

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEB 28TH, 2021 // BOOK OF ROMANS

Written by St. Paul around 57AD

- Paul was a Jewish Pharisee named Saul. He killed Christians for God. He then met the true Jewish Messiah and radically changed. He was also a Roman citizen, which gave him incredible access throughout the Empire.
- Paul relentlessly helped establish churches. He didn't directly start the church in Rome but knew Jewish leaders who did.

Roman Culture

- Rome was a brutal culture. It was focused on power, it was blood thirsty, ruled only by freed men of wealth, and Caesar was god-like. It was a 3rd world country we wouldn't recognize today. Rome was the center of the Empire.
- **The new creation in Jesus and His followers challenged this worldly power and darkness. It continues today!**

The Church in Rome

- Rome had house churches filled with Jews and non-Jews alike. They all probably had weekly gatherings in the synagogue. St. Peter may have helped start the churches and were led by Jews. But, in the 40's AD the Emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews (Acts 18).
- When Jews returned, non-Jews were leading. This led to significant tensions.

Power and Prestige In The Church

- Non-Jewish Christians rose to power, including women and slaves. Phoebe likely carried and read the letter. The chosen people of God (Jews) were now in a weaker position, and that didn't sit well.
- **This letter is about how God is the one who saves and unites all people. Strength is used for the weak, and weakness is used for God's power. It's The Gospel message.**

GOOD NEWS (ROMANS 1:1-7)

THE GOSPEL

This word appears 3 times (1:1, 9, 16). Paul refers to and explains it 4 other times. There are 7 direct and indirect references in just the opening section! Paul wants to make it clear.

- It was a term for royal announcement for Caesar. But Jesus gave the counter Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven! Paul was changed by it and spread it.

"...THE GOSPEL OF GOD..."

So, what is the gospel? First, it's God's Gospel. It's not our gospel. It's not a certain church, a tract, doctrinal preference, religious creed, or a pastor. It's not about us and our personal salvation. It's God's story in Jesus!

- God's Gospel shows His power to save and redeem His creation, revealing God fulfills His promises and is righteous.

"PAUL, A SERVANT OF CHRIST JESUS..."

Paul understood The Gospel was about God's power and not our own. Paul says he is a "servant" or "slave" of King Jesus and was submitted and obedient as an apostle.

- **Jesus must be King of our lives for us to live life well. We see later in Ch. 1 how our way ends up. It's a contrast between Caesar's world and God's Kingdom.**

DEFINING THE GOOD NEWS

Paul wants to make the Gospel crystal clear to the Romans, so he succinctly summarizes it from the start.

- **The Gospel is God's story in Scripture of creation, the fall of humanity, and God's promise through the prophets to redeem His people through the Jewish line of David. The pinnacle is God coming in flesh.**

"...ACCORDING TO THE FLESH..."

Jesus coming in flesh 2,000 years ago in time and space is central to The Gospel. Jesus showed us how to be human, died a Roman death to take on the power of sin, and rose from the dead to renew all humanity!

- **The Gospel must include the OT story of creation, brokenness and promise, Jesus' saving work, and the renewal of all creation!**

"...APOSTLESHIP TO BRING ABOUT...FAITH..."

Paul knew his role was to present the Gospel to bring about the "obedience of faith." The Good News is brought by God's diplomats (His Church). The Spirit empowers us to go.

- **It's critical to understand that faith requires obedience! We are saved by grace through faith, but obedience is a requisite. God doesn't force, and neither do we. We offer.**

WHO IS THE GOSPEL FOR?

Paul says this message is for "all the Gentiles." Literally, all "ἔθνησιν" or ethnicities. It is a Gospel for everyone! Paul wants to make clear God's salvation renewal is not an exclusive club for one person or people group.

- **All people can be changed into holy "saints." If we forget this, we won't reach the world around us.**

FRUITFUL (ROMANS 1:8-13)

"...THE NEWS OF YOUR FAITH"

Although Paul didn't start this church community, he was connected with those who did. It may have been Peter or other Jewish-Christians. Regardless, it's a team sport.

- **It's a partnership to spread the Gospel and change lives. We need to do better at celebrating any other church that is reaching new people and growing.**

"I WANT VERY MUCH TO SEE YOU..."

Paul was hoping to go to Rome in order to use it as a launching pad for planting other churches in Spain. But he

realized something important: they would be "mutually" encouraging "each other's faith."

- **Discipleship and community as Jesus followers should never be from a superior place. We all have something to learn.**

FRUITFUL MINISTRY

Paul was having incredible success in starting churches and helping transform communities for God's Kingdom. It was energizing seeing widows and orphans cared for, people sacrificing, and lives changed! Paul wanted the same thing for Rome and beyond. A church that is alive produces fruit!

- **That's what we are called to: the fruitful change of lives, families, and communities!**

FAITH FOR ALL (Romans 1:14-17)

THE GOSPEL FOR ALL

Paul reiterates God's mission: to fulfill the OT promise that "all the people on earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Every person is made in God's image, even the "barbarian," Greek, "foolish," and wise. Paul wanted them saved!

- We must feel the same obligation to help all people back to God. It doesn't matter their background or "likability".

"I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL..."

Paul fiercely helped people back to God. But this was more than just not being nervous to talk to people. Caesar was promoted as king. Yet, Paul knew that submission to King Jesus changed people. Paul risked his life for this!

- **We can become complacent and not share God's renewing news. We have excuses. Do we carry God's conviction?**

"...THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION..."

The reason why Paul had this conviction is he believed in the power of God to change anyone! If he can change, if the Roman world can, then anyone can! God's power is real!

- **Do we believe in God's power to change us and others? Despite our pasts, or how much we struggle. God can change any person or community.**

LIVING BY FAITH

God's power of change comes through faith. Verses 16-17 are the thesis of Romans: God is restoring His creation through faith in our crucified and risen King, Jesus. It's active!

- Faith is more than a one-time prayer for a future security. "Faith to faith" is a present reality and a future hope. We are saved, are being saved, and will be saved fully one day.

THE GOSPEL

- Do we understand the Gospel?
- Jesus is the King of the universe. Either we are submitted to that or not. People didn't go around Rome asking, "do you believe in Caesar as ruler?" They just announced it, because it was so.
- Do we live like Jesus is the ruler of our lives? Or do we act like we are in charge?

FRUITFUL MINISTRY

- Here is how we know who is in charge of our lives: the fruitful ministry around us. Are our lives and ministries "fruitful?"
- Do we have fruitful ministries in our homes? Are we producing fruit in our workplaces, neighborhoods, and community?
- Are we eager to share our faith or are we complacent? Is God renewing our lives?

OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

- Faith is not an empty cognitive decision. It requires obedience! You do not have faith in Jesus if you are not obedient to Him.
- Where do you need to be obedient today? Is it with your finances? Is it with serving? Maybe you need to confess. Perhaps it's with prayer. Maybe it's submitting to Jesus for the first time.
- Are we being obedient to King Jesus?