

Romans 1:16-17

Introduction

Many students struggle to master having a thesis statement for their term papers.

A “**thesis statement**” makes clear the point or the purpose of the paper.

What is true of term papers is also true of sermons and epistles.

Rom 1:16-17 is the thesis statement of Paul's epistle to the Romans.

Summary

In Romans 1:16-17, we find Paul's chief point for his epistle to the Romans; the power, scope, and nature of the gospel.

1. Old Testament Background vs. 17b

Paul constantly quoted the Old Testament Scriptures in his letters.

Rom 1:17 ends with a quotation from **Hab 2:4** "The righteous shall live by his faith."

Regardless of the apparent moral complexity of God's actions, the Lord's answer to Habakkuk's complaint is simple yet profound. God is not blind to the condition of His people nor has He forgotten His covenant promises.

God's words to Habakkuk echo the description of Abraham.

God had entered into a covenant with Abraham and promised him many offspring (**Gen 12:2**). Yet even in the absence of the realization of God's promise Abraham took God at His word: "And he believed in the LORD, and He counted it to him for righteousness" (**Gen 15:6**). Abraham believed in the promise of the gospel, as Paul tells us later in **Romans (4:3)** and in **Galatians (3:6-8)**, and therefore God “counted” or “imputed” righteousness to Abraham.

This was God's message to Habakkuk: “Continue to trust me even in the face of circumstances that might lead you to believe that I have forgotten you. I have not and will not forget My covenant promises to you, My people.”

This message lies at the heart of Paul's epistle to the Romans and is the reason he quotes Habakkuk 2:4 in the thesis statement of his letter.

2. The Power of Gospel vs. 16a-b

Paul does not simply apply a bandaid to the mortal wounds of humanity.

He writes that the gospel is "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (**Rom. 1:16b**). The gospel is the means by which God frees sinners from bondage and raises people from death in sin to life in Christ.

Paul's own life was dramatically changed by the gospel.

One moment Paul was persecuting the church, and the next moment he was transformed by Christ's grace (**Acts 9:1-19**). For this reason, Paul was unashamed of the gospel of Christ (**Rom. 1:16a**). Are you ashamed of the Gospel of Christ?

3. The Scope of the Gospel vv. 16b-c

A person cannot be saved apart from faith in Christ.

This is one of the great themes throughout Romans and one that he begins to lay out in his thesis statement of the letter (**Rom. 1:16b**).

God's mercy is wide and great, and He has dispensed it universally. Through the preaching of the gospel, the message has gone out to every tribe, tongue, and nation.

God first came to Abraham, the great patriarch of Israel.

He then made His covenant with Israel as they stood at the foot of Sinai.

Gentiles, too, have been received into the covenant people of God.

These are all themes that Paul unpacks in greater detail in the coming chapters, but the point still stands-the scope of the gospel is universal, but it goes to the Jew first and then to the Gentile.

No one can claim that the gospel is irrelevant. No one can claim he does not need Christ, because all people, both Jew and Gentile, lie under God's just judgment.

4. The Nature of the Gospel vs. 17

Paul explains that God reveals His righteousness in the gospel in terms of His faithfulness to His covenant promises to His people-this point is evident in Paul's quotation of Habakkuk 2:4, which also has allusions to Genesis 15:6 and God's faithfulness to His promises to Abraham.

A person would not be righteous if he promised to do something and then reneged on his promise.

In God's covenant dealings with Abraham, (Gen 15), God took the oath of self-malediction and in effect said, "If I break My word, may this curse fall upon Me, and if you, Abraham, break your word, may this curse fall upon Me."

God also promised and gave to Abraham his legal standing, righteousness: (**Gen. 15:6**). The gospel reveals the righteousness that God gives to His people, the perfect obedience of Christ (**Rom. 1:17a**).

This is the righteousness that God reveals in the gospel, and this is why Paul was unashamed of the gospel, for he personally knew that it was the power of God unto salvation, first for the Jew then for the Greek.

This is Paul's thesis statement for the whole of his epistle to the Romans.

This message was the heartbeat of Paul's preaching, and he wanted to expound on this central truth in terms of our redemption as well as its significance for the Christian life. Faith is both the exclusive means by which we receive the imputed satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, and the lens through which we must live our entire lives.