**Text**: Romans 1:16-17

**Title:** Not Ashamed of the Gospel

**Truth**: These verses complete the introduction of the theme of Romans by emphasizing the gospel as God’s power of salvation to everyone who believes.

**Date/Location**: Sunday Morning January 27, 2012

Introduction

This passage is complicated because of all the subordination of clauses. This is a feature of the Greek language. If you look at the number of times “for” and because” occur in 1:15-21 you will see what I mean. The string of such words becomes so long that the NIV breaks it by omitting the ‘for’ in verse 18!

I. Not Ashamed of the Gospel

A. Ashamed – a sensitive or painful feeling of a loss of status because of something, in this case, the gospel. Do you feel you have lost status with the world? And moreover, do you feel bad about that? That is being ashamed.

B. It is easy to be ashamed of the gospel.

1. The world hates it because it is foolishness to them. 1 Cor. 1:18.

2. We don’t like to be too “different” from other people. Said another way, we fear people more than God.

C. Paul was NOT ashamed of the gospel. Looking at it from the positive angle, this means that he stood ready to bear witness to the gospel’s saving power. He was ready to confess Christ before men (Mark 8:38).

D. We should not be ashamed of the gospel. You can acknowledge your loss of prestige in the world without feeling bad about it—that is not being ashamed. For the one who is ashamed, the easiest way to get out of it would be to renounce the gospel…but then a real believer cannot ever do that. So, let’s get over our feeling ashamed! God has not given us a spirit of fear, and we who are Christ’s are on God’s side. Why be ashamed of that? It is the *world* that has something to be ashamed of, namely their unbelief and pitiful behavior. Do not let them turn their shame around and make you feel badly!

II. Because it is God’s Power to Salvation

This power is the dynamic ability of the gospel to rescue lost sinners. It is required due to people’s deadness in sin and inherent inability to save themselves.

This kind of power was evident in the resurrection of Christ from the dead and is also evident in the life of a believer who lives for Christ (Eph. 1:19-20).

III. Provides Salvation to All Who Believe

A. To everyone who believes. The emphasis here is that *everyone* who believes is saved. Believes what, you ask? Well, everything that we’ve read in verses 1-15 so far; what we read in 10:9-10; what we read in 3:10 and 3:23 and 6:23 and 5:8, etc. But the point is *everyone* who believes taps into this salvation power.

B. This includes two categories of people: the Jew and the Greek.

C. The meaning of “Jew first.”

This phrase does *not* mean that today we seek out Jews to evangelize first. Nor does it mean that God is completely done with the Jews (as if it says ‘to the Jew first and then move on to the Greeks’). The phrase *does* reflect the order of history in that the gospel came to the Jews first, and then moved outward to Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth.

But we cannot say simply that “to the Jew first” is ONLY an issue of historical order. It is an issue of divine order. The Jews were the people that God chose, the people to whom God gave His revelation and many other blessings (Romans 3:1-2, 9:4-5).

As Gentiles, we have to face up to the fact that it was the nation of Israel that was chosen to bring to the world these things. God sovereignly decided to use the nation this way and we cannot appeal to some flat model of pure equality of all people to say that God cannot do that. Who are we to say that God cannot do so?

The issue is not one of the gospel coming from me to a Jew first, and then to Gentiles. The issue is one of the gospel coming from GOD first, through the Jewish nation second, to the world third. Its provenance (origin) and flow are always that way, outward from God, through the nation of the Jews, to all people. As a result of this, the historical “happenstance” was that they had first access to it.

D. The meaning of “faith to faith.” The repetition of terms emphasizes that the gospel and its salvation and righteousness of God come to a person only through faith. The idea is like “faith, from beginning to end.”

E. The Meaning of Habakkuk 2:4. Paul appeals to an Old Testament authority on this matter of faith, showing that even back in Habakkuk, centuries earlier, the prophet understood the principle that the just live by faith. If we can say nothing else from this, at least we can say that faith/belief is a key ingredient of the godly life. We can go farther and say that a person cannot be truly justified apart from faith, and cannot live properly without faith.

IV. What is “The Righteousness of God”?

There is not universal agreement on what the phrase means. Is it:

1. An attribute of God?

2. A status from God?

3. An action of God?

4. A combination of any two or all three of the above?

Here are some Biblical texts that use the phrase or idea:

NKJ Romans 3:5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the **righteousness of God**, what shall we say? *Is* God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) [The idea here is God’s righteousness in in His activity of judgment. His judgment conforms perfectly to His holiness. There is nothing wrong in the way God carries out His judgments.]

NKJ Romans 3:21-22 But now the **righteousness of God** apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the **righteousness of God**, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference. [Taken with the next verses, this cannot be God’s attribute of righteousness, because it has to do with something that comes upon people through faith. People do not get God’s attribute of perfect righteousness. That attribute is a communicable one, in limited measure, of course. The text must be talking about a righteous *status* or *standing* with God.]

NKJ Romans 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the **righteousness of God**. [The Jews have some understanding of God’s attribute of righteousness, so that is not the thing they are ignorant about. The Jews were busy by good works trying to generate their own righteousness before God, just like many other world religions today. Because “their own righteousness” is contrasted with “God’s righteousness,” the meaning must be a status or standing before God given by God to those who are not ignorant (through faith) about God’s righteousness.]

NKJ 2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the **righteousness of God** in Him. [Here it is rather obvious that we are not talking about an attribute of God. Jesus was made sin that belonged to us; and we were made righteousness that, to retain the parallel, had to belong to Him. In other words, we get a righteous standing whereas He got a sinful standing. He wiped out the sinful standing by taking the penalty of sin in His own body on the tree.]

NKJ James 1:20 for the wrath of man does not produce the **righteousness of God**. [This refers to righteous behavior which God demands of His children.]

NKJ Philippians 3:9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the **righteousness which is from God** by faith; [Paul did not want his own righteousness, but that of another, namely, God.]

NKJ Romans 1:17 For in it the **righteousness of God** is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

This righteousness is not God’s attribute, because it is conveyed through faith to people. It is parallel to verse 16’s salvation. Both salvation and righteousness come through belief/faith. Therefore it must be a **status or standing before God**. It is not achieved through personal behavior, but rather belief, so it cannot be imparted righteousness.

One can be sympathetic to the view that the righteousness of God involves the act of God because no one can experience the righteousness of God without the action of God to provide and apply it. But the “action” emphasis belongs in the cognate verb “to justify.” In 1:17, we have the noun form, “righteousness,” so I believe the emphasis here is on the status that God’s action brings to people.

We have established the meaning of “the righteousness of God.” But what does the Bible further say about it?

V. This Righteousness is Revealed in the Gospel

A. The Basic Meaning of *Revealed*

The word has the meaning of bringing something to light or disclosing it, making it fully known.

B. The Meaning of *Revealed* in This Context

We might think of *revelation* as some facts and information that God gives to us through the words of the Bible, or, in earlier times, by the words of a prophet or apostle. That is, the information is disclosed in words and sentences.

The idea of “revealed” here is more than just good news in words. The words are pointers to something which is the gospel itself, having to do with Jesus Christ Himself, the son of Man and the Son of God, dying for sinners and raising from the dead. Our words explain the gospel. We do not believe a series of bare statements or propositions alone; rather we believe them because they are attached to actual realities that make the words true.

C. God’s Word says here that in “it” – that is, the gospel – the righteous standing from God is revealed. In the work of Christ itself, not just in abstract words, we find that God disclosed something marvelous. Namely, he disclosed the answer to the age-old question, “How can a man be right with God?” Christ dying on the cross and rising from the dead brought to light the answer, in that the meaning of what Christ did is the answer to that question!

Conclusion

Could you echo the words of Paul as your own? Could you say you are not ashamed? That you know the gospel is God’s power for salvation? That everyone who believes in Christ is saved? That God’s gift of righteousness is disclosed in the gospel? That it is only by faith that one is saved?

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