

Studies in Romans

God's Powerful Saving Gospel (1:16-17)

Review

The purpose of Romans

Why did Paul write Romans?

1. **Paul was gathering support for his trip to Spain.**
2. **There was tension between Jews and Gentiles in the church and Paul wanted them to live in harmony with each other.**
3. **This was connected by an emphasis on the gospel.**

Key purpose:

The overarching goal in this letter is to glorify God.

“The purpose of Romans is the glory of God seen in a united missionary church humbled together under grace” (Christopher Ash).

Context

Romans 1:1-17 is the opening “frame” or section of the letter and the introduction simply divides up into three parts:

1. **vv. 1-7** Greeting (from: Paul, to: the Roman Christians)
2. **vv. 8-15** Relationship (the background: Paul's gospel commitment to the Roman Christians)
3. **vv. 16-17** Manifesto (key verses: God's powerful saving gospel)

What is the connection between Paul's overview of the gospel in vv. 1-7 and his eagerness to visit Rome in vv. 8-15?

So we saw last week in **vv. 8-15** how Paul prays for the Romans – praising God for them and praying that he might come see them—so that he could preach the gospel to them and they would be mutually encouraged.

Paul's manifesto (1:16-17)

Note the “linking words” in this passage. Grasp the logic of what Paul's argument.

¹⁵ *So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.*

¹⁶ *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.*

¹⁷ *For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed
from faith for faith,
as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”*

Why is Paul eager to preach the gospel? Because –

Why isn't Paul ashamed of the gospel? Because –

Why is the gospel the power of God to rescue? Because –

Important questions to answer about this passage:

1. Why might one be “ashamed of the gospel”?
2. What is “the righteousness of God”?
3. What’s Paul mean by saying God’s righteousness “is revealed” in the gospel?
4. Why is it “from faith to faith”?
5. Since Paul is quoting from the Old Testament, from the prophet Habakkuk, how does the Old Testament quotation help us understand what he’s saying here?

Paul is not ashamed of the gospel

Why might one be ashamed of the gospel?

“The gospel always involves “despising shame” (Michael Eaton). See **Hebrews 12:2**.

See also **Mark 8:34-38; 2 Timothy 1:8, 12** (noting the context) and **2 Cor. 11:23-27**.

“Ashamed” could also be interpreted “being disappointed” by the gospel or “publicly disgraced.”

Why is Paul unashamed of the gospel? Because...

The gospel is the power of God to rescue

Paul is not ashamed because the gospel is not weak. It has power to save. Remember, every human being that God rescues, He will rescue by the gospel of Jesus Christ. See **1 Cor. 6:9ff**.

The power of God: *dynamis theou*.

The reason Paul is unashamed of the gospel is because the gospel is the power of God that “results in” or “brings about” salvation. See also **1 Cor. 1:18**. To be more exact, note the context of that verse. The power of the gospel lies in its effective work in calling believers to salvation (see **1 Cor. 1:23-24, 26-29**). See also **1 Cor. 2:4-5; 4:19-20; 2 Cor. 4:7**.

“**Salvation**” – the word means “rescue” or “deliverance.” In danger and brought to safety... And, the future sense of salvation is certainly in view here...

Saved in the future from what? See **Rom. 5:9, 10; 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:8-9; Eph. 1:13-14; Eph. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:18**.

Who is this salvation for?

Note the emphasis on faith: **vv. 5, 8, 12, 16, 17 (x2)**.

What does Paul mean by “faith”?

Example of Abraham: **Rom. 4:16-25**.

The tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility...

“**...to everyone** who believes...”

“**...to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**” Note that the saving promises that God made to the Jews are also being fulfilled among the Gentiles. This is a big theme in Paul’s preaching.

Why is the gospel the power of God to rescue? Because...

In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed

Verse 17 explains why the gospel is the power of God that brings salvation. The gospel is the saving power of God *because the righteousness of God is being revealed in it* (present tense).

What is “the righteousness of God”? This expression is used eight times in Romans (**1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3a, 3b**) and it’s used elsewhere in Paul’s letters (**2 Cor. 5:21**).

The “righteousness of God” covers three important elements: who God is, what He does, and how He does it.

1. **Who God is** – an attribute of God’s character – “God’s righteousness.”
2. **What God does** – “the righteousness shown by God.” It’s God “doing the right thing...” especially in light of His promises. See **Psalm 98:2, 3a**. So “the righteousness of God” can mean His saving work—His saving activity.
3. **How God does it** – “the righteousness of God” can be pointing to how God saves – it’s a free gift of God to the believer. See **Phil. 3:9**. It’s this instantaneous change in legal status of a sinner before God. It’s this declaration of righteousness before God.

So we can take “the righteousness of God” to mean His saving activity in reaching out to rescue all who trust in Christ by giving them, as an undeserved gift, a right status before Him. (Christopher Ash).

The revolution in Martin Luther’s life...

Remember, God’s righteousness is...

1. A gift from God.
2. Not *our* righteousness.
3. The basis of our assurance.
4. Not by works.
5. Why we have to give God all the praise.

About this “righteousness of God,” Paul says first that it’s “being revealed.” *What’s that mean?* See also **1 Pet. 1:10-12**.

Secondly Paul says that it’s “being revealed” how? “...from faith for faith...” or “by faith from first to last” or “from faith to faith.”

Finally, Paul illustrates the righteousness of God, which is revealed from faith to faith” with an illustration from the Old Testament—**Habakkuk 2:4**. Note the context in **Habakkuk 2** and Paul’s point here in Romans.

For further thought and discussion

- *If someone asked you what you believe as a Christian, what would you say? After studying **Romans 1:1-17**, is there any area where our message differs from Paul’s? In what areas does our thinking most need to be changed?*
- Thinking about Paul’s purpose in writing Romans...
 - *How do **verses 16 and 17** help promote church unity?*
 - *How do **verses 16 and 17** help increase a passion for evangelism and missions?*
- *According to this passage, how are we saved? How should this view of salvation affect:*
 - *Our view of ourselves?*
 - *Our view of others?*
- *Are you “ashamed of the gospel”? Why? What is the antidote to this?*