*divING DEEPER* **Discussion Guide**

**TEXT SUMMARY**

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This week’s sermon is about the two verses that form the heart of Paul’s letter to the church in Rome. Today’s text (**Rom 1:16-17)** is to the rest of the epistle what an overture is to a musical: it sets the tone and announces various themes that will appear in the rest of the work.

In just two verses Paul outlines the central thesis of the entire epistle. In other words, everything that follows (specifically 1:18-8:39) explains the two sentences we look at in this text.

The sermon is built around three main ideas.

* **Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel.**
* **First reason: The Gospel is the power of God for salvation.**
* **Second reason: The power of the Gospel is for everyone who believes.**

**INTRODUCTION** (observation):

Notice Paul’s use of the tiny but significant conjunction “for.” Remember that “for” stands in for an important transition: **“For” means “Why? I’m glad you asked. Here’s why.”**

Read the v. 14-17 aloud, replacing each “for” with “Why, you ask…” to get a sense of how Paul organizes his thoughts.

**DISCUSSION** (interpretation):

1. *Why does Paul use the word “power” to describe the salvation God provides? What is powerful about the Gospel (the Good News about Jesus)?*
2. Because Grecian culture had so dominated the Roman world, Gentiles (non-Jews) were sometimes called “Greeks.” *Why does Paul add the caveat “to the Jew first and also to the Greek”?*
3. *Paul’s phrase “revealed from faith for faith” is difficult to interpret. Compare other translations to see how other translators have rendered it.*
4. *Paul’s letter introduces an alien concept of “righteousness” to his readers. What does he mean when he says that “the righteous shall live by faith”?*

**SO WHAT?** (application)

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*We will gain the most from reading our Bibles when we read with open, expectant, curious minds and hearts. To get the most out of our Bible, we should read with several questions in mind:*

* *What does it say? (observation)*
* *What does it mean? (interpretation)*
* *So what? (application)*

*Even though* ***application*** *is not the first question we must ask ourselves, it is the most important. Until we ask that question, all we’ve done is read for insight and understanding. While it is important that we understand what we read, it is vital that we apply (believe, obey, take to heart, etc.) what we understand.*

*Application will always involve first person pronouns (“I” and “me” and “we” and “us”). And as we think about application, we will find that God’s Word has different effects on us, depending on our need of the moment. Sometimes God’s Word encourages and comforts, sometimes it convicts us and prompts us to repent, sometimes it clarifies what is true so that we are not confused. But it always points us to Jesus, and it always calls for a response.*

* **What does it mean to be “ashamed” of the Gospel?
What are some of the reasons someone might be reluctant to share the Good News about Jesus with someone else?**
* **If the Gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,” what is the Gospel for someone who *doesn’t* believe?**
* **We all want to live an ethical (righteous) life. And yet the Gospel is not about inspiring toward or instructing us about righteousness. What is there about the “righteousness” Paul here presents that is difficult for people to understand and believe?**
* **Romans 1:17 exploded in the mind of Martin Luther, who, until that moment, thought he had to discipline himself to be accepted by God. What does that verse mean? Why is Romans 1:17 such good news for the sin-weary soul?**