

## 11th September 2016—Romans 1:1-17

Paul's letter to the Romans (written from Corinth in the mid-to-late 50's AD) is all about good news (the Gospel of God v.1). Paul saw his life as 'set apart' to take this good news to the nations and, with that in mind, he longs to visit Rome (a church he has never visited). The epistle is breath-taking in its scope and vision precisely because God's Good News in Jesus, the Messiah, is breath-taking in its scope and power.

### 1. The heart of the Good News (v.2-4)

The word Gospel is a word used both in the O.T for proclaiming the good news of God's deliverance (e.g. Isaiah 40:9) and a word familiar to the pagan Roman world for celebrating the birth, and accession to power of the emperor. As such, this good news fulfils the longings of the Jewish world O.T., and subverts the claims of the pagan world. It centres entirely on what God has achieved in Jesus. It's a story that:

- stretches back to the beginning of Israel's history (v.2)
- has its focus on Jesus, truly human, descended from David, in line with Messianic expectations (v.3)
- declares that Jesus shares the very nature of God marked out by the resurrection (v.4)
- offers Jesus as the fulfilment of Israel's hopes and the saviour of all (Messiah and Lord! v.4) 'What the Creator and Covenant God was supposed to do for Israel (and through Israel to the world) at the end of time he has done in Jesus in the middle of history'
- calls for an obedience to God as the expression of faith.

### 2. The scope of the Good News (v.5-15)

Paul recognises that Christ has called him to share this good news with the Gentiles (v5) including those in Rome (v.6,15) Part of the reason for the letter, it seems, is that Paul is deeply anxious that Gentile believer will not belittle what God has done through Israel. In this context, he writes with great affection and gratitude to this church (v.7-15)

### 3. The power of the Good News (v.16-17)

This good news - that the Messiah is the crucified and risen Jesus and in him all God's plans for Israel and the world are fulfilled – was utterly laughable to both the Jewish and pagan world. But Paul is 'not ashamed' because he is convinced that precisely in this strange and foolish message lies the power of God to renew every human life, indeed the whole cosmos. Put another way, this gospel reveals *both* the faithfulness and justice of God (his own righteousness) and the power to put us right with him (a righteousness given to us, to be received by faith.)



## Home Group Study Notes

### Read Romans 1: 1-17

1. The church in Rome was young and small (one scholar suggests about 100 in a city of a million). From what you know of Rome and Romans (glance at Ch.16) how do you imagine the make-up and structure of the church to whom Paul is writing?
2. From these opening verses what do you deduce about why Paul was writing this letter?
3. The Apostle Paul, by background, inhabited three worlds - the world of Judaism, the Greek culture which dominated the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Roman world. How does this passage relate to these three worlds? How many 'worlds' do we live in and how does that affect our witness?
4. The good news Gospel) centres on Jesus of Nazareth. Identify all the key claims Paul makes in this opening section of his letter about Jesus.
5. Romans almost begins (v.5) and ends (Ch.16:26) with the phrase '**the obedience of faith**'. What does this phrase mean and why is it important?
6. In what ways recently have we been tempted to 'be ashamed of the Gospel' and how does this passage help us find confidence?
7. A key debating point in interpreting Romans is what is meant by the 'righteousness of God' (v.17) – namely, does it refer to God's own faithful character or to a righteousness status that comes from God to us? Do we need to choose – could it be both?
8. Share stories of how you have experienced the power of the Gospel personally (not just at conversion) and in others. Pray for many more stories!

