

Far in Body, Close in Spirit

Week 1 - Romans 1:1–17

Objectives:

- To explore the opening of the book of Romans and examine how it sets up the rest of the book.
- To examine our own relationship to the gospel through the lens of this passage.

? How do you introduce yourself when you meet new people? What's something about yourself that you rarely talk about when you introduce yourself that you want people to know?

This week we are beginning our study of Romans. Paul had not yet been to Rome, but knew the people there. As the gospels had not yet been written down and widely circulated, it was likely this was the first major piece of Christian literature that many of the Roman believers had seen! (Reference: Zondervan Life Application Study Bible, Romans 1 notes) In this book, Paul sets out a systematic explanation of the Christian faith and how to live it out.

Greetings

Read Romans 1:1–7 NIV:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— ²the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, ⁴and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. ⁶And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

⁷To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

? Take a couple minutes to look over the passage on your own. What stands out to you from the passage?

? How does Paul define himself in the introduction of the passage? (vs. 1)

Possible answers: He says he is called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.

? How does Paul explain Jesus and his connection to the gospel? (vs. 2–3)

Possible answers: Jesus is the fulfillment of the gospel from the prophets; He is the descendant of David and the Son of God; and He was resurrected from the dead with power; He is our Lord.

? What is our role now as Christians because Jesus came? (vs. 5–6)

Possible answers: We all are included in this! We are to call people to obey the gospel message of Jesus Christ from all walks of life.

Connection, Noun and Verb

Read Romans 1:8–17 NIV:

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. ⁹God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you ¹⁰in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

¹¹I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— ¹²that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith. ¹³I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

¹⁴I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

? How does Paul care for the people in Rome? (vs. 8–10)

Possible answers: Paul thanks God for them and prays for them at all times. He also wrote this letter to them to share his wisdom and remind them to seek God.

? Why did Paul want to come see the Romans? (vs. 11–13)

Possible answers: Paul wants to share in spiritual conversations and encourage one another, as well as having a harvest among them, i.e. seeing more people become believers who were Gentiles.

? How can we care for the believers we know when they are close by? How can we care for the believers we know when they are far away?

Possible answers: Close by: Spend time together, talk about God and our spiritual walk and lives together, study the Bible together so we can gain deeper understanding and closeness with God, meet one another's physical needs when things are hard, provide emotional support and friendship. Far away: reach out through digital or physical means to ask how they are doing and connect; pray for them; send care packages or financial support; seize opportunities to spend time together when physically in proximity; seek God independently but knowing that they are seeking God too.

? Paul says "I am not ashamed of the gospel" in verse 16. Have you ever felt ashamed of the gospel? What encouragement can you take from this passage about why the gospel is not something to be ashamed of? (vs. 16–17)

Leader note: prepare your answer and be ready to share it with the group to facilitate discussion of this tricky question!

Possible answers: Most of us have probably felt ashamed of the gospel, either because it was counter-cultural, it was different than what our friends and peers believed, because it is mocked in our scientific-method-focused culture, or because it limited our behavior in ways those around us didn't feel was reasonable. But Paul encourages us here that the gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.

Righteousness, according to Merriam-Webster, is "Acting in accord with divine or moral law: free from guilt or sin."

? What does it mean "to live by faith"? (vs. 17)

Possible answers: To live by faith is to believe what God tells us, and to act in line with this belief. When we believe God and obey Him, we are acting in a righteous and faithful way.

Possible answers: To simply and constantly believe God and the truths of the gospel of Christ. And to know, as a result of that faith, I am alive - my life is a reflection!

For Discussion and Accountability

? Where is it hard in your own life to trust solely in Christ, and not trust your own righteousness?

? How can we encourage you to allow God, through the gospel, to reveal more of himself to you this week?