

Romans 1:8-17

The Gospel for All

Main idea: Everyone everywhere needs to hear the gospel, because the gospel is for all.

You've probably noticed this, but we often say and do a lot of things that just don't make a lot of sense. Like, have you ever said the phrase, "It's always in the last place that you look?" Well, of course it's always in the last place that you look! Because you wouldn't continue to look for it once you found it, would you?

And have you ever said, "Knock, knock" while entering a house? Why do we do that? We're already in the house!

My son Cory sent me this picture this week. It's called, "Humans are adorable."

[Humans are Adorable Illustration]



Humans are adorable.

Supporting evidence:

1. Humans say 'ow', even if they haven't actually been hurt. It's just a thing they say when they think they might have been hurt, but aren't sure yet.
2. Humans collect shiny things and decorate their bodies and nests with them. The shinier the better, although each individual has a unique taste for style and colouring
3. Humans are not an aquatic or even amphibious species, but they flock to bodies of water simply to play in it. They can't even hold their breath all that long; they just love to splash!
4. When night falls and the sky goes dark, humans become drowsy and begin to cocoon themselves in soft, fluffy bedding.

Some of these are great! Number 1 says, “Humans say, ‘ow’, even if they haven’t actually been hurt. Do you do that? Because I do all the time!

Number 9 is also pretty relatable. It says, “If a human hears a particularly catchy sound or tune, it will often mimic it, even to the point of annoying themselves!” Why do we do these things? It really doesn’t make any sense at all.

And yet, even Christians today have come to embrace some very strange practices that don’t seem to make sense in light of what we believe. One of the most obvious is that we’ve often come to hide our faith and in many cases even apologize for it. Our method of evangelism, if it exists at all, often comes across as very narrow-minded. So rather than sharing the gospel, we often keep it to ourselves out of fear. It’s like we’re just trying to huddle together and wait out what we fear is coming.

But if we really believe, as it says in 1 Timothy 4:10, that we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe, then belief in Jesus ought to be celebrated and shared with all the world. And this shouldn’t be something we do merely out of obligation, but out of joy as we proclaim the good news of great joy that shall be for all the people.¹

¹ Luke 2:10

That's what our Scripture will encourage us to do. It will challenge us to see that the gospel isn't just for us to hoard for ourselves, but to share with all the world.

Romans 1:8-17.

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. 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. 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." (Romans 1:8-17)

Father, help us to live by faith. Help us to see how good You are to us, and then take that step of faith to then share the gospel with all the world. In Jesus's name, Amen.

I'm not really good at celebrating good things. It's really something I need to improve at because celebrating good things encourages us to do those good things more often.

A few years back, Home Depot was struggling with low morale among its 350,000 employees. They were unmotivated, and while they were doing their jobs, they were only doing their jobs, and they weren't invested in the company to the point that the business would grow and thrive. So the CEO of Home Depot at the time, Frank Blake, did something brilliant. He began writing thank you notes to people. Every Sunday, he spent several hours writing thank you notes. He wrote hundreds of them every week. They weren't long or elaborate, but they were genuine. They would simply say, "Dear John," or whoever, "I heard you helped your coworkers when you weren't required to. Thanks so much for your hard work." Then he would sign his name and send it. He did this for hours every Sunday afternoon, just letting his employees know he appreciated them.

One day, when Frank went into one of the stores, an employee came up to him and said, "Mr. Blake, I got your thank you card, but could you re-write it for me?" Frank laughed and said, "Sure, I can re-write it. But why do you need me to do that?" And the employee said, "Well, you send so many of these notes that we

were convinced that they were just bulk printed from a computer. So we put it under water, and the ink ran, so we knew that it was actually written and signed with a pen.”

Another thing Frank did was that he simply began celebrating the good stories of his best employees via a TV in the break room. So anytime his employees were in the break room, they would hear their boss thanking them for their dedication and hard work. And hearing this over and over again, they began to get very proud of how they did their job, and they saw a huge improvement in how happy and helpful Home Depot employees were to their customers. And it was all because Frank Blake had this motto: “You get what you celebrate.”²

You get what you celebrate. I think that’s true. And I think Paul knew that was true, also. Verse 8.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. (Romans 1:8)

I’m not sure we celebrate faith in Christ enough. Paul had never even visited the church in Rome, yet he wrote to them and basically said, “Y’all are awesome! I praise God for your faith, and how your faith is being proclaimed everywhere to everyone.”

² Frank Blake Interview: <https://youtu.be/Mw-GnpfdgMM>

It's silly how much we sometimes see ourselves as in competition with other churches. We're not in competition. We're on the same team!

It's like when you're playing baseball, and you're up to bat with the bases loaded. You hit it deep into left field, and you're running around the bases, but even if you're faster than your teammates, you don't run ahead of them. Why not? You'd be called out!

Yeah, you want to score, but you also want your teammates to score. You have the same goal, and your success depends on their success. So you don't try to run ahead of them.

In the same way, we ought to celebrate the faith of other believers in other places, in other churches, because we're all working together with the same goal to proclaim Christ to all the world.

You see, everyone everywhere needs to hear the gospel, because the gospel is for all.

Whenever I drive by a church building, I try to take a moment to pray for that church. I thank God that the church is there, and I pray that the gospel would be clearly proclaimed, not just by the pastor, but by all the people. And I pray that they would be effective in reaching their community with the message of Jesus.

Because it takes all sorts of people in all sorts of places to reach all sorts of people in all sorts of places with the good news of Jesus.

I read a story about a revival that was taking place in Nova Scotia. There were different evangelists preaching each night, and Billy Graham was scheduled to preach the next night. But Billy Graham arrived a day earlier than he needed to speak, so he came to the revival and sat in the back, wearing a hat and dark sunglasses so no one would recognize him. After the preacher that night finished, he invited people to receive Jesus as Savior. And Billy Graham noticed that the person sitting in front of him was paying close attention to the preacher that night, and Billy wondered if he was close to making a decision. So Billy tapped him on the shoulder and asked him, “Are you ready to accept Christ?” And the man responded, “Nah, I think I’ll wait until the Big Guns get here tomorrow night.”

We think that way sometimes. We think that evangelism is the job of the “Big Guns,” the preachers, or the missionaries, but the Bible is clear that we ought to all be ready to share the love of Jesus.³

In order for that to happen, we all need to be equipped to share the gospel. Verse 9.

³ 1 Peter 3:15

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.

(Romans 1:9-12)

You can clearly see Paul's love for the Roman church in this passage. He writes, "I always pray for you," and "I long to see you." Now, as we said, Paul wasn't a member of the church in Rome. His home church was in Antioch. And yet, I think Paul's longing to pray for and gather with the church in Rome is an illustration of how we ought to feel toward our own church. We ought to long to be together.⁴

We all know how busy life can get sometimes. I think we all wish we could have another day in the week sometimes to get done all the things that we want to get done. But if we did have another day, we'd probably just wish there was another day. And then another day. And then another. But the simple truth is that God has given us six days to work, and a seventh day to rest.⁵

One of the best ways for us to strengthen one another's faith and equip one another to share the gospel is by being together.

⁴ Hebrews 10:24-25

⁵ Exodus 20:9-11

When we gather as a church, we're discipling each other to be who God calls us to be, and do what God calls us to do.

But merely being together doesn't do it. We need to be intentional in our gathering. Paul's goal was to use his spiritual gifts to strengthen the church in Rome. But he also expected them to use their spiritual gifts to strengthen him, so that they would be mutually encouraged.

It's tempting to treat church like a movie theater or a concert. We like being entertained, and we like feeling good, and so sometimes we like going to church because of what we can get out of it, and we prefer to just kind of blend into the crowd. But that's not what church should be! We ought to all come to serve, and encourage one another, using our gifts and abilities to serve the Lord and one another.⁶

There are so many ways that we can do that. Some of you teach. Some of you sing. Some of you play with kids. Some of you do things behind the scenes. Yesterday, Jess mowed the church lawn when it was like 300 degrees outside. Now that's service! Amen?

If you don't feel like you have an area of service in the church, please talk with me, and I'd love to get you plugged in. Because there's a lot at stake, even as we just gather here. We're not just battling for our own faith, or for the faith of our kids, we want to

⁶ Romans 12:4-8

see the gospel proclaimed, received, and obeyed in all the world. And we all have a role in accomplishing that.

Verse 13.

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. (Romans 1:13-15)

I think this is an awesome way to look at our calling to share Jesus with people. In verse 14, Paul says that he's obligated to preach the gospel to all sorts of people, and then in verse 15, he says that therefore he's eager to preach the gospel to them. He's obligated, therefore he's eager. And I wonder how often we understand the obligation to engage in evangelism,⁷ but don't get to the point that we're eager to tell people about how much God loves them.

I think that starts with knowing how much God loves you.⁸ And how much He loves your neighbor. And He's given you the good news of Jesus so that you might also take the good news to your neighbor so that they might be saved.⁹

⁷ Matthew 28:19-20

⁸ John 3:16, Romans 5:8

⁹ Luke 10:25-37

So when we gather together, we're not just seeking to be encouraged in our faith, we're seeking to be equipped to share the gospel and reap a harvest elsewhere. Because everyone everywhere needs to hear the gospel, so we have an obligation to everyone to preach the gospel.

And they desperately need to hear the gospel, because the reality is that we're all condemned because of our sin.¹⁰

Verse 16.

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.” (Romans 1:16-17)

This is interesting. It says that the righteous shall live by faith. But the reality is that we have not lived by faith. We've all fallen short of that standard. Therefore, we're not saved by our becoming righteous, but by faith in the gospel that Jesus came, and died for the whole world, and forgave us of our sins. That's the power of God for salvation, and it's given to everyone who believes.

¹⁰ Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23

My sermon this week is titled, “The Gospel for All.” And that’s absolutely necessary because of what I’ll be preaching on next week. My sermon next week is titled, “The Wrath of God for All.”

You see, the wrath of God is rightly upon all people because all have sinned. And because of that reality, it makes the gospel for all that much more necessary. When you see just how impossible it is to save yourself, you become that much more in awe of the good news.

So don’t be ashamed of the gospel. Don’t hide it under a bushel. Don’t apologize for it. It’s good news, and it’s good news for all people.