

In 1768, a young, newly married English clergyman, Richard Johnson, agreed to accompany the First Fleet. As Chaplain to the new penal colony of New South Wales. Why? In 1967, 26 year old teacher Sylvia Jeanes went to Sabah in Borneo as a missionary. She is still there. Why? In 2018 M left the comfort of life in Australia, moving to the Middle East. Why? Because each one knows the truth of **Romans 1:16-17**. Each one personally transformed by the victorious, good news of which it speaks. Each one convicted of the universal relevance and significance of the gospel. God's good news about his Son, Jesus Christ. Of which Paul was a unique set apart messenger. The gospel for all nations. Demanding a response from all people. These two verses introduce us to key themes in Paul's letter. Explaining the function of the good news about God's Son. The opening word '*for*' links the verses to **v15**. Paul eager to preach the gospel in Rome. Because of its power to rescue people. Because he wants people to know the benefits of the saving acts of God in Christ. In two verses we learn five things about the gospel. **First**, this message about Jesus is the instrument of God's transforming power. '*the power of God that brings salvation*' Powerfully working as the gospel is read or heard. Achieving its purpose: salvation, rescue. Universally needed due to the mess humanity is in. Rescue from the judgement of God. For the inheritance only God provides. Brothers and sisters, does the story about the crucifixion and resurrection of a wandering teacher sound plausible to you? My confession. I sometimes feel foolish when telling others this story. Especially in the face of weighty intellectual arguments, in-depth scientific explanations, compelling rationales for personal freedom, assertion of rights, self-determination. Especially when powerful spiritual forces enslave and bind. Especially when confronted by life experiences that crush, wound, damage the heart and soul. The Christian gospel seems and sounds weak. But the glorious truth, my brothers and sisters, God's word is true. This gospel message is powerful to save. Just ask Grant who in boredom began reading the New Testament and was converted. Peter captured for Christ by preaching at an evangelistic rally. Kylie faithfully taught the gospel in youth group. Committing her life to Christ as a teenager. Barry a successful businessman full of guilt and fear. Repenting of his sins, submitting to Christ after months of one to one gospel sharing. **Second**, the benefits of this powerful gospel come through believing. '*to everyone who believes*' Words emphasising individual faith response. When a person trusts in the message about Jesus the rescue it

promises is theirs. Each being powerfully saved. Sisters and brothers, are you being powerfully saved? How are you impressing on others the need for personal response to God's powerful gospel? **Third**, in God's salvation plan, everyone who responds shares the benefit equally. Paul's words reveal this. '*first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.*' That phrase includes everyone. However, in God's purposes a priority for Jews. Offered the salvation of God first. Paul deals extensively with this in. **ch9-11**. This truly is the gospel for all nations. **Fourth**, this powerful gospel reveals the righteousness of God. '*For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed*' Writing in the passive tense, Paul teaches God the agent of this revelation. In the gospel message and its proclamation, God shows the world his righteousness. A number of possibilities as to what this word, righteousness means. **One**, the righteous character of God. **Two**, the righteousness God imparts to people when they believe the message. **Three**, the status of being right with God. Or righteousness of character flowing from the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian. Something of all three captured in the explanation I believe best fits the context. The righteousness of God revealed in his divine activity of putting his people right with himself. And establishing justice by the ushering in of his perfect rule, under the Lordship of Jesus. **Fifth**, both the revelation and benefit of God's righteousness received by faith. '*a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,*' Literally '*from faith to faith*' God reveals his righteousness when we put our trust in him. God reveals his righteousness so our faith in him deepens and grows. God's revelation for our benefit: before we become Christians, throughout our life, until the fullness of revelation in eternity. What amazing grace. Paul's teaching in **v17** based on the Scriptures. Our Old Testament. Using Habakkuk 2:4, the first of many Old Testament quotes. In that verse, Habakkuk teaches the righteous in Israel will be preserved throughout the impending invasion of the Babylonians. A mark of God's salvation. Paul highlights the continuity of God's way of salvation before and after Christ. Those righteous by faith will receive the benefit of the salvation proclaimed in the gospel. Whether living before the coming of Jesus or after. Salvation always by faith. Brothers and sisters, are you convinced of the universal relevance and significance of the gospel of power? If not, why not? The word of God is clear on this matter. If yes, how is that conviction evident in your life? Five marks of conviction. To help us examine our lives. Marks that fit together like a quality jigsaw. **One**, profound awareness of what you are rescued from. Listen in next week. **Two**, the gospel as the solid foundation of life. Not just at the point of new birth in

Christ but throughout your life. Paul's letter to the Romans unveils what that looks like. As works in progress keep trusting in the righteousness of God. As the foundation of daily decision making, establishing priorities, in works of service. Keep grappling with the content of the gospel message. With all of God's word, to deepen your understanding of its implications. **Three**, confidence in a foolish sounding message. Solid foundations grow confidence in the gospel. Confidence in the gospel reinforces solid foundations. I confidently drive over the new Harwood bridge at full speed. Knowing the bridge's solid foundations. 117 concrete piles, the deepest set 65 metres into the ground. Our confidence is to be in the saving power of the foolish sounding gospel. God declares it to be his saving power. God shows it to be. Trust God's word. Trust God's evidence. You, living testimonies to God's powerful rescue. Alongside Richard Johnson, Sylvia Jeanes, M, Grant, Peter, Kylie, Barry. **Four**, commitment to sharing the gospel. We profess to know the gospel's transforming power in our lives. We struggle to share it. We seem to lack the passion, conviction of the prophet Jeremiah, *'his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.'* Paul, not ashamed of the gospel though it brought him no physical comfort and ease. Our conversations betray us as ones who may be ashamed of the gospel. More committed to conversations about sport, weather, medical procedures, children or grandchildren, remedies for sore throats. Than conversations about the only remedy for souls damaged by sin, for lives cut off from God. Time to renew our commitment to not keeping the gospel of salvation to ourselves. **Five**, willingness to defend the gospel within the church. Because, denying the biblical content of the good news about Jesus Christ robs the gospel of its power to save. Like a ventilator switched off at the wall. Sisters and brothers, these convictions ought to shine in individuals, churches convinced of the transforming power of the gospel. Do they shine in us? Christian singing duo, King & Country sum it up, *'You're the God who runs in my direction when the whole world runs away. You're the God who saves.'*