Our righteousness is as filthy rags before God (Isa 64:6). God has to provide the righteousness that we need to be right with Him.
- The “righteousness of God” that Paul is describing in v17 is not so much a righteousness that God demands of sinners (and therefore punishes those who could not reach His standard of righteousness), but a righteousness of/from God that He freely provides by His grace through faith in Christ. Although God demands righteousness, He provides that righteousness as a gift in faith.
- The righteousness by which one is saved is not his own; it is a righteousness of God revealed in and through the Person of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:9). We cannot produce that righteousness or manufacture it; we receive it by faith. We are not MADE righteous, but righteousness is imputed or credited to us (3:21-24). It is always God who justifies the sinner (4:5).

### 3. The Righteousness of God is Received through Faith (1:17b)

- The righteousness of God is received through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith involves ‘a commitment to, a trust in, a reliance upon.’ True saving faith involves the mind, heart, and will. With the mind, a person must know the essential truths of the gospel. He must then be persuaded of its truthfulness in his heart. Finally, saving faith includes a commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Master. The power of God for salvation must be appropriated through faith (1:16).
- When Paul states, “*from faith to faith,*” he is saying, “it is faith from start to finish.” True conversion begins with genuine faith, and it continues day by day in a walk of faith, a life of faith. Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4 to establish the truth that righteousness can only be attained by faith. Paul is using the quote to say, “The one who is righteous (justified) by faith shall live, that is, shall be saved.” This expression emphasizes that true faith is not a single event, but a way of life - it perseveres or endures (by the power of God).