

The Guy, the Gospel, and the Goal

(Romans 1:1-17)

Background on the book of Romans: Paul wrote Romans to both Jewish and Gentile Christians. At the time of his writing, the church in Rome was struggling with the division between Jews and Gentiles. Emperor Claudius had ordered Jews out of Rome for five years, during which time the Gentiles ran the church. After five years, the Jews were allowed to return, and the two groups struggled to integrate. Paul writes to both these groups of Christians that the gospel gives them all the power to overcome political and cultural differences (1:7).

As he opens the book of Romans, Paul introduces three topics to us:

The Guy (Romans 1:1):

- Paul was a Pharisee. He was fluent in multiple languages; he had the law memorized; and he had pride in keeping the law. He was so zealous for the law that he was willing to kill for it, showing that religion alone makes one insecure, selfish, and cruel.

- The gospel is the opposite of religion. Salvation is offered not to those who have earned it but to those who were so unworthy they could only receive it as a gift. In 1:1, Paul now introduces himself as a ***servant***, not one who is elevated above other people but one who lowered himself to serve others. While religion makes us proud and self-centered, the Gospel makes us humble. After experiencing the Gospel first hand, Saul (referring to the tall, honored king) was renamed Paul ("small, little").

- ***Set apart for the gospel of God:*** after his salvation Paul wanted to be known for his work for God. He did not try to become a role model for others to emulate but rather a model in turning others to Jesus.

Questions to Consider: What do I want to be known for? Am I trying to be Saul the amazing or Paul the small? Have I been transformed from Saul to Paul in the same way?

The Gospel (Romans 1:2-5):

- The gospel was foretold centuries before through the prophets -- 30+ authors over 1,500 years all pointing to Jesus. Every other religion which

says "I obey, therefore I am accepted". On the contrary, the gospel says "I am accepted, therefore I obey." That difference is the grace of the gospel (see 1:5)

-If you believe Jesus is Lord, you must do what you can to bring others to Him. Jesus gave us the great commission, not the great suggestion. Is it a command. It requires obedience. But it should not be only compulsion or only compassion that makes us deploy on mission, rather a desire to see Jesus magnified and recognized in the nations.

Questions to Consider: You cannot know God and do His will without making adjustment so to your life through obedience. What are you NOT willing to do for the gospel? What habits need to change in your life?

The Goal (Romans 1:14-17)

- Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel, but was eager to proclaim it and felt obligated to do so.

-Reasons we feel *ashamed* of the Gospel:

1. It offends moral and religious people who feel they are better than the less moral
2. It offends popular belief in our innate goodness
3. It offends the nice person who believes they can find God in their own way
4. It offends all who want an easy life because the gospel promises we will serve and suffer.

- Paul's eagerness, (v 15). Paul felt power in his life and wanted to share with others. The opposite of being ashamed of the gospel is not being "proud to be a Christian", but rather being "eager to share the gospel." With the privilege of hearing the gospel comes the responsibility to spread the gospel. If we have felt its power in our lives and know it is the hope of salvation, we should want to share it with the world around us.

- Paul felt obligated: There are two ways to be in debt: you owe something, or something (the gospel) was given to you that you are obligated to share. You weren't worthy to receive the gospel, but God blessed you with it. With the privilege of hearing the Gospel comes the responsibility to spread the gospel.

Questions to Consider: Am I eager to share and unashamed of sharing the gospel with my "one"? If not, why not? Do any of the above reasons

resonate with me? Do I consider the Gospel to be the most valuable gift I have ever received that I must therefore pass on to others? If not, what about my perception of myself or the gospel itself hinders that?