

Romans 1:1-17 - Paul's Passionate Persuasion

In this first study on Paul's letter to the Romans, we're going to meet the writer, the readers, and the heart of the message. First, read through verses 1 to 17 carefully. Make a note of any words or terms you don't understand in the space below. Some of them may be dealt with later in the study. If they're not, make sure you take time at the end of this session to discuss them with the group.

WORDS OR TERMS I DON'T UNDERSTAND YET...

Who is Paul?

If you've read much of the New Testament, you've probably already met Paul. The Romans, however, had not.

Originally a leading Jew, Paul actively persecuted the Christian Church until one day he was confronted by a blinding vision of the risen Jesus. From that day on, his life was radically changed.

Though he was perhaps the leading church-planter of his time, he had never been to Rome. The church there had grown up independently, and Paul is now making contact with them.

1. Read through verses 1 to 7. List the things you learn about Paul - especially note the terms he uses to describe himself.

2. Think about these descriptions. "Apostle" means "sent one" or "messenger" or "ambassador." Just as the Australian Government sends it's "Ambassador" to a foreign government with a message, Paul is an Ambassador too. Who does he represent?

What is Paul's Message?

Sometimes, Christian jargon is unavoidable. There are some terms in the bible we just have to grapple with and try to understand, even though they're not a common part of our everyday language. There's a term like that in this passage. It's the word ... "gospel".

Gospel originally meant "good announcement" or "good news". It was often used of Royal announcements, such as the proclamation of the reign of a new king.

We call the first four books of the New Testament "the gospels", because they contain this "good news" about Jesus. But Paul uses the term in a slightly more technical way. His gospel is the very essence or heart of the message he preaches.

3. How many times does Paul use the term "gospel" in verses 1 to 17?

4. Make a brief note of everything Paul says about this gospel.

5. Now try to summarise these points in a simple statement of the gospel:

The Good News is

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6. Some important points to note:

a. Paul's gospel isn't just something he made up! Who does it come from?

(v1)

b. Likewise, the gospel has a specific content and focus. Who is it about? (v3).

7. In a misguided effort to be "relevant", many Christians - and whole churches - have completely lost touch with this gospel. Instead of the focus of their message being Jesus, they pursue all sorts of other things. Can you think of some examples?

a. Why is the gospel so important? (v16)

b. Why might we Christians be tempted to "be ashamed of the gospel"?

Have you ever felt this way? Y/N What aspects of the gospel would have seemed most ridiculous to the ancient world?

What about today?

What aspects of this ambassador's announcement would have been most "politically incorrect" in Rome?

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8. How does our world today react to the proclamation of the “rule of King Jesus”?

The right response to the Gospel

Paul gives a number of hints in this passage as to the right response to the gospel. Read through the passage again, and take note of the way the Romans have responded, and what it is the gospel calls us TO.

Paul says his gospel calls people from everywhere - Jew and Gentile - to the "obedience that comes from faith." (v5) Notice that FAITH comes before our works. We're not saved by our good deeds, but that our good deeds, or obedience, follows along after our faith.

9. Read verse 17. The rest of the letter to the Romans expands on this verse. Where does our "righteousness" come from, and how we become righteous?

10. The Romans have responded to the gospel in exactly the right way, and everyone's talking about it - see verse 8. Can we expect to see the same response from people today? How, and why?

What stops us from calling people to the OBEDIENCE that comes from our faith?

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11. Notice Paul's longing to visit the Roman Christians in verses 8 to 13. He wants to encourage them in their faith, and be encouraged by them. Do you share this desire to encourage and be encouraged? Y/N

How can we better do that for one another?

Notice too Paul's passion for the gospel. Read aloud the verses that show this most clearly. Do you have this same passion for the gospel? Why, or why not?

Looking for an honest response

How can we maintain our passion for the gospel?

Can you give an example of obedience that comes from faith in your own life?