



Sermon Notes | Not Ashamed of the Gospel: Part II | Romans 1:16b-17

INTRODUCTION

Romans 1:16

"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."

We return to the summit of these opening verses of Romans 1, to the theme of this letter, the concept of '**righteousness**', the great content of this gospel, and Paul's bold confession, '**I am not ashamed**'. Paul has no cause to feel ashamed, and more, Paul states, 'I confess the '**gospel**'. My lips and life declare the great content of the '**gospel of God**'.'

It is a temptation for the imperfected Christian follower to be 'ashamed', for Christ's followers are weak, frail, trembling, and are living in a curse-stained world where the culture openly declares evil is good and good is evil, and boasts evil, mocking Christianity, and calling it foolish. That is the shame of today!

I Corinthians 1:18

"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the 'power of God'."

The word of the cross may be 'folly' to the perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the '**power of God**'.

Romans 1:16

"... it is the power of God ..."

This '**power of God**' is the first '**gospel pillar**' of Romans. The '**power of God**' is the only power that can change man's '**fallen nature**' which is transmitted through Adam, (detailed in Romans 5), and transform the sinner's fallen natural state to something new. The '**power of God**' is the only real and true power, the Omnipotence of God, that can 'effect' this change. This is what we confess. This is why we are not ashamed. We are new creatures, transformed. It is the only power that can bring about this change. Our faith rests on this '**power**'. Though we live in weakness, it is the '**power of God**' from which we derive our strength. It is the '**power**' for every work of faith. It is '**power**' that can raise from the dead. It is Sovereign '**power**'. It contests with no other power. It stands alone. No

other power can give us hope, and it is the only **'power'** that can save. It is found nowhere else.

The second **'gospel pillar'** is the **'power of salvation'**.

Romans 1:16

"... it is the power of God for salvation ..."

The greatest demonstration of the **'power of God'** is **'salvation'**. It is the only **'power'** which saves. **'Salvation'**, meaning **'to be saved'**, not of one's body, but of one's soul. By **'salvation'** God means being saved from the **'just penalty'** that comes after death, the destruction that we cannot escape from, our eternal destination, our eternal residence of hell, the place we deserve, our eternal place of death, of eternal agony and anguish, there to meet with **'the wrath of God'**. By nature and by choice our depravity and brokenness makes this the place we deserve.

Romans 1:18

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

Therefore we need **'salvation'** for we are bound for eternal anguish. We are incapable of 'self-rescue'. Such is impossible. This is why we are not ashamed. **'Salvation'** is our hope. The **'gospel'** makes our condition known. We are the lost and fallen soul that needs to be **'saved'**, and can be **'saved'**. The lost soul that is headed for eternal agony and separation from God, can be **'saved'**. The lost soul that **'turns'** from sin and mocking and indifference, who **'turns'** to God, and embraces His Son, to everyone who **'believes'**, this is the **'power of God'** for **'salvation'**.

It is a **'gospel'** presented to all mankind. In time, this **'gospel'** is given/offered to the Jews first, then also to the Gentiles. It is an offer, an opportunity, for all nations, a free **'gift'** from God. It is the **'power of God'** for **'salvation'**, proclaimed to Israel first, and then the other nations. We confess this. Therefore we are not ashamed. The **'gospel'** is offered to all.

Next we look at **'pillars'** three and four, The Righteousness of God, and Faith.

III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD: (v. 17)

Romans 1:17

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith'."

May God grant us eyes and minds to see these truths, and hearts to understand them, so that we might respond to them in faith.

The **'righteousness of God'** is revealed. **'Righteousness'** is God acting in accordance with His own nature. This is the simplest of definitions. The **'righteousness of God'** is referenced nine times by the Apostle Paul's work, eight of them in Romans. Indeed, the 'summit' in Romans is God acting in accord with who He is. This is God. This is His **'righteousness'**, the sum of His perfection, the sum of who He is and what He does. In the **'gospel'** God is 'doing' in accord with His being. It reveals. The **'righteousness of God'** is 'revealed'. Romans 1:17. Reveal is an important word. The concept of 'revealing' is not new. 'Revealed' in Scripture and in the **'gospel'** is where that which was concealed, that which was hidden, is now made known in present time. The hidden was always known by God, but now it is 'revealed' to man also. God's eternal and divine intention is 'revealed'. He is acting in His nature. He is doing what is His eternal nature. Other realities about His nature in this **'righteousness'** are also communicated. God's eternal decree and accord, His omniscience, all responding to His nature. It is an intentional act and accord. It is the sum of God's perfection, Him doing what is Him; it is His nature.

The **'righteousness of God'** is opposite to the righteousness of man. The **'righteousness of God'** opposes the righteousness of man. Romans shows that God's **'righteousness'** is contrasted to the unrighteousness of man, and that God is set against man's unrighteousness.

Romans 3:5

"But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way)."

Our unrighteousness serves to show the **'righteousness of God'**. Man's righteousness is 'contrasted' with God's **'righteousness'**. We will see this further in chapters 1 and 2. This polar difference between man's unrighteousness and God's **'righteousness'** is not just a study. This truth is essential for every human to understand before they die.

Why? The majority of people are on the broad road to death, believing that their own way is good enough, that their own righteousness will save them from the grave. People are deceived believing that 99% Christ is enough. NO! It is Christ Alone! Our own righteousness is impotent, our deeds are useless. Attending church, our lineage in the church, opening our Bibles, is not enough, for we pollute our righteousness. We are a deceived people with such ideas, facing tragedy on that day, for God will say, 'Get away! I never knew you.'

Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

Our righteousness only condemns, it does not save. The very opposite is true. Yet how we rely on it. We love our own deeds. Our deeds comfort us. God, see what I do? See what I did yesterday. I am not like them. How we rely on our own righteousness. We feel it, even if we don't say it. Humanly speaking, it is our nature to rely on our own way. This is the reality, not submitting to God, who is the only instrument of 'righteousness' and 'power' to save. Yet another reality that warrants introductory comment is that the '**righteousness of God**', the who and what of God, who He is and what He does, is indeed, but it is also '**righteousness bestowed**', it is '**righteousness imputed**'. God acted according to His nature, but it gets more glorious still. God makes sinners right with Himself. How does He do this? He infuses the sinner with '**righteousness**' slowly, bit by bit, so that progressively we learn and earn the right standard. **It is not a divine boost.** Nothing is based on our merit. Scripture is clear that it is not a 'helpful' infusion so that we 'help' God to make this happen. NO! It is a status, confirmed upon us, a right status, confirmed and '**bestowed**'. It is '*divine*' achievement Alone. It is amazing love. It is a legal declaration of one's new standing; '**righteousness**' counted, and accounted, to the sinner. It is the '**righteousness of God**' that declares the unjust are now made just in God's sight. How? Through Christ, the perfect One, the One who lived a perfect and '**righteous**' life. It was not just a laid down life. Christ laid down a perfect and '**righteous**' life, '**imputing**' it to our account. It is a legal verdict upon the accused, making the accused sinner now right before God. Like a courtroom scene, the accused stands, not worthy, but has been granted a new status, a new standing, a new position. They are now 'declared' '**justified**'. By nature they are not, but they have been 'declared' so. The '**gospel**' declares that this is 'divine achievement' '**revealed**'. Learning to walk with God in this 'new position' is their '**sanctification**'.

This 'divine achievement' '**revealed**' was completed 'apart' from the Law. The Law demanded fulfillment. The Law pointed to fulfilling this demand '**righteously**', and this was, and only could be done in Christ.

Romans 3:21

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it ---"

Further, not only was this fulfillment completed '**righteously**' and '**in Christ**', it was accomplished '**through faith**' in Christ.

Romans 3:22

"--- the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe."

This '**righteousness**' is a gift from God, a '**free gift**', for nothing is merited.

Romans 5:17

"For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ."

Thus is Paul's confession. He recognizes that he has nothing worthy to offer to the cause. Paul, the famous law-keeper, had done his very best with following the Law, but no righteousness of his own was sufficient to meet God's standard. He recognized it was all loss, all rubbish, and that only '**faith in Christ**' mattered.

Philippians 3:8-9

"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith —"

And so Paul abandons his own righteousness that he sought by law-keeping, and his law-keeping becomes nothing to him but trash. He now understands the error of his way. It is not by his own works, but is '**by faith in Christ**'. He confesses his new '**faith**'. It is not his own righteousness, but depends on '**righteousness**' that comes by '**faith alone**', given and confirmed by Christ. It is a divine declaration from Him Alone.

IV. FAITH IS THE ACCESS: (v. 17)

Romans 1:17

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

'**Faith**' is '**gospel**' access. It is given and confirmed by Christ. It is a 'divine' declaration. This is alien '**righteousness**' by the world's understanding. So how does one receive this '**righteousness**'? It comes in the '**salvation**' of the believer, and '**faith is the access**', faith for faith. '**Righteousness**' is revealed in the 'good news' of God's '**gospel**', and reception of this '**righteousness**' is always by '**faith**' only, whether in Romans, or in the Old Testament. It has always been this way. The only reception of the 'good news' is and has always been by '**faith**'. There is no other reception, whether it be the 'faith' of the Jew or the 'faith' of the Greek. Even in the days of the Law, the focus of the Law was '**faith**' not works. It was not a case of Old Testament saints receiving the promises by the Law and then the New Testament by grace. No. One of the first of the '**faithful**' in the Hebrews declaration of the 'lives of the faithful' was Noah, heir to '**righteousness**' by '**faith**'.

Hebrews 11:7

"By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith."

Over half of Paul's citations of the Old Testament are found in Romans. This is important because it affirms that there is nothing new about this. Paul demonstrates this truth by his writings, and we need to be reminded and to understand this truth, that as it is written, 'the '**righteous** shall live by '**faith**'. It is not just a New Testament fact.

The Old Testament proves that it has always been so, that it has always been a matter of **'by faith'**.

We turn to Habakkuk to illustrate this point. Habakkuk is complaining about Judah. He sees that justice is not happening, that justice is perverted, and he questions why God is letting this sin go unpunished.

Habakkuk 1:2-4

"O LORD, how long shall I cry for help and you will not hear? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted."

But God answers Habakkuk, assuring him that He is not idle, but is, unknown to Habakkuk, raising up the unjust and ruthless Chaldeans, and later still, Babylon, to deal with the problem.

Habakkuk 1:5-6

"Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own."

Habakkuk protests. He is bewildered. 'This is your solution, God? You are raising up a wicked people to judge us? How long is this to go on, this judgement and reproof?' He complains further.

Habakkuk 1:12-17

"Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he? You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. He brings all of them up with a hook; he drags them out with his net; he gathers them in his dragnet; so he rejoices and is glad. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet; for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich. Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?"

Habakkuk questions God; he protests at what he sees. 'How can you remain silent, God? What is going on? Help me to understand. How can You sit by? How can you use the wicked to judge us, Your people?' This makes no sense to Habakkuk that God, whose eyes are pure, who cannot look at wrong, should use the Chaldeans, who were worse than Israel, to judge them.

Habakkuk 2:1

"I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint."

Such are the questions and bewilderments when we look at life only by what we can see. But the LORD responds to Habakkuk, and assures him that proper justice will come all in good time.

Habakkuk 2:2-4

"And the LORD answered me: 'Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end --- it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright with him, but the righteous shall live by his faith'."

And Paul links to this passage in Romans chapter 1.

'If it seems slow, wait for it' Habakkuk is told. At the time of Habakkuk's writing, Assyria was still in power. The Chaldeans had not yet been raised, and were not yet a world power, but they too would also fall in time, and Israel would ultimately be judged by a yet another power also not yet risen. But 'surely' it was to happen. Indeed, Babylon also fell in 539 BC as God foretold in Habakkuk 2. It was roughly one hundred years after Habakkuk was given the Word. In God's timing. In God's timing the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD, a prophecy to the future coming Kingdom.

Habakkuk 2:14

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

Habakkuk 2:20

"But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."

God sits in Sovereign Control therefore be silent. He sits in cosmos; in Sovereign Control over space and time, therefore 'be silent'! There is nothing further that needs to be said.

Do not live your life by what you see, by your limited sight. You will only complain. Live in light of God's Sovereign Oversight, and rest in that. You cannot possibly know what God is doing from the heavenlies. Habakkuk, Israel, Paul; 'Be Silent' and live by '**faith**' not by sight.

'**Faith**', the fourth and concluding pillar of Romans 1. '**Faith**', the perfect resting place. '**Faith**', granted as a gift by God. Use it. Respond to '**faith**'. Both Paul and Habakkuk point to something more.

The passage, Habakkuk 2:4, is referenced three times in the New Testament. It serves to prove '**salvation**'. No one is '**justified**' by the Law, but the '**righteous**' live by '**faith**'.

Habakkuk 2:4

"Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith."

Galatians 3:11

"Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith'."

Hebrews 10:38

"... but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."

'Sanctification' is in view here, living out the Christian life boldly and in **'faith'**, believing that Sovereign God is working out the details of our life. To shrink back promotes no pleasure in God; such brings Him no happiness.

Hebrews 11 lists those who sojourned through the ages by **'faith'**, who lived **'righteous'** lives by **'faith'**, believing, and knowing **'salvation'** and **'sanctification'**.

Habakkuk and Paul had right standing with God, had a right and present relationship with God, but more was made plain. Yes, life is accessed by **'faith'**, but it is not just about life here and now. More still has been given. Life in **'faith'** is eternal. It has an eschatological element.

'Faith' in the Seed. **'Salvation'** by Christ Alone. They will live by **'faith'**. **'Faith'** accesses eternal life. **'Faith'** is accepting the free **'gift'** of God and responding in hope. The elect, the chosen, **'called'** by God ... responding.

Salvation's entry. **Salvation's** progress. **Salvation's** culmination into eternity. **'Salvation'** to **'Sanctification'** to **'Glorification'**, not for a better life for today, but raised to life for the future, **'Eternal Life'**.

This is the message. And we are **'not ashamed'** of that message. It is our confession, our enduring confession: This great truth, God's divine achievement in Christ, having given us something so undeserved. A good God, bestowing His great gift upon us. Yet we are weak and frail. We need to be strengthened to live more ably in order to bring our God the honour due. We give thanks, for the **'righteous'** shall live in **'eternity'**, and through Jesus Christ, all sin and evil will be vanquished forever. This is our **'righteousness'** in Christ!