

# The Revelation of Righteousness

Romans 1:1-17

Today we start a new series of sermons and they are on the letter of the apostle Paul to the Romans.

Unlike the letters of Paul to the other churches this letter he writes to a church, where he even hasn't been yet.

And as he explains in his letter, this is not because he did not want to go there, but until that time God did not allow him to go there.

In the book of Acts we see many times that Paul, when he went to a new place, he first went to the synagogues of the Jews and shared the gospel there. So, many of the churches founded by him were composed of both Jewish people and gentiles. The church in Rome consisted mainly of gentiles and had never had any connection with a synagogue. Let's first look at a general overview of topics in this letter.

## Introduction

- 1. The Revelation of Righteousness**
- 2. Justification, or the Imputation of Righteousness**
- 3. Life in Christ, or Union With and Ultimate Conformation to the Righteous One**
- 4. Vindication, or God's Righteousness in His Relationship with Israel**
- 5. Application, or God's Righteousness at Work**
- 6. Conclusion, or Purpose, Plans, and Praise in Connection with the Dissemination of Righteousness**

These are the main topics in this letter.

As we will find out there are various subtopics within each main topic. Each main topic also relates to a specific portion of the letter. I did not mention the specific portions here, but we can do that each time when we start with a new main topic.

But we need to keep in mind, that all these topics are part of one and the same letter, so we must not try and separate any of them from the letter as a whole.

For today we will look at the first main topic, which we find in the first 17 verses of the first chapter of the letter.

Let's go there.

### Romans 1:1-4

- Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead,

Even in the very first part of this long sentence we see already some very important lessons for us as members of the Body of Christ.

First of all Paul introduces himself as a servant of Christ.

And then he declares that he did not become an apostle by his own choice and decision, but that he was called to be an apostle by God.

He also declares that he had been given a specific responsibility, namely to proclaim the Gospel of God concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And in this letter he starts by pointing out the double nature of our Lord Jesus Christ and by pointing to His resurrection from the dead as the undeniable proof of His identity as the Son of God.

Let's look at the remaining part of this first sentence.

## Romans 1:5-7

- Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,
- To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:  
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this part of the introduction Paul points out that the Gospel indeed had to be preached among all the nations, so that from among all nations people would become part of the worldwide Body of Christ as they were saved by grace through faith.

He ends this first sentence by telling all the disciples of Christ in Rome that they are loved by God and that they too were called by God to become saints.

This is in line with what the apostle Peter declared to those who responded to the Gospel on the first time of Pentecost in Jerusalem. We see that in the verses on the next sheet.

### Acts 2:36-39

- Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”  
Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself declared that no one could come to Him unless the Father would draw Him.

The apostle Peter says basically the same in the last part of the last sentence of this sheet. Our salvation depends on God calling us to Himself.

In Ephesians 2:8-10 Paul writes it in this way:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Let's continue.

## 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 18-20

- For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
- But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

Another important aspect of our calling is the fact that God assigns us our place and role within the Body of Christ.

And this does not just relate to our role in the local church we are visiting at this point in time.

It even relates to the specific local church God wants us to join and to serve in there.

When we speak about the Body of Christ it is important to keep the whole Body of Christ worldwide in mind.

There is only one Body of Christ in this world and every disciple of Christ anywhere in the world is a member of that one Body of Christ.

Let's go to the next sheet.

## Ephesians 4:11-14

- And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

These verses are speaking about the fact that Christ Himself assigns specific people to the various responsibilities as mentioned in these verses.

We also see in these verses that all the saints are supposed to be equipped and involved in the work of ministry. It is never the responsibility of a few selected persons.

And we should never forget that in the end we always have to depend on the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see that clearly in the verses on the next sheet.

### Ephesians 4:15-16

- Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

We are to grow up in Christ, being connected to the whole Body of Christ.

In the current situation in the Christian world quite often different denominations are competing with one another.

But that is not how it is supposed to be.

We are called to work together, to build up one another, not just within our small group, but also in other communities of disciples of Christ as He is leading us.

For me personally that means being available for preaching in different churches as Christ calls me to do.

That is also what Paul starts talking about in the next verses of his letter to the Romans.

## Romans 1:8-12

- First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

Apparently the church in Rome was known for its faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul rejoices about that.

But not only that, Paul also states clearly that he prays on a regular basis for this church, including his desire to come and visit them and actually serve them also.

But he also hopes to be encouraged by them. Especially as he plans to visit them while on his way to Spain, to proclaim the Gospel also there. As CBF we are supporting several people in various countries financially. But maybe at some point in time we may also be called to visit some of these people and minister to them in different ways.

Paul definitely understood the importance of prayer as we can also see in the verses on the next sheet.

## 1 Timothy 2:1-4

- First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

As CBF we have our regular prayer meetings on Friday evening.

Unfortunately I cannot be there, but I hope that the prayers offered during those prayer meetings include the persons mentioned in these verses.

It is important that we bring them before the throne of God as we can also learn from the next verses from this letter to Timothy.

## 1 Timothy 2:5-7

- For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

The apostle Paul makes it clear one more time that he is serving not by his own choice, but as he was appointed by God in the various capacities he mentions in these verses.

But let's go back to the letter to the Romans again.

### Romans 1:13-15

- I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Paul informs his brothers from among the gentiles in Rome that he had desired and intended to visit them already for a longer period of time, but that the Lord until now had not allowed him to go there.

Paul is quite well aware of the fact that he was appointed as an apostle to the gentiles, no matter their actual condition. And therefore he is also eager to share the Gospel in Rome.

Maybe we do not understand that Paul states he was prevented from coming to Rome and he considered that the leading of God. But that actually happened to him several times as we can see in the following verses.

### Acts 16:6-7

- And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

So, we see that not only God appoints the people he sends out on specific missions, but He also points out to which mission field He wants them to go.

This is also something to keep in mind.

Therefore we always have to seek the face of God with regards to the vision for our specific congregation.

We should never just go for something we think is the most logical thing to do.

We need a clear confirmation from God regarding these things also.

As we saw in the previous sheet Paul was very eager to go and preach the Gospel in Rome also. In the next sheet we see why he is so eager to preach the Gospel.

### Romans 1:16-17

- For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

So often we refer to the Gospel as the Good News.

And indeed it is good news for us as people as it points us to our need for repentance and forgiveness and our need for the mercy and grace of God.

But the apostle Paul makes it clear that the Gospel is not just good news. In reality it is the power of God to be proclaimed to the world. And faith is the means by which it is indeed received, as we also saw earlier in the verses from Ephesians 2:8-10.

Salvation is, and always has been, by grace through faith. We see that also in the following verses from Genesis 15.

### Genesis 15:1-3

- After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir."

The things the first verse relates to, is the liberation of Lot by Abraham and the giving of tithes to Melchizedek.

We do not know exactly how old Abraham was at that time, but he was definitely older than 75 years, as God only told him to go to Canaan when he was 75 years old.

But Abraham and Sarah still didn't have a child yet, so Abraham assumes that one of his servants will inherit his possessions.

As we know, that is not correct and we see it in the verses on the next sheet.

## Genesis 15:4-6

- And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Here we see the great promise of God to Abraham.

And despite the fact that, thinking logically, this was something impossible, Abraham believed God.

And it is this faith in God that God counted unto Abraham as righteousness.

God also promised Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed.

That promise was a confirmation of the promise God gave to Eve after the fall.

We see it on the next sheet.

### Genesis 3:15

- I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

This is the earliest reference to the Savior in the Hebrew Scriptures.

And even though it makes it clear that Satan will be overcome, it also speaks about suffering by the Savior of the world.

As I have said before: the main themes of the whole Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, is the Lord Jesus Christ and the calling by God of so many people for specific purposes.

Shall we pray?