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A1419 – May 11, 2014 – Romans 1:16-17
The Gospel Of Righteousness By Faith - Part 2

We're working with the theme of Romans. What's a theme? It's the subject of a piece of writing. When you write it's a good idea to place your theme at the end of the first paragraph. Why do we have to go through this? Because the education system in this country is falling apart and the church needs to pick up the ball and educate people. I consider this an educational facility. The word disciple means "a learner." You're here to learn. So you have to point out basic things like what is a theme because the majority of people in college today don't know what a theme is or how to write a paper. And I really don't fault the teachers. My heart breaks for the English teachers who are desperately trying to teach parts of speech, sentence structure and how to write. They're doing all they can, working extra hours, giving kid's one on one attention. The fault is not the teachers in the majority of the cases. Whose fault is it? It's the parents who fail to discipline the children. We've lost authority structure in the family, we've lost the family and when you lose the family everything else follows because the family is the basic unit of society, not the individual, the family. So when a family is broken or it has no authority structure what do you expect from the kids? They're brats. And what can a teacher do when your brat is disrupting class every five seconds. Nobody can teach or learn in that kind of environment, it turns into a babysitting job. The teachers around this country are fed up with it. They get all the blame but it's not their fault, it's the parents fault. And if the system crashes it's going to crash because of the bratty parents I commend you because at least in this classroom we have discipline, we have peace and quiet and we have parents who discipline their children. And now we're into what is a theme and where is a good place to put a theme? Paul was a good writer, he shows us a good place to put your theme, near the beginning of your writing. That way everyone knows what you're talking about from the get-go. What verses carry the theme of Paul's piece of writing to the saints at

Rome? Romans 1:16-17. As a theme they have to encompass the subject matter of the entire letter. This means they are well worth understanding and memorizing. It's one thing to memorize but if you don't know the meaning of what you memorize then it doesn't have much use. Fortunately the verses are very memorable, "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. ¹⁷For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." I want to show you what these memorable verses mean. Verse 16 begins with "For," that means it's an explanation. An explanation of what? An explanation of the end of verse 15, Paul's eagerness to preach the gospel in Rome. So the theme in general is the gospel that results in salvation to all who believe. Verse 17 also begins with "For" so it is a further explanation of the gospel. This gospel specifically relates to the righteousness of God that is being revealed from faith to faith.

We said there are seven great words here; gospel, power, God, salvation, righteousness, faith and life. We only defined a few of these words and so today we want to define more of them. Without a proper definition you can't think correctly. First, "gospel." The word "gospel" is *εὐαγγέλιον*. It means "good news." If you told me that your friend was walking with Christ that would be a kind of "good news." Of course, here Paul is being more specific and his use of gospel is that it is the good news that results in salvation when believed. There is only one good news in this sense and it centers on the person and work of Christ. As to His person He is the Christ, the Son of God. As to His work He died for our sins and was raised on the third day. This is the good news. Jesus Christ in His person and work has paid the penalty for our sins and the resurrection vindicates that the payment was accepted. Now if we believe this message God saves us on the basis of what Christ has done. That again, is good news itself.

Second, "believe" and "faith." Believe is used in verse 16 and faith is used in verse 17. Essentially these are the same word since they come from the same word group; one is a noun, the other is a verb. The verb "believe" is *πιστευω*, the noun "faith" is *πιστις*. The noun refers to "something stable, reliable, firm." The verb refers to "having confidence in someone or something, to be convinced something is true." It is not a weak form of knowledge, it is being convinced that something is true because it can be relied upon. It is one of the

most misused words in all the Bible because it was destroyed in the early 1800's by Immanuel Kant. He insisted that faith was irrational and reason was rational and he pit these two against one another in the mythical dichotomy of faith and reason. When Soren Kierkegaard accepted Kant's re-definition of faith in the 1840's he said it in theological circles as a leap into the nothingness, a blind guess that something was out there. When Karl Barth systematized this view of faith into his neo-orthodox theology in the 1940's it spread through evangelicalism like wildfire. Ever since faith is seen as a verifier of truth. It verifies that something is true for you. That is very unfortunate. Christianity has been impotent ever since. It has retreated into an other-worldly mysticism. About the only concept of faith anyone has today is a leap of faith. But this concept is not at all what the Bible is talking about when it says faith or belief. Faith is not a blind leap into the nothingness hoping that someone or something is there to catch you, faith is a firm confidence that something is true because there are good reasons it can be trusted. It involves the process of asking questions and having those questions reasonably answered so that you become convinced. Only when we are convinced something is true should we put our faith in it. We do not leap out into the nothingness, that is a very foolish thing to do and that is not a faith that saves, it is not a great faith, it is a silly idea that Satan invented through Immanuel Kant. When Paul says in verse 16 that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, he is saying to those who have become convinced of the gospel message that it is the saving power of God. They are convinced that thinking through the human predicament it is reasonable to conclude that God would save them through the gospel. It might help if you replace the word "faith" with "convinced" or "confidence" because that is what it means.

Third, "salvation" and "save". Both these words come from the same root and are also misunderstood or at least limited in their true scope. The noun "salvation" is *σωτηρια* and the verb "save" is *σωζω*. The noun "salvation" means "deliverance." The verb "save" means "to rescue from dangers and afflictions." Any danger that someone is delivered from is salvation. If a man was rescued from drowning that man was saved. If a man was rescued from the penalty of sin that man was saved. What Paul is talking about is salvation from the death-dealing effects of sin. He argues that God saves us from sin through the gospel in three tenses or phases. First, if you are a non-Christian you stand condemned by God, but when you believe the gospel you

have been saved, this past tense refers to your justification which is a once-for-all legal imputation of Christ's righteousness to your account by which you are instantly saved from the penalty of sin which condemned you. Second, if you are a Christian you are justified by God, but as you continue to believe the gospel you are being saved. The present tense refers to sanctification which is the process of God imparting Christ's righteousness through you in the form of good fruit which saves you from the power of sin which causes loss of fellowship and bad fruit. Third, if you are a Christian then you are justified and in the process of being sanctified, but in day of resurrection you will be saved, this future tense refers to your glorification which is the inheriting of Christ's righteousness so that you are instantly saved from the presence of sin altogether. Understanding that salvation can refer to all three of these aspects is one of the most important tools in interpreting Scripture. You must look in the context to determine what tense of salvation is being referred to. Otherwise you will hit a passage like Gal 5:4 that says, "You have been severed from Christ...you have fallen from grace" and you will say, "Holy mackerel, I can lose my salvation" but you have not specified what aspect of salvation Paul is addressing. It turns out that Paul is addressing the present aspect of salvation, which is their sanctification, they are not being set free from the power of sin because they are depending on their flesh. If they died that day they would remain justified, they would only lose rewards. Or you might read the passage in 2 Cor 13:5 that says, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?" Again you might become fearful thinking that Paul is saying you can lose your salvation, but in the context again, what aspect of salvation is Paul talking about? It turns out that he's talking about discipline and how they needed to test themselves to see if they were walking in fellowship because if not Paul would discipline them when he arrived. So again it's talking about the present aspect of salvation, which is their sanctification, they were not being set free from the power of sin because they were walking according to the flesh. If they died they would remain justified and go to heaven, but they would lose rewards. Always the context determines and if people would read the Bible carefully they would not misunderstand what is being said. When you do this consistently it becomes quite clear that when you first believed the gospel God justified you legally in the court of heaven and that He never puts you under double jeopardy, that is, you cannot be tried twice for an offense! Once you have believed in Christ

you are justified in God's court of law and once you are justified you are always justified, nothing can change that, it is a legal decision God made and He doesn't go back on His legal decisions. God is not a liar; He does not deny Himself. From that point forward you are operating in the present tense of sanctification and in this aspect you can walk in the light or in the darkness, abide or not abide, walk by the Spirit or by the flesh, and how you walk will determine whether you are being saved from the power of sin or not. All believers fluctuate in their walk. They get saved and unsaved all day long because they are shifting back and forth between walking in the light and walking in darkness. Anytime you sin and walk in the darkness you are not being saved from the power of sin, you are subjecting yourself to the power of sin. If you died you'd go to heaven because you are already justified but what would be affected would be your rewards. What you need to do when you step out of the light and walk in the darkness is confess your sins. When you do that you are returning to the gospel, to the foot of the cross where Christ paid for all your sin. You are enjoying a fresh application of the gospel to your experience. You are saved when you confess. Paul is talking about all of this and more when he uses the word salvation in verse 16. That is why it is so important to understand the meaning of this word salvation, it simply means to be delivered from some danger, any danger, and sin remains a danger all the way from when you were a non-Christian to the very end of your Christian life. You need to be saved from it, all of it and the gospel is the power of God that can do it, if you will only believe it, be convinced of it, continually, more and more convinced of it!

Fourth, "power." It is the Greek word *δυναμις* and we already defined it as "potential power" in distinction from the other three Greek words for power. It simply means that the gospel is the potential power of God to save us. The only reason it is potential power is because God requires that we believe it for that power to be unleashed. But we can be sure that when we believe it His power is unleashed to save us.

Fifth, and here we come to verse 17 and the word **righteousness**. This verse is a further specification of the salvation that Paul is addressing in this book; he wants to look specifically at **the righteousness of God** or technically "a righteousness of God." There is no definite article so what a righteousness of God means is a God-kind of righteousness or a kind of righteousness that is consistent with God's righteousness. It's not talking directly about the

attribute of God's righteousness although indirectly that is there. But what it is talking about is a kind of righteousness that is consistent with God's attribute of righteousness that is available in the gospel.

What is righteousness? It has two meanings, one is legal and the other is moral. As we'll see Paul means both. The legal meaning of righteous is the idea of a right standing, of being in the right with respect to some law or standard. God is a flawlessly consistent law unto Himself and so He is always in the right. Will not the Judge of the earth do right? Men lack legal righteousness because we are condemned in Adam. We have not lived up to the standard of God. There is none righteous, no not one. The Bible is quite clear that God is righteous and man is not righteous and this is our fundamental problem, it's a legal problem. But in the gospel, Paul is saying in verse 17, a God-kind of righteousness is made available that is consistent with God's righteousness. It's not saying we can have God's attribute of righteousness. We never get any of God's attributes transmitted to us. But what we do have access to is a God-kind of righteousness that is compatible with His righteousness. Where is this righteousness provided? In the gospel, in Christ's death and resurrection. There a God-kind of righteousness was made available that we have access to. This is good news because God is not going to compromise His righteousness. He's not going to do what Allah does which is compromise His righteousness by weighing our good works against our bad works; that's a pagan idea. It's the same idea the Egyptians had when they set the human heart on one side of the scale and a feather on the other. If the heart was heavier then your bad works outweighed your good works and you were destined for a bad afterlife; if the feather was heavier then your good works outweighed your bad works and you were destined for a good life. It's all about which you have more of, good works vs bad works. Christianity is not like Islam or ancient Egyptian polytheism at all. In Christianity there is none righteous, no not one, every one of us filled with the poison of a lying asp. So how then are we ever going to be with God? There's got to be a God-kind of righteousness made available for us to access. If there's not then we're without hope, dead in our transgressions and sins. That's what the cross of Christ is all about. It's not about man, it's not even first and foremost about saving man. It is about God, it is about solving the righteousness dilemma that we have with God. If His righteousness is not satisfied by a genuine human being providing a God-like righteousness then there can be no salvation! The cross is about solving the dilemma of a lack of

righteousness. This is where so many people have gone astray. They don't really understand the gospel because they think that the cross is some kind of psychological pill that people take in order to become better followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus is just a wonderful example, he followed his faith all the way to martyrdom and now I'm going to follow his example and be more sincere and do better. Friend, that is not the gospel; and if you ever bring that garbage to me I'll wad it up and use it for toilet paper. Jesus Christ did not come to be an example so you could live a better life. Jesus Christ came to solve the problem of the righteousness of God.

See, you always have to go back to the character of God. God has a specific character. He's not like play-doh that you can twist and shape however you want. We don't make God in our image; He made us. And He has a definite shape to Him and He's revealed His shape to us in the Scripture. Around here we use a mnemonic device to recall His shape. What is it? SRJLOOOIE. The S stands for God is sovereign, the R stands for God is righteous, the J stands for God is just, the L stands for God is loving, the first O stands for He is omniscient, the second O for He is omnipresent, the third O for He is omnipotent, the I stands for He is immutable and the E stands for He is eternal. That's who and what God is, it describes His shape and that shape never changes. The particular attribute Paul is interested in with respect to the gospel is God's righteousness. How do we describe God's righteousness? By saying that His character is the standard for what is right and wrong always and everywhere. Something isn't right or wrong and God looks at it and says, "that's right" or "that's wrong." That's Platonism. Platonism said that things were intrinsically right or wrong and god, if he exists, reached out and said, "that's right," "that's wrong." Well, Platonism is wrong. But how do I know that? Because God's own character defines what is right and wrong. There is nothing outside of God that is intrinsically right or wrong. He Himself defines it by His own nature. That's why, when Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and said, "Good teacher," how did Jesus respond to him? "Good, why do you call me good? There is none good but God." In other words, you can't just come in here and arbitrarily start making moral judgments. There is no concept of goodness or evilness apart from God. If there was no God goodness would be the equivalent of evilness, there would be no distinctions, all would be one. We call that monism, all is one, good is evil, there are no distinctions, eastern religions are all monistic. It's Star Wars all over again. What's the force in Star Wars? Is it good? Yes. Is it evil? Yes.

There's no true distinctions. We see a distinction because we don't live in that world. Star Wars has to piggy back on the world of the Creator-creature distinction and the concept that there is an ultimate good and that ultimate good is God Himself, He is righteous and it's His character that is the standard for what is right and wrong everywhere and always.

What's our problem? We're not righteous. We're each sinners condemned for our participation in Adam's sin. Actually we're condemned for a number of reasons but that's a preview of coming attractions. It's simply not true that we're condemned only for our lack of belief. We're condemned by creation, we're condemned by our conscience, we're condemned for our participation in Adam's sin, and we're condemned on many, many counts. There are none righteous, no not one. And fundamentally we therefore lack a God-kind of righteousness that is consistent with God's righteousness. This means we can't be with Him. To be with Him we must have a God-like righteous. By the way, does any fallen human in Adam want to be with Him? If you say yes you're theology needs a total makeover. No one seeks Him, no not one. One of the most fundamental truths of the Bible is that man does not want to be with God, man wants to be God. Catch that, man does not want to be with God, man wants to be God. That's one of the most fundamental things from page 3 in the Bible! Man wants the power to legislate his own reality and create his own destiny independent of God so that he can sin without consequences. There is no man who ever wanted to be with God. Not even Adam, who was created without sin, wanted to be with God. He wanted to be God. That was the lie, eat and you will be like God. And now here we are, all participants in Adam's sin, complete with a sinful nature and do you think any fallen sinner is going to seek God? No. And that's what the Bible teaches. "There is none who seeks for God." On the other hand, a shocking revelation throughout the Bible is that God wants to be with us. It is one of the major themes of the Bible that God wants to dwell with man. Think back to the Garden. Did God seek fellowship with Adam in the Garden? Yes, He did. Then, after man fell what did God establish in order to dwell with man? A sacrificial system. But that was temporary so what was the final solution? To send His own Son to be the final sacrifice for our sins so He could do what? Dwell with you and me. We're talking about a righteous, holy God who wants to dwell with you and me. And the pangs He went through to accomplish that are shocking. Have you ever thought about that? He sent His own Son to establish a God-like righteousness available to us freely so that He can be

with us. That's the good news! There is a righteousness that is now readily available and accessible.

How is it accessible? What does verse 17 say? Through faith. It's **from faith to faith**. That's an important phrase and it explains why the verb **revealed** is in the present tense. A God-kind of righteousness is being **revealed** continually. I'd argue that always, somewhere, a God-like righteousness is being shown in the world because always, somewhere, someone is exercising faith. Doesn't that make the statement Jesus uttered even more interesting? Where He said, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" The Son of Man is the title in Dan 7:13 for the Messiah coming in His kingdom. And the question raises the possibility that He will not find faith on the earth, no faith. That means no righteousness being revealed. And if that's the case then the only thing present is wickedness and total judgment will be unleashed. It's a scary thought because as long as there is someone, somewhere exercising faith then there is a revelation of righteousness on earth and God is so gracious; but if there's not, then only judgment remains.

We want to look at this expression **from faith to faith**. Difficult to understand. The long and the short of it is that the righteousness is accessed by us as we exercise faith from the beginning of our salvation all the way to end. In other words, it's accessible over and over, both legally and morally. A.T. Robertson said "faith the starting point and faith the goal." There's only one way to live, by faith, there's only one way to access this God-like righteousness, by faith. So when we think of accessing it we want again to think in terms of the three tenses or aspects of salvation. First, when we first believed the gospel there was a revelation of righteousness in that Christ's righteousness was imputed to us. This is the legal aspect. Impute is a legal word referring to the ascribing of Christ's righteousness to our account, it's a crediting to our account. It doesn't mean we become righteous, it means we are looked upon as if we were righteous because the God-like righteousness of Jesus Christ is credited to our account. The Reformers said it this way, *simil iustus et peccator*. "At the same time just and a sinner." Just is another word for righteous even though the English language doesn't accommodate us there too well. But that's why the doctrine of justification says that we are imputed Christ's righteousness. The righteousness belongs to Him and when we place our faith in Him then God looks at us as He looks at Him. So we are not righteous in ourselves but He looks at us as if we were righteous because

of our association with Jesus Christ who is righteous. That's a revelation of righteousness at the beginning of our faith. It is a legal declaration made at the very moment we have faith in Christ. Second, when we believe the gospel as believers there is a revelation of righteousness in that Christ's righteousness is imparted to us. Impart means actually given or shared with us. It's His righteous life being imparted through us in righteous behavior. Here we are becoming righteous, there is an actual righteousness coming through us that is revealed to the world. 1 John 3:7, "the one who does righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous." How can we be just as righteous as He is righteous? Because His righteousness is poured out through us as we believe. And right then and there is a revelation of a righteousness of God. It's pure, it's spotless, it's a perfect thing in an imperfect world. Third, at the last, when we believe the gospel there will be a revelation of righteousness in that Christ's righteousness will actually be instilled in us. By instilled I mean we will actually be righteous. 2 Cor 5:21, "so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Won't that be a wonderful day? When we actually are righteous. That too comes through faith in the cross work of Jesus Christ. All righteousness comes from the cross through faith from the beginning to the end of our salvation because the cross work of Christ is the only source of the God-like righteousness ever made available. So there is no other means of acquiring a righteousness that pleases God. It's only found in Jesus Christ.

Finally, Paul quotes from the OT to prove the point that it has always been this way, it's never been any other way, always, even for OT saints, the righteousness was provided by Jesus Christ. They only accessed it by looking forward to its provision; we access it by looking back at its provision. They lived before the cross when no God-like righteousness had been provided, so it was credited to them, so to speak, on the certainty of it being provided; we live after the cross when a God-like righteousness has been provided. What passage does he quote to prove it? Hab 2:4. It's one of the OT quotations by a NT author. Those of you in the Matthew study have been exposed to the various ways the NT authors quote the OT so you're going to have an edge on understanding this. If we went to the original Hab context what is going on? The southern kingdom of Judah was corrupt. Habakkuk the prophet was frustrated watching the perversions of justice and God revealed that a new world power was rising, the Babylonians. And their rate of rise to the status of world superpower was going to be an astonishment. God was raising them

up to discipline the southern kingdom militarily. Habakkuk struggled to understand because the Babylonians were even worse than the Judeans. How could God be just and allow those more evil to destroy those less evil? And how could a just God allow those who were righteous to be swept up in the judgment along with the righteous? In that context God says, “But the righteous will live by his faith.” In other words, the one who was living a righteous life under OT standards would survive if he lived by faith. So the original is teaching physical survival in the military invasion to the righteous among the Judeans, if they lived by faith. Daniel and his friends, Ezekiel, these would be prominent examples of the fulfillment, they survived by living by faith. Paul picks it up in Romans, and because of the similarities he applies it to all aspects of our salvation. It can be translated two ways and each is equally valid, “But the righteous shall live by faith” or “The righteous by faith shall live.” Those are equally valid but they do not mean the same thing. “But the righteous shall live by faith” means that those who are already justified shall be sanctified by faith.” That is true. Sanctification is by faith and as we live by faith we enjoy life. The other translation, “The righteous by faith shall live” means that those who are justified by faith shall have life. This too is true. I’m not sure which one Paul intends because they are both true and they are both taught by Paul in Romans.

In conclusion, in verse 16, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes in all three tenses; we have been saved by faith, we are being saved by faith and we will be saved by faith. In verse 17 he’s specifying that what salvation is really all about is our need of righteousness. We are condemned on so many counts and we don’t have a God-kind of righteousness that is consistent with God’s righteousness. Jesus Christ on the cross provided a God-kind of righteousness and made it accessible to all who believe, from beginning to end; at the beginning His righteousness is imputed, in the middle His righteousness is imparted and in the end His righteousness is instilled in us. When all is said and done we will be totally fit for God to dwell with us.

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