



## World Christian Fellowship

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### Romans 24 Righteousness of God

**Romans 1:16-17**, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”*

#### **Why we need salvation?**

We need to be saved from the wrath of God.

**Romans 1:18**, *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”*

This is given as the reason why we need saving. God is very angry at our unrighteousness and the way we suppress and distort the truth to justify ourselves.

**Romans 2:8**, *but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath,*

“truth” rejected, and “unrighteousness” embraced.

This is our problem. God is angry and wrathful toward us in our unrighteousness and our untruthfulness.

**Romans 2:5**, *But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,*

God’s wrath is a righteous judgment. When we are unrighteous, God’s righteousness burns out with wrath and indignation. He is not to be played with.

This is what we need saving from in the end. This is our ultimate problem.

God’s final wrath that separates us from Himself and casts us into hell.

**What do we need to be saved from?**

From sin, guilt, from destructive habits and harmful ways.

But mainly the answer is: We need to be saved from God’s wrath.

Our ultimate problem, though very few today see the problem, is that we are sinners in the hands of an infinite, omnipotent, angry God.

The good news is that God Himself has rescued us from the wrath of God.

Not mainly from ourselves and the mess we make of our lives, but from His own anger and His own righteous judgment.

The gospel is the power of God for salvation from the wrath of God the power that brings us to eternal safety and joy in the presence of God.

**Romans 5:9**, *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*

In the end, it is all about escaping the wrath of God, or, having the wrath of God turned away from us.

So, that God becomes our friendly King and not an enemy.

**V 16** “The gospel is the power of God for salvation,” it means that the gospel is God’s power to rescue believers from the “wrath of God,” or from “the righteous judgment of God”.

## **Righteousness Revealed**

How does the gospel save believers?

How is the gospel God's power for salvation?

**Romans 1:16-17**, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

Now that is not what it says. But that is where the emphasis for many of us falls, when we think about the gospel. The gospel is the good news, we say, because in it the love of God is revealed.

**Romans 5:8**, *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

That too is the gospel. The gospel of Jesus is a demonstration and revelation of the love of God for sinners.

But that is not what verse 17 says.

The love of God could not just sweep the unrighteousness of man and the wrath of God under the rug and pretend all is well.

The love of God had to deal with man's unrighteousness and had to deal with God's wrath.

The love of God is not a sentimental thing. If it was only sentimental then we would have had gospel in small book not such a big bible detailing about everything.

The love of God is a love full of wisdom and a love full of justice and a love full of truth.

It is a love that upholds all the other attributes of God, rather than blotting them out.

The love of God is worked out wisely and legally and justly and truthfully — nothing hidden, nothing suppressed. It takes our unrighteousness and God's righteousness into account and deals with them in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Paul must want Christians to understand how they will be saved from the wrath of God. He must want us to know more than just that God loves us and sent Jesus to die for us.

It is so simple and so plain. Evidently it matters to Christ and to his inspired apostle, Paul, that Christians learn how the gospel is the power of God for salvation.

**Why Paul stress this?**

Many Christians today have such a weak understanding of what our human condition is without grace.

- How God planned our redemption?
- What God did in Christ to save us?
- How the Holy Spirit worked in us to convert us? and
- How God goes on working by the gospel to keep us and purify us and fit us for heaven?

These are the things that the New Testament especially Romans is at pains to teach Christians. There are many Christians simply do not care to know these things and therefore do not know them.

Paul begins to explain for us how the gospel saves believers. He does not just say that It shows the love of God.

Paul gets inside the love of God and shows how God deals with the real problems of the universe. We begin to learn what the real issues of the universe are.

They are deeper than we think they are. There is an enmity against God and a suppression of truth and a deep unrighteousness of soul and the almighty wrath of God behind such things that only one power in the universe can overcome is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is what you are going to want to know when the doctor says, “We have done all we can do.”

How long do I have?

Doctor says, “A week? Maybe two”

Then face to face with the Maker and Judge of all the universe, infinite in holiness and unswerving in justice.

Get serious about growing in the knowledge of God (**Colossians 1:10**)

### **How God saves the unrighteous?**

How does the gospel powerfully bring us to eternal safety and joy in the presence of God when what we really deserve is God’s wrath, which verse 18 says is already being revealed from heaven?

**V 17**, *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”*

The fact that God is righteous, and I am unrighteous is the problem.

God’s wrath is being revealed against the unrighteousness of man.

### **How is the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel?**

God demands righteousness and we do not have it!  
So, the only hope for us is that God Himself would give the righteousness that He demands. That would be gospel.

What we had to have, but could not create or supply or perform, God gives us freely His own righteousness, the righteousness of God.

If God would do that, then His wrath would be averted, and we could be reconciled to Him.

*“The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,”*

Because in it God offers to us what He demands from us, His own righteousness.

He reveals as a gift in Christ Jesus what was once only a demand. In the gospel of Jesus’s death and resurrection, God gives to us the righteousness that He demands from us.

### **What does the Righteousness of God mean?**

1. The demonstration of His own righteousness in forgiving sin because he punishes that sin in our substitute, Jesus.

2. The righteous means our right standing with God as forgiven and acquitted sinners without guilt in his presence.
3. The righteous mean the moral change in us that makes us obedient, righteous children of God.

We are going to see over time in Romans that all three of these are, in fact, true meanings of God's righteousness. It is part of the gospel that all three of them are free gifts for us, obtained by the death of Jesus in our place.

### **Right standing before God**

Our right standing before God as forgiven, acquitted sinners without guilt. People who are justified or declared righteous because the righteousness of God has been imputed to us.

In Christ, we now have a right standing with God. God imputes to us His own righteousness even while we are still ungodly. He counts us as having his righteousness.

#### **1. God credits His righteousness to man.**

V 17, the quote is from

**Habakkuk 2:4**, *“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.”*

How can Paul give an Old Testament quote to illustrate his point if there is such a huge difference in the use of the very words he wants to compare?

The answer is that there is not a huge difference. This quote from the Old Testament shows that what Paul has in mind when he speaks of the gospel revealing “the righteousness of God” is not mainly that God Himself is righteous, but that He imputes or credits His righteousness to man so that man can be called “just” or “righteous.”

“The righteous man,” the one who is now righteous because of the gift of God’s righteousness “shall live by faith.”

So, what verse 17 means is that, in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed in the sense that we see it being given to sinners so that we are justified.

We have a right standing with God. What we cannot provide on our own, God imputes to us so that we are forgiven and acquitted and justified before Him.

## **2. God’s righteousness is manifested through faith.**

**Romans 3:20**, *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

The issue here is how sinners are “justified.”

How do we get a right standing with God when we have no righteousness of our own?

How do we get acquitted in the courtroom when we are guilty sinners?

**Romans 3:21-24**, *But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,<sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

We have God’s act of justifying sinners in verse 20 and again in verse 24 and in between we have two references to God’s manifesting His righteousness through faith. (verses 20, 22).

In the death of Jesus God has manifested His own righteousness by imputing or crediting that righteousness to sinners and pronouncing them righteous or just with His own righteousness. This is called justification.

This idea of manifesting his righteousness now apart from the law is so close to the revealing of the righteousness of God.

The gospel does reveal that God demonstrates His attribute of righteousness in justifying sinners who trust Jesus.

The gospel does reveal that the death of Jesus purchased not only a declaration of our right standing before God, but also a development of our right living before God.

**Romans 8:3–4**, *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

Because our sins have once for all been condemned in the death of Christ, we now have new power and freedom to make real progress in fulfilling the moral law of God by the power of His Spirit.

### **Justification to Glorification**

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation because in it the righteousness of God is revealed, that is, God reveals righteousness as a free gift that we need and don't have.

Our final salvation is based on God's giving the righteousness to us that He demands from us.

**Romans 8:30**, *Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

Justification (God's righteousness completely imputed to us) is the foundation of glorification (God's righteousness completely imparted to us).

**Romans 8:32**, *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

The foundation for all our future hope of life and joy and salvation is based on God's giving His Son to die as a substitute for us so that our sins could be on Him, and His righteousness could be on us.

Justification is treated as a past event in our lives and is the foundation and security of everything else.

The past grace of justification secures the future grace of salvation.

The power that will bring believers to that salvation is the revelation of that justification.

Everything God requires of us as believers assumes that we are justified, accepted, forgiven, acquitted, counted righteous with his righteousness, not ours. From that secure position we must fight sin and unbelief. And the one who fights like that as a justified sinner will live.

### **The Righteous Man Shall Live by Faith.**

In the context of the book of Habakkuk the meaning of this sentence is just what it is here. The unrighteous nations are in great peril before the judgment of God.

**Habakkuk 1:5–6**, *“Look among the nations and watch— Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. <sup>6</sup>For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs.*

But Judah herself is not exempt from judgment. The wickedness and idolatry of some is about to be tried in the wrath of the Babylonian invasion.

**How can a person be saved?**

**How can they gain their lives and not be destroyed in God’s judgment?**

That is the same question addressed by Romans 1:16.

**Who will be saved from the wrath of God?**

## **Live by Faith**

The answer of the book of Habakkuk is given in 2:4, *“Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.”*

There are two crucial truths in this verse that are relevant for Paul’s argument.

### **1. Rescue depends on faith.**

By faith you will not be swept away utterly in the wrath of God.  
By faith you will live.

So “living” in Habakkuk 2:4 and here in Romans 1:17b (“the righteous will live”) refers to salvation from the judgment of God.

It is important for Paul’s point in verse 16. There he says, “salvation to everyone who believes.” Rescue from God’s wrath and the gift of eternal life is given freely to those who trust God.

Then he sees this same truth in Habakkuk 2:4 and quotes it to give further support to that part of his point. The words, “will

live by faith” in verse 17b correspond to “salvation to everyone who believes” in verse 16.

We are saved from judgment and inherit life by trusting God.

## **2. Life is gained by faith.**

A righteous person who gains his life by faith. “The righteous shall live [the righteous person shall gain his life and be saved from God’s wrath] by faith.”

Now that is crucial for what Paul is saying about the righteousness of God. Habakkuk 2:4 does not say in so many words that we get God’s righteousness by faith, which is what Paul teaches in this book and in Romans 1:17.

But Habakkuk does link the righteous person and faith.

Faith is the essential thing about being righteous before God.

**Habakkuk 1:13**, *You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?*

Faith must somehow be counted by God as righteousness, because otherwise we could never be rescued by Him and given

life by Him. Because we are all sinners and God could never look on us with favour.

So, if God cannot look on any evil with approval (Habakkuk 1:13), and yet saves us and gives us life by our faith (Habakkuk 2:4), then our righteousness that has a standing with this holy God must be a righteousness by faith and a gift from Him.

So, in summary, we see two things in Romans 1:16–17 that are confirmed in the Old Testament quote.

- a) The gospel is the power of God to save believers. If we have faith in Him, we will live and not perish.
  
- b) The way God saves believers is by revealing the righteousness of God as a gift “from faith to faith.” The righteousness God demands from us (Habakkuk 1:13) He freely gives to us.

### **From Faith to Faith.**

The only parallel to this phrase in the New Testament.

**2 Corinthians 2:15–16**, *For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.<sup>16</sup> To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?*

When Paul's message and sufferings meet with death in the soul, that leads to the final death of the soul.

When his message and sufferings meet with spiritual life, that leads to final life. Death is unresponsive to the gospel and is confirmed in its deadness forever. Spiritual life is responsive to the gospel and is confirmed and preserved for eternal life.

**Romans 1:17**, *"The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith."*

When the revelation of the gift of righteousness meets with faith it leads to future faith. Faith is the initial window of the soul that lets the light of the revelation of righteousness in.

When the light of God's gift of righteousness comes in by faith, it powerfully works to awaken and sustain and engender more and more faith for the years to come.

**1 Corinthians 15:1–2**, *Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*

If we give up on our faith and throw it away, our supposed faith will prove to have been vain, empty, and dead.

**Romans 8:13**, *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

But the problem is, we all know that in our war with sin we do not win often enough to have peace in our consciences.

So, if our life hangs on perfect winning in the war with sin, we are going to despair and not persevere to the end. We will simply give up because there is no use trying.

**What then will keep us going and fighting so that we will live?**

The gospel is the power of God to save believers because in the gospel we can see revealed every day that our standing with God is not based on our own righteousness but on God's, freely given to us by faith.

When we see that over and over in the gospel, day after day, as long as we live, our faith is renewed and sustained, and we press on in the fight.

Our confidence that God will help us in life and save us from the wrath to come is based on our ever-renewed assurance that our acceptance with him is based on the gift of his own righteousness, not ours.