


**THE RIGHTEOUS
BY FAITH WILL LIVE!**

THE BOOK OF

ROMANS

Chapter 1:16-17

A vertical cross is centered on the left side of the image. The background is a soft, misty, golden-yellow color with a subtle texture. The right side of the image is a solid purple color with a faint diamond pattern.

Vs. 16-17: For [γὰρ] I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is [the] power of God unto salvation to everyone believing – to both [the] Jew first and to [the] Greek. For [γὰρ] in it [the] righteousness of God is revealed, from faith to faith, as it has been written:
“And THE RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH WILL LIVE.”

Chapter
1:16-17



**The Righteous
By Faith Shall
Live
(vv. 16, 17)**





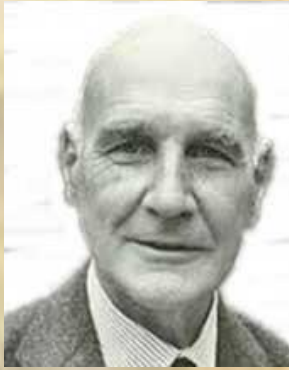
The Righteous
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Vv. 16-17 introduces the central theme of the Letter to the Romans. Paul's choice of verbs may reflect the fact that the Gospel was under attack in Rome. Paul was not ashamed of the preaching of God's punishment of all sins in Himself (the crucifixion and death of Jesus); rather, this "foolishness" he heralded as the center and heart of his proclamation (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17 – 2:16).



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Again, we cannot, we should not understand the Gospel as an abstract message that is disconnected from the reality of Jesus, the Christ; rather, it is the means by which Jesus presents Himself to us.




The theologian C.E.B. Cranfield expresses the relationship between the Gospel and Christ quite well:

“The gospel is [. . .] its subject, Jesus Christ. It is He Himself who is its effectiveness. His work was God’s decisive act for men’s salvation, and in the gospel, in the message of which He is the content, He presents Himself to men as if it were clothed in the efficacy of His saving work” [C.E.B. Cranfield, Romans, 1:89].

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That is why the Gospel (preaching) and Christ (Person) can both be called the “...power of God...” (Rom. 1.16; and, cf. 1 Cor. 1.24).



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The most important theological reality presented in these thematic verses and in the broader letter is the Greek δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, which means, “*the righteousness of God.*”

Verse 17 is a quote of Habakkuk 2:4 and Paul is making sure that his readers know that he is only telling them what God has always said through His prophets.




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The background for Paul's understanding of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is surely to be found in the OT, not only in Habakkuk, but especially in Isaiah:



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[YHWH says] “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.’” “All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But in the LORD all the seed of Israel will be declared righteous and be glorified” (45:22-25).



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[YHWH says] “Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are far from righteousness. I am bringing My Righteousness near, it is not far way; and my Salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel” (46:12-13).

[YHWH says] “My Righteousness draws near speedily, my Salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nation. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my Salvation will last forever, my Righteousness will never fail” (51:5-6).




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It is noteworthy that “*the Righteousness of God*” is not an abstract concept or attribute of God in these texts, but is a term that identifies *God’s saving action* that will be revealed in the latter days in His Servant. Furthermore, Isaiah 45 demonstrates that the coming of “*the Righteousness of God*” will result in a changed status: the seed of Israel will be declared righteous.




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The verb used with “*the Righteousness of God*” is significant: αποκαλύπτεται, (*is revealed*). This present tense verb is communicating the fact that the apocalyptic end-time deliverance has come in Christ Jesus and is NOW being revealed and offered in the Gospel. That cosmic deliverance expected at the end of time has come, in time, and is now present!



This verb is also in the Middle voice, which means that the action has been done and will continue until the originator stops the action. Thus, “the Righteousness of God” has been extended to all humans and will continue until its culmination on Judgment Day!

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The Righteous
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The crucial role of faith in receiving salvation is showcased three times in these two verses:

First, it is found in the (“...to everyone believing...”). Faith is the way of receiving salvation, even for the Jew: “...to both [the] Jew first and to [the] Greek.”


Second, this role of faith is stressed prominently through the odd phrase in v.17: (“...from faith to faith...,”). The Righteousness of God can be “seen” only with faith (through faith) and the Righteousness of God is the very reality that creates and nurtures faith (for faith). Thusly, the Righteousness of God (i.e., Jesus) is received by faith **ALONE!**



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The crucial role of faith in receiving salvation is showcased three times in these two verses:

Third, the Hab. 2.4 quotation that Paul used is written by Paul this way: *ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται* (***“THE RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH WILL LIVE”***). Not, *“and the righteous one shall live by faith.”* This wrong translation would be redundant at best. Certainly, the righteous one shall live by faith. He wouldn't be *called* righteous if he didn't have faith. If you have any translations that have misinterpreted this, it would be a good idea to make a note of it in the margin.



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On the other hand, the emphasis is not faith, but the *living!* Habakkuk and Paul are talking about the reward of heaven! *“THE RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH WILL LIVE!”*****

This is supported by the next verse which gives the alternative to living, *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness...”* So, if you put verses 17 and 18 together, you will have this: *“...the righteous by faith shall live! But the righteous, by any other means, shall die!”*****


Looking Ahead!

These verses, 16-17, are used as the thematic grid for chapters 1-8.

Chapters 1-4 will teach us that the righteous person is the one who is *righteous by faith*;

and,

Chapters 5-8 express the life that the one who is righteous *by faith actually lives*.



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Luther & Verse 17



Luther struggled with the biblical phrase “the righteousness of God.” He wrote, “Nevertheless, in spite of the ardor of my heart I was hindered by the unique word in the first chapter (of Romans): ‘the righteousness of God is revealed in it.’ I hated the word ‘righteousness of God,’ because in accordance with the usage and custom of the doctors I had been taught to understand it philosophically as meaning, as they put it, the formal or active righteousness according to which God is righteous and punishes sinners and the unjust.”



Luther & Verse 17

“As a monk I led an irreproachable life. Nevertheless, I felt that I was a sinner before God. My conscience was restless, and I could not depend on God being propitiated by my satisfactions. Not only did I not love, but I actually hated the righteous God who punishes sinners...thus a furious battle raged within my perplexed conscience, but meanwhile I was knocking at the door of this particular Pauline passage, earnestly seeking to know the mind of the great apostle. Day and night I tried to meditate upon the significance of these words: ‘The righteousness of God is revealed in it, as it is written: The righteous by faith will live’” [WA. 54, 183-185]



Luther & Verse 17


Luther's discovery was that he now no longer needed to look to his own works, behavior, or obedience to determine his standing before God. He discovered that the believer had the full righteousness of Christ, who fulfilled the Law, already *now*—not maybe or later—*by faith*. For peace of conscience, rather than looking to his own active goodness and holiness spurred on by “infused grace,” he could rest confident in the declaration of God that the sinner is righteous because He is covered in the righteousness of Christ.

A False Teaching

Semi-Pelagianism: The Roman Church teaches that God “*infuses grace*” in us and then we work out our salvation through a life of love and good deeds.

(Pelagianism is the teaching that mankind is generally good by nature and does not need God’s grace to do good deeds. The Romanists condemned Pelagianism, yet they teach a modified form of it, which is called Semi-Pelagianism.)

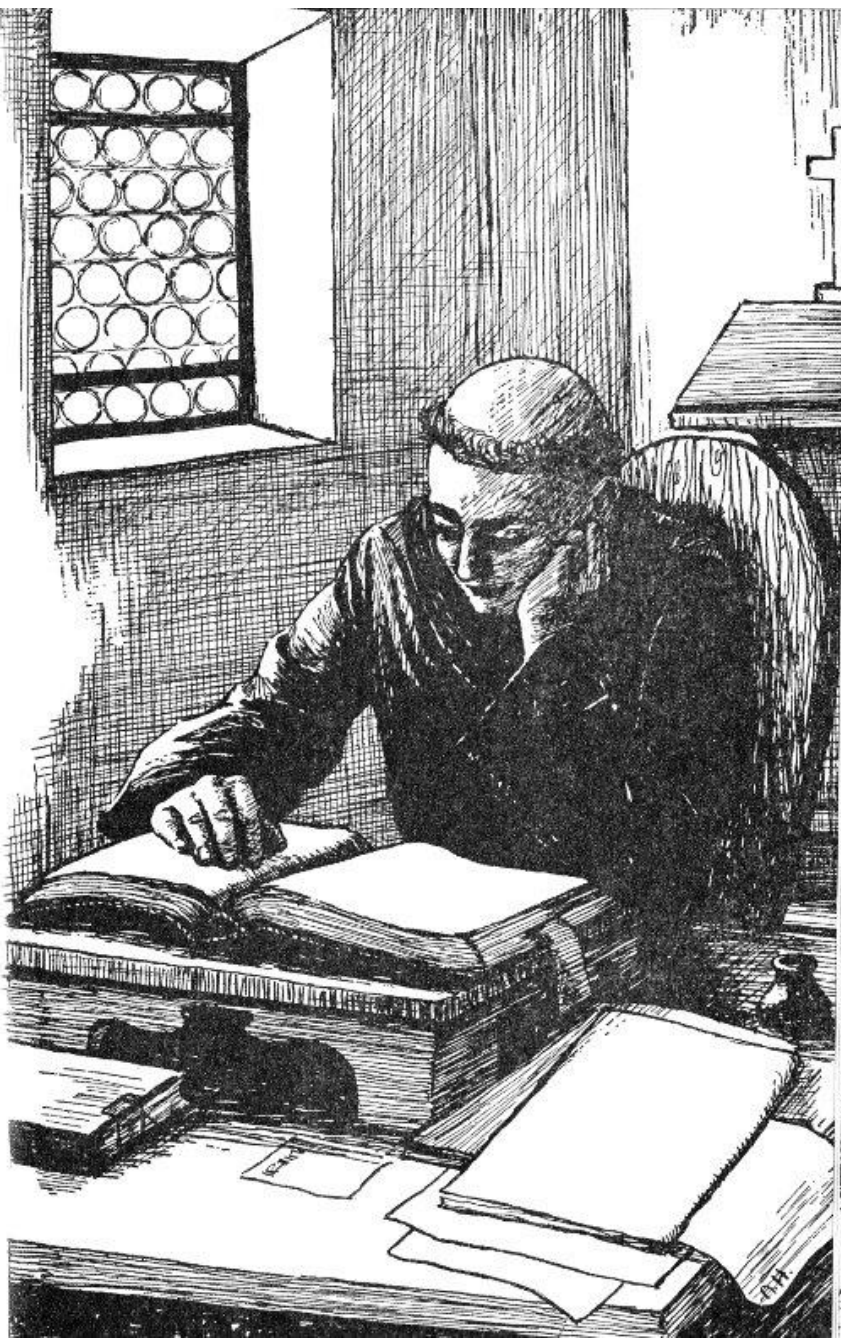
We need God’s grace, the Romanists say, yet with the help of God’s power (grace) given us through the Roman Church, we can become worthy of eternal life via our works.

A portrait of Martin Luther, a German theologian, philosopher, and reformer. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a black cap and a dark robe. The background is a light, textured blue.

The righteous
will live by faith.

ROMANS 1:17

THE VERSE THAT CHANGED
MARTIN LUTHER





ROMANS 1:18-32

God's Wrath on Unrighteousness

**NEXT
WEEK!**