

## Romans 1:16 Clarified

Here is Romans 1:16 from NKJV: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.* Most Christians think that Paul is talking about the gospel as God's means to cause unbelievers to be converted. When the gospel is proclaimed and then understood by unbelievers, God then raises some of them to new life in Christ. While this is one of the functions of the gospel, this does not seem to be the focus of what Paul is saying. If he wanted to convey that, he could have said so more precisely. He could have said something like: *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to raise sinners unto new life in Christ.* No, while we can point to other scriptures that teach this aspect of the gospel's power, Paul seems to have a bigger idea in mind here.

Please note that Paul is talking about "everyone who believes." This verse is focusing on the effect that the gospel has on believers, not unbelievers. While it is true that God used the gospel in raising them to new life in Christ, Paul is talking here about the gospel's ability to propel believers across the finish line so that they attain to the resurrection of the dead. This becomes even more apparent by Paul's intentional use of the Greek present tense. When we more accurately convey the Greek present tense (as Paul deliberately specified), this becomes even more apparent:

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto **salvation**\* to each one who believes and continues to believe, the Jew first, also the gentile.*

\*From the syntax and the context, we know that the word **salvation** (soteria) here is referring to the believer's resurrection when Jesus comes back, not his conversion, justification or regeneration. Usually, this future aspect is what Paul had in mind when he used the word soteria (salvation, the noun) or sozo (save, the verb). See examples below.<sup>1</sup>

Paul believed that the truth expressed in Christ's gospel provided the power that propels believers across the finish line of the race set before them. This gospel of Christ promises that anyone who believes and continues to believe will definitely be raised from the dead when Jesus comes back (and will live with Him forever). Because he believes this gospel promise, he is propelled/motivated to continue believing unto the end because of his expectation that he will be glorified on that day. Because he truly believes these things, he continues to live by faith expecting that he will definitely be glorified as long as he continues believing. This understanding also harmonizes better with the following verse:

*For because of it, the righteousness of God is being revealed by faith unto faith, for it is written, "The righteous person shall live by faith."*

Unbelievers do not live by faith. Believers do live by faith. From the moment they first begin to follow Jesus, God begins the process of setting them apart as truly holy people. (This is called sanctification.) He begins bringing trials, persecutions and sufferings into their life to purposely test their faith. They are in a race and they will only finish that race if they endure to the end. They will face obstacles all along the path that leads to their glorification. As they continue to trust God while going through very uncomfortable circumstances, they prove that they really do trust God (believe).

Verse 17 teaches that this faith-living (under trial) produces righteousness that the believer acknowledges comes from God and not of himself. As a result of this faith-living, additional faith is produced in him, and perhaps in others who observe him living by faith.

In summary, the gospel is God's power to enable believers to attain to their ultimate salvation, their glorification. Because they truly believe, they trust God even under the greatest trials and sufferings. Because they truly believe, they do not turn away from Jesus. (They do not apostatize.)

(My most recent book, [\*\*FINISH! What Christians Must Do to Avoid Ending up in Hell\*\*](#) demonstrates how this theme runs throughout the New Testament.)

Thomas Bear, November 12, 2019

Οὐαὶ μοί ἐστιν ἂν μὴ εὐαγγελίζωμαι (Προς Κορινθίους Α 9:16)

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<sup>1</sup> **Romans 5:9-10** Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. **Romans 13:11-12** And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.