

**Romans (5):  
Paul's Introduction to his Epistle (1:16, 17) (cont.)**

**Introduction:**

Last Lord's Day we began to address the two verses of Romans 1:16 and 17, in which the apostle introduced the theme of his epistle, which is essentially "the gospel."

Paul had expressed his desire to preach the gospel to the church at Rome. He had longed to visit with them. He had desired to impart spiritual benefit to them, that is, a spiritual gift to them (1:11). But at the same time, he knew that he would receive benefit from them (1:12) (Those who desire and purpose to serve others will find that they are always served by others). Paul had attempted to come to them before on a number of occasions, but something had always prevented him from seeing his desire realized (1:13). But he felt a sense of compulsion to be among them. He saw that to take the gospel to that Gentile church in that Gentile city of Rome would be the realization of God's Scriptural promises and also a fulfillment of his own calling as the apostle to the Gentiles (1:14). And so, he longed to be among them to preach the gospel, for as he explains in verses 16 and 17:

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

The gospel is the good news that God brings His salvation from sin to people through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the message that through Jesus Christ God saves His people from the penalty of sin (justification), from the alienation of sin (reconciliation and adoption), from the power of sin (sanctification), and ultimately from the presence of sin (glorification). Paul was not ashamed of the gospel for He was confident that God would use the gospel to accomplish His purposes in all places among all peoples in calling His people to Himself.

We now arrive to the second verse of this introduction to the epistle. **Verse 17** reads:

**B. "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" (Rom. 1:17)**

We will find this verse to be a difficult matter to sort through. But this should not surprise us and we certainly not allow it to discourage us. The apostle Peter himself described some of Paul's writings as difficult to understand. He wrote,

consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation-- as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, <sup>16</sup> as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, *in which are some things hard to understand*, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. (2 Pet. 3:15f)

As we attempt to understand precisely what Paul intended to say here in Romans 1:17, there are a number of factors to consider and weigh. Let us break the verse down and consider its various parts.

1. "***For*** in it ***the righteousness of God*** is revealed..."

The initial word, "for", as it was used in earlier verses, is used here for the same reason; it serves to show that his statements of verse 16 explain further what was stated in the previous verse. Paul had declared, "For I

am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” **“For** in it the righteousness of God is revealed...” And so, verse 17 tells us why the gospel is the power of God that brings salvation. Paul declared that in the gospel ***the righteousness of God is revealed***.

The expression, “the righteousness of God” is one of the most difficult to understand phrases in the Scriptures, and it is one that is debated greatly among Bible scholars. As one described the understanding of this phrase:

Defining **δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ** (the righteousness of God) is crucial and intensely controversial. The secondary literature on this issue is so massive that only a full-length monograph (book) could tackle the issues adequately.<sup>1</sup>

We might first look at the verb associated with this subject, “the righteousness of God.” Paul wrote that the righteousness of God ***is revealed***. “Is revealed” is the translation of the Greek word, **ἀποκαλύπτεται** (*apocaluptetai*), which is commonly translated in its noun form as “revelation” or the “apocalypse.” Paul is saying here that God is in the process of continuously revealing His righteousness in the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

In order to understand what the phrase means, “the righteousness of God”, we must know what range of meanings the word, “***righteousness***”, is used in Scripture, but more specifically, how Paul uses the word in his epistles. Paul used the word as it was commonly used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX). The root of this word and the words that are built upon this root have a range of meanings. Sometimes it describes ***the legal status*** of a person being in a right standing before God. It is also used to describe ***the faithfulness of God*** to His Word and to His covenantal commitments. In some places righteousness depicts the standard by which people are to live before God; they are to live according to ***the standard*** of God’s righteousness, that is, God’s law. Righteous is used occasionally to describe the correctness or the justice of the manner in which one acts or behaves. The Lord Jesus said one day, “**John 5:30** “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is ***righteous***, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” The word “right” (or “righteous”) is sometimes used to describe ***God reckoning a man to be righteous***, in other words, for God to declare a man to be right or righteous, that is acquitted of guilt and pronounced to be true and without condemnation. And then there are occasions when “righteousness” is used to describe the character that God has produced in a man, God having ***made*** him righteous, here, not declaring him righteous, but transforming him into a righteous man. This would not be a legal (forensic) usage but an ethical usage of the word. Ultimately only the context in which a word is found will provide the nuance that Paul, that is, the Holy Spirit, intended to convey by the word “righteousness.”

The little phrase, “of God”, that Paul attaches to the word “righteousness in verse 17 narrows the possible meanings. But what does the expression, “the righteousness ***of God***” mean? Again, this is a greatly debated matter. The manner in which this phrase is interpreted can have a profound influence how one reads the epistle. In order to show how difficult a problem it is to assess precisely what Paul intended by this phrase, I want to give us a little grammar lesson.

In every language there are ways to express issues and describe matters that are common to all written and verbal communication. In our communication with one another we use words that we identify as parts of speech. We have nouns, adjectives that describe nouns, verbs, adverbs that modify verbs, prepositions that stand in a “pre”- “position” to a noun to qualify its meaning, and we have conjunctions to join words, phrases, and clauses together. More specifically, when we use nouns, we employ them in different functions within a sentence. A noun may be used as the subject of a sentence, and object of a sentence, or a noun may be used to be ***descriptive of another noun***. That is the function of the words “of God” in the phrase, “the righteousness of

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Schreiner, **Romans** (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> For you grammar sickies, this Greek verb is in the present tense, passive voice, and indicative mood. It is implying that God is the one who is continuously revealing His righteousness in the gospel. Commonly writers of Scripture will use a subject with a passive verb to imply God’s action, doing so in this manner to avoid too frequent direct references to the name of their holy God.

God.” The noun phrase, “of God”, is descriptive of “righteousness.”<sup>3</sup> When a noun is used as a subject of a sentence, it is said to be in the nominative case. When a noun is used as an object in a sentence, it is said to be in the accusative case. And here, when a noun is used in this descriptive manner of another noun, it is said to be in the genitive case. And so, the phrase, “of God”, is a noun in the genitive case, which is descriptive of the word “righteousness.”

But how is this phrase specifically descriptive of righteousness? A number of possibilities need to be considered and the context of Romans 1 and the message of the larger context of the epistle must be considered in order to determine how best to understand what Paul intended to say. What are the possibilities? Here are a few. A noun that is descriptive, that is, one in the genitive case, which is commonly preceded with the word “of” may convey a variety of ideas. Here are several possibilities. A genitive noun may convey the idea of:

-- **possession**, which is the most common; example: “He is the son *of* Jacob”; that is, “he is Jacob’s son.”

-- **apposition**, that is, it repeats the same idea of the noun that it modifies; example: “And he received the sign *of* circumcision”; that is, “he received the sign, *which was* circumcision.”

-- **subjective genitive**, the genitive noun *produces* the “action” of the noun; example: “the peace *of* God”; that is, “The peace that God *gives*.”

-- **objective genitive**, the genitive noun *receives* the “action” of the noun; example, “there is no respect *of* persons”; that is, “there is no respect *for* persons.”

-- **partitive genitive**, the noun is a part of the genitive noun; example, “a third *of* the world was burned up”; that is, “a third *part of the* world was burned up.”

-- **genitive of source**, the genitive noun describes the source of the noun it modifies; for example, “the heat *of* the sun scorched them”; that is, “the heat *from* the sun scorched them.” When Paul wrote of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ to the believer, he used this kind of Genitive: “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even *the righteousness of God*, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe” (Rom. 3:21). Here the second phrase, “the righteousness of God” should be seen as “the righteousness *from* God”; “of God” is a genitive of source.

--simple **descriptive genitive**, which is a very common use of the genitive; example, “For the hour *of* His judgment has come.” God’s judgment describes this hour.

And so, we see that this grammatical construction of a noun preceded by the word “of” can potentially have any number of meanings. As we try and assess the claims of commentaries and scholars as to how we are to understand the expression, “the righteousness of God”, we need to consider what kind of relationship or meaning they not only assign to the word “righteousness”, but also of the words, “of God.”

There are four different major opinions to the meaning of “the righteousness of God” in verse 17. *First*, most reformed scholars follow Martin Luther’s opinion that *this expression describes the gift of righteousness that comes from God and is given to believing sinners in the gospel*.<sup>4</sup> This would make the words, “of God”, to be a genitive of source, or perhaps a subjective genitive. According to this position Paul was speaking of the gift of righteousness that comes from God. In other words, Paul is describing here at the outset of his epistle the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer; it is the gift of righteousness given to believing sinners,

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<sup>3</sup> Again, for you who are interested in grammar, this descriptive use of the noun is commonly known as being a noun in the genitive case, which is commonly preceded with the word, “of.”

<sup>4</sup> Schreiner gives six points of scriptural evidence for this position, which he affirms, but he also sees an additional aspect of righteousness rather than imputed righteousness here only. See Thomas Schreiner, **Romans** (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 64.

which is a major component of the believing sinner's justification.<sup>5</sup> The righteousness of God is a declaration of righteous standing before God that God Himself declares on behalf of a sinner upon his faith in the gospel. To be justified through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, means that God has declared a forensic (legal) status. Although the sinner is still a sinner and is worthy of death, God declares him, the believer, to be just, or righteous, before Him. God no longer regards the believing sinner as a guilty sinner, but a pardoned and righteous sinner.

*Second*, many are increasing in number who understand "the righteousness of God" to mean *God's saving power*.<sup>6</sup> This would understand "of God" as a *subjective* genitive: the righteousness that is characteristic of God is being manifested in his powerfully saving people from their sin.

These scholars do not deny the idea of the above position, that God justifies, that is, declares sinners pardoned and righteous through faith alone, however, they believe that is not taught in this verse. They would argue that here God's righteousness is an effective righteousness, God's power that transforms people, not just declaring their changed legal status by God. They would argue that Paul's use of the word translated "is revealing" (*ἀποκαλύπτεται*) is an eschatological work of God (i.e. having to do with the end times), which has invaded history in the person and work of Jesus Christ. They would argue that for Paul, "it is more natural to speak of a divine action being revealed than it is to speak of a new status being revealed" (which is the first position). In addition, the wording that is found in **verse 17**, which reads, "*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith*", is similarly found in **verse 18**, which reads, "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...*" (Rom. 1:18). Clearly in verse 18 God is revealing His active judgment in history; they argue that in verse 17 God is revealing His active saving power of His people.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, just as verse 16 speaks clearly of the power of God in the gospel, and verse 17 is linked with the explanatory conjunction "for", then it follows that verse 17 also speaks of God's righteousness as a manifestation of God's power.

A *third* position is that it would be inadequate to choose one of the above two positions to the exclusion of the other, but rather *it is best to understand Paul including both ideas-- God's forensic declaration of righteousness and His righteousness to transform sinners-- in his expression, "the righteousness of God is revealed."* I believe that this is the correct position.

I would suggest that it is a mistake to opt for an either-or here, and thus I conclude that the term "righteousness of God" is both forensic and transformative... Those whom God has vindicated He also changes... The saving righteousness of God is a gift received by faith alone, and God declares sinners to be right before Him on the basis of Christ's atoning death. Yet God's declaration of righteousness—which is a gift of the age to come invading the present evil age—is an effective declaration, so that those who are pronounced righteous are also transformed by God's grace... The forensic is the basis for the transformative, but the one cannot be sundered from the other... God's righteousness is both gift and power.<sup>8</sup>

There is a tendency among Bible interpreters to examine a list of possible meanings, like that which is provided above, and assume that Paul would have with precision intended only one of these options. But it may be that the Holy Spirit purposely moved Paul to use this form of expression in order to convey a broad use or perhaps several meanings of the expression, "the righteousness of God."

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<sup>5</sup> I believe that one reason that this is not a suitable understanding of the term in this verse (but it most certainly is elsewhere) is that the gospel, which Paul is addressing here, is broader than the imputed righteousness of Christ through faith alone. In fact, one could say that the imputed righteousness of Christ to the believer is but half of the equation of justification; the other being the atonement for the guilt of sin through the crucifixion of Christ.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> In this understanding, both uses of *θεοῦ* (of God) in verses 17 and 18 would be the genitive of source, depicting God's actions in history (Schreiner).

<sup>8</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 66-68.

The *fourth* understanding of the expression, “the righteousness of God”, is of recent invention. It has only been proposed in the last generation. There are those who understand this expression, “*the righteousness of God*” is that Paul was referring to God’s covenantal faithfulness. It is the position of those who have embraced what has come to be called, “*the new perspective on Paul.*” This position holds that the gospel is a manifestation of God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises of the Old Testament. Now certainly we would concur that the gospel is a manifestation of God’s faithfulness to His covenantal promises. But the proponents of this view take the matter to extreme and deny and redefine doctrines long held by Protestants. This is why the movement is called “the new perspective of Paul.” It had its origins only several decades ago.

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I would like us to spend a few minutes to speak to this subject, “the new perspective of Paul.” The basic ideas or positions of those who espouse this position are these: (1) The Reformed or Protestant understanding of Paul’s theology is wrong. Luther and Calvin and others, in reaction to the teaching of works-righteousness of Roman Catholicism of their day, misinterpreted Paul to have been addressing the false teaching of works-righteousness of the Jews of the first century. (2) The Jews of the first century did not espouse works-righteousness, but rather they taught the need to keep the Mosaic covenant (in faith) in order to be in a right relationship with God, rather than understanding that faith in Jesus that generated good works was the way to identify who was right with God.<sup>9</sup> (3) “Justification” is not the way that God saves sinners; it simply describes and identifies the standing of people “in Christ.” (4) The way to enter into Christ is through baptism.<sup>10</sup> (5) Believers are not “saved through an imputed righteousness of Christ.” (6) Christ’s death was not a penal substitution on behalf of His people. (7) The final judgment will declare people saved based upon their works born by faith, those works are what justify them.<sup>11</sup>

In listing these views of those who espouse “the new perspective of Paul”, it needs to be understood that there are varied views among proponents of this position. And although the expression, “the new perspective”, suggests a unified position by its proponents, this is not the case.<sup>12</sup> New perspective scholars not only disagree about the details, but they often revise their positions as different claims they have made have been discredited.

As a matter of principle, I am always suspicious of any “new” interpretation or understanding of the Scriptures. I have a New Testament that was given to me by an educational mentor of mine, who first encouraged me and motivated me to attend seminary. He is with the Lord now. He wrote in the front cover these words,

“Lars: Congratulations on your earning the M. Div. On doctrine: Just remember, if it is historical it has a possibility of being true. If it is of recent origin, it is false without a doubt. God bless, Brother Harris, June 5, 1986.”

I think those are wise words.

Why is it important to be informed about these matters? First, it is such an influential teaching among New Testament scholars that since 1977 no reputable book on Pauline studies or commentary on an epistle of Paul can be regarded with credibility unless it interacts with this teaching. Second, although people in the pew

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<sup>9</sup> This was the claim of E. P Sanders in 1977, in his important book, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. I believe that he has been proved wrong. There were indeed Jews in the first century who taught works-righteousness and we believe that Paul was confronting and correcting their heresy.

<sup>10</sup> This results in any and all who are baptized, including infants, to be viewed as “Christians”, but whose salvation is finally determined by the merit of their works born of faith. The effect is to make “Christians” of any and all who are baptized, whether Protestant, Greek Orthodox, or Roman Catholic.

<sup>11</sup> And so, rather than Christ’s righteousness, the believer’s righteousness is viewed as the ground of final salvation.

<sup>12</sup> N. T. Wright, who is a leading proponent of the new perspective, sought to distance himself from other leaders of the position, saying, “there are probably almost as many ‘new perspective’ positions as there are writers espousing it – and I disagree with most of them.” Paper delivered at the Rutherford House, Edinburgh, 10th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference: 25–28 August 2003, “*New Perspectives on Paul.*”

are uninformed about these matters, pastors, who have been seminary trained in the last generation, have been taught these things and many embraced them. Churches will be weakened by the failure and refusal of these “evangelical” pastors to teach the historic and biblical doctrines that the new perspective folks deny.

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Let us return to the meaning of the expression, “the righteousness of God”, in verse 17. Recognize this, although God’s saving actions in the gospel reflect His covenantal commitments to His people, this is not all that Paul was intending to say in his expression, “the righteousness of God.” In other words, the fourth position above is not likely.

The arguments in favor of defining God’s righteousness are not strong... God’s saving righteousness certainly involves His covenantal promises, but it should not be defined as His covenantal loyalty.<sup>13</sup>

2. “For in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God *is revealed from faith for faith...*”

The interpretation of these words are many more in number and much more varied in kind than the previous expression that we considered. Here is a summary of some of the popular suggestions as to what Paul meant by these words:

Most interpretations include the idea of a progression from one form of faith to another: from the faith of the OT to the faith of the NT; from the faith of the law to the faith of the gospel; from the faith of the preachers to the faith of the hearers; from the faith of the present to the faith of the future; from the faith of the words we hear now to the faith that we will possess what the words promise; from the faithfulness of God to the faith of human beings; from smaller to greater faith; from faith as the ground to faith as the goal.<sup>14</sup>

Since this verse begins with the now familiar word, “for”, we understand that this is an explanation of verse 16. Since verse 16 spoke of the faith of human beings, this explanation of verse 16 also speaks of human faith. Probably what Paul was conveying is that through the gospel God manifests His power in order to produce and sustain faith in His people.

3. “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, *as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’*”

Here the apostle quotes the Old Testament Scriptures to substantiate his teaching. This is a quotation from **Habakkuk 2:4**. It was providential that we made a study of this Old Testament prophet just before turning to this epistle of Romans. Now many look at this quotation from Habakkuk as Paul simply providing an Old Testament proof text to set forth his emphasis on *justification through faith alone*. But it appears that Paul had much more in mind in citing Habakkuk than merely providing a proof text. In order to show this, we need to remind ourselves of the context and message of Habakkuk. This should not be too difficult for us, since we were there not many weeks ago.

Habakkuk’s prophecy was largely a dialogue with God. The prophet was in some ways protesting in some ways appealing to God for an answer as to why God was acting or not acting in the ways that the prophet thought was fitting. You may recall that Habakkuk’s initial challenge to God is that it did not seem that God had been faithful to His people. His people were sinning terribly, and God seemed to be inactive in dealing with the matter. It even appeared to Habakkuk that the law of God had failed to arrest the people’s sinfulness.

<sup>2</sup>*O LORD, how long shall I cry,  
And You will not hear?*

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

***Even cry out to You, "Violence!"***

***And You will not save.***

<sup>3</sup>Why do You show me iniquity,  
And cause me to see trouble?  
For plundering and violence are before me;  
There is strife, and contention arises.

***<sup>4</sup>Therefore the law is powerless,  
And justice never goes forth.***

For the wicked surround the righteous;  
Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

God responded to His prophet by basically telling him and his people to watch and wait for what He was going to do. God announced that He would judge His people according to His law, bringing Israel's enemies, the Chaldeans, upon them in order to punish them for their sins.

This brought forth the prophet's second complaint. The prophet in effect asked God, "Is it right for You to use these Gentiles to punish us, when they are more wicked than we are?" Again, God responded in effect saying, "Trust Me to do what is right and just, and trust me to be true to My covenantal promises to my people, Israel." God told Habakkuk to write down His response to him:

<sup>2</sup> Then the LORD answered me and said:

"Write the vision  
And make it plain on tablets,  
That he may run who reads it.

<sup>3</sup> For the vision is yet for an appointed time;  
But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.  
Though it tarries, wait for it;  
Because it will surely come,  
It will not tarry.

<sup>4</sup> "Behold the proud,  
His soul is not upright in him;  
***But the just shall live by his faith.***

God told His prophet to write the vision on tablets in order to confirm to him and his people that their God will be faithful to them. IN time God will bring His salvation to them. They were to wait in faith, trusting God to preserve them and that to trust Him that He would indeed bring to pass His promises of salvation to them.

It would seem that the apostle Paul saw more than a proof text from Habakkuk 2:4 to draw from this Old Testament prophetic book. There is a repetition of themes of what Israel experienced in the days of Habakkuk and what Paul saw as unfolding in the expansion of the gospel into the world.

Just as Habakkuk was calling upon Israel to believe on their God even when they were under God's condemnation for their sin, so the apostle Paul is also calling upon people, both Jews and Gentiles, to entrust themselves to God through Jesus Christ, trusting and waiting upon God to deliver them from their time of suffering and difficulty in this fallen world.

Just as God was revealing His wrath upon wicked people in the days of Habakkuk, so Paul declares that even while he was writing. In the verses following our introduction we read:

<sup>18</sup>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup>because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

In addition, just as Habakkuk protested that the law of God had appeared to him to have been ineffectual in restraining sin among the people, Paul asserts the same concern.

Although Paul gives no explicit indication that he has in view Habakkuk's opening complaint about the Law's ineffectiveness, it is noteworthy that he is especially concerned with this issue. True, the emphasis is different—Habakkuk laments the weakness of the law to restrain sin, while Paul focuses more on human inability to keep the law—but Paul nevertheless makes it clear that the Law cannot solve the problem of wickedness. Much of his argument proceeds on precisely this premise. Granted the wickedness of pagan idolaters (1:18-32), Paul spends considerably more time arguing that the Jew is no better off, in spite of having Torah (i.e. the law) (2:1-3:20). All are under God's righteous judgment (1:18-32).<sup>15</sup>

Later in Paul's epistle he tells of the inability of the law to enable him to live righteously (7:1-25). Not only does the law of God fail to restrain sin in Paul, it actually brought forth the sentence of death and damnation upon him, just as it did in the days of Habakkuk. And just as the Old Testament prophet called out to God for help, so Paul does also as he saw himself before the holy standard of God's law (Rom. 7:24).

There is also a parallel between Habakkuk and Paul's writing of Romans in the relation between the Jewish people and the Gentiles. Habakkuk had a problem with theodicy, which is, the problem of God being all powerful but that he permits and even uses evil and evil people in His dealings with mankind. Habakkuk was troubled by the knowledge how and why God was not bringing His judgment on the Gentiles (Babylonians), but He was bringing His judgment upon the Jews. This is also an issue in Romans. It appears that God had passed by His people, the Jews, and had manifested Himself and His work among the Gentiles. But just as God showed Himself to Habakkuk that He was just (i.e. righteous) in His dealings with Israel and the Babylonians, so Paul shows that God is also just in His dealings with Israel and the Gentiles, even though it appears at the time that the Jews had been largely "set aside" while He was dealing with the Gentiles. But Paul declared that God would indeed show Himself to be righteous, in that He had been faithful (righteous) and would be faithful (righteous) in His dealings with people. The people should respond in persevering faith to their God.

Just as Habakkuk both recognizes the need for perseverance (3:16-17) and concludes with a song of praise (3:2-15), so too does Paul. He both stresses the need to endure (Rom. 4:18-21; 5:1-5; 8:18-27) and concludes all three of his central major sections with praise (5:6-11; 8:28-39; 11:33-36). Not only so, but whereas Habakkuk ends his resolution of the mystery by proclaiming "I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength" (3:18-19), Paul echoes this language as he outlines his thesis "for it [gospel] is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16). This might explain why Romans alone concludes with a doxology (16:25-27): "Now to the One who is able to strengthen you... according to my gospel... and the revelation of the mystery... to bring about the obedience of faith (cf. 1:5). Just as God had dealt mysteriously with Israel in the past, so also now. The right response is to believe."<sup>16</sup>

And so, Paul shows forth God as being faithful to His Word, to His covenant, to His people, and even to His enemies. Moreover, as in Habakkuk, the proper response that should be rendered by His people is that they should continue in their faith in their God through it all, for "the just shall live by faith."

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<sup>15</sup> Soderland, Swen, & Wright, N. T., *Romans and the People of God* (Eerdmans, 1999), p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.