



2. 'Welcome to His world!' Romans 1.8-17

Background

All that God does is consistent with, and characterised by, who He is and what He is like. That's why the Scriptures are first of all a revelation of God, a gracious self-disclosure by God, enabling His finite creatures to have some (necessarily limited) understanding of the infinite and eternal God.

God is, according to His revelation, essentially *community* – a mystery and reality which in the 'shorthand' of theology is known as the 'trinity', God's oneness in no way being compromised by His being Father, Son and Holy Spirit: and because God is essentially that community, the essence of His work, both in creation and salvation is similarly characterised. Thus we describe the cosmos as a *universe* rather than something *diverse*: because for all the vastness and variety there is an essential 'oneness' about it.

And thus, too, at the heart of God's work of re-creation, or salvation, is His commitment to *community*, the bringing together and making one of that which has been hopelessly fragmented, the integration of what, through sin, has been *disintegration*.

The call of God in the gospel therefore brings us in to that community: we are 'called to be His holy people' as we saw in the previous study.

It might appear on an initial, quick reading of this next passage that Paul is simply conveying some polite, warm greetings to a fellowship which he's yet to visit: in truth he is setting out some important and challenging lessons for us. For these next verses in Romans 1 see Paul explaining what it means to have been thus called by God, what's entailed in being a part of that new community, a community which through the power of the Spirit is to both reflect and give expression to the 'community' of the Godhead.

We do well to consider how these verses challenge ourselves in regard to our relationships within the fellowship of God's people – both locally in our own fellowship, and more broadly in terms of God's people elsewhere, whom (as was the case with Paul and many of the believers at Rome) we may well never have met in person.

Read the whole passage (perhaps reminding yourself of the first 7 verses of the chapter) and start with '**days**' (1), (2) and (3).

1) Monday 15th January – thankful for one another

Read [Romans 1.8](#)

“.. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you ..” (Rom.1.8)

The gospel of God’s graces cultivates a spirit of gratitude. We learn to see in others, not how far they still have to go, but how far through Christ they have already come. Once dead, they’re now alive! Once rebels, they now rejoice in their God and Saviour!

Why is it so important to cultivate a spirit of gratitude in our hearts, and how can you do so?

For whom might you gladly give thanks to God for today?

Why does Paul say that he thanks God *“through Jesus Christ”*?

How can you thank God for believers who make life very difficult for you?

In what ways might your own faith occasion gratitude on the part of others?

Prayer: *It is by Your gracious work in our lives, O Lord, that any of us believe! How I thank You, therefore, for your work in the lives of my fellow believers, near and far!*

2) Tuesday 16th January – praying for one another

Read [Romans 1.9-10](#)

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

Paul’s preaching was never at the expense of his praying. Christ brings us into a family, binds us to all who are brothers and sisters in Him, and, like the priests of old, we learn to carry them all on our hearts and bring them all to our Father in heaven in prayer.

Why is our interceding for others an integral part of our serving God?

How might you become more constant in your praying for others?

Might you be more specific in what you request when you pray for and about your fellow believers?

Some churches alternate their midweek pattern by breaking into groups one week, and the next week holding a central gathering for prayer: others vary that by having a regular *monthly* central gathering for prayer: would there be value in adopting such a pattern to facilitate more of the congregation being able to join in prayer together?

Prayer: *Thank You, Lord, for those who have prayed with such faithfulness for me. Lay the needs of others upon my heart, that I may pray for them with a true constancy.*

3) Wednesday 17th January – encouraging one another

Read [Romans 1.11-12](#)

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

Believers need each other, just as the different parts of the body are mutually dependent. Our varying gifts are to be recognised and exercised, and always with a view to encouraging one another in the worship and service of our Lord Jesus Christ

The ministry of *encouragement* is hugely important (think of the role that Barnabas played in the early church): how can we ensure that as believers we become those who are known for the encouragement we give?

What sort of strength does Paul have in view when he anticipates making the believers at Rome ‘*strong*’?

In what ways over the past few weeks have you been encouraged by the faith of others?

Whom perhaps needs your encouragement today – and how might you be able to encourage them through the exercise of your faith?

Prayer: *You, my God, are the One who gives endurance and encouragement: grant me grace that I may never weary of being an encouragement to my fellow believers.*

4) Thursday 18th January – enriching one another

Read [Romans 1.13](#)

“.. in order that I might have a harvest among you ..” (Rom.1.13)

Paul knew that his message was invested with the power of God: he’d long since discovered for himself that expounding the Scriptures and releasing that message bore rich fruit in the lives and experience of others. He was eager to see it again!

What was the nature of the ‘harvest’ which Paul was expecting among the believers at Rome?

Why could Paul be so sure that he would ‘have a harvest among’ the believers at Rome – and can we be similarly expectant of such a ‘harvest’?

Prayer: *How great You are, Lord God! You are the great Creator who imparts life and makes things grow. What a joy to serve You in the harvest fields of gospel ministry!*

5) Friday 19th January – serving one another

Read [Romans 1.14-15](#)

“.. I am a debtor both to Greeks and non-Greeks ..” (Rom.1.14)

The gospel is thoroughly counter-cultural. Far from your being the centre of the world, you gladly acknowledge your abiding and total indebtedness to God, a debt that is paid in your daily living as you go out of your way each day to serve those around you.

In what ways does your sense of indebtedness to God translate into a debt to those around you?

In what ways does that sense of indebtedness find expression in your 'preaching the gospel' to others?

Prayer: *All that I am and have is Your gracious gift to me, O God. May my whole life, day by day, serve to declare Your glory and commend to others the grace of Jesus.*

6) Saturday 20th January – the power of God

Read [Romans 1.16](#)

".. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God .." (Rom.1.16)

Grasp the enormity of the gospel message and it's that which fills your every horizon! The enormity? Yes indeed! It's not just that it *contains* or *declares* the saving power of God to bring life to the dead – it *is* itself that power! Release it – and see for yourself!

What has been your experience of the saving and transforming power of God in the gospel?

What examples could you give of the gospel being the power of God that brings salvation to all who believe?

Prayer: *Thank You, Lord, for the ways in which You have worked in my life through the gospel! I once was blind, but now I see: I once was dead but now I am alive!*

7) Sunday 21st January – the life of faith

Read [Romans 1.17](#)

".. the righteous will live by faith .." (Rom.1.17)

This Habakkuk text opened Luther's eyes to the wonder of the gospel. Life in its fulness enjoyed by believers, as a righteousness secured by God in His Son is received by faith. The work of Christ. The life of faith. The grace of God. Worship your God and Saviour!

What is it about this text from Habakkuk which is so liberating?

How would you support the claim which some make that the whole of the letter to the Romans is simply an exposition of this text from Habakkuk?

Prayer: *Your righteousness, God, reaches to the skies, You who have done great things. My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you – I whom You have delivered [[Ps.71](#)]*