

## Passages Worth the Dig

Romans 1:16-17

**“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 for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”**

I first considered this passage when I was in high school. I went to a public school, and among the 600 people in my class, most were not too interested in Biblical matters. It was a rarity to see someone carry a Bible around.

To me, this passage meant that I shouldn't be embarrassed to carry my Bible. After all, I thought of the “gospels” as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Since Paul wasn't ashamed of “the gospel,” so I shouldn't be either. This was the verse I went to when I wanted to feel better about having a Bible nearby amongst those who might think it odd.

It wasn't until I got to Lipscomb for college that this passage took on a whole new meaning. Dr. Harvey Floyd, one of my Greek professors, taught on this passage in ways that opened flood gates, dousing us all in the living water that flows from a proper understanding of this passage. Dr. Floyd wanted us to dig into the Scriptures deeply. Through his teaching and encouragement, many of us embraced this passage for its transformative teaching. We were changed. That change still holds 40 years later. This lesson reflects a debt of gratitude to Dr. Floyd, with too many ideas and examples from him to ever adequately cite them. In a real sense, this lesson itself is properly attributed to Dr. Harvey Floyd, who passed into God's eternity in 2018.

Upon a careful reading, the passage shouts, “I'M IMPORTANT! GET ME! UNDERSTAND WHAT I AM SAYING!” After all, the passage speaks of the gospel as God's “power” to save everyone who believes. Who doesn't want to know how God is able to save them?

When one reads Paul's entire letter now known as “Romans,” it becomes fairly apparent that these verses are an overview or theme of the letter. This passage sets out Paul's major thoughts that are fully explored in the coming pages. Understanding these verses, then, helps one understand the entire letter, framing Paul's thoughts for the overall message.

To best understand this passage, the vocabulary is worthy of special examination. After all, Paul wrote in the common Greek of 2,000 years ago. If one studies his vocabulary

carefully, then one can more fully grasp the message as translated into 21<sup>st</sup> century English.

## Vocabulary

A most challenging and enjoyable part of studying languages involve nuances of vocabulary. Those nuances take on enhanced significances when considering a foreign language that is separated by thousands of years of history and culture. The way Paul used terms doesn't always cleanly translate into a single English word.

Weston Fields taught me to always be careful when saying an ancient foreign word "means" a certain word in English. Ancient words always had a spectrum of nuanced meanings. Rarely does an ancient word transfer to just a singular modern word. Weston uses the phrase, "semantic range," or one might say, "range of meaning." This can be work,, but it is recognized as a worthy endeavor to do vocabulary justice. It recognizes the broad range of the original language (in today's case, Biblical Greek).

No one should be frustrated over this. It is the same in modern languages, it's just the brain generally does the work for one so rapidly, that one doesn't realize it happened.

A non-Greek example familiar to many is the Hawaiian word "aloha." Aloha can mean "hello," but it can also mean, "good-bye." To translate it with the same English word each time is an error waiting to happen. Happily, English has adopted the word so that one needn't translate it but simply write it: "She said, 'Aloha!'"

This also becomes an issue in reverse. The English language has a broad range of vocabulary which doesn't always bode well for using an English word in place of a Greek word. English as a language descended from Celtic, Germanic tribal languages, as well as the descendant languages from Roman Latin language, especially French.

This becomes readily apparent when considering food. In 1066, the Norman conquest of England occurred. The Normans came from Northern France and were French speakers. They brought their language and diet as well as their rulership. One result was that animals that were known as stable or farm animals kept their English rooted names. However, when those animals were cooked, they carried their French names used in the recipes. So a pig was a pig, but when cooked the French name for pig "*porc*" was used and today we speak of a "pork chop," not a "pig chop." Similarly, a "calf" became "veal;" "cow" became "beef," etc. Careful historical work makes the language finds even more interesting.

The Old English for “pig” (“*picg*”), seems to descend from the Low German “*bigge*,” and meant a young pig. The adult was a “swine” (“*swin*” in Old English) from the Proto-Germanic “*sweina*.” Meanwhile, as already noted, the French word *porc* descended from the Roman Latin word, “*porcus*.”

Now what does this have to do with Romans 1:16-17? Quite a bit, actually!



There is a set of Greek words formed from a common root – *dikē* (δική). These *dikē* words get used by Paul over and over in Romans. However, the peculiarities of the English language means that one doesn’t always know that Paul is using the same word root over and over. Sometimes the *dikē* words are translated into English words based on Modern English’s Latin heritage with words based on “just” (from the Latin root *ius*). So Paul’s word gets translated into English words like “just,” “justify,” and “justification.”

Yet in other places Paul’s same *dikē* words get translated into English with words that come from Modern English’s Germanic roots. So the English words “right,” “righteous,” and “righteousness” coming from the Germanic *recht* are used to translate the same *dikē* roots in Paul’s writing.

So when Paul speaks of the “righteousness” of God to ones who have faith in Romans 1:17, Paul is using the *dikē* words in Greek. Similarly, in Romans 3:26 as Paul wrote of God being both “just” and the “justifier” of the one who has faith in Jesus, Paul is still using the same *dikē* root words. The average English reader doesn’t pick up that Paul is using the same words. Yet his usage of the same words is important to understanding what he means.

For example, the same Greek word group (*dikē* - δική) is variously translated in English with:

- words based on “just” (descended from the Latin heritage of English) like “justice,” “justification,” or “justify.
- words based on “right” (descended from the German heritage of English) like “righteous” or “righteousness.”

These vastly different English words all work to translate the same Greek word and idea.

These vocabulary points are set out to emphasize the importance in any Biblical study to make sure one understands the depth and breadth of the vocabulary being used. How one does this involves more than one might think. An obvious first-step is “Look it up!” or, “Google it!”



In other words, a first-step is often as simple as looking in a lexicon (a name given to ancient dictionaries that translate ancient languages into modern ones) to see what meanings are given. Smaller convenient lexicons give select definitions. Other larger and more thorough lexicons give definitions, explain how the word developed, indicate different uses, provide different nuances, and even exemplify how the

word is used. This assists the scholar in finding the more appropriate idea and meaning of the word in question.

A second very important tool for determining meanings of words involves looking at other places where a word is used, especially if a specific author frequently used the word. In today's passage, for example, a key word is “gospel.” One should look at other places where Paul used the same word to better inform one's understanding of how Paul might use it in a passage.

These tools are important, but they are not the only ones available in understanding vocabulary and meaning of a passage. Sometimes within the passage itself one gets a fuller idea of what the word might mean in its particular usage. Occasionally, one can understand what is meant with a word by seeing it contrasted in the passage. In this sense, if Paul says, “It is A, not B.” then one better understands what “A” means by seeing that Paul is contrasting “A” with “B,” so “A” is *not* “B.” The contrast heightens one's understanding of “A.”

In today's passage, the meaning of the verses is greatly enhanced by understanding the vocabulary. In fact, I would argue the impact of Romans 1:16-17 *cannot* be appreciated as fully if one doesn't recognize and consider the meanings behind the vocabulary. But in addition to the vocabulary, any appropriate study of the passage must include the historical framework behind the writing itself. Into what situation was Paul writing? Who were his readers? What were their likely issues? All of this is worthy of examination as part and parcel of understanding a passage.

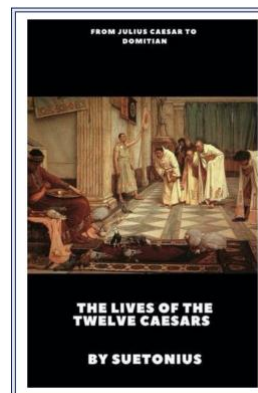
## The Passage in its Historical Framework

Scripture does not inform one of the origins of the church at Rome. It is clear that there were Jews from Rome in Jerusalem during Pentecost. Acts 2:10 explains that “visitors from Rome” were among those who heard the apostles speaking in tongues and heard Peter’s first sermon that first opened the kingdom of God to mankind on Pentecost when God added to his church “about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). It is also clear that there was a thriving Christian community there at the time Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, even though Paul had never personally been to the Empire’s capital.

Secular history does not provide the church’s origins in Rome either. Around 119AD, Suetonius Tranquillus (c.70AD – post 130) wrote a history of the lives of the Caesars. Suetonius’s credentials give credence to the accuracy of his writings. Under Trajan, who ruled the Roman Empire from 98 to 117, Suetonius served as Director of the Imperial Archives. Later, Suetonius was the personal secretary to the Roman Emperor Hadrian in 119 – 121, and it was during this time that Suetonius finished his work on the lives of the Caesars.

The *Lives of the Caesars* is still available today. Book five tells of Claudius, who ruled the Empire from 41 to 54AD. This was the stretch of time that included Paul’s second missionary journey. Suetonius has an important passage buried in the middle of Claudius’s actions while emperor (The Latin is important, so I add it here):

Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.



*Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit.*<sup>1</sup>

In the English translation of John Carew Rolfe, one of the top classical translators of the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Latin name “Chresto” is reproduced in its basic Latin form as “Chrestus.” Rolfe then added in a footnote that this was “another form of *Christus*,” or “Christ” in English.

Most scholars understand this to be referencing Christ, although a small few think that there may have been another Jew in Rome by such a name at the time of Paul. “*Chrestus*” is not a typical Jewish name. For that matter, it is not a common Greek or Latin name

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<sup>1</sup> Loeb Classical Library, *Suetonius II*, LCL vol. 38 (Harvard University Press 1997 ed.) translated by J. C. Rolfe at 25.4.

either. It is a Latinized derivation of the Greek word for “anointed” (Christos - Χριστός), not the Hebrew word, which would be *Mashiach*. Instead, it seems to be an alternate spelling of *Christus*, or “Christ.”

The earlier Roman writer Tacitus (c.55AD – c.120) wrote of Jesus’ death and his followers, using the spelling *Christus* during the era of Nero, the emperor who followed after the death of Claudius in 54AD. Nero used the group as a scapegoat to quell the rumors that Nero himself had caused the great fires in Rome which were used to prepare the neighborhood for Nero’s new buildings.

Therefore to scotch the rumour, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices<sup>2</sup>, whom the crowd styled Christians [“*Christianos*”]. Christus [“*Christus*”], the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, there was no real dictionary at the time, and standardized spelling is much more a modern novelty than a historical fact. In the pre-dictionary days, spelling was often based on pronunciation. The African lawyer-turned-theologian Q. Septimus Florens Tertullian (c. 150AD – 222) recognized as much in his defense of the faith written less than 100 years later:

“Christian,” [“*Christianus*”] so far as translating goes, is derived from “anointing.” Yes, and when it is mispronounced by you “Chrestian” [“*Chrestianus*”] (for you have not even certain knowledge of the mere name)...<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A major indictment against Christians at the time included cannibalism, based upon the suggestion they consumed the body and blood of a person at closed feasts. This was a public misunderstanding of the concept of the Eucharist, which was celebrated in private by the church. The public just heard the rumors that associated the Lord’s Supper with the body and blood of Christ. For more, see the martyr lessons in the class’s church history series available at [www.Biblical-literacy.com](http://www.Biblical-literacy.com).

<sup>3</sup> Loeb Classical Library, *Tacitus Annals Books XIII-XVI*, LCL vol. 322 (Harvard University Press 1997 ed.) translated by John Jackson at 15.44.

<sup>4</sup> Loeb Classical Library, *Tertullian Apology*, LCL vol. 250 (Harvard University Press 1997 ed.) translated by T.R. Glover, at 3.5.

The historical accounts of Jewish eviction, regardless of whether it was over Jesus, dovetails perfectly with the Biblical events and adds some important context to the narrative provided by Luke in the book of Acts. Luke's history recorded that Paul's first encountered Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth, sometime during his stay there from 50 – 52AD. Scripture adds that this came about because of the actions of Claudius, the emperor.

And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them.” (Acts 18:2)

Scripture is also clear that the Jews were later allowed to return to their homes in Rome, because by the time Paul writes his Roman letter, Priscilla and Aquila have returned and he sends them his greetings (Rom. 16:3).

This information tells a great deal behind the situation at Rome that gives vital context to the situation into which Paul wrote Romans. Paul addressed in his letter.<sup>5</sup> Consider the likely situation at Rome:

- Jews from Rome hear Peter preach in Jerusalem and return to Rome, likely starting the church (Acts 2:10).
- The church grows to include a large number of both Jews and Gentiles.
- Since the Jews began the church, one may reasonably surmise, the Jews held the core leadership positions.
- When Jews were forced to leave Rome over Christ (or “Chrestus”), this would have included the Jews who were in the church, like Aquila and Priscilla.
- During the time the Jews were gone (likely several years), the converted Gentiles were the leaders that controlled and directed the congregation.
- After the death of Claudius (Oct. 13, 54AD), Jews were allowed back into Rome.
- The church's first members, the early authority and leadership, returned likely ready to resume their positions of leadership.
- Yet, the Gentile Christians no doubt recognized that God had continued working in the church while they were its leadership and core constituency.

One readily understands how such a church could have issues that needed answers and insight from the Lord.

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<sup>5</sup> While Paul had not yet visited the church in Rome, Paul clearly knew many people there. Reading Paul's personal notes in chapter 16 of the letter impresses one with the number of people and church workers in Rome who were close to Paul.

Into this situation came this letter from Paul. Paul had left Ephesus and worked his way back to Corinth. Around 57AD, Paul wrote to the Romans from Corinth, a port city with a western harbor that constantly sent ships to the coast of Italy and the *via appia* road that led straight to the capital city. Paul wrote to set the church on its core foundations.

Paul's letter addressed the equal standing of Gentile and Jew in the church, setting aright any lingering issues or doubts that might have arisen from the Jewish departure and return. Paul gave insight into the position of the Gentile and the Jew before God. Paul knew that as the believers understood their respective place before God, their personal interactions and church roles would logically follow.<sup>6</sup>

Within this historical framework, one should read Romans. Then at Romans 1:16-17, one reads Paul's theme for his larger letter. Since Paul's letter addressed the basis for Jews and Gentiles to stand before God, with an agenda of seeing that the Jews and Gentiles live in harmony in the church, one reads his central premise,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for the gospel is the power of God to salvation for 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, "The righteous shall live by faith."

With that background, one can turn to the vocabulary of the key words in the passage.

### ***"Gospel"***

A first word that jumps out from this passage is "gospel." The passage makes clear that the "gospel" is very important. What could be more important to anyone than God's power to save people? One should want to know what Paul means by this term!

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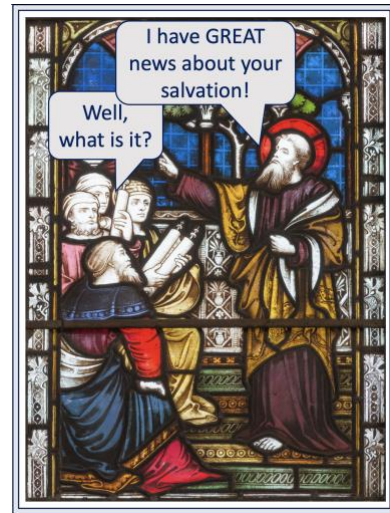
<sup>6</sup> Some scholars believe that Paul used the Greek word *parakaleo* (παρακαλέω) to signify his ultimate intent behind his letters. This word is generally translated "I appeal..." or "I urge..." It has been likened to a college student who writes home with a number of details before reaching his true purpose of, "please send money!" One sees this word used by Paul in ways that underscored his concerns. In Romans, it comes in 12:1 as Paul appealed for the Romans to all present themselves to God appropriately, each appreciating the gifts given each, which were never parceled out by the Spirit based upon ethnicity – Jew or Gentile. Paul again used the word in Rom. 15:30 and 16:17 as Paul reiterated his appeal for unity. These indicate the importance of this letter in addressing the Jew/Gentile issue that likely arose from the departure and then reunion of the Jewish believers.



The Greek word translated “gospel” is “*euangelion*” (εὐαγγέλιον). A simple dictionary meaning for the word is “glad tidings” or “good news.”<sup>7</sup> If one considers the nuances of meaning written in more theological dictionaries, one finds,

the content of good news (in the NT a reference to the gospel about Jesus) — ‘the good news, the gospel.’ ... In a number of languages the expression ‘the gospel’ or ‘the good news’ must be rendered by a phrase, for example, ‘news that makes one happy’ or ‘information that causes one joy’ or ‘words that bring smiles’ or ‘a message that causes the heart to be sweet.’<sup>8</sup>

From these and similar entries, one gets a basic idea of what “gospel” means, but in some ways these entries are inadequate for helping one understand how Paul is using the word in Romans 1:16-17. So, Paul’s “great news” was the power of God to save people. If I know no more than that, I am not satisfied! It is akin to me telling my wife, “something great happened to me today,” and then leaving it there. Such a comment begs for follow-up. “What happened?” “What was the ‘great thing’?”



Knowing Paul is referencing “good news” leaves one wondering, “just what is the news that is so good?” What is the content of that “good news”? The passage says that the news is the power that God has to save people, but that just intensifies the desire and importance of knowing what that news is! To best answer, “What is the content of this good news?”, one gets greater insight from reading Paul’s other references and teachings about the good news.

Paul used “gospel” often. Of the 76 times the word is found in the entire New Testament writings, 60 of those are from Paul’s pen. Before reading it in today’s passage (Romans 1:16-17), Paul has already used it twice. In the first reference, Paul used it in a way that helps one understand the content of the gospel. In his first sentence, Paul told the Romans that Paul self-identified as,

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<sup>7</sup> “εὐαγγελ-έω,” Liddell, Scott, Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9<sup>th</sup> edition, Unabridged), (Oxford 1940), at 705.

<sup>8</sup> “εὐαγγέλιον” Louw, Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), (UBS 1989) at 413.

...a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the *gospel* of God, *which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures*, concerning his Son...

From this, one rightly understands that the good news was both “promised beforehand” in the Old Testament and that it concerns Jesus as the Son of God. This should not be surprising, after all, Jesus clearly asserted that the Old Testament spoke of his coming,

And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ [Messiah] should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

Jesus indicated that the Old Testament not only prophesied of his coming, but also indicated it would be “necessary” for Jesus to suffer and *then* to enter into his glory. To further trace this to its roots, one can consider other teachings of Christ and his apostles surrounding this idea that it was necessary for Jesus to suffer. Consider these passages:

- Matthew 16:21 – “From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”
- 1 Peter 1:10-11 – “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.”

I’m not sure I ever met anyone who liked to suffer. By its very nature, suffering is something one doesn’t like. The idea that Jesus, the Son of God *must* suffer begs one to ask the profound question: why?

The answer is found, in part, in an extended passage in Isaiah 53.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for *our* transgressions; he was crushed for *our* iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All

we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? ...

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief... because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

The necessity of the gospel is one centered in the actions of Jesus for the salvation of humanity. This gospel's good news is that Christ suffered for the transgressions and shortcomings, for the sins of humanity, in the place of those who committed those sins.

This was Paul's message and his purpose for living. When Paul had his tearful goodbye with the Ephesian elders, he explained,

I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

Nothing Paul had, not even life itself, was as precious as testifying to the gospel.

In the Acts passage above, Paul gave further insight into his vocabulary and meaning of the "gospel" when he linked it to grace: "the gospel of the grace of God." Paul gives another aspect to what one might hear when listening to the "gospel." One would hear of the "grace of God."

The gospel is both about Jesus and about the grace of God. In this sense, the "grace of God" is not an abstraction. It isn't a mere attribute or trait of God, in the sense of "graciousness." It is the gift God gave his people through the death of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> When Paul used the word "grace" in this sense, it is often spoken of as "unmerited favor." Paul was using it as a noun to speak of a specific favor God did for his people, not simply as an adjective to describe God's nature. The "favor" God did for humanity was the gospel, Jesus' dying in place of sinful people.

Paul's many other uses of "gospel" accord with this understanding. In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul explained that,

Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

The gospel centered on the cross of Christ.

Perhaps nowhere is Paul's meaning behind "gospel" illustrated better than in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. There Paul put it simply,

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures

So, in examining Paul's theme to the Romans, and asking the question, what is the content of "gospel," of the "good news" that is God's power to save everyone who believes? The answer is worth digging to find – it is the cross of Christ. There Jesus suffered in the place of humanity for the sins of humanity. This was Paul's sermon on the "gospel." This explains Paul's reference above in 1 Corinthians 1:17, to preach anything else as gospel would have denied the truth of what happened at Calvary. Even relying on Paul's eloquence rather than the power of the gospel has the effect of emptying the cross of its power (1 Cor. 1:17).

For Paul, this "good news" about the cross of Christ satisfying the suffering and penalties of sin that was truly everyone personal responsibility except Jesus's. Christ dying on Paul's behalf, as well as on everyone else's behalf, was the only real good news. Any other message was cursed. As Paul informed the churches of Galatia,

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

In speaking of Paul's message about the cross of Christ, it is important to realize that Paul also spoke of Jesus's resurrection. As Dr. Floyd would teach us,

Paul often spoke of the death of Christ, but never of a *dead* Christ. Because he wasn't dead.

So, when Paul was under arrest in Caesarea, and awaiting his appeal to Rome, King Agrippa came into town and was visiting with the governor over Paul's case, Gov. Festus. As Festus explained to Agrippa, the dispute that got Paul into trouble centered on Paul's disputes with the High Priest of Jerusalem along with certain Jewish elders,

About a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted was alive (Acts. 25:19).

Why was it so integral to Paul's good news that Jesus was a resurrected Lord? For that, one must consider the other terms in Romans 1:16-17.

### ***"Righteousness"***

Examining this part of Romans 1:16-17 is critical. By looking at Paul's usage of "righteousness," one is better able to understand "justification," or the rightness one has before God. N.T. Wright put it well,

If you start with the popular view of justification, you may actually lose sight of the heart of the Pauline gospel; whereas if you start with the Pauline gospel itself you will get justification in all its glory thrown in as well.<sup>10</sup>

Justification and righteousness are bound together. "Justification," "salvation," and "redemption" are synonyms for the same picture of reality. These words paint the canvas on which Paul explains reality for the believer. "Salvation" recognizes that humanity stands condemned under the wrath of God and needs to be rescued from that danger. "Justification" is a courtroom concept of the impending judgment that can only be set aside by the judge declaring one not guilty. "Redemption" refers to purchasing one who is in bondage to release them from that bondage. At the end, all of these terms are bound irrevocably in the Pauline gospel, that Jesus died in place of the believer.

In that sense, Paul continues in Romans 1:16 and 17 to explain that the gospel is not only God's power to save everyone, but in the gospel, the "righteousness of God" is revealed. This is worthy of a deeper dig. Understanding first that the gospel is the death of Christ

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<sup>10</sup> Wright, N.T., *What Saint Paul Really Said*, (Lion Hudson 1997), at 202.

on behalf of a sinful people, one might ask, “If dying was that big of a deal, why didn’t God forgive sins another way?” Or, “Couldn’t God have just decided to forgive sins and let that decision be enough?”

Paul doesn’t directly ask those questions, but his theme addresses any such concern. Paul explained this in his bold comment that in the death of Christ (the “gospel”), people see “the righteousness of God.”

*dikaïosunē* (δικαιοσύνη)

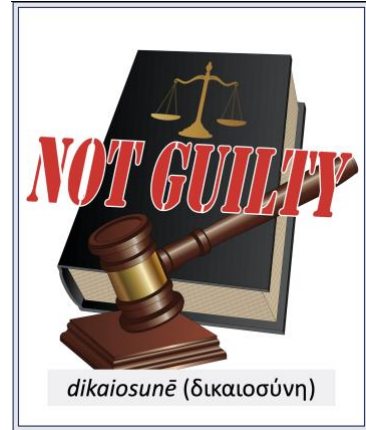
As noted earlier, Paul is using a Greek word translated “righteousness” that comes from the “*dikē*” family of words (δική). These words have a wide range of semantic usage, but generally fall into the category of words associated with right and wrong, with punishment and justice, and with penalties. Paul’s specific word translated righteousness is , a noun typically focused on justice or fairness. In other New Testament writings, *dikaïosunē* is frequently an ethical term for doing what is right. For example, the word is found repeatedly in Matthew’s recording of the Sermon on the Mount in this ethical sense:

- **Matt. 5:6** “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for *righteousness*, for they shall be satisfied.”
- **Matt. 5:10** “Blessed are those who are persecuted for *righteousness’* sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
- **Matt. 5:20** “For I tell you, unless your *righteousness* exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”
- **Matt. 6:1** “Beware of practicing your *righteousness* before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.”
- **Matt. 6:33** “But seek first the kingdom of God and his *righteousness*, and all these things will be added to you.”

Importantly, beyond the ethical usage, the word also has a peculiar usage as a judicial term, a term of court. This would be like in English where the word “guilty” can reference ethical guilt, i.e., “I feel guilty over how much I ate!” but the word can also have a peculiar judicial usage, “How does the defendant plead?” “Not guilty!”

Paul is using *dikaiosunē* in the judicial sense. The judicial usage is found frequently in passages that speak of courtroom ideas like sentencing or judging. Consider these examples:

- **John 16:8** And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:
- **Acts 17:31** because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”



- **Acts 24:25** And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, “Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity, I will summon you.”

When the Jewish fathers translated the Old Testament into Greek in the centuries before Paul, they used *dikaiosunē* in the judicial sense. (Notably, this was a translation that Paul used frequently in his journeys, and it was the way Scripture was read by most of the Jews spread throughout the Mediterranean.)

- **Lev. 19:15** “You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”
- **1 Kgs. 3:9** “And give to your servant an obedient heart to judge your people in righteousness...”<sup>11</sup>
- **2Chr. 9:8** Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on his throne as king for the LORD your God! Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness.”

Paul will use this judicial term repeatedly in Romans, speaking of the character of God as the universe’s judge. God’s judgment is one of righteousness. God doesn’t run a kangaroo court. God doesn’t act unfairly. God doesn’t play favorites. God is a just and

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<sup>11</sup> This translation does not align with the E.S.V. used in these lessons. The Septuagint (Greek version) of the Old Testament uses a variant reading, and it doesn’t follow the Hebrew text used by modern translations. Hence the translation is my own.

consistent God. The wages of sin are death. It is that simple. God paid the price of death so his children wouldn't have to.

The effect of this righteous judgment is profound. As Paul later told the Romans,

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? (Rom. 8:33-34)

God, the Supreme Universal Judge in the ultimate and final court has declared that the believer stands right with God, that the believer is in the clear before God and before the law – so who can challenge God's verdict? No one! It is a just and righteous verdict! It is *dikaiosunē*!

This understanding of God's righteousness in the gospel should change the theology of some well-meaning people. Some believe and teach that in the life of believers, God infuses grace which makes obedience possible and hence brings one into a righteousness. This idea reads *dikaiosunē* (righteousness) as an ethical term, rather than a legal term. But Paul is not saying that God makes one ethically right and therefore acceptable to God.

The idea that God's grace frees up an individual to be morally righteous goes back at least to Pelagius (c.354-418), deemed a heretic by the church. Wright correctly assessed the incorrect idea of infused grace writing,

I must insist, right away, that if you come upon someone who genuinely thinks that they can fulfill Pelagius's programme, in whichever form or variation you like, you should gently but firmly set them right. *There is simply no way that human beings can make themselves fit for the presence or salvation of God.* (Emphasis added).<sup>12</sup>

Others believe and understand that God is simply declaring believers righteous, imputing righteousness to them. It is premised on God granting a righteousness by assigning the righteousness of Christ to the believer. Now there is merit and a certain beauty to this view, for indeed the believer "puts on Christ," as Paul taught the Galatians (Gal. 3:27). Furthermore, the idea of one standing before God simply because of the merit of Christ is solidly Biblical. However, if this is all there is to righteousness, then righteousness is premised on a fiction.

Dr. Floyd used to equate this view to a barnyard covered in manure. When snow falls, one can see the beautiful white pure surface, but manure remains underneath. The purity

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<sup>12</sup> Wright, at 206-207.



is an illusion. Not so with the death of Christ. There is no fiction of righteousness. The Christian walk isn't premised on God covering over one's sin. It is based on something much more solid. It is based on a great reality: *the believer's sins are forgiven!* The righteous judge has paid the debt owed in full.

Consider in this sense, two of Paul's supports for his teaching. Paul uses Abraham as an example. Abraham was a party to God's covenant to deal with humanity's problem of sin. Paul explained,

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Rom. 4:2-3).

As Paul wrote of Abraham's justification, he explained it as based on his faith (the same Greek word translated here in the verb form as "believe"). Abraham's faith was "counted" as righteousness. The word "counted" is an accounting word in the Greek.<sup>13</sup> Paul is using it in a clear sense of meaning that one has an account entry on the credit side of the balance sheet. God has written, "Right standing!" The key here is that God didn't do it blindly or fictionally. His work in the gospel on the cross was what allowed God to justify his children righteously!

Paul's second support is David, the king who had committed atrocious adultery, getting Bathsheba pregnant and then having her husband killed to coverup the sin. Paul uses David as his example immediately after that of Abraham in Romans 4. While Abraham was seemingly a righteous man in the general moral sense, not so David. David repented from his sin, and Psalm 32 was reflective of that. Paul quotes Psalm 32,

... just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered..." (Rom. 4:6-7).

This is no fiction. This is true forgiveness. Paul ties in God's forgiveness to Abraham and to David to the gospel as well. God can only forgive sins in righteousness by paying the price for that sin. The death of Christ is "evidence" of God's righteousness. Paul explained,

This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present

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<sup>13</sup> *Logizomai* (λογίζομαι) indicated something determined with mathematical precision and accounted accordingly.

time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:25-26).

So this gospel death of Christ on behalf of sinners as the righteousness of God is assigned by Paul to “everyone who believes,” as a righteousness “from faith to faith.” This brings in the next word to dig into carefully: “faith/belief.”

### ***“Faith” – “believe”***

Few words in the Bible have created such a stir in theology, philosophy, and history as the word “faith.” Consider the writings of two well-known historical figures, the German churchman Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Danish thinker Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855).

Martin Luther famously found solace and understanding in Paul’s great theological truths in Romans. Of particular significance to him was Paul’s claim that the believer is justified by faith alone. In his introduction to Romans Luther explained,

faith alone makes someone righteous and fulfills the law; faith it is that brings the Holy Spirit through the merits of Christ.

So ardent was Luther that when referencing the New Testament Epistle of James, Luther had disparaging things to say. Luther’s angst with James stemmed from a perception that James slighted, if not outright assaulted Paul’s doctrine of salvation based on “faith alone.” Luther called James, “an epistle of straw,” and relegated it to the end of the New Testament, almost a canonical “time out” as punishment.

Of course, more careful and less reactionary study of James indicates an understanding entirely consistent with Paul, but that will need resolution later in this paper. First, “faith” should be considered in light of the second historical example, Soren Kierkegaard.

Reading his papers and those of others close to him show that Kierkegaard had an unusual, if not rough upbringing, and so I tend to cut him some slack for how he thought through things. He also lived in the height of what scholars now call the Romantic Age, which was a reaction to the strong rationalism of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment had brought about industrialism through heavy emphasis on rational thought. The Romanticism that sprung up in response emphasized the important of emotionalism, intuition, and experience over against rationalism. He died relatively young, and without the benefit of modifying his ideas that comes from aging. But with all excuses thus made, it is hard to underestimate the influence that Kierkegaard had on the ideas of faith.

Kierkegaard placed himself into modern culture by suggesting faith is an exercise of believing without evidence. Although Kierkegaard didn't coin the phrase, "blind leap of faith," the idea of a leap of faith is certainly his. For Kierkegaard, the rationale processing of faith was paradoxical. As Stephen Evans summarized,

As Kierkegaard sees things, the attempt by modern philosophy to give rational support to Christian doctrines actually undermines genuine Christianity. If I believe what God has revealed only because I myself have independently investigated matters and found that the doctrines revealed are true, then my belief does not stem from trust in God and thus does not count as genuine faith.<sup>14</sup>

Kierkegaard countered the rationalism that had preceded him by placing his concepts of faith and belief in subjective experience rather than rational thought. He was the Romantic Age's rebellion to the rationalism of the Enlightenment and subsequent thinkers like John Locke (1632-1704). While Kierkegaard would emphasize the role in faith of intuition and acceptance without reason, Locke wrote of the importance of "trial and examination" in determining truth in ideas.<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Floyd was fond of presenting a practical example of the difference in rationale thought versus Kierkegaardian faith. He used the example of the two versions of the movie "Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street." The movie centers on whether a certain fellow in New York City named Kris Kringle is really Santa Claus. The movie was made twice, and both movies climax in a courtroom scene where a judge is to determine wither or not Kris is crazy or is Santa. In the 1947 version, the court affirms Kris Santa Claus on the basis of evidence. Judge Harper concludes Kris must be Santa because a letter written to Santa was delivered to Kris by the U.S. Post office. For the judge, the bag of letters was *evidence* on which he could base his findings. This is the rationalism of people like John Locke. Findings are based on evidence and rational thought.

In the 1994 film, the courtroom scene turns on a different basis. In the courtroom scene at the end of the film, the judge is about to make his decision, apparently ruling *against* Kris as being the real Santa. Right before the ruling, the little girl Susan, who features

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<sup>14</sup> Evans, C. Stephens, *Kierkegaard, an Introduction* (Cambridge 2009), at 143-144.

<sup>15</sup> Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), in the tribute to the King preceding the Essay. Locke's essay doesn't equate reason with faith. He understood reason as the rational discovery of probability of truth while faith was an outgrowth of the credit one gives to the revelation of God. Even with this, however, Locke was quick to credit reason with the process of determining whether something was in fact a revelation of God. As Locke wrote, "it still belongs to reason to judge the truth of its being a revelation." (*Essay*, IV, 18,8).

prominently in the film, walks up to the judge and hands him a Christmas card with a one-dollar bill. On the bill, the words “In God we trust” are circled. The judge decides to accept Kris as Santa *without evidence* because if the U.S. Treasury Department can trust in God without evidence, then the court is entitled to do the same.

The 1997 remake comes about from the frustrating idea that has permeated much of 21<sup>st</sup> century culture that there is no “proof” or rational thought involved in belief. Belief seems to be rooted in nothing more than a Kierkegaardian intuition or emotional/experiential leap.

I suggest that both Luther and Kierkegaard might have alleviated some of their heartburn had they both more carefully studied the Greek concept of “faith.” (As a side note, both Luther and Kierkegaard were good Greek students, so more is involved than simply reading the Greek. Careful deliberation and Biblical study are important as well. Additionally one mustn’t succumb to a rebellious age to logic, etc.)

Consider now the Greek ideas behind the vocabulary of the word “faith” and “belief” in the Bible.

As a prelude to the considerations of the Greek, a problem from earlier in this lesson rears its head. Just as different English words are used for the Greek words based on *dikē*, those built on just- roots and those built on right- roots, so multiple English words are used to translate the same root in Greek related to faith. One finds the Greek word in English Bibles written as “believe” when the Greek verb is used or “faith” when the noun is used. But in Greek, the root and word is the same. The form varies, but because English doesn’t have a verb form of “faith” the English transforms the same Greek word into a different for verbs (“believe”).<sup>16</sup>

The Greek root is “*pist-*” (πιστ-). So the Greek verb is *pisteuō* (πιστεύω), generally translated “believe.” The Greek noun is *pistis* (πίστις), and is generally translated “faith.”

In the Romans 1:16-17 passage, Paul uses the word four times, once as a verb and three times as a noun:

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* for *faith*, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by *faith*.”

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<sup>16</sup> “Faith” comes from the Old French word “*feid*.” “Believe” comes from Germanic tongues that used “*leubh*” (the “-lieve” part of “believe”). The “be-” at the beginning marked the word out as a verb.

Being linked tightly to God's power for salvation, "believe"/"faith" is clearly an important concept and practice. Not surprisingly, it is a common word laced throughout Paul's theological treatise of Romans. The oft-quoted Romans 3:28 is one of many examples of its common occurrence theologically underpinning Paul's teaching on salvation.

For we hold that one is justified by *faith* apart from works of the law.<sup>17</sup>

In teaching his classes to study the word and idea of faith, Dr. Floyd was fond of using questions to explore the depth of the concept. It wasn't his exclusive approach. Notre Dame professor and philosopher Alvin Plantinga showed a fondness also for the Socratic method. (Socrates was so famous for teaching through questioning that the approach of using questions to teach still bears his name 2,500 years later.)

Question 1: Does faith require knowledge of content?

Biblical faith is a substantive concept that clearly requires some measure of knowledge of content. Two examples illustrate this truth.

First, in John 9, Jesus had healed a blind man. The synagogue rulers were upset that the healed man was giving Jesus credit calling him a prophet. The rulers were upset and cast the healed man out of the synagogue. Afterwards, Jesus sought out the man, as John recorded in 9:35-37.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you *believe* in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may *believe* in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you."

Jesus asked the man if he had faith/believed in the Son of Man. The response was one seeking content. "Who is he?" The man needed to know who the Son of Man was. He

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<sup>17</sup> This verse that Luther cited as the indictment against James who wrote,

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has *faith* but does not have works? Can that *faith* save him? ... So also *faith* by itself, if it does not have works, is dead... You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (Jms. 2:14, 17, 21).

Yet the James passage is written carefully to delineate the different ideas inherent in the word "faith." Some demons are noted as having "faith," yet theirs is clearly not the saving faith of Paul and the believer. No human can look into another one's heart and determine whether the person has faith. In human sight, one only sees faith by looking at one's works. As Jesus taught, false prophets are known by their fruits! (Mt. 7:15-16).

couldn't simply believe without knowledge content. He couldn't just accept in the moment, that which he didn't understand.

A second example is found in the Old Testament Psalms. Psalm 9:10 begins,

And those who know your name put their trust in you....

Trust (a concept closely entangled with faith, as will be shown later) happens not simply out of an emotional reaction. Trusting God is not the intuitive call. Trusting God comes from knowing his "name." Both in the Hebrew Old Testament and in the Greek New Testament, "name" stood for more than a label. One's name was one's character, one's actions, one's CV or resume. This means that *content* precedes trust. One needs to know that God is a refuge for the oppressed, that God will not forsake those who seek him. God is a stronghold in times of trouble. When one knows who he is, and what one can expect from him, *then*, armed with that knowledge of content, one will trust in him.

Question 2: Is Biblical faith based on evidence?

With due respect to Soren Kierkegaard, the answer to this is an unequivocal yes. The idea of belief without weighing evidence, without seeking or reasoning through the foundation of belief is called "fideism." The philosopher Alvin Plantinga wrote of fideism as belief or faith with a "disparagement of reason." Plantinga cited Kierkegaard's fideism as the extreme setting of faith against reason, seeing Kierkegaard as a proponent that faith is "absurd" from the point of view of reason.<sup>18</sup>

Biblical faith is more than accepting a proposition regardless of whether it makes sense to do so. Biblical faith is wrapped up in the idea of "trust." The Greek words built off the root *pist-* are appropriately translated in many passages with the word "trust." Consider Luke 16 where Jesus spoke of faith and trust:

One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

In this passage the root word typically translates as "faith" is used three times. The first two are translated "faithful." The third is the same Greek word, but is translated as

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<sup>18</sup> Plantinga, Alvin, *Faith and Rationality – Reason and Belief in God* (U. Notre Dame Press 1983) at 87. He added, "fideism is 'exclusive or basic reliance upon faith alone, accompanied by a consequent disparagement of reason and utilized especially in the pursuit of philosophical or religious truth.' A fideist therefore urges reliance on faith rather than reason..."

“entrust.” Jesus is saying that one who is reliable in little is reliable with lots, but who will trust one who is unreliable? Reliance is trust based or faith based. If faith is an irrational leap or an intuitive anti-reasoning, then one would be foolish to entrust or believe in any such thing. Instead, belief and trust are based on what one knows.

Jesus never asked his apostles to trust in the absence of reasoning. As Jesus explained in John 14:6,

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus is to be trusted because of who he was and what he was. Jesus never told his disciples to set aside their minds and go with their gut. In fact, when the resurrected Jesus encountered the doubt of Thomas, Jesus told him,

“Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” (Jn.20:27).

When Jesus was validating his ministry, he did so based upon Scripture, not an intuitive faith. Jesus told those listening,

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished (Mt. 5:17-18).

Jesus wanted the people to follow him because it was the right thing, and that was a truth found by reading Scripture carefully and thoughtfully. Jesus repeatedly spoke of the witnesses to his reality and role as Savior and Son of God (Jn. 5:31-38). In John, one reads over and over that John the Baptist was specially ordained by God to bear witness to Jesus (Jn. 1:7, 15, 22-24, etc.). This was a testimony that called on people to use their minds and reason to compare the claims of Jesus and John to Scripture that prophesied about the coming Messiah.

Similarly, the New testament writers urged a reasoned faith. John explained his gospel was written for faith.

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (Jn. 20:30-31).

Peter told his readers,

in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15).

When Paul was explaining the resurrection of Jesus and why the Corinthians should believe it, Paul didn't urge them to blindly jump of faith's cliff. Instead, Paul told them,

he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me (1 Cor. 15:5-8).

For Biblical writers, faith was based on evidence, not guesses.

Question 3: What gives value or validity to faith?

This is the simple truth of Paul's comment in the verses cited above in 1 Corinthians 15. The value or validity is in the truth and objective reality of the resurrection. What really happened in true space and time is the value. Jesus really did die. He really bore the sins of the world. He really was resurrected. In his death, the faithful find forgiveness and justification. In the resurrection, the faithful share in the eternal inheritance.

Question 4: What is the chief hindrance to faith?

While there are likely many hindrances to faith, I cite two as the preponderant reasons I have found in life.

First, many people don't believe for emotional reasons. This is especially interesting in that these people often cite the lack of intelligent reasons for faith as their reason. But when you peel back the layers, most haven't thought through fairly and completely the issues, but have thought through just to an adequate depth to justify their unbelief. This is ironic when that unbelief is based on one feeling if there is a God, then that God has been a let down.



At least one well-known atheist and Christian critic, for example, cites to a period in his life when God didn't answer prayer as formative in moving him from faith to disbelief. Many more, when probed, will admit they had sought God but God had failed to appear in their hour of need.

A second group of people closely related to the first are those who are unwilling to make the changes in life that faith requires. In John 7:17, Jesus said,

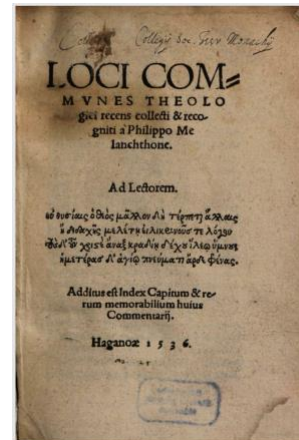
If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

If one is willing to repent, willing to follow God, then one is going to see and understand more readily the truth of who God is and what he has done. But an unwillingness to change one's lifestyle, an unwillingness to change one's priorities, an unwillingness to shift one's morality is an insuperable barrier to faith.

The Reformation movement is often associated with Martin Luther (1483-1546). He rightly considered the father of the movement, but right alongside him was his collaborator, Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560). Melanchthon was called by Luther to the University of Wittenberg to be a professor of Greek.

In his 1536 work, *Loci Communes Theologicarum Recens Collecti & Recogniti a Philippo Melanchthone*, Melanchthon explained that the Greek concept of Biblical faith rested on three Latin ideas:

1. *Notitia*
2. *Assensus*
3. *Fiducia*



"*Notitia*" is a Latin word for an acquaintance with a person, or practical knowledge and understanding. In the sense of Biblical faith, it is the information that was discussed in Question 1 above. It is the content of the knowledge that forms the basis for faith. Specifically, in the context of the gospel, it is the knowledge that Jesus died on behalf of one's sins.

"*Assensus*" is a reference to an approval or an agreement with what one might know. In the Biblical sense, one might know the truth that Jesus died for sins, but if one only knows it without approving and agreeing with it, one does not hold a biblical faith in the sense of Paul. This is one of the factors that distinguishes the kind of faith that James set out as

a demon's faith. A demon can have *notitia*, and even shudder, but that kind of faith alone is no saving faith!

"*Fiducia*" is a Latin word for trust, reliance, or confidence. With *fiducia*, one has a confident attitude with regard to an uncertainty. *Fiducia* holds to a sureness or confidence. With regard to faith, it is the element of trust after the rational thought process of what one has information concerning (*notitia*) with agreement (*assensus*). A clear usage of "faith" to indicate a fiducia trust is found in Jesus's teaching of John 14:1. Jesus taught his apostles,

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

Jesus wanted his disciples to trust him. This is critical to the understanding of the Biblical faith that Paul speaks of in the Romans 1:16-17 passage.

Melanchthon uses the Biblical example of Saul to distinguish these different ideas of faith. Israel's first king, Saul had a kind of faith. He had an idea of the existence of God, for he sacrificed to God. But Saul's sacrifice wasn't one of true Biblical faith. For Saul sacrificed in ways that were an abomination to God. Melanchthon "neither feared the wrath of God nor trusted God's benignity [i.e., "benevolence"]."<sup>19</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Paul's theme for Romans sets forth the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Paul rightly explains that Jesus's sacrificial death on behalf of sinners fully and rightly satisfies God's judgment on sin. This sacrifice is given to those who place saving faith in the sacrifice. This is an informed understanding<sup>20</sup>, one that produces in the faithful an approval and trust that God will count the sacrifice as one's righteousness. This is God's power to save everyone who trusts God, Jew and non-Jew alike!

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<sup>19</sup> Melanchthon, Philip, *The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon* (Wipf and Stock 2007), translated by Charles Hill, at 174.

<sup>20</sup> By "informed" I do not mean perfect or full understanding. No human, save Jesus, is perfect in any regard. This is a trusting faith that is reasonably informed based on the information presented.