

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, October 9, 2011 – 6:00 PM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**Living By Faith - Romans 1:17**

**Introduction:** P. T. Barnum had a saying: *"There's a sucker born every minute."* He was right. People can be so gullible.

I saw a headline on a grocery store tabloid once that read: "Mom On Diet Of Only Chicken - Lays Huge Egg!" People believe that stuff because those tabloids are flying off the racks.

One of my former pastors, used to tell a story of his wife gullibility. When they moved to GA from MO, they were out in their neighborhood driving around, and he saw a yard full of trees with the lower trunks painted white. He said to his wife, *"Look honey, there must be a white tailed bambaloo on the loose in this area."* She asked him how he knew, and he pointed to the white trunks of the trees and said, *"Because they've left their mark."*

Well, a few weeks later, they were entertaining an evangelist and his wife by taking them out to eat. As they passed by those white trees in their neighborhood, the Pastor's wife turned and pointed to those trees, and said, *"Did you know we have a white tailed bambaloo loose in our neighborhood?"*

Some people are gullible to a fault. But a lot of people think Christians are gullible for their faith in God. They think that we are gullible for our belief in miracles and angels, and Biblical accounts of healing and stories of the Red Sea parting and Jonah being swallowed by a big fish. They point to our belief in an unseen God is evidence of our own gullibility.

But the Bible teaches that faith is the key to everything for the Christian. We know that we come to Christ by faith. We know that the only way to live our Christian lives successfully is by faith we. We know that without faith, it is impossible to please God. In other words, faith is central for Christian living. What to the world may seem like gullibility is in fact the key that unlocks the door which will eventually lead us to heaven.

Vance Havner used to tell the story of an elderly lady who was greatly disturbed by her many troubles both real and imaginary. Finally she was told in a kindly way by her family, *"Grandma, we've done all we can do for you. You'll just have to trust God for the rest."* A look of utter despair spread over her face as she replied, *"Oh, dear, has it come to that?"* After telling that story, Vance Havner would say, *"It always comes to that, so we might as well begin with that!"*

Well, let's begin with that tonight and see what the Scripture has to say concerning faith as it relates to our salvation and the living of our lives. First in this verse we see:

**1. Righteousness Revealed**

*For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last..."*

**Romans 1:17a (NIV)**

Paul had previously made the point that God is powerfully working in the Gospel to effect the salvation of sinners. He pointed out the truth that everyone who believes in the message of the Gospel is saved. It is the object of this Gospel message that is the object of our faith - Jesus Christ.

When Paul says that a righteousness from God is revealed in the Gospel, he's really speaking of the righteousness of Christ. You see, Jesus Christ is the message of the Gospel. The Gospel centers in the person of Christ. It is all about His sinless life, His atonement, and His resurrection. He is the object of the Gospel, and the object of our faith.

So in the Gospel we see a righteousness from God centered in His Son, who died on the Cross as the sacrifice for our sins. Christ's righteousness is revealed to us in a couple of ways. (1) Christ *is* righteousness and (2) He *imparts* His righteousness to us.

This is what the Gospel reveals, and it's important for us to see this truth. This is the purpose for preaching the message of the Gospel, and why Paul emphasizes *"Christ and Him crucified"* in his preaching. This is why we celebrate the Lord's Supper - to remember the righteous One who was crucified in our place. It is important to understand this truth because it is the basis for our salvation. The Gospel is an explanation of why we can be saved.

We can only be saved because of what God has done. The Bible teaches that we're all sinners by nature and by choice and that we're totally unable to save ourselves. The Gospel is all about how God intervened on our behalf. It is about God's work in bringing us to salvation. Salvation is something God has made possible for us through His Son, Jesus Christ. And unless we understand the message of the Gospel, we will be confused about how we must be saved. But we also see in this verse that there must be a:

## 2. Faith for Living

*"... just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." Romans 1:17b (NIV)*

The way that the righteousness of God is given to us is through faith. You see, it is only Good News when we come to understand that God offers His righteousness to us through Jesus Christ. If the only thing we understand is that Christ is righteous and we're not, that is not very Good News for us is it? If that is all we know, then we're still left with no hope because we're in our sin with no way to be forgiven, and no way to save ourselves. That's terrible news. But the bad news gives way to the Good News when we realize that Christ extends His righteousness to us.

But it's only offered to us by **faith**. In fact, we are told that this righteousness comes to us *"by faith from first to last."* In other words, **faith** is how we receive the righteousness of Christ, and **faith** is how we walk in that righteousness.

But what is real faith? Is faith something *we do*? No, faith is never a work we perform because we're good enough. In fact, faith is rejecting all our works and trusting completely in Christ alone. If you have trouble remembering all that, just remember this acrostic:

Faith is  
Forsaking  
All  
I  
Trust  
Him.

Real faith is throwing yourself wholly on the Lord Jesus Christ as your only hope for salvation. Faith is trusting in what Jesus did on the Cross as sufficient for you.

When John Paton was translating the Bible for a South Seas island tribe, he discovered that they had no word for faith. One day a native who had been running hard came into the missionary's house, flopped himself into a chair and said, *"It's good to rest my whole weight on this chair."* *"That's it,"* he said. *"I'll translate faith as 'resting one's whole weight on God.'"* When we're fully trusting and believing in God, we're resting wholly upon Him.

It's by faith that we have the righteousness of Christ imparted to us. But it is also by faith that we must live our lives every day. We must not only trust in Christ for our salvation, we must also trust Christ with our lives. Paul quotes from the OT prophet Habakkuk when he says, *"The righteous will live by faith."* (Hab. 2:4). It's also found in Gal 3:11 and Heb 10:38. It's one of the great statements of Scripture.

This statement was used by God to change the life of Martin Luther, a monk who had been trying to earn his salvation by doing good works. But he became frustrated. He thought to himself, *"But what works? What works can come from a heart like mine? How can I stand before the holiness of my judge with works polluted in their very source?"*

Luther had almost come to the point of giving up in his efforts to please God. But as he was studying Romans, he came across this passage: *"The righteous will live by faith."* And God began to use it to speak to his heart.

He began to see his futile efforts and it made him tremble. He realized that he could never save himself by works but that he could only be saved by the righteousness of Christ, received by faith. At that moment, he became a new man. And the rest is history as he became the catalyst for the greatest reformation that the church has ever known - the Protestant Reformation.

But the Scripture doesn't just say that the righteous will be saved by faith, it says that *"the righteous will live by faith."* Faith is not just how we enter into a right relationship with God, faith should be the way we live every day. We don't just come to Christ by faith, then live by our good works. Remember, it's *"by faith from first to*

*last.*” Or “*from faith to faith.*” Faith should become a way of life for the believer.

The Bible calls all of us to believe in Christ and trust in Christ. Do you believe? Do you truly trust Christ? Is Christ your Savior? And are you trusting Him daily?

If you don't know Jesus, you can by simply throwing yourself on Him as your only hope of salvation. If you have trusted Christ for salvation, but you're not trusting Him in your daily life, you're missing out on real Christian living. You're as the Bible says, “*weak and heavy laden.*” You're trying to shoulder the load of living up to God's standards by yourself. No wonder you're tired and frustrated and having thoughts of giving up and giving in! Your strength is not enough. It's insufficient. The same way you came to Christ is the same way you've got to learn to live for Christ. You've got to trust Him daily. He is all you need.