

1-4

# ROMANS

GOD'S GOOD NEWS

STUDY #2

1:8-17



## **OVERVIEW - ROMANS 1:8-17**

Having introduced his gospel and his credentials as an apostle to the Gentiles (1:1-7), Paul now expresses his joy at the inroads that the gospel has made amongst the Gentiles in Rome. He also expresses his eagerness to preach this gospel in Rome, for it is the power of God that brings salvation to both Jew and Gentile.

### ***Motivated by Mutual Encouragement (1:8-12)***

Paul thanks God for the faith of God's people in Rome. This faith was widely reported amongst God's people, and the fact that God was at work in the great capital city must have brought great encouragement to God's fledgling church scattered throughout the sprawling empire. Because of this work of God, Paul indicates that he had been petitioning the Lord to provide an opportunity to visit (v 10). As it turns out, Paul's prayer was eventually answered, but not in the way or timing that he might have planned (Acts 25:9-12; 28:16-31).

Paul's desire was to be of mutual encouragement.<sup>1</sup> As an apostle to the Gentiles he naturally desires to minister to this predominantly Gentile church and is concerned for their well-being. Yet he also looks to benefit from their faith (Rom 15:14).<sup>2</sup> This is very instructive for us. We need the body of Christ to encourage and strengthen us in our faith. We never graduate from this need or privilege, not even Apostles! Indeed, how encouraging it is for an older believer to be spurred on in the faith by someone newly found in Christ.

### ***Motivated by Obligation (1:13-15)***

Up until this point, Paul had been delayed in coming to Rome, presumably this was owing to his extensive ministry in the eastern Mediterranean and his desire to preach the gospel where Christ was not known (15:17-22). Yet in coming to Rome, he expected a harvest amongst the Gentiles just as he had experienced elsewhere.

In verse 14, Paul explains one of his motivations behind this ministry – he was *obligated*. As an Apostle to the Gentiles, he had been given a trust by God to preach the gospel to Gentiles (1 Cor 4:1f; Gal 2:7; 1 Thess 2:4; 1 Tim 1:11; Tit 1:3). In this regard, Jesus has made him a debtor. Whether Greek or non-Greek (literally *barbarian* – those not sharing Graeco-Roman culture), wise or foolish, Paul had an obligation to *all*, because he had been entrusted with the responsibility to preach the gospel to *all* without exception, including those in Rome. Though Paul's apostolic commission was unique, we must realise that we too have been entrusted with the gospel and are to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18-20), we too have a joyful *obligation* to speak and not be silent.

### ***Motivated by the Gospel (1:16-17)***

The ultimate reason Paul is eager to preach at Rome is because he is unashamed of the gospel. The reason he is unashamed of the gospel is because it is the power of God that brings salvation to those who believe – the gospel *declares* God's power to save, and *is the means by which* God's power is unleashed in people's lives to save them. The church in Thessalonica is an excellent case in point (1 Thess 1:4-9).

How does the gospel save? By revealing the *righteousness of God*. In Scripture,<sup>3</sup> the righteousness of God can refer to a divine *attribute* (God is righteous, true to his character in justice and faithfulness), it can also refer to his divine *activity* (God's righteous saving of his people in loyalty to his covenant). Yet here it refers to a righteous *status* given by God. Put differently, a righteousness *from* God (cf. Rom 3:21-24; Phil 3:9; 2 Cor 5:21). For those who hear the gospel and respond to Christ with faith, they are given a righteousness from heaven. Though we are sinners, by faith in Christ, we are *declared* righteous, we are given a *right standing* before God. We are declared not guilty. This gift of righteousness is in keeping with God's *righteous character* (for justice has been meted out upon Christ) and is an expression of his *righteous saving activity* (he has taken the initiative to put things right with us). This gift of righteousness is to be received by faith - for *all* who *believe*, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.<sup>4</sup> A righteous that is by faith from first to last.

---

<sup>1</sup> There is some ambiguity as to the *spiritual gift* he looks to impart. Perhaps this is owing to the fact that Paul, not yet acquainted with the church, did not yet know the way in which he would look to bless the church. Yet we can rule out Paul's impartation of a spiritual gift of the sort found in 1 Corinthians 12-14, for it is only God who dispenses such gifts. Colin Kruse posits that given that it is the ministry of the gospel which strengthens (16:25), Paul was likely looking to build the church up in the gospel.

<sup>2</sup> This no doubt included being resourced by them to go onto Spain and preach the gospel there (15:24)

<sup>3</sup> For a helpful summary of how God's righteousness is referred to in Scripture, see John Stott, *BST: Romans, 61-63*.

<sup>4</sup> Rom 3:2; 9:4-5; 11:28-29 – 'Paul's understanding of Jewish priority rests upon the place God himself had given them in his plan of salvation by his sovereign choice of the Jewish people, his covenants with them, his promises to them, and the way he was working out his purposes through them, culminating in the sending of Christ. Because of their special place in God's plans, Paul believed that he must offer the gospel first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles.' Colin Kruse, *Pillar New Testament Commentary Romans*, 69.

## **GETTING STARTED**

1. Share with the group what you find difficult about talking to others about the good news of Jesus?

## **INTO THE TEXT**

### ***Read Romans 1:8-12***

2. Why had Paul been longing to visit the church in Rome?
3. It's instructive that even the great Apostle longs, and expects, to be *encouraged* by the faith of those in Rome. How can we better position ourselves to encourage, and be encouraged in the faith, by God's people?

### ***Read Romans 1:13-15***

4. What additional motivation does Paul give for wanting to visit the church in Rome?
5. What does it mean for Paul to be *obligated* to Greeks and non-Greeks? Why was this so? (cf. 1 Cor 9:16-17)

### ***Read Romans 1:16-17***

6. Given the violent opposition he faced, and the shame he endured, Paul had plenty of reasons to be *ashamed* of the gospel, yet why did he remain so *unashamed* of the gospel? (Indeed, even *eager* to preach it!)
7. What is the righteousness of God and in what way does it bring 'salvation'? (cf. Rom 3:21-24; Phil 3:9; 2 Cor 5:21)
8. How is this righteousness received?

## **TAKEAWAY**

9. By God's grace, through faith in Christ, we stand righteous before God. We are not guilty (Rom 8:1). We have been washed clean (Isaiah 1:18). Our debt has been paid (Col 3:14). We have been forgiven (1 John 2:12). Let those realities sink in. What a gift we have received by faith! Spend a moment thanking God together in prayer or song.
10. Whether it's your own story or that of someone else, share an instance where you have heard or seen the power of the gospel at work in someone's life.

As you share, be encouraged to take on the same eagerness, expectancy, and un-ashamedness of Paul in sharing the gospel which is the *power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes*.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> If you are short on stories, read the story of the church in Thessalonica – 1 Thessalonians 1:4-9.