The Book of Romans
1:16-17
8/29/2018 Wednesday PM

Romans 1:16-17

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

- V. 16 – The 1984 edition of the NIV does not include "For" at the beginning of the verse like most translations.
- "For" should be in the verse because the Greek word *gar* is in the text which means "for".
- This is important because "for" connects this verse to vv. 13-15.
    - The train of thought is: "I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome, *because* I am not ashamed of the gospel…"
- **These two verses give us the overall theme of Romans, but what is the theme?**
- Paul is presenting an argument in these two verses that proceeds in a "stair-step" movement:

I am not ashamed of the gospel,
because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes:
first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.
For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness
that is by faith from first to last,
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- The gospel seems to be a key word in these two verses, as well as vv. 1, 2, 9, and 15 of this chapter.
- In these verses Paul is explaining why he is so committed to spreading the good news and how that message is able to transform human beings.
- In v. 16 Paul wanted to make it abundantly clear that he was not in any way ashamed of the gospel.
- Why wasn't he ashamed? Because he knew the gospel that he was called by Christ to preach is the message that had the power to bring salvation to everyone.
    - "Salvation" is the Greek word *soteria* which is also found in vv. 10:1, 10; 11:11; 13:11.
    - The verb "to save" is the Greek word *sozo* which is also in vv. 5:9-10; 8:24; 9:27; 10:9, 13; 11:14, 26.4.
    - These are two important words in Romans.
    - Today, we almost exclusively use these words to refer to our conversions: When we were "saved."
    - Paul more often uses these words to refer to final deliverance from sin and evil that will come to us at death or the Second Coming of Christ which is called the Parousia. See vv. 5:9-10; 13:11.
    - This of course is our ultimate salvation, we just need to make sure we understand the broad implications of our "salvation" so as to not limit our understanding of what the Scriptures are teaching.
- "for…everyone who believes" is a key note throughout Romans as well. (3:22, 4:11, 16; 10:4, 11-13..)
    - This is a significant advance on the Old Testament which focused on Israel.
    - This statement is qualified however with "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."
        - This statement has both a historical and theological aspect to it:
            - <u>Historically</u>: Salvation was only offered to the Jews. One had to be Jewish to be a "person of God."
            - <u>Theologically</u>: Jews still have a kind of "priority" in the plan of salvation. They still remain the chosen people of God. (Deuteronomy 14:2)
        - To put it as simply: The Jews are the first addressees of the good news of Jesus Christ. That is, God worked through them to prepare the way for the coming Messiah, and the good news about him naturally has them as the primary focus.
        - Paul develops this comparison to "everyone" but "first to the Jews" throughout Romans and we will go more in depth as we enter chapters like Romans 11.
        - Also a study of Acts lays this model out clearly as well. (ex. Acts 13:46)

- In v. 17 Paul answers the question: Why does the gospel transmit salvation to those who believe?
- Paul says, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed,"
    - This is a debated phrase that Bible interpreters cannot seem to all agree on.
    - The Greek here is *dikaiosyne theou* which literally says "righteousness of God."
    - Paul uses this phrase 9 times in his letters. (Romans 3:5, 21-22, 25-26; 10:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21). 8 of those occurrences are in Romans so it must be important to the message Paul wanted them to receive.
- Three interpretations of the phrase are popular:
    1. **"God's righteousness"** – an attribute of God.
    2. **"Righteousness *from* God"** – a status given to people by God. This is the traditional view that most Protestant theologians hold. When God "justifies" the sinner, He gives that person a new legal standing before Him – his or her "righteousness."
    3. **"Righteousness *done by* God"** – an action of "putting in the right" being done by God. This view is held by a growing number of scholars. It is God's intervention to set right what has gone wrong with His creation.
- The context of the passage does not really point in one direction or the other.
- The fact that the verse says "revealed" may make some lean to #3 while Paul's teaching on righteousness based on faith may lead some to #2.
- However, when you take the totality of the Bible together and look at what the Old Testament says about "righteousness of God," it becomes more clear that the phrase is used to represent God's saving activity. This would lead one to accept #2 as the correct interpretation of the phrase.

- A central teaching of Romans, and Paul's teachings in general, is the insistence that one can experience righteousness of God only through faith. He emphasizes this in two ways in this passage:
    1. He repeats the word "faith" several times: NASB, "[17]For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from **faith** to **faith**; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY **FAITH**."
        - The Greek here literally says "from faith into faith." The NIV translates it appropriately as "faith from first to last."
    2. He quotes **Habakkuk 2:4**, ""The righteous will live by faith."" This shows the connection between the righteous person, faith, and life. However what that connection looks like is not clear.
        - Is Paul emphasizing that righteous people should live by faith as the NIV, NASB, and KJV translate it?
        - Or is he saying that it is only the person who is righteous by faith who will attain life as the NRSV, TEV, REB versions translate it? The Good News Bible (REB) says, "…As the scripture says, "The person who is put right with God through faith shall live.""
        - If you take the totality of Paul's letter and teachings, only the righteous through faith attain eternal life which would lead to the second reading of the verse give in the REB.

- These two verses set out for us the theme for the entire book of Romans.
- The gospel is the overall theme of Romans and under that umbrella is justification by faith and how that process works.
- An understanding of what Paul is teaching in this book is fundamental to our faith.
- Martin Luther is famously quoted as saying, "Justification is the article upon which the church stands or falls."
- He believed in *Sola Fide* – "through faith alone."

Next Week Study

Romans 1:18-32