

## **How Does God Save Us Through the Gospel?**

Romans 1:16-17

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*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 righteous shall live by faith." - Romans 1:16-17, ESV*

Have you ever known someone who was obsessed with something? It can sometimes seem like they can hardly see or hear or talk about anything else. It amazes me how relentlessly Paul focused on the gospel in his opening of his letter to the Romans. We have already seen how Paul opens his letter by focusing on his identity as "an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God" and how Paul longs to bring gospel fellowship and encouragement to the church in Rome. We have seen how Christ is the focus of the gospel and how prayer and fellowship are vital to our faithfulness and growth in the gospel.

Today, Paul tells us that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. The gospel is indeed all about Christ - who He is and what He has done - but the gospel is also the way God saves us. How does the gospel save us? The gospel saves us in what it reveals and in how it is received.

The gospel reveals the righteousness of God to us. Martin Luther, who launched the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago, was once confused by this verse, because his Latin Bible had told him that Paul was saying that the gospel revealed God's justice. He could not understand how the justice of God could be good news or could bring him salvation, since he knew himself to be a guilty sinner, condemned by the justice of God.

Once Martin Luther got his hands on the Greek New Testament, he saw that Paul said not "justice" but "righteousness." He then knew that the gospel was the revelation of a gift, the gift of God's own righteousness, revealed through Jesus Christ. Thus, God was not condemning us in His justice, but offering us rescue in the gift of His righteousness.

Here is what Luther later wrote:

*At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. (Luther's Works, Volume 34, pp. 336-337)*

The best news is that this gift of righteousness is given "to everyone who believes" and "is revealed from faith for faith." In other words, the righteousness that the gospel reveals is received by faith alone. God does not require the performance of certain acts of penance or the fulfillment of legal requirements. The righteousness offered is already perfect and complete. We don't add anything to it; we just receive it by faith alone.

Praise God that He saves us through the Gospel by giving us the gift of His perfect righteousness, received by faith alone!