

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME // WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING?
FEBRUARY 21, 2021

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: What do you think it means to live your life for God?

Key Passage: “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.” (Romans 1:1)

During the next several Sundays, we'll be studying the first chapter of the Book of Romans.

What is the Book of Romans?

The apostle Paul wrote the Book of Romans (1:1) in 50-56 A.D. with the help of a man named Tertius who transcribed Paul's words (16:22). As a citizen of Rome, Paul had a special love and passion for Christians in Rome. Although he had not yet visited the church in Rome, he was determined to get there as soon as possible. Until then, he wrote a letter to them to introduce himself and to encourage them in their faith and doctrine.

The Book of Romans can be divided into five parts: 1) Paul's introduction (1:1-17), 2) Our need for righteousness (1:18-3:20), 3) God's provision of righteousness (3:21-8:39), 4) How and why God chose to provide righteousness (9:1-11:36), and 5) How to live righteously (12:1-15:13). In the Book of Romans, we learn about what we were like before we knew Christ and who we are now that we know Christ, and we learn about who God is and what He has done for us through Christ's death.

Discuss: What were you like before you knew Christ, and how has knowing Christ changed you?

What is Romans 1 about?

In Romans 1, the apostle Paul introduces himself to the believers in Rome, none of whom had he met before. He states his purpose for writing and explains his life's mission to unashamedly preach the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles around the world and particularly in Rome. Also, in Chapter 1, Paul explains how humans have rejected God to the extent of even worshiping created things instead of the Creator. So, God let men do what they wanted, and their indulgences resulted in rebellious actions against God and will lead to His righteous judgment later.

Discuss: Why do you think some so-called believers are ashamed of the gospel?

Discuss: How can we show that we are not ashamed of the gospel?

Discuss: Under what circumstances did you first hear the gospel? How did you respond?

Now let's take a closer look at today's text, Romans 1:1: "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God."

1. Paul identifies himself as a servant of Christ Jesus.

"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus..." (v.1a)

The word "servant" is a translation of the Greek word *doulos*, which means bondservant. A bondservant was a free man who had willingly sold himself into servitude to someone else who would be considered his master/owner. Paul viewed himself as being owned by Jesus, his Master!

Discuss: Why is it important that Paul said that he willingly placed himself under Christ's authority—he wasn't forced by Christ or anyone else to do so?

Discuss: How do you think our living as Christ's bondservants should play out in our daily lives at home? At work? At school? Among our neighbors?

2. Paul identifies himself as an apostle—one sent to represent and speak for Christ.

"...called to be an apostle..." (v.1b)

Paul also refers to himself as an apostle. An apostle was someone who was sent out to represent and speak for Christ. The twelve disciples of Jesus were the first apostles—they spoke with the authority of Christ Himself. Later, Paul became an apostle when Christ revealed Himself to Paul and called him to that role (Acts 9:15).

Discuss: In what sense are we all ambassadors for Christ?

3. Paul identifies himself as being set apart—on a special mission for God.

"...set apart for the gospel of God!" (v.1c)

The word "gospel" means "good news," and it is primarily concerned with Christ and salvation through Him. Much of the Book of Romans is dedicated to explaining the meaning of the gospel. Paul viewed his life as having a special purpose: God had set him apart for the special mission of sharing the gospel with both Jews and Gentiles.

Discuss: How would you summarize the unique mission God has set you apart for?

Discuss: How would you advise a new Christian to discover God's unique mission for him/her?

For Further Study

What Is the Gospel? by Greg Gilbert

True Identity: Finding Significance & Freedom Through Who You Are in Christ by John C. Majors

The Book of Romans at www.bible.org