

# Thesis Of Romans

By John Ward



**Bible Text:**

Romans 1:1-17

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## Preaching and Teaching Helps

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If you would turn to the book of Romans, the book of Romans, the opening chapter, as we make our way back to an expositional study of this marvelous book that was written by the Apostle Paul. It is a book that prompted one student of this letter to say, "I think St. Paul's epistle to the Romans the most profound book in existence." And then another recent expositor basically said about this book, "Romans, among the epistles of the New Testament, stands out like an imposing cathedral. Its symmetry of form, its logically develop structure, its evidence of plan and design, its wide sweep of thought, its sublimity and grandeur of revelation all combine to make it one of the loveliest edifices of truth in existence," which is absolutely true, as anyone knows who has taken the time to ponder the contents of the 16 chapters that make up this marvelous book.

Now remember, the Apostle Paul had never been to the capital city of Rome which was the largest city within the Roman Empire at the time of the writing of this letter. He was on his way to the city of Jerusalem, completing what we know as the third and final missionary journey, when he came into Greece, he came into Corinth, Greece, where he stayed for three months, as we read about it in Acts 20:2 and 3, and during that three month stay in Corinth, Greece, that is when this letter was written. So we're going to place it in A.D. 57 or perhaps A.D. 58. He was staying, we know, at the home of Gaius, who was a Corinthian according to the document itself, Romans 16:23, "Gaius, my host." Furthermore we know that he dictated the letter to a man by the name of Tertius, who actually composed the letter. We know this because when you come to the end, Tertius pauses and basically by way of a personal note sends greetings. We simply read the words in Romans 16:22, "I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord." And furthermore, we know that it was delivered to the Roman believers by a lady by the name of Phoebe, which name means bright or radiant, and Paul says in Romans 16:1 that she was a servant of the church at Cenchrea, and Cenchrea as we said last week, was Corinth's eastern seaport. So the letter comes from the city of Corinth while Paul was staying with a man by the name of Gaius, as he dictates this letter to a man by the name of Tertius, and sends the letter by a lady whose name we know as Phoebe, to a city that he had never visited at the time of writing which was anywhere from 57 or A.D. 58.

Now when we think of this letter and the purposes why Paul writes the letter, there are three that basically come to mind. The first purpose for the writing of the letter that we know as Romans was he wanted to announce his plans to visit Rome after he finished

what he desired to do in Jerusalem, and he wanted to prepare the Christian community in Rome for his arrival. He said that for many many years he had desired to come to Rome and finally that desire was going to be satisfied. So he wanted to inform these believers of his future plans, and he wanted them to pray that these plans would take place. So that is one reason why, one purpose for the writing of this letter.

The second purpose why he writes this letter to these Roman believers is because when you read through the letter, you can sense there was a tension between the Jewish and the Gentile segments within the Christian community in Rome. You can sense this when you read through the letter. He doesn't really take sides, even though he argues from both positions. He will say on the one hand that when you talk about the Jews, they certainly had an advantage, they were given the oracles of God, but when you talk about God, there is only one God and the God of the Jew is the same as the God of the Gentile. Both Jews and Gentiles are under sin and both are saved in the very same way, so even though God has set aside the nation of Israel, because Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah and he's doing something different now in terms of Jews and Gentiles, once that is completed he's going to take up his plan in terms of Israel and he's going to fulfill all the promises that he gave to Israel as a nation.

So he sets forth his plans, what he wants to do, and he communicates that to these believers in Rome. He certainly senses the tension among Jews and Gentiles within the community, and he certainly addresses that. But the third and basic reason why he writes this letter is to set forth a detailed statement of the Gospel message that he always proclaimed. He wanted them to understand his Gospel and it's interesting because when you read through Paul's writings, he will refer to the Gospel as "my Gospel," and he'll do it three times, twice in Romans. If I'm reading through Romans, Romans 2:16, he refers to the Gospel as "my Gospel," chapter 2, verse 16. When I come to the end of Romans, chapter 16, verse 25, he will again refer to the Gospel as "my Gospel." He will only do it one other time in his writings, he'll do it in 2 Timothy 2:8, and in 2 Timothy 2:8, he refers to the Gospel as "my Gospel." So three times, Romans 2:16, Romans 16:25, 2 Timothy 2:8, three times he refers to the Gospel as "my Gospel" and he writes this document that we know is Romans, even though Tertius was the actual composer of the letter, in order to set forth a complete and detailed statement of the Gospel that he always proclaimed.

So when I think about this letter that we know as Romans, I understand there are at least three purposes that prompted him to write it. First, to announce his plans and to inform them of what he was going to do, and then to ask for their prayers that it would happen; certainly the tension of Jews and Gentiles, and he wanted to talk about that, we'll certainly see that when we read the letter and certainly when we come to chapter 14 and into chapter 15, that becomes very clear as well as chapters 9, 10 and 11; and then furthermore, he really wanted them to understand "my Gospel," this incredible Gospel that he always preached and it always, of course, revolved around Jesus Christ.

If I'm reading his opening letter, the very first letter that Paul penned which we know to be Galatians, he makes this statement in Galatians 1 when he was converted. He said, "God did this in order that I might preach Jesus Christ among the Gentiles." Then he talks

about preaching the faith, and then he says to these believers in Galatia, then after 14 years after his conversion, "I went to Jerusalem with Barnabas, having taken also Titus, and I will went up according to revelation and I communicated with them the Gospel which I was preaching among the Gentiles." He had done it for 14 years and it was exactly the same Gospel. So when I read Galatians 1:16, "in order that I might preach him," or Galatians 1:23, "preaching the faith," or Galatians 2:2, "the Gospel which I was preaching among the Gentiles," it's always the same Gospel. All of the apostles preached the very same Gospel and Paul wants these Roman believers to understand it.

So when you talk about the book of Romans, the fundamental reason why he writes it is to set forth a complete and detailed explanation of the Gospel in all of its facets. Again, it's the reason why you have statements like this, "Romans really is the chief part of the New Testament and truly the purest Gospel. Romans is the fullest, plainest and grandest statement of the Gospel in the New Testament. Romans is the principal, it is the most excellent part of the New Testament and most pure Gospel, that is to say, good news."

So if we really want to understand the Gospel as the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel, "my Gospel," then we have to understand this book of Romans, and when you move into the book of Romans, you begin with the salutation. It is found in verses 1 through 7. It is the longest salutation of all of his letters and the salutation reads like this, Romans 1:1, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called apostle, and then separated until the Gospel of God which Gospel God promised before and through his prophets and holy writings, concerning his Son who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was," and I'm going to translate, "installed Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord through whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience of faith among all the nations on behalf of his name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ to all the ones being in Rome, beloved of God, called saints, grace to you in peace from God our father and Lord Jesus Christ."

He then shifts from the salutation to set forth his long-standing desire to visit Rome. He offers a thanksgiving for these believers. He explains how he constantly prays for them, and then he sets forth his future plans and desires and we read it in verse 8 all the way down to verse 15. Follow it, verse 8. "First I'm giving thanks to my God through Jesus Christ concerning all of you because your faith is being proclaimed in the whole world. God is my witness to whom I am serving in my spirit in the Gospel of the Son. I'm making mention of you constantly always at the time of my prayers, asking if somehow I would be prosperous by the will of God to come to you for I am longing to see you in order that I might share a certain spiritual gift with you in order that you may be strengthened, now that is to be comforted together among you through the mutual faith both of you and of me. But I'm not desiring you to be ignorant, brothers, that frequently I determined to come to you and I was hindered up until now in order that I might get a certain fruit also among you, just as also among the remaining Gentiles."

Then we come, chapter 1, verse 14, "I am a debtor. I am under obligation both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." Now when you read a

statement like that, he's setting forth his obligation and his obligation is found in this coupling, and when you talk about the couplets, you're probably talking about the same group but he contrasts them. He talks about Greeks, barbarians would be non-Greeks. He talks about wise, he talks about unwise. I would say the Greeks would be the wise and the barbarians, the non-Greeks, would be the unwise.

So you are reading the statement here and he talks about Greeks, non-Greeks. It doesn't matter about nationality or culture or language, wise, unwise, foolish, it doesn't matter in terms of intelligence or education. He feels an obligation to present the Gospel to the whole of Gentile humanity whether you're talking about Greeks, those who consider themselves to be wise, or from a Greek standpoint, this is a non-Greek, a barbarian, he's a fool, he is unwise. So Paul says, "I am an apostle to the Gentiles and I feel an obligation to preach the Gospel to all Gentiles regardless, Greek/wise, non-Greek/unwise." If I'm reading the book of Romans, he will say in Romans 11:13, "For I speak to you Gentiles in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles. I magnify my office. I am an apostle of the Gentiles." So I read this statement here and I recognize Paul senses a debt, an obligation to preach this Gospel to whatever Gentile, Greek, non-Greek, wise, unwise.

Then I read verse 15. "So according to me, I am ready, I am eager also to preach the Gospel to you who are in Rome." So not only do I sense his obligation, I sense his ambition. I sense his intention. He was eager because he felt he was under obligation and he had this obligation and this eagerness because these Gentiles, regardless of who we're talking about, desperately needed to hear the Gospel.

So I read this in verses 8 all the way down to verse 15: he sets forth his thanksgiving; he sets forth his prayer; he talks about his future plans and his desires; he talks about his obligation; he talks about his intention; and then you come to verses 16 and 17 and when we come to verses 16 and 17, this is the thesis of the entire book. This is the theme encapsulated in two brief verses. Everything will be a further explanation of this. So if I'm thinking about 1 through 7, or 8 through 15, I target the pinnacle 16 and 17. Here's the thesis of the entire book of Romans.

Now notice the way it reads, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, both to the Jew first and to the Greek, for the righteousness of God is being revealed in it, out of faith into faith, just as it stands written," and then he quotes Habakkuk 2:4, "now the righteous by faith will live." Now if you read this statement, there are three points that could be made. He sets forth his attitude towards the Gospel; he talks about the nature of the Gospel; then he talks about the content of the Gospel. All three you certainly sense here.

Now here is his attitude towards the Gospel, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel." There's his attitude towards it. Now if you look at the word "ashamed" and you look up that verb, it will be defined like this: to experience a painful feeling; a sense of loss of status because of some event or activity. To experience a painful feeling, "I'm not ashamed. I'm not experienced this painful feeling." A sense of loss of status because of

some event or activity, "I'm not ashamed in the sense of losing this status all because of the Gospel."

So I read the statement here, "I'm not ashamed." Now when you read it, it does raise a question: what is Paul saying when he says, "For I am not ashamed"? Some would say that this was a figure of speech and if you think of this figure of speech, this would be an understatement in which an affirmation is made by a negative. So if you read this statement here, "For I am not ashamed," and you say this is an understatement for rhetorical effect, he's stating the negative in place of the positive and he says, "I am not ashamed," he's saying, "I'm very proud of the Gospel." So some would say this was a figure of speech that was used by the Apostle Paul. He's stating an affirmative, a positive, but he's stating it by a negative. Not a bad singer versus not a bad singer, which of course, you mean the person is a pretty good singer.

So some would say that's what Paul is talking about here. He's using this understatement for rhetorical effect, "I'm not ashamed. I'm very proud of it." But James Stewart of Edinburgh weighs in and James Stewart argues, "Why would he say something like this unless he was tempted to feel ashamed of it?" Why else would he say it? So James Stewart would argue think about what he said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1 and 1 Corinthians 2 and what was going on within him when he came into the city of Corinth. And remember, he writes the letter from the city of Corinth. If you read his words, he will say he came to the Corinthians in weakness and fear and with much trembling. He talked about the message of the cross being foolish and a scandal, a stumbling block, and he knew that the moment he preached the Gospel it would arouse opposition, contempt, ridicule, persecution. So when he says, "For I am not ashamed," some would argue like James Stewart, he only says this because he did understand the temptation to feel ashamed because the moment he said it, he knew the response, the response he was going to receive.

So there are various ways that you can take it. An understatement is one way. He says it for rhetorical effect, he says the negative for the positive, or he understood the feeling of this, he'll talk about this in 2 Timothy which hopefully we'll see towards the end of our study this morning, where he uses the same word three times in 2 Timothy 1. And there he is in Rome, and there, of course, he's incarcerated, about to be executed.

So I read the statement here, "For I am not ashamed," however you want to say it, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel." Now he's already talked about the Gospel, that word. He's used it in verse 1 where he identifies it as, "the Gospel of God." He used it in verse 9 as he identifies it as, "the Gospel of his Son." So this is the Gospel that comes from God and it's a Gospel that's all about his own Son, so when you talk about the Gospel, you have to talk about the person and work of God's own Son that we know as Jesus of Nazareth.

So Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel." That's his attitude towards it, but why? Because of the nature of the Gospel. Now look, verse 16, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, both to the Jew first and to the Greek." It is the

power of God. You say, "Well, how do you know it's the power of God?" Because of what it does to a person when a person receives it. It explodes within a person's life and it changes the person. I mean, think about Saul of Tarsus. It changed him completely. And think about you, think about all of us, how it changed us. So when you read the word "power" here, it is the word "dynamis," and we think of the word "dynamite" because our English word comes from it, but we think of dynamite in the sense of an explosion but that's not the nuance of the word; that's not really what the word is communicating. The word is communicating there is something inherent within it that can do incredible things.

So when I read the statement here and I think about the nature of this Gospel that he wasn't ashamed about, he says, "I'm not ashamed about it," and he gives the reason why, "for it is the power of God that results in salvation," a rescue, a deliverance, "to everyone who believes both to the Jew first and to the Greek." Now, why does he say that, "to the Jew first and to the Greek"? Why does he say it that way, "to the Jew first and to the Greek"? This isn't the only time he'll say it. Come over to Romans 2 and look at verse 9, "to the Jew first, and to the Greek." He does the same thing in verse 10, "to the Jew first, to the Greek." I mean, he's going to talk about Jews and Greeks all through this letter. So why does he say "Jew first and to the Greek"? Because he's thinking of the time. Think of it in terms of history. Think of it in terms of chronology. It came to the Jews first and then to the Greeks, so I think the time aspect but wouldn't you also think of the privilege? I mean, think of it theologically. Israel became God's chosen nation. God entered into a covenant only with the nation of Israel. He gave to the nation of Israel his own oracles. His own Son came from the nation of Israel. He was born a Jew. So if you think of Israel, Israel was in covenant relationship with God, God gave revelation only to the nation of Israel, his own Son came out of the nation of Israel, so I think of this in terms of history, I think of this in terms of privilege. Didn't Jesus say, "Salvation is of the Jews. Salvation is of the Jews," John 4:22?

So you think of Jew first. If Paul entered into a city, you remember what we saw in the book of Acts, if Paul entered into a city and there was a synagogue there, do you know what he did? He made a beeline for the synagogue. He first went to the synagogue. Always did it. He first went to the synagogue, preached the Gospel from the Old Testament to those in the synagogue when they repudiated and rejected it, he turned from them and he went to the Gentiles, but he always went to a synagogue if there was a synagogue in the city because they had the Old Testament Scriptures that he could argue from.

So I read the statement here, I recognize his attitude towards the Gospel. He wasn't ashamed of it, and I understand the reason why, and the reason why is because of the nature of the Gospel, "for it is the power of God resulting in salvation to everyone who believes," believes that Gospel, "both to the Jew first and to the Greek." Now why Jew/Greek? Because both Jew and Greek both were under sin and both the only way they could be saved is through this Gospel. Remember what he says, Romans 3:9? "We have charged both Jews and Greeks to be all under sin." So since Jews and Greeks are under sin, Jews and Greeks can only be saved and they can only be saved by believing the Gospel. They have to believe the Gospel.

Now this introduces this whole concept of belief, doesn't it? Belief and faith. If I read it in verse 16, "to everyone who believes both to the Jew first and to the Greek," and then verse 17, "for the righteousness of God is being revealed in the Gospel from faith to faith, just as it is written, the righteous by faith will live." When you read the word "believe" in verse 16, that is the word "pisteuo," if you read the word "faith" in verse 17, it is "pistis, pistis," and then repeat it for a third time, "pistis." So the noun is "pistis" and the verb is "pisteuo." So if you say "to believe," or if you say "to exercise faith," we're saying the same thing, aren't we? We're just using the verb and the noun.

So then that raises the question, "Well, what do you mean when you talk about believe or exercising faith? What does that mean?" And this is really important. First and foremost, you cannot exercise faith unless you know something. You have to know something. You have to know the Gospel. It has to be articulated. It has to be communicated. You intellectually have to know it. So it is impossible for me to exercise faith, it is impossible for me to believe in something without knowledge. I've got to know something. So faith is not closing your eyes and jumping out into the darkness. That's not faith, that's insanity. The only way that you can exercise faith is to know something. There has to be knowledge, number 1.

So the Gospel has to be communicated, it has to be articulated. I have to understand the Gospel. That's the reason why Paul will set it out in such detailed fashion, but he doesn't stop there because there are a lot of people that know intellectually about the Gospel and they are as lost as lost can be. So it's not just knowledge, you have to move into assent. You have to assent to it and if you think of assent, there are two aspects: one is intellectual, and the other is emotional. Intellectual assent would say, "I recognize this to be absolutely true," and emotional would say, "This is vitally and important for me to believe." So I recognize this to be true and I recognize this is something that is vitally important for me to believe.

So there has to be knowledge and then there has to be assent, "I recognize this and I understand this is important for me," but then third, here is the key because there are a lot of people that have knowledge and have emotions and they are as lost as lost can be. Here's the third and the third is crucial: you've got to trust. You've got to trust. "I know this. I assent to it as true and something important for me in terms of my own life, but now I have to move out from myself and I have to trust it. I have to entrust myself to it." So we could say cognition, knowledge, passes into conviction, assent, which passes into confidence, trust. So there is cognition, there is conviction, there is confidence, but I've got to know, I've got to assent, and I've got to trust. I've got to trust in the Gospel. I've got to trust in Jesus Christ.

There are a lot of people who have knowledge, not saved. There are a lot of people that have knowledge and emotions, not saved. You have to have knowledge, emotions and trust, in that order which Paul will argue when we come to Romans 6, and to remind us what he said in Romans 6, he will say it in that order. So if I talk about believing the Gospel, if I talk about what it means to exercise faith, I've got to understand. I understand

intellectually the Gospel, I recognize this is true and vitally important for me to understand, and I myself move out from myself and I trust in the Gospel, namely in a person, I trust in Jesus Christ and I believe that Jesus Christ is the one who saves me.

So I look at Paul's attitude towards the Gospel, he's not ashamed, and I look at the nature of the Gospel, it's powerful, it can bring about deliverance, it can rescue someone and it doesn't matter if you're a Jew a great, but the only one that it will save and the only one where the power will be unleashed is the one who believes in it, and the one who believes in it has to know, has to assent, has to trust. Now this is the attitude of Paul towards it and this is the nature of it, then what would you say is the content? What is the content of the Gospel? And here it is, "for the righteousness of God is being revealed in it," the Gospel, it literally says "out of faith, into faith, just as it stands written, now the righteous by faith will live." Now when you come to Romans 1:16 and 17, there are many commentators who would call these two verses the text of which the rest of Romans is the exposition. This is the text of which the rest of Romans is an exposition, which I think is so so true, and the key, of course, revolves around this little word "righteousness," the righteousness of God, and the question, of course, is what does Paul mean when he talks about the righteousness of God? It is being revealed in the Gospel, it is by faith, and then he substantiates it by Habakkuk 2:4, but what is the righteousness of God? What does that mean? Now that is a critical question when you talk about Paul's writings. Certainly you see it in Galatians and certainly you see it in Romans.

So what does he mean when he talks about the righteousness of God? Now let me set forth three options, three options by way of explanation. Here is the first one. If you read the righteousness of God, the righteousness of God is basically emphasizing a divine attribute. This is a divine quality, so God would be the subject and this righteousness would characterize him. He is a righteous God. So some would say that when you read this, this is referring to a divine attribute, this is describing God's character so that everything that he does would be consistent with who he is. You remember Genesis 18, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" He's a righteous God. Now all of us understand that to be valid and true in terms of his character. He is a righteous God and obviously everything that he does is consistent with who he is, but the question is when I read "the righteousness of God," am I saying that God is the subject of this and this is referring to his attribute or quality or characteristic? I recognize God is righteous but is that what Paul is really after? That's option 1, divine attribute.

Option 2. If you talk about the righteousness of God, God is the subject of it, but when you talk about righteousness this is referring to not a divine attribute but a divine activity, referring to God's saving intervention through Jesus Christ. This is a divine activity. Now the reason why this has been suggested is because if you go back to the book of Isaiah and you read Isaiah chapters 40 through 66, over and over again you have the righteousness of God in parallel with God's salvation. Over and over again you have God's righteousness, next phrase is God's salvation. I'll give you an illustration. Here's one, Isaiah 46:13, "I'm bringing my righteousness near and my salvation will not be delayed." I'm bringing my righteousness near and my salvation will not be delayed, and there God's righteousness and God's salvation are synonymous. So some would say that

when you talk about the righteousness of God, God is the subject of it and he's either referring to divine attribute or divine activity because when you look at Isaiah, righteousness and salvation are used interchangeably.

Now there is a third option which, of course, is the right one. If you talk about the third option, we would say God is not the subject of this, God is the object. It's a righteousness that comes from God. So now we would say even though we understand divine attribute, God is a righteous God, and we understand a divine activity, God intervenes and brings about salvation, we recognize all that, there is a third option and the third option is this is a divine achievement. God bestows his own righteousness to the one who believes in the Gospel and it's a righteousness that comes from God. It is a God kind of righteousness and if we don't have this righteousness, then we're not going to be saved.

Now listen to the way one defines it. This is a righteous status which God requires if we are ever to stand before him, which he achieves through the atoning sacrifice of the cross, which he reveals in the Gospel, and which he bestows freely upon all who trust in Jesus Christ. It is a righteousness that comes from God. It finds its source in God. It is his righteousness which he bestows only upon the one who believes. I recognize the divine attribute, I recognize the divine activity, this is the divine achievement which he achieves on the basis of Jesus Christ, and once one embraces Jesus Christ, then one receives this righteousness.

Now when you read through Romans, this is the one that is emphasized. Even though we will read of his attribute and certainly his activity, but this is the one that Paul will emphasize. If we are reading through the book of Romans, isn't it true to say that he will talk about God's righteousness as over against our own righteousness? He'll talk about we try to establish our own righteousness which God absolutely repudiates? That we have to have his righteousness? Turn over, please, Romans 10, and let me just read it. This is Romans 10, look at verse 3, "Will they be in ignorance of God's righteousness, this is a righteousness that comes from God, and going about, these Jews, to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness from God." Now twice he talks about a righteousness from God as over against their own righteousness. I have to have this righteousness from God. So I read this contrast in Romans 10, Paul will say that this righteousness is a gift that God gives, chapter 5, verse 17, it is offered to faith and it is something that we can have right now. I like the words of Professor Cranfield in his commentary when he says, "For in the Gospel, a righteous status which is God's gift is being revealed, a righteous status which is altogether by faith." Isn't this what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For God made him," Christ, "to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness from God in him." In Christ, we are made the righteousness that comes from God.

So when I read it, I recognize divine attribute, I recognize divine activity, but I also recognize and what is emphasized here, divine achievement. God bestows upon the believer a righteous status because he gives to that believer his own righteousness. So that's the way we're going to take it. We recognize the others but we're going to say this is

a righteousness, it's the reason why the NIV reads it the way it does, this is a righteousness that comes from God, making God the object of it.

So we could say this is God taking the initiative of making a sinner right with himself by bestowing upon the sinner a righteousness which is not the sinner's own but his. So I'm reading, "for the righteousness from God is being revealed in it," the Gospel, "from faith to faith." From faith to faith, that's what it literally says. Out of faith, into faith. From faith to faith. Then the question is: what does Paul mean from faith to faith? And you have several options. Here's one. He's talking about the spread of faith. It comes from one believer to another believer, from faith to faith, from one believer to another believer. He's talking about the spread of it. That's one. Another, this is the growth of faith. From one degree of faith to another degree of faith. It is the growth in faith. So some would say this is the spread of faith from one believer to another believer, the growth of faith from one degree of faith to another, or the primacy of faith, from first to last, through and through, it is faith alone. So some would say it's the spread of faith, some would say it's the growth of faith, some would say it's the primacy of faith. It seems to me it's the primacy of faith.

So the NIV will translate it, "faith from first to last; it is faith through and through." Then he substantiates it by this quotation, "just as it stands written, now the righteous by faith will live." Now this is Habakkuk 2:4. It is quoted also, you recall, in Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38. So you have Habakkuk 2:4 quoted three times in the New Testament, here in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. Now the question is: what does it mean? Some would say if you go back to Habakkuk 2, he's talking about a righteous Israelite versus these Babylonians, and this righteous Israelite in the midst of all of the terrible things that were going to happen, was going to live by faith, which means in humble steadfast trust in the Lord regardless of what's going to happen in terms of the Babylonians when the Babylonians come and destroy Jerusalem. So some would say this is how a believer is to live, he lives by faith, and then, of course, to substantiate it, you go back to Habakkuk 2:4.

Now others would say that you could read it, "he who through faith is righteous, shall live." So the only way that you become righteous is by faith and that's what he's emphasizing, and when you read various individuals on this, they have certainly some merit to the argument. If you go back to Galatians 3:11 which Paul writes before this, he certainly understood that justification was by faith, he emphasizes that, and uses this verse to support it. If I read in verse 17 and I say, "this is faith alone," then obviously this is what he's arguing. He's arguing not how I live but how I become righteous, "he who through faith is righteous," that is the person who will live.

So if I read that "from faith to faith" and Paul is talking about faith alone, then obviously he is talking about not how righteous people live but how sinful people become righteous, and then it has been pointed out that if you read Romans chapters 1 through 4 as over against chapters 5 through 8, it's very interesting when you think about life and you think about faith. Now think about this: Romans chapters 1 through 4, you have the word "faith" 25 times. It's mentioned 25 times. You have "life" mentioned twice. So in

Romans chapters 1 through 4, faith is mentioned 25 times and life is only mentioned twice, but when you come to Romans chapters 5 through 8, life is mentioned 25 times and faith is mentioned twice. So it seems the theme of chapters 1 through 4 is someone who through faith is righteous, whereas in chapters 5 through 8, this is the way the person is going to live. But however we say it, faith is essential, correct? Faith is essential. Faith is essential in terms of being saved and faith is essential in terms of living the Christian life.

So I read this particular text and I recognize here's Paul's attitude towards the Gospel, here is the nature of the Gospel, and here is the content of the Gospel, and he says, "I'm not ashamed. I'm not ashamed of it." I want you to turn to his last letter. This is in 2 Timothy 1 and I want you to notice what he says to Timothy. He tells Timothy this in verse 8, "Therefore, Timothy, be not ashamed of the testimony of thy Lord, neither me his prisoner, but suffer misfortune together with me in the Gospel according to the power of God." He's telling Timothy, "Don't be ashamed. Don't be ashamed, Timothy. Don't be ashamed of the Gospel and don't be ashamed about me being incarcerated."

Now look, this is the same word that is used in Romans 1:16. Now look, the same chapter, come down to verse 11. At the very end of verse 10 he mentions the Gospel, then he says in verse 11, "unto which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher on account of which reason also I'm suffering these things, but I'm not ashamed. I'm not ashamed, for I know in whom I have believed." I'm not ashamed. He's incarcerated and he's going to be executed all because of the Gospel.

Then you come down and for a third time he uses the word, this time in verse 16, concerning this man Onesiphorus, and he says, "he wasn't ashamed of my chains." He wasn't ashamed that I was incarcerated. So he says to Timothy, "Don't be ashamed. Timothy, I'm not ashamed. And Onesiphorus, he wasn't ashamed." And he had this whole concept of not being ashamed when you talk about the Gospel and the reason why, of course, it's the only way that we can be saved. You have to have righteousness that comes from God. You have to have the status, the standing, and it comes and it doesn't matter whether you are Jew or Gentile, you have to believe.

Now I want you to come back with me to Romans and I want you to notice what Paul says in Romans 3, think of this in terms of Jew/Gentile, think of this Gospel. This is Romans 3. Look at verse 21, "But now apart from the law, righteousness from God is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets even righteousness from God," notice, "through faith," look at the object, "in Jesus Christ, unto all who are believing, for there is no distinction." No distinction? Distinction between who? "Jew/Gentile, for all have sinned and are coming short of the glory of God."

Now turn, please, to Romans 10:12, "for there is no distinction," now he's explicit, "between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord of all is being rich unto all who are calling upon him, for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Well, what if someone doesn't call upon the name of the Lord? What if someone doesn't believe in the name of the Lord? Then the individual is not saved. I mean, isn't that explicit? You

don't call on the name of the Lord? You don't believe on the name of the Lord? You don't believe in Jesus? You don't call upon him? Then you're not saved. It's the only way that you are saved is by calling upon him and believing in him.

Now I go back to Martin Luther, Martin Luther was a monk in a monastery. He writes, "I was indeed a monk and kept the rules of my order so strictly that I can say if ever a monk gained heaven through monkery, it should have been I. All my monastic brethren who knew me will testify to this. I would have martyred myself to death with fasting, praying, reading, other good works had I remained a monk much longer. As a monk, I lived an irreproachable life, nevertheless I felt that I was a sinner before God. My conscience was restless. I could not depend on God being propitiated by my satisfaction. Not only did I not love, I actually hated the righteous God who punishes sinners." So he thought about God, asking him to do something that he himself simply couldn't do or he never understood if he did enough until finally he understood that this wasn't something that he did, it was something that God does. This is his righteousness that he gives to someone who believes in his Son, and his whole life changed.

Now listen to his words. "I, Dr. Martin Luther, the unworthy evangelist of the Lord Jesus Christ, thus think and thus affirm that this article, namely that faith alone without works justifies us before God, can never be overthrown for Christ alone, the Son of God, died for our sins, but if he alone takes away our sins, then men with all of their works are to be excluded from all concurrence and procuring the pardon of sin and justification, nor could I embrace Christ otherwise than by faith alone. He could not be apprehended by works. But if faith before works follows apprehends the Redeemer, it is undoubtedly true that faith alone before works and without works appropriates the benefit of redemption which is no other than justification or deliverance from sin. This is our doctrine. So the Holy Spirit teaches and the whole Christian church, and this by the grace of God will we stand fast. Amen."

Now that's it. I see his attitude, I see the nature, I see the content when you talk about the Gospel, and then he begins to unpack it, and what I'd like to do is to take segments that will bring us up to where we ended. I'm going to take chapter 1, verse 18 through 3:20 next week, then I'm going to take 3:21 through 5:21 the next week, then I'm going to take 6:1 all the way into chapter 8 the following week and we will move into chapter 8. So I'm going to take the sections of his argument, survey the argument that will bring us up to chapter 8 where we left off several years back. I will read the salutation. I'll read his desires of all the things that he says, 1 through 7, 8 through 13, and then here's the thesis, here's the thesis of the book, 16 and 17. That is absolutely the thesis of the book of Romans.

I'll lead us in prayer.

*Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank thee for this book that we can read and study. We know that the Holy Spirit is the one who guided and directed Paul and even Tertius to record the words that were dictated to him there in the city of Corinth. We can only imagine what it must have been like in the lodging of Gaius and to have the Apostle Paul*

*dictating this letter to Tertius and the communication that took place between those two men in composing this letter to these believers in Rome. We thank thee that Phoebe faithfully delivered the letter to that congregation, and that that letter has been preserved for us 2,000 years later to read and contemplate. We pray that thou would help us to understand this Gospel in a better way and pray that the Holy Spirit would just direct us in this entire study. We thank thee that we understand and recognize that salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone, and we know, Father, apart from this righteousness that comes from thee, we could never go to heaven. So we thank thee that we are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ and that can never be changed. Make that real to us even today. For I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.*