

• *Summary verses*

Romans 1:16–17 is a summary of everything Paul wants to say. He begins: 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.*

1. What the gospel is

• *Good news!*

1. **We must notice exactly what the gospel is.** People are always corrupting the gospel. For some people the Christian faith is about politics or helping society to be moral. For others it is a matter of getting God's help in our business or in paying the rent! But for Paul the 'gospel' is just that – a gospel! An announcement of good news. The good news is that God has – in and through the Lord Jesus Christ – done everything that needs to be done for us to be 'saved'. God has – in and through the Lord Jesus Christ – made it possible for our sins to be forgiven, for the power of sin to be broken, and for us to be set on a pathway on which eventually sin will be removed altogether from planet earth.

2. The gospel has immense power

• *To bring change in a world of wickedness*

2. **The gospel has immense power.** The message about salvation in Jesus itself has great power. The good news when it comes to us by the Holy Spirit has immense power. That is why Paul is not in the least bit afraid or intimidated in trying to get to Rome. The entire place was full of wickedness and crime and moral filth of every kind. But that makes Paul all the more eager to go there. The gospel of Jesus was just what was needed by the people of Rome. Paul knew that, although Rome was full of every kind of ugly sin and wickedness, God's news about Jesus could change people. He is ready and eager to prove the point in the capital city of the empire, Rome.

3. The theme is salvation

• *From God's wrath and lostness*

3. **The theme is salvation.** What Paul is concerned about is 'salvation'. The word means 'rescue', 'deliverance'. It implies that everyone is in a position of danger or distress. What Jesus does is a matter of 'rescuing', 'saving', 'delivering'. The word implies that we are brought into a situation of safety and wellbeing. This is what the gospel is all about. In the New Testament we are said to be saved from God's wrath¹, from God's enmity towards us², from alienation from God³, from sin⁴, from lostness⁵, from a futile way of life⁶, from bondage⁷, and from demonic possession (Luke 8:36, where the Greek uses the word for 'save').

- 1 5:9
- 2 5:10
- 3 Ephesians 2:12
- 4 Matthew 1:21
- 5 Luke 19:10
- 6 1 Peter 1:18
- 7 Galatians 5:1

• *Into safety, well-being and rich blessing*

Positively we are brought into a position of safety and well-being. We experience the blessings of righteousness before God, life within us from God, the enjoyment of being God's sons and daughters. Flowing from this new position come all of the 'unsearchable riches of Christ'. Out of his fullness we receive grace that is greater than anything the world has to offer.

4. The starting point - a gift of righteousness

4. **The starting point is the provision of a gift of righteousness.** In verse 17 we come to the heart of what Paul has to say in Romans. The gospel is God's power: *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed . . .* The predicament of humankind is this. God demands that we should be righteous, but we are incapable of producing a righteousness by ourselves. We are sinners. We go astray from our earliest days. All our ideas about God and righteousness are mistaken. God wants righteousness of heart, and if we are honest with ourselves we know something of the deceit that goes on inside of our minds and in the secret places

• *What we are unable to produce, God is willing to provide*

• *A gift*

• *Total acceptance*

• *The basis of our assurance*

• *Faith in the faithfulness of Jesus*

• *Enjoying the life of God through faith*

of our lives. God's demand is for a 100 per cent righteousness, not merely for a righteousness 'most of the time'. But the good news is that what we are unable to produce, God is willing to provide. He will **give** us a righteousness, not one of our own making but one that comes entirely from him.

This righteousness is given by God, not achieved by us. It is not our personal righteousness. We do not do anything. We are simply clothed with a covering that God gives us, God's righteousness. This 'righteousness from God' has nothing to do with anything in ourselves at all. It is the basis of assurance. If we were standing before God in our **own** righteousness we could never be quite sure it is good enough. But God's righteousness is acceptable to him. Of course! It is his righteousness. It is perfect. It is his sinlessness. It is his total purity and holiness. We are clothed with **that**. It gives us total acceptance before God. This is why Paul is constantly saying that salvation is 'without works'. We don't do anything to get this righteousness. Believe it and it is yours. Believe and you are covered with it. It was secured for you by Jesus. Believe in Jesus and – in that second – you are covered with his righteousness. Salvation is planned in such a way 'so that no one may boast'¹². These are the things that Paul has on his heart. He will take the remainder of Romans to open them up to the Christians at Rome and to us.

In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed *from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The righteous person will live by faith.'* The phrases here are tricky. As I see it, what Romans 1:17 means is this. When we believe we are putting our faith in the faithfulness of Jesus and in the personal faith of Jesus. Our faith is faith in Jesus' faith and in Jesus' faithfulness.

Paul follows up what he had said with a quotation: 'as it is written, "The righteous person will live by faith."' The language goes back to Genesis 15:6. Habakkuk says in effect, 'You know about how a person becomes righteous before God – Genesis 15:6! Well, this righteous person goes on to have **life through** this same faith of his, or I could say through his holding on to the faithfulness of God.' The righteous person – who is righteous because he has faith – goes on to enjoy the life of God by the very same faith that saved him in the first place.

¹ Ephesians 2:9
² 1 Corinthians 1:13

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