

Romans 1:16-17
The Theme of Romans 1-8

Introduction: This section explains why Paul was eager to preach the gospel in Rome. He now begins his argument as to why the gospel is good news for both Jews and Gentiles.

1) Paul's confident attitude toward the Gospel—1:16a

- a) The explanation—*For* [ga,r] (linking to 1:15)
 - i) This is the basis for Paul's eagerness to evangelize in powerful, yet sophisticated, Rome (1:15).
- b) The confidence stated **negatively**—*I am not ashamed*
 - i) Paul can say: I suffer no guilt or remorse for the gospel. I fear no embarrassment or disgrace that my expectations of the gospel will be proven false. I have no reluctance through fear of humiliation because of the gospel.
 - ii) Up to this point in time, Paul had been imprisoned in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica, smuggled out of Berea, laughed at in Athens, regarded as foolish in Corinth, and stoned in Galatia.
 - iii) Those who are ashamed of the gospel tend to do so for fear of suffering some harm.
 - iv) Cf. 2 Tim. 1:8, 12, 16.
- c) The gospel—*of the gospel [of Christ]* (Majority Text)
 - i) No different than the gospel of God mentioned earlier.
 - ii) The gospel is indeed good news with a note of excitement, as in, "The war is over!" "It's a boy!" "The atonement is accomplished!" "God welcomes sinners because of Christ's work!" (S.L.J.)
- d) Why might people be ashamed of the gospel?
 - i) A strange message about a Jewish teacher, condemned and crucified by a Roman governor and allegedly raised from the dead. In addition, he is called both lord and God, titles often used for the Roman emperor.
 - ii) "Our task today is to tell people — who no longer know what sin is ... no longer see themselves as sinners, and no longer have room for these categories — that Christ died for sins of which they do not think they're guilty." (David Wells)

2) Paul's explanation of why he is not ashamed of the Gospel—1:16b

- a) The reason—*for* [ga,r]
 - i) This explains why Paul was not ashamed.
- b) The potential stated **positively**—*it is the power* [du,namij] *of God*
 - i) Refers to God's potential power or inherent or intrinsic ability to accomplish His determined purpose. We refer to **dynamic** power.
 - (1) Literally, the sentence structure reads: *for the power of God it is* (emphatic).
 - ii) Wrong views of power:
 - (1) Rome prided itself on its power. "We are right because we are the strongest." Might makes right (or so they thought). This attitude was

evident in their politics, military, and religion (i.e. the strongest god is the best). They worshipped power.

- (2) The Jews thought of the Law as power.
- iii) The sharing of the gospel message unleashes the omnipotence of God to overcome man's sinful nature and give him new life. Remember that Jesus was declared the Son-of-God-with-power by the resurrection (1:4). That same power is in the gospel. See Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 2:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:4-5.
- c) The purpose—*unto* [eivj] *salvation*
 - i) Deliverance or rescue from (negative) danger and restoration to (positive) a former state of safety and wellbeing. There are three tenses related to salvation:
 - (1) PAST—we have been saved and remain saved from sin's *penalty*
 - (2) PRESENT—we are being saved from sin's *power* and *pleasure*
 - (3) FUTURE—we will be saved from sin's *presence and pollution*
 - ii) We require deliverance from what we are as children of Adam.
- d) The limit—*to everyone who believes* [pres. act. ptc.] (i.e. exercising faith)
 - i) To each and every person—the appeal is universal (to Greeks and Barbarians), but its reception is limited.
 - ii) True faith is ongoing—present participle (characterized by believing)
 - (1) Faith involves the mind (understanding), emotions (embracing the truth), and will (we decide to believe what God has said).
 - (2) Faith is not something we do that impresses God. Faith is the response of our hearts to what God has already accomplished. The text says, “believes,” not “behaves.”
 - iii) There is no discrimination arising from race or culture and there is no obstacle arising from the degradations of sin. Wherever there is faith, ***there*** the omnipotence of God is operative unto salvation. (J. Murray)
- e) The order of presentation—*to the Jew first and also to the Greek/non-Jew*
 - i) The Jews are first in privilege and penalty.
 - (1) The Jews are God's chosen nation (Ex. 19:6). Cf. Rom. 9-11.
 - (2) Jesus went to Israel first in His ministry (Mt. 15:24). So did the apostles.
 - (3) It was through Israel that salvation came to the whole world (Jn. 4:24).
 - ii) Sadly, the Jews considered salvation as applying only to themselves.

3) Paul summarizes the Gospel—1:17

- a) Why is it the power of God unto salvation for all who believe?—1:17a
 - i) The gospel alone contains the power of God unto salvation—*for* [ga,r] *in it*
 - (1) This explains why the gospel is the potent power of God.
 - ii) God's righteousness—the ***righteousness*** (emphatic) *of God is [being] revealed* (found 8x; 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3 (2x))
 - (1) Righteousness is conformity to an absolute standard, namely the character of God. A Godkind of righteousness, the kind of righteousness which God provides by His grace and which God accepts.
 - (2) This righteousness is being revealed (present passive), not discovered by the ingenuity of people or reasoned out by philosophy. It is not

something *we* bring to Him. It is something He graciously bestows upon us in justification. See Phil. 3:8-9.

(3) The declaration that Jesus stands in the right is granted to all those who belong to him, to all those who are united with him by faith. (T. Schreiner)

iii) Man's faith is essential—*from faith for faith*;

(1) Lit. "out of [evk] faith, into [eivj] faith." Saving faith originates righteousness in our lives and consistently adds to that righteousness throughout our daily lives on this earth as we learn to trust Him more and more. Salvation comes through giving up one's own righteousness, works, knowledge, and wisdom and trusting in the finished, perfect work of Christ.

b) This view of the righteousness of God is supported by the OT—1:17b

i) *as it is written, "But the righteous (person) shall live by [evk] faith."*

(1) Quote from Hab. 2:4. This is first OT quote, demonstrating what Paul said earlier about the gospel being found in the prophets (1:2).

(2) Faith is really nothing more than "the hand of the heart."

4) Things we need to remember:

a) **Be reminded:** Though we are at times ashamed of Him, thankfully He is not ashamed of us—Heb. 2:11; 11:16

b) **Be encouraged:** There is no need to be intellectually ashamed of the gospel, no matter what the world and other professing Christians may say.

i) Paul was not ashamed in Athens. He was not ashamed before the Jewish Supreme Court. He was not ashamed before any king.

c) **Be faithful:** There are times when we all wrestle with the temptation to be ashamed of the gospel.

i) We know the gospel is unattractive and repulsive to the unsaved. We know it exposes man's sin, pride, and lostness. To the sinful heart the gospel appears to be bad news and they do not want to hear it. *The true gospel magnifies God and minimizes man.*

d) **Be confident:** The gospel is God at work. (R. Mounce)

i) God saves sinful man to make His power known (Ps. 106:8).

ii) Salvation is available to both Jews and gentiles because the basis of covenant relationship with God ("righteousness") is faith rather than the Mosaic law. (LCC)

iii) No matter how wicked you may be, no matter how nice you may think you are.

Next time: Romans 1:18-20