

Gospel Righteousness

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- [0 : 0 0] If you have the Bible, go ahead and turn with me to Romans 1. And we're going to be looking at verses 16 and 17 today.
- We're continuing our march through Romans at a somewhat slow pace. But fret not, there'll be some breaks.
- But today we're looking at Romans 1, 16 and 17. This is God's word. 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.
- Let's pray. Lord, we're thankful for your word which you've given us this morning. We pray that you might use it, that we might see Christ as more glorious through it.
- [1 : 0 9] And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. If you're like me, you kind of check your email, either a lot or a little. I won't tell you which one I am. I'm a persistent email checker.
- It's not just my computer. It's also other things like my phone. Maybe you check your email on an iPad or some kind of e-reader or some other kind of device.
- But that's not necessarily a bad thing. We want to stay connected. Even here at this church. Now, this isn't a paid advertisement to join into the church email list, although that's a good idea.
- But we want to stay connected. And each week, Miss Kathy and Matthew can send out news updates and reminders and all those kinds of things.
- And that's good. Now, this doesn't happen every week to me, but it happens a lot. But I read those emails. I get that weekly announcement in my email inbox, and I think, what in the world is going on?
- [2 : 1 2] Because I glance at that subject line, and I read it again, and I think, oh, my goodness. Is anyone paying attention? Who is running this operation? I've said this even out loud where the guy who works in the office next to me will say, what is going on with you?
- I'll show you what I mean. And here are some of the subject lines of the emails that I read. Make a significant impact. I think, oh, yeah, great. I want to make a significant impact. I think when I hear or when I read, join us for member enrichment.
- I want to be rich in all areas of my life. Don't you? But this is where the panic sets in. Come meet Dot and Chico. I think to myself, who are Dot and Chico?
- I've never met them. And then full-on pandemonium sets in when I read, Cora, the one-year-old panda, is settling in. Like, what in the world is going on?
- Grizzly bear housewarming party. Now I'm speed dialing Kathy. I'm trying to call her to make sure she's okay. And then it finally dawns on me when I read something like this.
- [3 : 2 0] Our zootacular auction is on the way. Ah, it's not Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. It's Cheyenne Mountain Zoo. And when I check it on my phone, I think it's on my phone, I just see Cheyenne Mountain.

And this happens every single time. I just assume that it's the church. But it's, in fact, the zoo. And I get worried because those subject lines are so descriptive, I know what is happening.

But I think it's happening at church and not up the mountain at the zoo. Those subject lines give you a snippet of what's happening at the zoo. They tell us what you're about to learn, what you're about to see when you visit.

The subject line of this letter in Romans tells us exactly what is going to happen for the rest of the letter. It reminds us in these two jam-packed verses that righteousness is really, really important.

Righteousness that comes from the gospel. Righteousness that is of God. And how far it reaches, how deep it reaches, and how it is accomplished.

[4 : 30] So we're going to look at that. How it's the reach of gospel righteousness and the means for how it is accomplished. First, let's turn our attention to the reach. Paul very narrowly is talking about the gospel noun form.

Gospel adjective form is good. But it seems we're inundated these days with that as an adjective. But he's talking very specifically about the gospel. The message of salvation through Christ.

And the righteousness that flows from that. And the righteousness that creates that. As we'll see in a second. He points us to that in the very first phrase of verse 16.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel. Now very much has been said. Ink has been spilt over what he's talking about. I'm sure you have heard someone say, you should not be ashamed.

That is absolutely true. If the gospel is that important and that life-changing, you should not be ashamed. In fact, you should glory over it.

[5 : 33] But what Paul is doing here is using this kind of technique. It's a rhetorical device where he uses almost a double negative. And he says, I don't want you to be sorry.

Sorry is not a negative. But he doesn't want you to be sorry. Or my favorite from growing up is, you don't want to leave hungry. So it means you want to be filled.

In fact, grandfathers say these things all the time. And when my brother and I were younger, we would write these things down to try to figure out exactly what my granddad was saying. Because he would use phrases like this.

And if we're going to write this phrase down and try to figure out what Paul is saying, he is saying very clearly, I glory in the gospel. I delight in it. I rejoice in it.

And he's still not ashamed. But why? If you remember last week, we ended with verse 15. Right? It's right before 16. He said he was eager to bring the gospel to Rome and preach it to those that were there.

[6 : 34] He's eager because he, in verse 16, glories in it. He delights in it. It's his everything. He relishes it. And it's not just him personally.

It's much more than that. Which we'll see in a minute. Now, this question of reach. It's a reach in terms of scope. It's a reach in terms of depth and breadth.

And that's how we're going to look at it. Depth and breadth. Depth. Anticipating the question about the gospel that Paul describes here is not just in terms of what it accomplishes.

He starts with the oomph behind it. The power. He says that very clearly. It is the power of God for salvation. He starts with God.

It's how he saves. Just like how he created all things, he brought them into being in creation. That's the story of God working powerfully to make things. Salvation is the story, is the means by which God saves people, shows his righteousness.

[7 : 41] As we'll see in a minute. The great theologian John Murray described it like this. Salvation is proclaimed in the gospel. Got that. The gospel as a message is the embodiment of power.

We don't often think like that. That salvation is how God shows his power. But that's what Paul is reminding us of. And that display of power is in the very depth of salvation.

He reminds us the gospel is for everyone. It's for anyone. It's not just for those who think they're within the pale. It's for those who are beyond the pale.

Those that think they can't even darken the door. But the power of God is that light that invades the darkness in each of our hearts. And changes us from sinner into saint.

This power of God, this message of the gospel, this salvation is for everyone. And sometimes we think that we are too far gone. But it's for those people.

[8 : 49] It's for the lawless. It's for the righteous. It's for the self-righteous. It's for the people that have everything together. It's for those people that their lives are a mess. It is for everyone and anyone.

And sometimes we trick ourselves into thinking it's just for us here in Colorado Springs. It's just for us here in this church. It's just for us in the Western world.

It's just for us that can read, that speak English. It's for everyone at all times, in all places, for everyone that is to come.

And everyone that has been. It's for every Pharisee, perfectionist, for every tribe, tongue, and nation. We know that. But we need to be reminded of that.

We all need the gospel. And it is free. Isaiah reminds us of this. He writes, Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.

[9 : 50] And he who has no money, come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. This good news is free and for everyone.

May we never lose sight of that fact. But there's a catch. Right? There's always a catch. The guy who comes and knocks on my door and gives me the free estimate.

I know there's a catch. I know it's coming. There's a catch to this. But it's a pretty easy one. Believe. Simply believe that message is true and trust in it.

Paul reminds the wayward church of Corinth of this very thing. He writes in this later letter, It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

If the gospel makes sense, that means the power of God is working in your heart to understand it. It's being made manifest. Just because like Paul said in 1 Corinthians, if it doesn't make sense, it's because God hasn't made himself known.

[10 : 51] He's not working. That sounds super foolish. But that is how he works. Now in that 1 Corinthians quote, and here, who's doing all the work?

It ain't me. It ain't you. It's God. He's the one that's operative. He's the one that can freely offer the gospel to us. And that's kind of a little bit of a mystery.

And Paul knows this. But he knows that God is at work. He knows God's power is the thing that causes salvation. And that's the only thing that can cause it.

Because sinners are captive to the law. They've had the penalty of sin and death. Death because of their sin pinned upon them. And they're dead.

Dead things don't live. Dead ice makers in refrigerators don't make ice, as I found out. No matter how much I want to massage them or reset them and will their existence into being, but when the circuit board is fried, it is dead.

[11 : 58] We are dead. Nothing we can do can will ourselves out of that. And that's the beauty of this gospel message, that God has sent his son to die for sin, for your sin and my sin.

And we receive that righteousness if we put faith in him. God and man sent here on earth to pay the penalty for sin. All that's required is that we believe in him.

And he rose from the dead. And one day, this world will pass away and we will rise as well. But not just for us, those long ago and those to come.

Everyone who believes, no matter their background. I think sometimes that's a confusing idea for us in the modern day. We hear that we are so informed and shaped by our culture.

And that's true. But that's where the gospel is unique, right? That message that's so simple that God works to come to fruition, it transcends all of that. And Paul reminds us of that in these unique phrases, first to the Jew and then to the Greek.

[13 : 10] Now, Hatfields and McCoys, there can't be two groups that are more diametrically opposed than Jews and Greeks. They're different. They have different values. They have different beliefs. They speak different languages most often in this context.

They simply don't like each other. And if you read the New Testament, a lot is written about getting those people who now have faith in Jesus to come and work together and actually care about each other.

They have the gospel. They believe in Christ. But they're holding on to who they are so tightly that they don't like each other. Paul reminds us the gospel works no matter where we come from or who we are.

Oftentimes, we'll hear that phrase Gentile, which is a.k.a. not a Jew. Greek is the same way. It has the same connotation that they are not Jewish.

But here, there's an introduction of an interesting wrinkle. Time. First to the Jew and then to the Greek. We see in other places that Paul writes in like Galatians.

[14 : 10] He wrote that letter before this. That there is either Jew nor Greek nor slave nor free nor man or woman. We're all one in Christ Jesus. Okay, we get that. We're all coming together.

We have faith in Jesus. But here, he introduces time. Why does he do that? He's doing that to show us how the gospel is at work, even in the past.

Because that gospel message came to the Jews first. And all those promises, and all those warnings, and all those reminders. As one other has said it, that God was laying the lines of preparation in Israel for the gospel.

It was there. They missed it. And now, it's come to everyone in the freeness, in the fullness of Jesus.

This is a quick pivot here by Paul from talking about how one is saved. Kind of the order of that's going on. The fancy term for that is, in Latin, order salutis. How things are ordered, right?

[15 : 11] I love order. I'm a Presbyterian in the army. I love order. I love it. And so, I get really uncomfortable when we talk about this other thing.

The history of salvation. The historia salutis. How the gospel is at work, weaving through all of time to come to fruition.

But that's exactly what Paul is pointing us to. He's pointing to us. He's pointing to these Jews that missed it. That it has always been there. It is always, it was always there.

To anyone and everyone who believes. To the Jew first. Now to all people. No matter what they have done. The depth of their sin.

The breadth of our world. The gospel is for all of those. In the spring of 1738, a young man entered a church. Wasn't a Christian. And he heard a man kind of stumbling his way through reading a commentary.

[16:15] Imagine if Matthew came here every week and read through a commentary. I don't know if I could make it. But this man was so taken by what he heard. He described his experience this way.

While he was describing the change by which God works in the heart through faith in Christ. I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ.

Christ alone for my salvation. And assurance was given to me that he had taken away my sins. Even mine. That man was John Wesley.

And that experience would inform his entire ministry. And would change a nation. Change the western world arguably. Christ had taken away my sin.

Even mine. His, mine, yours. We delivered from the law of sin and death.

[17:12] And delivered into glorious marvelous light of faith in Christ. Because sin is paid by Christ. That's what Paul is reminding us of. Of. That's what John Wesley experienced.

And even if we need to be reminded of that gospel. Because that gold has become dim. That glorious truth is no longer so fresh within us. The thing that makes you more holy.

That makes me love my wife more. That makes me love my kids more. That makes me want to do good at work. The thing that drives all that. The powerhouse.

The engine. Is that power of God. It is the gospel message. Even now. It's not something that happens and is set upon the shelf. God is at work.

God is at work. Even to make us more holy. From the gospel. To root out sin. And to walk in Christ likeness. We can't deceive ourselves though.

[18:13] And we often do. And think it's all on my own. Yes it is. In some sense. But God is the power. Behind this. God is the power in salvation.

It's not in us. And even when we share the gospel. We're talking about being a gospel hub. And having a fervent witness in this community. We can think that everything is in our technique.

Our tactics. How conversant we are in modern culture. Do I know the latest rap song. So I can talk to teenagers. Or soldiers. Or my neighbor.

Do I read those monthly periodicals. So I can talk about those things. And then transition to the gospel. Those aren't bad things. But we must know that the power of God is what changes hearts.

It's me on my knees praying for my children. No matter my parenting techniques. It's me praying for my neighbor. And wanting parents and wayward children.

[19:14] To come home to faith. That is the power. We must be reminded of that. Paul is reminding this church. He's reminding us. That God gives righteousness through the gospel.

Through the power of God. No matter our sin. No matter our culture. The depth and breadth of gospel righteousness. But how does he accomplish it?

What are the means he uses? He's alluded to this a little bit before. It's just believing. And then he expounds on this. He keeps turning back to that one key point. Verse 17.

For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed. The starting point is not the righteousness we receive. But it's God's righteousness. It's kind of a weird phrase if we think about it.

Often times we think about God's holiness a lot. We don't think about God's righteousness. But it's distinct. We think about our own lack of righteousness.

[20 : 14] We're really familiar with that. Shorter catechism and Puritans remind us of this. My favorite is the want of original righteousness. Just makes you sound smart, right? The want of original righteousness.

Just means you don't have any righteousness. But God has righteousness. And sometimes in the modern sense, we think of righteousness as moral. But Paul is bringing forth this Old Testament idea of it being legal.

Righteousness is legal. It thinks about a judge in a courtroom with one of the gavel things. Yep. Not the wooden hammer.

He declares that you're righteous. It's not the sense in which people that live in my home, when they get disgruntled, they say, Oh, Dad, that ain't right. It's not moral.

It's legal. But there is a moral quality. There's a moral quality in God. But righteousness is part of who he is.

[21 : 17] Holiness is being set apart. Completely other. We have that after being made in God's own image. We also have a righteousness that we receive from him. But when sin enters in the world, we know how that goes.

We don't have the holiness. We don't have the righteousness in his image. Righteousness is part of who God is.

But he reveals it to us. But how does he reveal it to us? It's not like he pulls up the curtain and goes, Ta-da, this is my righteousness. He reveals it in salvation. He reveals it in the gospel.

But this is not done without consideration of justice. It's not done and he puts justice aside. He just merely redirects justice towards his son.

And that is right. Lest we think this is something that only happens in the New Testament. Isaiah records this idea together of salvation and righteousness being linked together.

[22 : 23] He says this, I bring near my righteousness. It is not far off. My salvation will not delay. Soon salvation will come and my righteousness will be revealed.

Salvation and righteousness are linked together and we can't separate them. God's righteousness is on display in salvation. He doesn't just save us from sin, but he gives us Christ's righteousness.

The Christian actually receives the righteousness of Christ when they believe. That is a glorious fact. And it starts with God's righteousness because that's who he is.

Now, how does he accomplish that? This is the curious part. Paul points back to that critical component of believing or faith. He writes, When we see this, Paul is pointing back to verse 16 when he says, everyone who believes.

There's actually a lot of contention over what's going on here. But we know that you have to believe to be righteous. There's a disagreement over the phrase.

[23 : 37] Is it from faith, for faith, from faith, to faith? Does it mean degrees of faith? I have weak faith or strong faith. Does it mean faith alone justifies? Key is always context.

And many problems of heresies or good idea fairies, of things that pop up in the text, we know if we just keep reading, either before or behind it, nine times out of ten we'll figure it out.

And here, it's a lot closer. 16, it says, Whoever believes, if we have faith in Christ, then we receive justification. We are made righteous. In that earlier letter that Paul wrote to the church in Galatia, he said, the promise of faith in Jesus is given to those who believe.

That is the condition. That is the grounds. But this is an old, old story. As we see, Paul reminds us and points us back to Habakkuk. It's kind of a weird quotation.

Some have said Romans is an entire sermon, a really stinking long sermon, about Habakkuk, about this one verse in Habakkuk. And Paul spends 16 some odd chapters explaining it.

[24 : 46] He's quoting not Jesus, not the events of the disciples, but he's quoting an Old Testament idea because it's that important, because it's not new, that faith is the means by which God's people achieve righteousness or receive it.

It's how it's accomplished. We talked about righteousness earlier, but whenever I think of righteousness, I think of NBA basketball. I think of NBA basketball a lot. I love the NBA.

And if you're around in the 90s and early 2000s, you'll remember this very famous basketball player. He was an African named Mutombo. He played for the Hawks, and he was kind of a journeyman of other teams.

But what he did is when he would block shots, he would celebrate by doing this, like a mom. And he would say, no, whenever I hear the word righteousness, that I'm good, I think in my mind, I think back to Mutombo, even in the Geico commercial of a couple of years ago, him waving his finger at that person and saying, you don't need righteousness.

You need God's righteousness. I need God's righteousness. I need Christ. It needs to be given to me through faith. We need his righteousness as it's revealed to accomplish the means of salvation.

[26 : 16] Righteousness revealed in salvation, as Paul reminds us. We all need it. And it's freely offered to us. Gospel righteousness that reaches the vilest of sinners that are on death row.

The righteousness that is revealed to us in our homes, even me, you, we need Christ's work on our behalf. Christ's work on the cross.

But I can't escape this one thing. Why Habakkuk? Why does Paul use Habakkuk? I'll tell you why. It's for context. It's not going well for Israel.

They found themselves in darkness, oppressed, downtrodden, no visible hope of deliverance. Things were not going well. But God is reminding his people that evil will not triumph.

Wickedness will not always be. Broken bodies will not always be broken. Relationships will not always be fractured. They will be restored. Salvation is, yes, for us, from sin.

[27 : 22] But it accomplishes all these things. A restoration of all of that. God's righteousness invades. And Habakkuk writes this. Instead, there is coming a day that he says, the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as water covers the sea.

Until that day comes, let us live by faith. Let us live by faith. Let's pray. the news of Christ.

Both for our own sin, but also as a display of your power to make all things right. And may we live by faith in your promises until that day comes.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.