

# THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

**“For in the gospel the righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’.” —ROMANS 1:17**

The Apostle Paul was primarily and essentially an ‘evangelist’. The word ‘evangelist’ is the noun from the verb meaning ‘to announce good news’. Immediately after the martyrdom of Stephen, the church in Jerusalem was scattered, not only to escape persecution in Jerusalem, but as an opportunity for the dispersing church to evangelize.

It is important to recognize the general responsibility God has given to all Christians to evangelize, but God also gives specific gifts and abilities of an evangelist to some people in particular. Paul was supremely one of these. He was not a ‘church planter’, which does not have a specific classification in the New Testament. Church planting seems ultimately concerned with strategies and tactics, whereas evangelism is ultimately concerned with people. The consequence of Paul’s evangelism was that churches were founded, but the establishing of churches was the inevitable fruit of his ministry, not the goal. The goal was reconciling people to God.

In considering the role of the evangelist, we need to ask: What is the message of the evangelist? What exactly is the ‘good news’ that in Paul’s day revolutionized countless lives throughout the Mediterranean world, and has continued to do so ever since? Fortunately, we do not have to piece together Paul’s gospel from

fragments of his messages, because he took time to spell it out clearly in his letter to the Romans, which has been rightly called a ‘Christian manifesto’.

In this sense, the book of Romans is unique. Most of Paul’s letters are motivated by a pastoral concern to answer questions, correct doctrines or reprimand behaviour, but his letter to the Romans does not address problems. It comes down to us as the fullest and most systematic affirmation of the Gospel we have in the New Testament. What Paul is saying in the above verse is that the Gospel is about the righteousness of God, not simply as an objective truth about God, but as something made available to us - ‘a righteousness from God’, obtainable by faith.

The Gospel message is not primarily about salvation, but about a transition from unrighteousness to righteousness, which is received by being made alive in Christ through faith. For what purpose are we made alive in Christ? Paul writes, “Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4). The message of the Gospel is to mend the broken state of humanity by the work of the indwelling Spirit of Jesus Christ to restore us to our original purpose, which is to express the moral image of God.

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord, I pray for a deeper work of your Spirit in me so that I may express a closer image of your moral character. Thank You, God.

**TO REFLECT UPON:** What have I believed the message of the Gospel to be?