

Romans 1:16,17

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "*The just shall live by faith.*"

The first thing we need to do is look at the context of this passage. Isolating texts from their context is where I make my greatest errors in interpretation.

Let's look at the flow of thought in Chapter One.

Vs 1-6 Paul introduces himself and identifies himself with Christ and the Gospel.

Vs 7 Paul addresses his readers

Vs 8-15 Paul reveals his prayer for the Romans. First he prays generally for them. Then he prays specifically that by God's will he can visit them. He tells that his intent is mutual edification. He expects that his spiritual gifts and their spiritual gifts would be practiced and applied.

Paul explains that he is obligated to preach to both the cultured and the uncultured, the worldly wise and the worldly foolish. And that, as far as it lies in Paul's power, he is going to preach in Rome.

As we enter verse 16, I believe that Paul's statement that **he is not ashamed of the gospel** is in reference to the Gospel being superior to anything that would appear to compete against it. I don't think the statement reflects that Paul has been recently getting timid in his attitude toward the Gospel. It's not like he is rousing himself up to make a stand for the gospel. He is making a declaration that he is not ashamed because, based on all reason, he has no reason to be ashamed. All the world should be ashamed of the effects of their so called gospels. But oddly, they won't be ashamed of their foolishness, but they will mock and scorn

the Gospel. Paul, on the other hand, **has no shame** for the gospel that he ascribes to and that he boldly preaches.

Paul has no misconceptions about how people regard the gospel. Up to this point in Paul's life he has been hated, mistreated, brutalized, cursed and treated in just about any negative way men had in their power. And it was **all** for the **sake of the gospel**. Yet he never responded like the so called spiritual leaders of **our** day. He never tried to remove the offense of the gospel. He never stopped addressing the sin problem in his listeners. He didn't stoop to preaching Christ as **one** of **many** paths to God. He didn't take a survey to see what the listeners would view as appropriate. After all the abuse he suffered, he could still say without hesitation: I AM NOT ASHAMED.

How about us? What causes us to back down from boldly proclaiming Christ? Are we afraid to lose the acceptance in the earthly fraternities we are surrounded by? Are we afraid we will lose status or regard? Are we afraid we will offend? Paul was every bit as human as we are, but he was convinced of the supernatural power that God accompanies the gospel with and he would not stoop to proclaiming anything less important than this message he had received by God. I'm sure he didn't enjoy being hated any more than we would. Yet he would not be dissuaded from proclaiming it, no matter what the consequences. He could say I AM NOT ASHAMED.

Scripture is full of Paul's quotes about the Gospel. Many of these verses carries the same themes of the wisdom of God as opposed to the wisdom of man, the gospel as being revealed by God, the power for Salvation, the righteousness of God, salvation by Faith, and the fact that there is no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel. Let's look at just one of them.

I Cor 1: ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

¹⁸For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the **power** of God. ¹⁹For it is written:

*"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."*

²⁰Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. ²²For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the **power** of God and the **wisdom** of God. ²⁵Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Now back to our text:

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "*The just shall live by faith.*"

First- which Gospel is being proclaimed here? Paul tells us right up front, it is the Gospel **of Christ**. While this is the good news given **to** mankind, it is not a false gospel **of** mankind. In our time we will see the rapid increase of a false gospel that has its focus on human goodness and human capacity and human potential. But this is not a gospel at all. It is a lie to derail spiritual interest onto a deadly side path. The only real gospel is the Gospel Of Christ. That is the only place real hope is found. It is the only name under heaven whereby mankind must be saved.

In vs 16 and 17 we will be focusing heavily on three distinctions of this Gospel of Christ.

Only the Gospel of Christ gives the power of God to Salvation

Only the Gospel of Christ offers the righteousness of God

Only the Gospel of Christ offers salvation by Faith

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

The word for power is the word dunamis

Thayer Definition:

1) strength power, ability

1a) inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth

Dunamis is the greek word behind our word dynamite. It is an active power, sometimes outright remarkable and dramatic in its results. The Gospel is that kind of power. The Gospel, when responded to by faith, results in a dynamic result that cannot be denied. It is a change that is unexplainable except for the power of God.

And it is the power of God to salvation. This is also translated unto salvation. This may be the better meaning. The Gospel is the power unto salvation. It is a power that empowers justification, sanctification and glorification. It doesn't accomplish one thing and then stop. It is power unto salvation. The power is going somewhere and it will not stop until it gets there.

Salvation- sōtēria

Thayer Definition:

1) deliverance, preservation, safety, salvation

1a) deliverance from the molestation of enemies

1b) in an ethical sense, that which concludes to the souls safety or salvation

1b1) of Messianic salvation

As you are studying the scripture you will find that salvation is used in three tenses. We **have been saved**, past tense. We **are being saved**, present tense. And **we will be saved**, future tense.

All true believers **have been saved**, once and for all, from the **penalty** of sin. The wages of sin is death. We deserve God's eternal damnation. Yet through Christ's full payment of our sin penalty, we have been forgiven of our sin and the penalty of sin has been removed from us. We have been saved from sin's penalty.

Romans will spend some time dealing with that. While all believers are new creations, while the sin power cord has been unplugged, there is still indwelling sin and the flesh that needs dealt with. We have been saved from the penalty of sin completely and thoroughly, our justification has been accomplished perfectly. Just as Christ said, it is finished. Yet we still have to live in the flesh and in a world filled with sin. There is still saving that needs done. But it is not in the realm of justification.

We **are being** saved. We will learn in Romans that we are being saved from the **power** of sin. We are involved in the process of sanctification. We are conforming in thought and action to the new identity that we have been given in Christ. As believers we find that God is working in us to say no to sin and yes to Christ at the point of temptation. Sin has no power over us but the power of influence. But in our flesh that is power enough. Christ is delivering us from that power every day we live in Him. So as we commit sins, Christ is working in us to stop committing those known sins and conform to His image.

And we **will be saved**. Some glorious day we will be totally freed from the **presence** of sin. Oh what a day that will be. On that day we can say a sweet farewell to all of our defenses, to all of the ways we guard and protect ourselves. We will be able to trust all those around us implicitly without even bothering to test their claims. We will be true and all

those around us will be true. Because Christ's final work will be completed. We will see Him and be like Him. Oh what a day that will be.

To everyone who believes-

The verb tense of believes is present active tense. It is an action that is **being done now**. It doesn't say everyone who at one time has believed. It says the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who **is actively believing right now**.

Faith or belief is acting upon the word of another. There is such a thing as human belief or faith. That is something I can generate and it is something under my power. If a doctor tells me I have brain damage, I can believe him or I can disbelieve him. The choice is completely mine.

But scripture describes something that is different from this human power or this human resource. Scripture describes the faith that God gives us. And no man can drum up this faith. This faith believes what **God** has said. It goes way beyond human faith. No person will come to this faith by human effort or human will. It happens to Him from an outside force. And even his efforts in responding to the faith given to him are the result of a supernatural miracle. It will not seem it to a man, but scripture says it is so. Eph 2:9 tells us that this faith is a gift of God. And everyone who truly believes the gospel does so as a result of the work that God has already performed within him.

for the Jew first and also for the Greek.-

Some ideologies over man's history seek to make a case from scripture that we should punish Jews for killing Christ. While it is futile to deny that the Jews were guilty of killing Christ, it is also undeniable that the Gospel was given to Jews first. Christ was the Jewish Messiah. And the gospel of Christ was preached first to Jews by Christ. Christ spent little time preaching it to anyone but Jews. Then the apostles started preaching at Jerusalem. The gospel was preached first to Jews.

When that task was adequately accomplished the gospel was sent to the Greeks. But history will always show that the Jew was not left out. He received the message first.

Now for the rest of the text:

¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "*The just shall live by faith.*"

The Righteousness of God is revealed-

I would like to, at this point, contrast the righteousness of God revealed in scripture to the so called righteousness of man that is directly contrary to the gospel. I think this will help us best understand what the passage is saying.

First, let us take the normal Joe human being trying to please God. Joe reads God's law and he finds out what God requires. He learns what sin is. And he knows that to please God he must not sin.

So he says, I will not do what God forbids. I will do what he commands. So he tries, by his own strength of will, to do what God says. He keeps the first 9 commandments to the letter the best he can. But the 10th causes him to realize that he often covets that which he does not have. So he tries harder. He fails continually to reach the standard of perfection, but in his own self evaluation he believes that he has done pretty well. He believes that he is really a good person, better than many that surround him.

The regenerate man approaches things completely differently. He understands that he is an ultimate moral failure. He knows that he is a sinner saved by grace. He recognizes that he brings nothing to his relationship with Christ. But by grace, Christ was sent to this planet to pay the full penalty of this man's sin. The just penalty had to be paid for His sin, and so it was. And our Gracious Lord was the one who paid it.

Then Christ counted His own righteousness toward this man's account. So this man knows now that, while his

record was far from perfect, Christ's record is the one that will count for Him in heaven's reckoning. Grace is granted to us, not in the **application** of justice but in the **satisfaction** of justice by Christ. So now, in appreciation for that fact, he gladly submits himself to God's law in an effort to express appreciation for what has already been given to him. He counts, by faith, that God has already given him that which he needs in order to say no to sin. And he longs to say "no" based on what he has received. He recognizes the righteousness of God as his salvation.

The righteousness of God, as revealed in the Gospel, is superior in at least these three ways to man's supposed righteousness.

First God's righteousness is superior in degree. While a man may do some of the law, he can never keep all of the law. The law will condemn every man's record. He will fail. Christ, in contrast, lived the perfect life. Scripture tells us that He was without sin. He perfectly fulfilled the law's requirements. So Christ's righteousness far outshines every effort of man in degree.

Second, God's righteousness is superior in nature. Scripture tells us that all of our righteousness is as filthy rags. In other words, our actions of keeping the law in the flesh are every bit as corrupt as our actions of disobeying it. When our obedience is of the flesh, we are obeying for all the wrong reasons. We are not doing it by faith. And anything not of faith is sin. The unregenerate man is in the state of sin whether or not he obeys the law. So our unregenerate righteousness is worthless and evil. But Christ's righteousness is completely perfect and effective by nature. Every act that Christ did was in complete obedience of His Father and in faith of His Father.

Third, God's righteousness is superior in source. Any act of obedience to God's law by the flesh is an act of flesh. Man's pride can well up and say I deserve credit for that. I worked hard and accomplished it. I deserve a reward for that. Yet in reality, as we said earlier, the obedience, is by

nature, as evil as disobedience would be. It is based in man's ego and pride. It is the same pride that rises up against God and says, I am and there is none besides me. Yet God's righteousness is all of God. It is pure and perfect. It is God's goodness in motion. It never fails in letter or spirit. And when we are the receivers of God's righteousness, we can only say "Praise God for His unlimited grace who would apply His righteousness to a sinner like me. Praise God that He will display his power in me to save from beginning to end.

We will learn later in Romans that

Rom 3: ²¹But now the **righteousness** of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even the **righteousness** of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His **righteousness**, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶to demonstrate at the present time His **righteousness**, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ²⁹Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, ³⁰since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Romans 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture

say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 4Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

5But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
And whose sins are covered;

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin."

This is how the righteousness of God is revealed. Christ met the righteous requirement of the law and now Christ's righteousness counts for everyone that has faith in Christ.

And Romans 17 says this righteousness was revealed. There is no other world religion with such a concept of grace and imputed righteousness. All other religions include salvation by mans effort, by man's goodness. But only this Gospel has been revealed by God. Only this imputed grace has been told to us from the heart of God. And it is a good thing, because we would have never figured it out otherwise.

Then Romans 1:17 goes on to say

from faith to faith; as it is written, "*The just shall live by faith.*"

From faith to faith- The commentaries get interesting at this point. Fortunately, all three views I read are true, even if they are not the point of this scripture.

Some say that from faith to faith means that the faith of the apostles has been handed down over all generations, so our faith is the faith handed down from them. It has gone from their faith to our faith.

Others say it is speaking about the fact that we received our faith from another person. And God sees fit to save

every person through the evangelistic efforts of another person. So it is always from one person's faith to our faith.

Fortunately both of these points are true so no damage is done to theology here. But in the context it looks like there could be an even simpler interpretation.

What was your first act in responding to the message of the Gospel? In some way it was an act of faith. Now... how do you live every day? By faith.

Let's look at Hebrews 12 in closing.

Hebrews 12: 2looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Christ is the Author- from faith and the finisher, to faith. The believer will be living always in faith until we see Christ face to face. Whatever isn't of faith is sin. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love. Faith is believing God and living accordingly. We are saved by grace through faith. We are sustained by grace through faith. Faith is what the believer lives in. So it makes perfect sense that Paul finishes his thought with, the just will live by faith. The just are all those who have received the righteousness of God that was revealed in the Gospel. And the just are just by faith and they will continue to live in faith.