

Lesson 3: Paul's Thesis for the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

- ¹⁵...I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. (Why so eager?)
- ¹⁶ For
I am not ashamed of the gospel, (Why not ashamed?)
 - for
it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, (Why is it God's power for salvation?)
to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 - ¹⁷ For
in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; (How is God's righteousness revealed?)
as it is written, "But the righteous *man* shall live by faith."

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Introduction

Today we focus on the thesis of Paul's letter to the Romans. This is our third out of three lessons on the introduction, the part where Paul tells us what his letter is about. In the original Greek of chapter 1:16-17, Paul uses the word "for" to logically connect three statements. Let's read it starting with verse 15.

[Read Romans 1:15-17.]

We can imagine the flow of thought by inserting questions to which Paul is providing an answer and by changing the word "for" to the word "because" to help us get the logical flow. Paul has just commented in verse 15, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."

We might ask, "Why, Paul, are you so eager to preach the gospel to we who are in Rome?"

"Because I am not ashamed of the gospel!"

"Why are you not ashamed of the gospel, Paul?"

"Because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

"Why Paul is the gospel God's power of salvation?"

"Because in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.'"

"Okay, Paul, how is God's righteousness revealed in the gospel?"

"Well, if you have some time, I will explain that to you."

And that is what Paul does for the rest of the letter. He explains how the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals the righteous plan of God and is thus the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Let's consider each phrase of the thesis individually. And then at the end, I really want to spend some time on Paul's quote from Habakkuk.

1. I am not ashamed of the gospel.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel." I have heard the apologist Michael Ramsden come at this statement with the question, "What makes us ashamed of the gospel?" Paul is not ashamed. Why might we be ashamed of the gospel? Have you ever felt ashamed and so, have not spoken up about the gospel? Or you felt shame when you were speaking about the gospel? Why is that?

Shame happens when you speak or act in such a way that people around you reject you, put you down, devalue you because of what you have said or done. They laugh at you or they morally judge you. You put yourself out there, and you are rejected. As a result, you experience this feeling we call shame. What are some reasons that we feel shame because of the gospel?

Intellectual shaming

There is intellectual shaming.

“You are going to tell me that you believe in all this stuff. God. Heaven. Sin. Hell. You actually believe there was a real Jesus and that it matters that he died on the cross. You can be a Christian, but don’t you get that Jesus is just a metaphor. It does not matter that he really died on the cross. It is just metaphorical. He is a symbol of love. That’s what it’s all about. Nobody really believes all that actually happened or that there is really a hell. Next thing you’re going to tell me is that you believe in a worldwide flood. You are so naïve. Science has taken us past all this primitive stuff.”

That’s intellectual shaming. A significant element of society will try to shame you intellectually if you hold to the truths of the gospel.

Religious shaming

There is also religious shaming.

“Wait a minute. Our family has been Christians for generations and now you’re telling me that you have a special, personal relationship with Jesus that I don’t have, and your dad does not have, and grandfather does not have. It’s just by grace through faith. Who are you all the sudden to figure out that everyone else is wrong? That your family, your society, people of all these other religions, that none of us get it. Why are you trying to be so holy, reading your Bible and talking to Jesus and trying to be better than everybody else?”

A religious element of society, often coming from family, will shame you when you question the religious rituals and practices, assumptions and behaviors that are accepted as the norm. When the gospel leads you to act differently, to believe differently religiously, then you might experience religious shaming. Who are you to be different?

Moral shaming

You can also experience moral shaming. This comes in two versions. You can be shamed morally when you begin to live right, when you begin to live in the way you believe the gospel is calling you to live. When you come to Christ and your life changes, your friends might not love it. And it is normal for them to try to shame you into your old behaviors or into behaviors that maybe you never had.

“Woah, you’re a virgin. Wow. You’re suppressed. Here, have a drink, have a puff. What, we are not good enough for you anymore? You’ve found better friends? You hang out with your Christian friends and you can’t hang out with us? One beer, what’s one beer?”

There is a shaming of your gospel morals. You try to stand up, take a stand for Christ, and you get shamed. There is another type of moral shaming that’s even harder to deal with that insists your view of God makes God out to be ugly or unfair, unjust, unrighteous, unloving. This can get to some of the really difficult questions.

“If your God is so loving and he is just and he is all powerful then why does he let innocent little children suffer, die, have leukemia? God doesn’t care about the children?”

“What about the person who has never even heard of Jesus? You are telling me that the only way to get to heaven is through Jesus? So, all these people who have not heard of Jesus are going to hell, right? So, God locks out everybody who isn’t a Christian? God is that intolerant? Your view of God is ugly.”

This shaming shames you for your gospel worldview. This is tough. This is where some of the really hard questions come up. You are being rejected because of your view of God and your view of people and your view of salvation.

Paul is aware of all of this kind of shaming. He faced intellectual shaming from philosophers in Athens; he faced religious shaming from his family and countrymen; he faced moral shaming from

the pagan culture around him that tolerates everything and every god. The deep objections that call into question Paul's vision of God, he has faced it all, and he believes in a robust gospel. He believes the gospel answers the intellectual questions. It answers the religious questions. It answers the moral questions. So, he says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ!"

Furthermore, Paul's sense of honor and shame does not come from the society around him. They are trying to put on him a sense of shame for his gospel beliefs, but Paul knows his honor comes from God, and the shame that worries Paul is the shame of being counted unrighteous when he stands before the judgment of God. That's the shame Paul cares about. In Romans chapter 10 verse 11, Paul is going to quote Isaiah, saying, "And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." Paul has found a way that he can stand before God on that day and not be put to shame. And that way is the gospel. It is future oriented. I cannot tell you that you will not be *shamed* for your gospel belief. I can tell you that you do not need to be *ashamed* for your gospel belief. Friends, coworkers, family members, educators will try to shame you intellectually, religiously, morally for your belief in God, for your belief in Jesus Christ. But God will not shame you. Your life will be affirmed by God. If you trust in the gospel, you will not be put to shame.

Paul, fully out of his heart and conviction says, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome, because I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes!"

2. The gospel is the power of God for salvation.

Why is Paul not ashamed? Because he really believes there is power in the gospel to save us. He does not say here what we need saving from. But whatever it is, the gospel is God's power to do that saving. The gospel is not just words. The gospel is an unleashing of power. The gospel is not some philosophy made up by man. The gospel is an act of God that brings healing into our brokenness.

Most people can agree that things are not the way they should be. People are broken, lost, lonely, searching, unfulfilled, guilty, condemned. We know inside that there is a problem, and we need a real solution that recognizes the real problem and has real power to overcome that problem. The gospel is God's power for the salvation we need.

Paul adds two further emphasis. First, this power of salvation comes to those who believe. Belief is a critical component for experiencing God's power of salvation. Second, belief is available universally, "to *everyone* who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Paul will maintain these two truths throughout his argument; that the gospel is applied to those who have faith and it is available to be applied universally. Everybody can believe.

Paul states the claim here, "the gospel is the power of God for salvation." He is not explaining that claim, yet. This is his thesis. We will have to wait to see how his argument unfolds. How does the power of God bring about salvation?

He is going to give us one clarification. The gospel brings about power for salvation by revealing the righteousness of God.

3. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God.

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith."

A lot of recent scholarly discussion has revolved around this phrase "righteousness of God." This is going to get a little detailed, but it is worth it for right interpretation as we go through Romans. I'll give you four options for what "righteousness of God" could mean. First, we ask, "Is the righteousness of God something that applies to God, does God own it, or is it something that applies to a person?" In Paul's use here who does the righteousness of God apply to? If the righteousness of God applies to God then we can ask a second question, "Is it an action of God or is it an attribute of God?"

(1) So, righteousness of God could be a statement about God’s character, a virtue (attribute). The righteousness of God is his righteous character and that righteousness character is revealed in the gospel. We will see this use in Paul’s argument. Opponents accuse Paul of making God out to be unrighteous. “Your gospel Paul is unfair. It shows God as unfaithful.” Paul is going to argue that the gospel actually presents God as wholly righteous. So, in one sense Paul is going to say the righteousness of God is something that applies to God and that it applies to his character, to his nature.

(2) But then it is also interesting to note how often in the prophets the righteousness of God is depicted as action. It is not connected to who God is, but what God does, and often in context with the word salvation. For example, Isaiah 56:1, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Preserve justice and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come and My righteousness to be revealed’” (see also Isaiah 51:5 and 45:21b-25 and Habakkuk as discussed below). Something is about to happen, and when that something happens it is the coming of my salvation, the revealing of my righteousness. God is doing something that is righteousness. Here salvation and righteousness are actions of God that are about to be seen. God acts righteously in history to judge and to save. We will also see this idea in Romans. The death of Jesus on the cross is the righteous act by which God saves.

These two interpretations are possible if the righteousness of God applies to God. On the other hand, can the righteousness of God be something that belongs to a person? If it is then is the righteousness of God a status that God gives to a person, or is righteousness of God a virtue expressed by the person?

(3) If righteousness is a status then that means the person has a righteous standing before God. When God looks at that person, he considers them to be righteous. And that righteousness comes from God. It is the righteousness of God, not the righteousness of Michael. The source is God. God bestows righteous status. It comes from him.

(4) If righteousness of God is a virtue or quality expressed by a person then righteousness of God is the type of righteousness approved of or defined by God and then lived out by a human being. That is not righteous status conferred by God. That is righteous life or righteous character. This idea is expressed in Deuteronomy 6:25, “It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God, just as He commanded us.” In this sense the righteousness of God applies to a human being living according to a righteousness defined by God. We will see both the ideas in Romans, that the righteousness of God is a status given by God to a person and that righteousness of God is practically lived out. We see both. It is essential that we get the order correct.

Four Options for Interpreting Paul’s Phrase “Righteousness of God”

God	Person
Righteous character of God	Righteous status given by God
Righteous action by God	Righteous character approved by God

I may have just cheated. I have just said that all four senses of righteousness of God appear in Paul’s argument. We have to pay very close attention to the context to see which is which. Some scholars insist that an argument cannot stand if the author changes the meaning of a word or phrase as he goes. I think that is a fair principle in communication. I think that is the norm. When people are making an argument, they need to keep their terms consistent. But it is untrue to the way that authors actually write. Authors like to be clever. An author very well may employ one term with multiple meanings to make a concise argument if that author clearly communicates the meaning of the phrase as he goes. I believe Paul has done this very carefully and with great insight in regard to the term righteousness of God. What we are going to see is that God has manifested his righteous character through righteous action to provide a righteous status that brings about righteous behavior in those who believe. And each one is the righteousness of God.

We will test this interpretation of Paul's thesis by going through his argument and letting Paul develop our understanding of how the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. That is up to Paul. We are going to have to follow it through.

One last thing we notice here is that Paul again connects God's action to faith. The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. Again, faith plays a role here. Some have pointed out that the word faith could mean faithfulness, so we could translate the phrase as from faithfulness to faith, meaning the faithfulness of Christ to the faith of man. That is an interesting interpretation. I am tempted to understand the phrase as from beginning to end the righteousness of God is experienced by faith. However, the phrase is ambiguous enough here in the thesis that I am comfortable not trying too hard to interpret it. I will just wait and see how Paul brings faith or faithfulness into his argument.

Paul concludes his thesis with a quote from Habakkuk 2:4. What Paul does here is really fantastic. We need to take a closer look at his quote.

4. The righteous man shall live by faith. (Habakkuk 2:4)

Paul is not doing here what is called proof texting. He did not search through the Old Testament to try to find some verse that had righteousness or faith in it because that would really work in his thesis. It is what we would do if we were writing a term paper or essay on faith. We just need a good Scripture, so we google it, and find it. We pull it out of context and just plug it in. That's proof texting. That's bad use of the Bible. There is a lot more going on here. Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4 is importing the entire prophecy of Habakkuk into his thesis. He did not just select any verse. He selected a key verse from a prophet whose theology lines up with the argument Paul is going to be making about the gospel. People who knew the message of Habakkuk heard this and did not just think of one verse. The one verse echoes the whole of what was going on in the prophecy. It is more like a hyperlink. You just click on this one verse and the whole message pops up.

When we look at Habakkuk, we are going to see two things. We see God justifying his plan of salvation to Habakkuk. "This is the plan of salvation Habakkuk, and this is why it is righteous." And we also see that the right role of the righteous person is to trust God in his plan, no matter how crazy it sounds. Trust God. Believe in Him. Have faith. These are the two things in Habakkuk. Paul does the same thing in the argument section of Romans. Paul is going to show us that God is just. He is righteous in his plan of salvation. And then Paul is going to tell us that the right role of the righteous person, when faced with this plan of salvation called the gospel, is to trust God. Have faith in the plan. Have faith in the author of the plan.

Habakkuk is only three chapters long. Let's look at the whole prophecy of Habakkuk. It is not too hard to find in your Bible if you just go to Matthew and go back four books. It is a short prophecy. It is also one of the easier prophecies to get into, because it is kind of like wisdom literature. There is this back and forth going on between God and Habakkuk.

We start with Habakkuk complaining to God to do something about the wickedness in Judah. This is a couple of generations after the northern kingdom of Israel has been destroyed by Assyria and exiled for their wickedness. Now there is all this sin going on in Judah. Habakkuk has risen up as a prophet. He is incensed. He is angry at Judah and is calling on God.

Habakkuk 1:1-4

¹The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

²How long, O LORD, will I call for help, and You will not hear?

I cry out to You, "Violence!" Yet You do not save.

³Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness?

Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises.

⁴Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld.

For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore justice comes out perverted.

So, this is Habakkuk's condemnation on the nation of Judah. There is violence and wickedness, strife and contention. "The law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore, justice comes out perverted."

God responds in 1:5-11. It is not what Habakkuk wants to hear.

Habakkuk 1:5-11

⁵"Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder!
Because I am doing something in your days— You would not believe if you were told.

Now that sounds good. It sounds like we are getting ready to get a good plan of salvation. "Be astonished! Wonder! You would not believe if you were not told!"

⁶"For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people
Who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs.

⁷"They are dreaded and feared; their justice and authority originate with themselves.

⁸"Their horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening.
Their horsemen come galloping, their horsemen come from afar;
They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.

⁹"All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward.
They collect captives like sand.

¹⁰"They mock at kings and rulers are a laughing matter to them.
They laugh at every fortress and heap up rubble to capture it.

¹¹"Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on.
But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god."

"But God, what's this? I am asking for just on Judah, and your plan is to bring this wicked, powerful, violent nation Babylon to come and wipe out Judah and to carry them off into exile. That's your plan, God?" Habakkuk is not too pleased. We get Habakkuk's response to God's plan of salvation in 1:12-2:1.

Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

¹²Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, my Holy One? We will not die.
You, O LORD, have appointed them to judge; and You, O Rock, have established them to correct.

¹³Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor.
Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously?

Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?

¹⁴Why have You made men like the fish of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler over them?

¹⁵The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, drag them away with their net,
And gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad.

¹⁶Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net and burn incense to their fishing net;
Because through these things their catch is large, and their food is plentiful.

¹⁷Will they therefore empty their net and continually slay nations without sparing?

Habakkuk describes the Babylonians as these fishermen that catch nation after nation in their nets. They gather up peoples and destroy them. Even worse than that, they do not give praise to God, but give praise to their nets, their own power, to their swords, to their chariots, to their strategies, to their armies, to their plans. The Babylonians praise themselves for their victories. God is calling this sinful people to come deal out justice on Judah, but that people is arrogant and proud, rejecting God even as they are doing his will. "You are holy God. This cannot be the righteous plan. How can this be right." Habakkuk responds.

¹I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart;
And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, And how I may reply when I am reproved.

Habakkuk takes his stand. I am reminded of when I had little girls. There were those times when I would say, "Come." Or I would say, "Do this." And that little person would look at me and would plant their feet solid and would not move. They stood and waited to see what I would do. And here we have Habakkuk. God has said Babylonians will come. And Habakkuk says, "I am going up on the watch tower. I am going up on the wall. And I am going to plant my feet. I am going to stand. Because I don't believe God, that you who are righteous, can use an evil army to punish Judah. This is my answer, and I am going to wait and see how I might reply when I am reproved." He is expecting God to reprove him.

Habakkuk 2:2-4

²Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets,
That the one who reads it may run.

³"For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail.
Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.

God says, "This is my plan. You can write it down. And you can give it to a messenger to run it to the armies. Because it is happening. It is coming. You wait for it." Then comes our key verse.

⁴"Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him;
But the righteous will live by his faith.

"Habakkuk, we know the Babylonians are proud. Are you proud. Do you stand in pride against my righteous plan of salvation? Or will you trust me? Will you stand on the rampart in faith, trusting to see what I will do? If you want to live with me, if you want to live as righteous, you trust me and my plan of salvation."

Habakkuk 2:5-20

God goes on to give a longer explanation of what is going to happen to the Babylonians. He gave a hint in 1:11 that his use of the Babylonians is not a justification or a vindication of the actions of the Babylonians. God is able to use the wicked to bring about good. But the wicked are still responsible for their wickedness. For example, this was true of the Jewish leaders who handed Christ over for crucifixion. It is true of Pilate and Herod. They were all used by God to bring about his plan of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That plan was good. And those men were still held accountable for their evil behavior. Here in a similar way, Babylon is going to be used by God to bring about righteous punishment, but they are held accountable, since they do not turn in faith. They do not yield to God. They do not accept the fact that they are a holy instrument, while God is the one who wins the battles. The hint of this in 1:11 says, "They will sweep through the land like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their God."

The judgment on the ones God used to judge gets described in length in 2:5-20. I am not going to go into all the details of how God holds Babylon to account. It is a series of five woes, so I will just read the woes:

2:6 Woe to him who increases what is not his.

2:9 Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house.

2:12 Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed.

2:15 Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make them drunk.

The last woe has to do with the idols. It is a cursing against the false religion of the Babylonians. One of the root problems of this arrogance that arises out of man is the turning away from the true God to the making of false gods to worship. This sixth woe is in 2:18-20.

¹⁸"What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, or an image, a teacher of falsehood?
For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols.

¹⁹"Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, 'Awake!' To a mute stone, 'Arise!' And that is your teacher?

Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it.

This picture of idolatry is of these created things that men call to awake and speak. Then you get to verse 20.

²⁰“But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.”

The Lord is going to speak. The idols are called to speak, but they are silent, dumb, powerless. God is in his holy temple. God is going to speak. It is not God who is silent, rather all the earth is silent before him. Mankind is silent when the true God speaks.

Habakkuk 3:1-19

This last woe makes a good transition into chapter 3. What we have in chapter 3 is a vision of a new faith perspective. All Habakkuk saw before of God’s plan was wicked Babylon. The vision of chapter 3 describes the coming of God as a judge, an avenger to punish Judah. Habakkuk no longer sees the army of Babylon. He sees God. In verse 2 he says, “Lord, I have heard the report about you and I fear. O Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.” I see you, Lord, coming to judge. In your wrath remember mercy.

Then Habakkuk describes the chariots and the rage of the Lord coming. I will skip ahead to verse 12. “In indignation you did march through the earth; in anger you did trample the nations. You did go forth for the salvation of your people, for the salvation you your anointed. You struck the head of the house of evil to lay him open from thigh to neck.”

We have a beautiful ending at the close of the chapter, made well known by the book *Hinds Feet on High Places*. We see Habakkuk now standing on the ramparts, waiting for the Lord to come. He is waiting in faith. He believes that this is God’s righteous judgment but that does not make it easier. This is difficult faith. It is hard to trust God in what has to happen to Judah. So, in verse 16 he says, “I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress. For the people to arise who will invade us.” That idea of waiting quietly takes us back to chapter 2 where Habakkuk was standing on the ramparts, and God told him to wait. The righteous lives by faith. And now we see faith in Habakkuk as he considers the incrementally increasing destruction of Judah. He is going to trust.

In verse 17, “Though the fig tree should not blossom,” so there is no fruit on the trees, “and there be no fruit on the vine.” The fruit is gone but with that is also wine. What you drink. “Though the yield of olives should fail,” and you have no oil for cooking or to bring light. “The fields produce no food,” so, not only is the fruit gone, the grain for bread, for basic sustenance, is gone. “Though the flock should be cut off from the fold,” which takes away meat and wool for clothing. “And there be no cattle in the stalls,” again no meat, milk or the cattle to help us work the land. Everything is gone.

Verse 18, “Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the good of my salvation.” It is not just a patient waiting. There is also a joy in relationship with the God of his salvation. “I will exult or boast in the Lord.” That word “exult” will come out three times in Romans 5 which echoes Habakkuk here. “I stand in grace. Not only am I not ashamed of the gospel, but I boast in my God and in Jesus Christ.”

Verse 19, “The Lord God is my strength and he has made my feet like hind’s feet and makes me walk on my high places.” God has lifted Habakkuk up above the destruction of Judah and the judgment of the wicked. And has given him solid ground, a sure salvation, where he stands by faith.

Paul has used Habakkuk to forecast for us his program in the argument section of Romans. Habakkuk was given the righteous plan of God. “This is the plan of salvation Habakkuk. Do you receive it or do you stand in pride and reject it?” Now Paul is going to give us 11 chapters where he lays out God’s plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is going to be counter-cultural. It is not going to be acceptable to the intellectual. And it is not going to be acceptable to the religious. It is radical grace through faith in Jesus Christ. That is the plan of salvation. Do you turn away and reject it? Or by faith do you say, “Yes! That is what I am staking my life on. That’s my rock.”

That is where Paul wants to take you. He wants to give you this understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that by the end your heart will be bursting, and you will want to proclaim with Paul, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for I see that it is the power of God for salvation to everybody who believes, to the Jew first and to the rest of us, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. Just as Habakkuk said, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith.’”

Reflection questions

1. Would you describe yourself as being like Paul, eager to share the gospel with whomever, wherever? Or do you sometimes hold back from taking opportunities because of shame? What led you to the feeling of shame, what do you think is behind that emotion for you?
2. Take a look at Paul’s thesis in 1:16-17. What theme or phrase stands out to you, either as important or especially interesting? Or what questions are raised for you?
3. Habakkuk stood on the rampart, disbelieving that the suffering to come could be from God. When in your life have you struggled to believe that your circumstances were part of God’s good plan.
4. Habakkuk undergoes a change in faith perspective from chapter 1 to chapter 3. In chapter 1 he could not see God in the plan. That all changed in chapter 3. He saw the coming of the Babylonians as the coming of God, both to punish and to save the faithful. Reflect back on your own experience with the gospel. What change of faith perspective did you experience, whether as a non-believer who came to see the truth of the gospel or as someone who grew up believing, but then came to see the reality of the gospel for yourself. Reflect on and describe when, how and what it was like for you to “see” the gospel of Jesus Christ through a new faith perspective.