

Romans Verse-By-Verse

Romans 1:16-17 C

Student Notes

Verse 17: Paul's 2nd reason he is not ashamed of the Gospel of God. The first: "It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes..." The 2nd: "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed".

- **A Startling Statement:** "... a righteousness that is by faith from first to last".

A theme rarely taught in the synagogue, yet, as Paul notes in Romans 3:21, it was a part of Old Testament Scripture: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify."

What does Paul mean by "a righteousness from God"? Three prominent views:

1. The righteousness of God as God's character:

God's divine attribute; "the righteousness of God" describes God's character. See: Genesis 18:5

Throughout Romans Paul takes great pains to defend God's character of righteousness. Paul shows how God's decisions relative to salvation and judgment are both consistent with his righteousness.

2. The Righteousness of God as God's Intervention:

"The righteousness of God" expresses God's intervention on our behalf' "God's intervention has been revealed." See: Psalm 98:2.

3. The Righteousness of God as A Spiritual Status:

In this sense of the word it expresses a righteous status, which God requires if we are ever to stand before him. Even so, this is not a self righteousness, as Paul makes it clear that God achieves this through Christ's atoning sacrifice of the Cross.

Paul's use of the expression, "the righteousness of God" throughout Romans: Romans 4:3; Romans 4:24; Romans 5:17; Romans 9:30.

"Why do we have to choose just one definition?" In Romans, the righteousness of God is one of God's divine characteristics, it is involved in his redemption of humans, and it acts as our spiritual status once we have believed.

- **A Righteousness from "Faith to Faith":**

"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is **by faith from first to last**, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Paul's allusion to Habakkuk 2:4: "See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous will live by his faith..."

The phrase, "from first to last" in the NIV is also expressed as "from faith to faith" in other translations. The use of "faith to faith" in Scripture:

- The faith of OT saints to the faith of NT saints
- Progressing from an immature faith to a more mature faith
- Moving from a Law-oriented faith to a gospel-oriented faith
- Transitioning from the faith of the preacher to the faith of the hearers
- Going from present faith to a future, deeper faith

Paul's connection of "from first to last faith" to the quotation from Habakkuk: The prophet complained about God using the wicked Babylonians to judge Israel. God's assurance: The Babylonians would fall because of their pride, but the righteous Israelites would live by their faith – meaning, by a humble, steadfast trust in God.

Two views of "the righteous will live by faith": 1. Faith is the active ingredient that moves the one who trusts God into this newfound righteousness. 2.

Righteousness is maintained through the faith of the believer.

An equal application: 1. Faith is the vehicle through which we find “the righteousness of God”. The gospel is God’s power for the salvation of everyone who believes.

2. The same faith that brought us to God’s righteousness, or right standing, must follow the rest of our lives.

A parallel: 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 (Berean Version): “For we are to God the sweet aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. to one indeed an odor from death to death, and to the other a fragrance from life to life. And who is sufficient for these things?”

Paul’s assertion: Those who reject the gospel go from spiritual death to sheer death. Romans 1:17: “From faith to faith” -- initial faith to completed faith.

In the light of 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 we find a similar thought. As such, the person who is righteous by faith, will live. That’s essentially what Habakkuk meant in a different context.

Next time: Why Paul considers all godless humans of every age to be guilty before God.