

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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“From faith unto faith”

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Paul gives two main reasons why he is not ashamed of the gospel: “...for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God...” (Romans 1:16-17). The conjunction “for” introduces these two reasons. First, “for” it is the power of God unto salvation. Second, “for” it reveals how man can be righteous before God.

Paul adds to his comments surrounding the righteousness derived through the gospel with the words, “... from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). The phrase, “from faith unto faith” has been variously interpreted. What does it mean?

Whatever it means, it must fit with the Scripture which says, “the righteous shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). Paul connects the “from faith unto faith” phrase with this Scripture speaking of one living by his faith. But what is Paul emphasizing in the context of being righteous before God? Is he meaning, due to one’s faith, the righteous will live? Or is he saying that the righteous will

live a life characterized by faith?

“From faith...” could therefore be used by Paul emphasizing that only out of, or from faith, one could be righteous before God. This fact would therefore be an incentive for one to believe the gospel message, or it would point one toward believing, or “unto faith. This reasoning appears to have a Scriptural basis, for Paul writes, “yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ...” (Galatians 2:16). Because “knowing” the fact that one could not be righteous before God without faith, Paul says, “even we believed”.

Paul could also use the phrase, “from faith unto faith” to mean that the life one lives before God in righteousness begins with faith, “from faith” and continues to be directed towards a life of faith or “unto faith”. Habakkuk was bewildered with the fact that God would allow the idolatrous Babylonians to overthrow God’s people, the Israelites. He says, “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth

to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint (Habakkuk 2:1). God would bring justice in His time, first to the rebellious Israelites by forcing them into Babylonian captivity, and then by deflating the puffed up soul of the Babylonians. God encourages Habakkuk to “wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay” with the exhortation, “but the righteous shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). It appears that Habakkuk needed to let his trust in the Lord replace his demands for God to act in the way Habakkuk thought best. He, like the righteous, needed to live a life of faith that would allow him to wait on the Lord to carry out His perfect justice.

The righteous in the days of the gospel of Christ live a life characterized by faith. Paul described his life this way: “...and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God...” (Galatians 2:20). His entire life in Christ, proceeding from the beginning, could be characterized as “from faith unto faith”. Faith characterizes his new life in Christ from beginning unto any further developments.