

Sermon Notes

➤ Paul - Set Apart for the Gospel

About two decades have passed since Paul encountered the risen Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Even since he has been carrying out his ministry as a person “set apart” (Rom 1:1) for the Gospel (cf. Galatians 1:15; Acts 9:15). In the course of his work, he was constantly facing opposition from Jewish Christians who blamed him for preaching a false gospel. As he plans to reach Spain and travel through Rome, he has to anticipate critical opposition and decided to give an account of the gospel he is preaching to the mostly unknown group of Christians he intends to visit. The result is the *Letter to the Romans*.

➤ The Content of the Gospel

Paul stressed that the gospel is the fulfilment of all the promises made in the Old Testament. Its content is Jesus’ person, life and work.

➤ The Impact of the Gospel

As Paul is writing this letter, the Roman Christians were scattered over the city and most likely small in number. They were under constant observation from the authorities and looked at with suspicion by everyone else. That could be the reason why Paul does not even address them as “church (in Rom)” (as in 1 Corinthians 1:2: “to the church of God in Corinth”; Galatians 1:2: “to the churches of Galatia”), although in 16:5 he sends greetings to the church in the house of Aquilla and Priscilla. However, there of course *is a church in Rome*, and only two centuries later the majority of entire parts of the Roman empire will be Christian. This tells of the impact the Gospel already had and would continue to have.

➤ The Power of the Gospel

In 1:16-17 Paul introduces the theme of the whole letter: “the righteousness of God”. It is the saving righteousness of God that leads Paul to rejoice in the “power of God”. It is important to note that underlying is the Jewish understanding of “righteousness in relation to someone else”.

Questions for Discussion

- 1 What is your image of Paul? Have you ever pondered that during his life and ministry he was opposed and challenged with regards to his person, his calling, and the content of the gospel as he was proclaiming it? Does this surprise you?
 - 2 How would you summarise the gospel in a sentence? How does this match Paul’s statements in 1:2-4?
 - 3 How are we tempted to be ashamed of the gospel in our own contexts?
 - 4 In your own words, what do you understand to be Paul’s reasoning not to be ashamed of the gospel?
 - 5 Paul is eager to stress that the gospel is for everyone (1:14-16). To what extent does (y)our church reflect or transcend barriers between people of different backgrounds?
 - 6 What is “the righteousness of God” and why is it good news?
- ➡ If your group is rather big, consider breaking up into groups of 3-4 for discussion and prayer.