

...Faith...(Continued)

These are great questions and once again they are 21st century opportunities to tell the story of God's powerful good news of salvation. St. Paul wants these questions asked, and answered. So St. Paul wrote to the Romans (and to us) so that the answers would be right on the tip of our tongues.

First, a word about the word faith. The word faith appears 275 times in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Paul uses the word faith 40 times in Romans alone. In all of Paul's 13 letters (or at least attributed to Paul) the Apostle uses the word faith 175 times. This single word is paramount to understanding Paul.

So, what does Paul want us to know about faith.

#1 "For in it (faith) the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith..." Romans 1: 17

Martin Luther writes, "The righteous, namely, in the eyes of God, shall live by faith, that is only through complete belief in God will a person be saved. (*Luther's Works*, #25 "Lectures on Romans", 1972, *Concordia*, St. Louis). Here we learn that faith is complete belief in God. Not in the law, not works, not in our own strength - God saves (period).

#2 "...the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." Romans 3: 22

Here Paul, (in my humble opinion), equates complete belief in God with complete belief in God through faith in Jesus Christ. and not just faith in Jesus, but faith in what Jesus said, did and promised.

#3 "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith." Romans 3: 23 - 25

Since all have sinned; (we'll get into that next time), all are justified as a gift of grace...through faith. Both grace and faith are a gift. Faith is a gift from God. It, like grace, is not something you conjure up in your own heart. God put it there. Faith, like grace is not something you earn, it's a gift. So we can't even say look at my faith. That would be boasting in a gift you didn't earn.

#4 "But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." Romans 5: 11

But because of our complete faith in God (Jesus too) righteousness "rightness with God" is no longer a pipe dream. This dual gift of grace and faith has made it a reality. Salvation is now ours and we will live for ever with our Lord Jesus. For as Paul puts it, **"Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** Romans 5: 1

To that I say, Thanks be to God, (Jesus too). AMEN

Temple Lutheran Church

5600 N. Rt. 130
Pennsauken, NJ 08109
(856) 663 - 7783

www.templelutheranchurch.com

An Oasis Of Nurture And Grace In The Name
Of Jesus Christ For All People

For Whom Christ Died

A 21st Century Approach to:
The Letter of Paul to the Romans
By: Rev. David L. Stoner



An Introduction To Romans:

Through out Christian history, the Letter of Paul to the Romans has been written about as much as any book of the New Testament. Though the Gospel's of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, dominate worship and especially preaching, it is Paul's letters that dominate Bible Study and New Testament commentary. Of these letters, Romans is key to comprehending Christian thought since the first century. It is not possible to understand contemporary Christian thought without studying in detail Paul's Letters. And to understand Paul's letters a careful dissection of Romans is necessary. In my opinion, without Romans there would not be contemporary Christian thought.

For Whom Christ Died #1 Power of the Gospel - Prelude to Faith

Romans 1: 16 - 17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."

Though God inspired the Apostle Paul to write these words between 56 & 59 AD, I believe these words have more impact on our Future Church than for any other church in history. Now to prove that is the reason for this study. There are so many studies of Romans already, there has to be reason for adding yet another. So I'll say this, I believe our Future Church will not exist if we don't comprehend Paul's words to the Romans.

Take Chapter One vs. 16-17. **"I am not ashamed of the gospel..."** unfortunately we are. Until we can put a not in front of the word ashamed, our Future Church will not exist. For though we will know of the gospel, because of our shame of it we will not share it. If we do not share the gospel because of our shame, then when we die, it dies with us. If the good news dies with us, then the last one, who knows the truth of the good news, must reach their hand out of the coffin as it is being wheeled out of the church and turn out the lights. For in the immortal words of Dandy Don Meredith, "The party's over."

Now look at those next words, **"...it (The gospel) is the power of God for salvation..."** Here, in the first chapter, Paul is laying out the power God uses for salvation. I would say the only power God uses for salvation. Notice, so far Paul does not say what that salvation is, nor what the power is, nor, even, what the good news accomplishes. In fact, if you knew nothing of Christianity before reading this chapter, you would still know nothing of Christianity after reading this chapter. But, you would know that there is good news somewhere and some people have it. Not only that, you would know that it is through God that you could receive it and not only God, but God's power that is right now on earth making it possible for people to have something you don't have. wouldn't that seem unfair? Wouldn't that at least make you curious?

Today there are the haves and the have nots. Now we also have people who have received power from God and people who have not. Does that seem fair? Can you imagine how curious people might be about God's power and salvation? Now imagine no one offers to help you understand how to get that power on your side, or no one offers to tell you about their salvation? Wouldn't you begin to get a little resentful thinking the haves were keeping something from the have nots? Wouldn't you feel as if the haves were selfish? Imagine how dumb founded you would be if you found out they didn't tell you about God's power and salvation, not because they were selfish, but because they were ashamed of the gospel.

**"For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation"
...Faith...**

"...it (The gospel) is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Romans 1: 16

Everyone who has faith. Now imagine if someone asks you, how can I get faith? What would you say? Where did your faith come from? What is faith? How do you pass it on? Do your children have it? Will your grandchildren get it? Can anyone, meaning everyone get it? Is there a limited supply?

