

## **DISCUSSION GUIDE—ROMANS 1:16-17 (February 12, 2017)**

### Introduction

Understanding this passage in many ways holds the key to understanding the whole message of Romans. God used this text to open the eyes of Martin Luther in the early 1500s as he wrestled with the phrase “the righteousness of God.” Previously, he thought it referred to God’s character and holiness. This was dreadful to Luther because he knew he could never stand before a righteous God in his sinful state. But, as he wrestled with this passage, he came to see that Paul was not referring in this instance to God’s righteousness as an attribute of God himself, but rather the righteousness he gives to the believer through the instrument of faith. For Luther, this realization became as he said, “a door to Paradise.”

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Paul says he was not ashamed of the gospel. For him to mention this means that he realizes that it is possible to be ashamed. He knew those reading his letter were facing ridicule for their belief in this crucified Christ.

—Take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. Discuss how in the eyes of the world the gospel seems foolish and weak.

—How is God glorified in the seeming “foolishness” of the gospel?

—Discuss ways we are tempted to be ashamed of the gospel in our culture. Encourage the group to pray for one another’s boldness as we live on mission for Christ.

2. Paul says the gospel is for everyone who believes, the Jew first and also the Greek. This idea that Jesus came not just for Jews but also the Gentiles is a major theme of Romans. This is the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, that through him and his descendants (Israel), all the nations of the world would be blessed. So, through Abraham comes the Messiah, who is the savior of whosoever will believe—Jew or Gentile.

—How should this truth impact the Christian’s perspective on race and ethnicity?

—How should this truth impact the ministry of a local church in regards to missions, both local and foreign?

—Discuss the implications of the phrase “everyone who believes.” This means that right standing with God is not inherited, or gained through our own righteousness,

but by faith. The playing field is leveled. Coming to God is by faith alone, not social standing, good works, or anything else.

3. In v17 Paul says the “righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith.” As stated in the introduction, Paul is referring here to the righteousness that God declares and gives to the believer as he credits them with the righteousness of Christ by faith.

—Read Ephesians 2:8-10. Discuss the nature of faith. Paul says it is a gift given by God. What are the implications of this truth?

—Through the instrument of faith, God credits or imputes the righteousness of Christ to the believer. This truth is at the very heart of the good news of the gospel. In other words, God takes dead sinners, makes them alive and gives them the gift of faith which they then exercise in Christ. God then removes the guilt of their sin and declares them righteous before him because of Christ’s work. He then guarantees that they will live by this same faith as they grow in Christ and will one day be finally and fully free of remaining sin. Praise God! Take some time to discuss why is this such gloriously good news.