

Getting Started

- Read Romans 1:1-17. In his greeting, Paul identifies himself and his mission to the people who did not know him yet (1:1-7). How does Paul identify ...
 1. himself (1:1)?
 2. his message (1:2-4)?
 3. his mission (1:5)?
 4. his readers (1:6-7)?

The Greeks and Romans despised servitude above all else. In a similar way, Jewish culture reserved the term *doulos* for illegal or unreasonable service, such as Israel's slavery in Egypt. Sometimes, *doulos* referred to those who were subject to the rule of another, such as when one ruler had to pay tribute to another, more powerful king. No one wanted the title *doulos*, unless, of course, he or she served God.

- Paul begins his introduction by saying he is a *doulos*. Why do you think he chose this title?

Discussion

To become a Christian in Rome often meant challenging the social order and the safety it provided. For Jewish believers, the price of discipleship often included the loss of family and clan. Life was hard for everyone but being a Christian in that environment was even worse. If believers in Rome needed anything, it was encouragement. Before teaching them anything, Paul chooses four ways to lift the spirits of his Roman brothers and sisters.

Discuss how Paul does the following in 1:8-13 ...

1. He affirms them (1:8)
2. He prays for them (1:9)
3. He expresses his desire to be with them (1:10)
4. He promises to assist them (1:11-13)

Who can you encourage in a similar way this week? How will you do this (letter, email, text, call, etc.)?

"Paul wrote that he wanted to impart some spiritual gift to them so that they may be established. Paul was not planning to give them a spiritual gift that they lacked; he was planning to share with them his spiritual gift, the gift of knowledge, the gift of wisdom, the gift of apostleship. He planned to give them a share of the knowledge that God had given him. The fruit he hoped to see from this is more converts through faith in Jesus Christ and more Christians living in obedience as a result of their growing faith." – Chuck Swindoll, Insights on Romans

In 1:14, Paul said that he was under *obligation*. His statement reads, literally, “To both the Greek and the barbarian, to both the learned and the ignorant, I am a debtor.” There is more than one kind of debt. The most familiar is when we borrow money and we are indebted to pay it back. Paul’s debt is of another kind. If someone were to give me money to deliver to someone else, I am indebted to the one who gave me the money and, in a real sense, to the one who should receive it. As the middleman, I am a debtor to both. Paul writes, in effect, “I have been given the good news from the Savior, Himself, and I now have the responsibility, a debt to pay, to give this news to someone else. (Chuck Swindoll, Insights on Romans)

- To what degree do you share Paul’s sense of *obligation* to share the gospel? Why? Why not?

From our recent church-wide survey, 79% of people said that they have been saved for more than 10 years, yet 67% of us also self-identified that we have not shared the gospel with anyone in the last 6 months or more (last 6 months 18%, Last 12 months 12%, more than one year ago 24%, Never 13%).

What are your reactions to these survey results?

- Read Acts 14:19, 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, and 2 Timothy 3:11 and then discuss how Paul could write that he was still *eager to preach the gospel* to those in Rome.

This eagerness to preach the gospel is not just a desire to see people trust Christ as Savior. Since Paul’s readers were already Christians, it appears that he includes within the scope of “preaching the gospel” the continuing work of discipleship that follows evangelism.

“Successful evangelism includes follow-up. Discipling those who have ‘come forward’ to receive the gospel is not an optional add-on, but a necessary component of the initial preaching of the gospel itself.”

- Douglas Moo, The NIV Application Commentary

This statement aligns with our 2 cross vision that also focuses on evangelism and discipleship. Which of these is your strength? What steps can you take this year to grow in an *eagerness for both evangelism and discipleship*?

- Have you ever been “*ashamed*”, fearful, or hesitant to share the truth of the gospel? What was at the root of your silence?
- Define and discuss some of the key terms in 1:16-17 ... “gospel”, “power”, “salvation”, “believe”, “righteousness from God”, “faith”