

# Romans 1.<sup>1-17</sup>

## Background

The previous two studies from Acts 20 were essentially 'introductory', intended to give you some sense of what the church is and why the church matters in the purpose of God.

Through the rest of the series we'll be looking at the 8 key privileges & responsibilities to which Tony Merida alludes in his book *'Love Your Church'*, and it's for that reason you may find that book a helpful resource as we go along.

We'll be addressing these 8 themes in a slightly different order, however, and instead of dotting around from one book of the Bible to another for the different themes, we'll be sticking with one book of the Bible. Paul's letter to the Ephesians is commonly, and with some justification, regarded as the classic exposition of 'the church'; it's to his letter to the Romans that we'll be turning, however, for although that letter is more comprehensive than Ephesians in its scope, setting out as it does the full glory of the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ, woven through it – as an integral feature of the gospel – is a clear and continuing statement of the doctrine of the church (what's termed *'ecclesiology'*). The exposition of the church which is found in Romans quite strikingly highlights just these 8 themes which are the focus of Tony Merida's book.

Indeed, this note of 'Belonging', with which *'Love Your Church'* starts is in many ways the opening note sounded by Paul in this letter which he wrote to the believers in Rome. Having said that, it's perhaps worth pointing out that although the NIV translation uses the specific word 'belong', the original text speaks only of your being 'called of Jesus Christ' (what's termed a 'possessive genitive' or a 'genitive of belonging').

This study explores what's involved in this belonging, why it matters and how it happens. On pp.35-36 of Tony Merida's book you'll find a set of 5 'Action Steps' which you may find helpful as part of your Community Group discussion. You can also hear a brief (just under 3 minutes) video clip of Tony Merida speaking about this theme of 'Belonging' [here](#).

The Daily Bible Readings on the website again provide a series of questions which may provoke useful discussion, but I suggest that if you're short of time you concentrate on **Days (1), (3), and (4)**, in relation to which I've added some questions.

Here's a note of the 8 studies –

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|--------------------------|------------|
| 1. Rom.1.1-7             | Belonging  |
| 2. Rom.5.1-5 & 14.1-15.7 | Welcoming  |
| 3. Rom.10.1-21           | Sending    |
| 4. Rom.12.1-8            | Serving    |
| 5. Rom.12.9-21           | Caring     |
| 6. Rom.15.14-22          | Witnessing |
| 7. Rom.15.30-16.3        | Honouring  |
| 8. Rom.16.3-27           | Gathering  |

## 1) Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October – identity

Read [Romans 1.1-7](#)

*“.. to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith ..”* (Rom.1.5)

‘Identity’ has become a key issue in society today, not least because as a nation we have lost our true roots. Paul’s identity was defined by reference to Jesus Christ: who Jesus is, what He’s done, and how He changes everything.

**How does the longing to belong find expression in our society today, and why is it so closely related to issues of ‘identity’?**

What terms does Paul use to describe his (new) identity as a believer, and how do these apply to you?

Your relationship with Jesus is key to your true identity: in what ways do the truths Paul declares about Jesus here enrich your relationship with Jesus?

**How does the knowledge that we are ‘loved by God and called to be saints’ change our lives?**

**Prayer:** *Thank You, Lord, that impressing on my heart that I am made in Your image, saved by Your grace, and indwelt by Your Spirit. Help me to live in that light today.*

## 2) Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> October – called

Read [Romans 1.1-7](#)

*“.. grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Rom.1.7)

All who have trusted in Jesus, though neither an apostle or a Jew, nonetheless enjoy the privilege of being part of God’s family, knowing the Father’s love, the Saviour’s grace, and a comprehensive peace breathed into their hearts by the Spirit.

The ‘call’ of God is integral to a believer’s new found identity: have you known that ‘call’ of God on your life and how was it experienced by you?

How does that ‘call’ of God transform your conduct and your experience according to what Paul writes here?

**Prayer:** *You have called me out of darkest night into Your glorious light! Make me always mindful, Lord, of the rich privileges which You have bestowed upon me.*

## 3) Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> October – thankful

Read [Romans 1.8-10](#)

*“.. how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times ..”* (Rom.1.9-10)

A sense of gratitude infused the spirit of the apostle, and such a spirit, he believed, will be a characteristic of all believers ([1 Thess.5.16-18](#)). Gratitude for the believers in Rome found expression in his prayer for them and his longing for their fellowship.

*Are you grumpy or grateful when you think of others in your fellowship?*

How might you cultivate such a spirit of gratitude in your own heart?

What practical steps might you take to ensure you pray more for fellow believers?

*What do you value most in the opportunities there are to meet and be with others in the fellowship (v.11)?*

**Prayer:** Ask the Lord to lay on your heart say 5 fellow believers for whom to pray today, and another church fellowship beyond your own. Use [Eph.6.23-24](#) as your prayer.

#### **4) Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> October – encouragement**

Read [Romans 1.11-13](#)

*“.. that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith ..”* (Rom.1.12)

Encouragement is a two-way ministry: each believer both needs encouragement *from* others and is able to afford such encouragement *to* others. Such encouragement will invariably issue in a growing ‘harvest’ to the glory of God.

From whom, and in what ways have you received encouragement from other believers over the past few days?

Whom might need your encouragement today and how might you afford them that?

*We all long to see ‘a harvest’! How does the mutual ministry we exercise within a fellowship promote such a harvest and how can we cultivate that (see [James 3.13-18](#))?*

**Prayer:** Lord, grant me the grace to be like Barnabas of old, one who is known by others for the encouragement I bring, lifting up the down-hearted and spurring others on.

#### **5) Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October – gospel**

Read [Romans 1.14-15](#)

*“.. I am bound both to Greeks and non-Greeks ..”* (Rom.1.14)

The Lord having graciously made Himself known to Paul in such a life-transforming way wrought in the apostle the burden to make Jesus known to all around Him, no matter their background or status. His whole life was a preaching of the gospel.

In what sense was Paul “a debtor both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish”?

You may not be called to be a preacher, but how may you nonetheless 'preach the gospel' to those around you?

**Prayer:** *You have opened my eyes, Lord: help me so to live and speak throughout today that the eyes of others may be opened, too; that they may know Your glory and grace.*

## 6) Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October – salvation

Read [Romans 1.16-17](#)

*“the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes”* (Rom.1.16)

Paul reveled in the gospel! The message doesn't simply *speak about* the saving power of God: it *is* itself the power of God for salvation, as it is received and embraced by faith, regardless of pedigree or performance. The gospel is sheer dynamite!

What did Paul mean by saying it was *“first to the Jew, then to the Gentile”*?

Paul quotes Habakkuk 2.4 to summarise the gospel: how would you articulate the message of the Bible in a simple one-liner?

**Prayer:** *Give me, O Lord, an ever greater grasp of the greatness of Your gospel, that far from being ashamed or embarrassed I may be keen to share it with others.*

## 7) Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October – access

Read [Ephesians 2.11-18](#)

*“.. you who once were far away have been brought near ..”* (Eph.2.13)

Jesus' death was accompanied by a remarkably occurrence – the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom: no longer was sin a barrier keeping you at a distance from God. In Christ You now have access to the Father as His beloved child.

In what ways does each of the terms Paul uses in v.12 to describe your former condition highlight the privilege and blessing of belonging?

How are Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each involved in prayer? How does (or might) this find expression in your praying?

**Prayer:** *Nearer, my God, to Thee: nearer to Thee! And though it be a cross that raises me, still all my song would be, 'Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee.'*