

Righteousness and the Good News of the Kingdom

Romans 1:16-17 (NASB) – 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 from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

Skip Moen¹ draws out a number of important points from these 2 verses.

(1) One point about translators adding words that weren't in the original Text.

“First let's notice the added 'the' in the beginning of the verse [17]. In Greek the text reads, 'Righteousness for of God in it is revealed'. Paul puts the word 'dikaiosyne' first in the sentence because he wishes to emphasize it. The point of the thought is not 'God' but 'righteousness'. That causes us to rethink the translation of gar, the adverbial conjunction found in second position in the verse. Gar covers a wide range of possible English words such as “and, as, because, even, for, then, therefore, what, why”, etc. Paul uses it constantly in Romans as a bridge between points in his argument. Perhaps in English we need to put it first in the sentence, but we cannot diminish the primacy of 'dikaiosyne' as a result.

What follows is the genitive noun 'theou', translated “of God”. Now we see why the NASB adds 'the'. Paul's text reconstructed for English syntax should read, “Because righteousness of God”, but the translators want us to note that this righteousness belongs to God alone. It is unique to Him. Therefore, it can support the addition of the definite article, 'the'. But the genitive 'theou' might just as legitimately be translated, “God's righteousness”, or “righteousness belonging to God”. Is there a subtle difference? I don't need to add the definite article with either of these options, do I? Now the text implies that this is not righteousness uniquely possessed by God but rather righteousness displayed in God's action. Which thought is more likely Hebraic? We might need to remember that there is no verb for possession in Hebrew. The basic construct in Hebrew is relationship, not ownership. If Paul thinks like a rabbi (and he does!), wouldn't he suggest that this righteousness is the result of relationship rather than ownership? And if that is the case, then we too can share in this righteousness when we enter into the same relationship.”

(2) A second which uncovers what the Gospel really is from a Hebrew perspective of the 1st Century.

“What relationship is that? Ah, Paul implies the relationship with the pronoun auto, translated 'it'. That means we have to go back to the previous points of his argument in order to understand what 'it' is. We discover that 'it' is the good news (to 'euangelion', this time with the definite article). That begs the question, “What is the good news?” If I am completely Hebraic in my answer, I would say that the good news is that the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua, has been revealed in these days and his death and resurrection are the guarantee that the Kingdom, God's Kingdom, will reign on earth as it does in Heaven. The good news is not that “Jesus saves”. It is that the final victory of the Kingdom is assured...The good news is that God's purposes for and with His people are assured. It is now only a matter of time. That's why this “good news” is the power of salvation for everyone who believes. It is precisely what the angels announced at the birth. “Good news on earth and peace among men.” The King has been born and He will bring in the Kingdom, no matter what the odds. This news is salvation (deliverance) because it rescues us from the power of pagan idolatrous empires that currently inhabit the earth.”

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