

April 28, 2015

Faith that Leads to Righteousness

Romans 1:17 (NASB), **“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.’”**

Over the past week we have been looking at Romans 1:16-17 and have been looking at the key words that the apostle Paul uses in regards to the gospel. The words we have looked at are **“power,” “salvation,”** and **“faith.”** Today we look at the word **“righteousness.”**

The concept of **“righteousness”** is I believe a deeply misunderstood concept by the public at large and by many within the church. The word **“righteousness”** is a term that Paul uses over thirty-five times in the book of Romans alone. **“Faith”** which we looked at yesterday, activates the divine power that brings salvation, and in that sovereign act **“the righteousness of God is revealed.”** A better way to render this would be from **“God,”** this indicates that God alone imparts His own **“righteousness”** to those who have repented of their sins and believed in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It is thereby not only **“revealed”** but it is also then debited to the account of those who believe in Christ. Romans 4:5 says, **“But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.”**

Paul confessed to the Philippians in Philippians 3:8-9, **“More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”** In Romans 3:21-24 Paul writes, **“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...”**

The German Evangelical Theologian Count Zinzendorf wrote a very profound hymn:

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
‘Midst flaming worlds,
In these arrayed, With joy shall I lift up my head,*

*Bold shall I stand in Thy great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.*

Paul continues and writes here in verse 17, **“From faith to faith.”** This seems to parallel verse 16 which said, **“everyone who believes.”** The idea then is “from faith to faith to faith to faith,” it’s as if Paul were singling out the faith of every individual believer.

You see salvation by His grace working through man’s faith was always God’s plan. Paul implies as much when he quotes from Habbakuk 2:4, “as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’” Abraham, the father of the faithful, believed, and it tells us in both Genesis and in Romans 4:3, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to Him as righteousness.” All who have repented of their sins and believed in Jesus Christ are the same then as Abraham, it has been credited to us as righteousness. This is the theological concept of “imputed righteousness.”

One of the essential truths of this verse is the emphasis it places on the continuity of faith. It is not a onetime act, but a way of life. The true believer who has been made righteous will then live in faith all the rest of his or her life. This is called “the perseverance of the saints.”

We cannot earn our righteousness; rather the righteousness of Christ is given to each person once they have believed in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The result then is a life of faith which is lived out in acts of righteousness day by day by day.