

Discussion Guide, Romans 1:8-15

In Romans 1:8-15, Paul expresses his desire to minister to the Christians in Rome. In this short passage, we get a glimpse of Paul's perspective on the Christian life.

QUESTIONS:

1. It's striking how much theology Paul could pack into one sentence. In v8, we see a mini theology of prayer. Paul prays to "my God" (God is personal) "through Jesus" (we can approach a holy God only because of the Cross) "for all of you" (Paul was consistently putting others first).

—Discuss what stands out about this verse and what it has to say about prayer.

—Notice also that Paul acknowledges that He is bound by the "will of God" in v10. Discuss the relationship between our prayers and God's will. How should knowing that God is utterly sovereign fuel our confidence in prayer?

—If our view of God's sovereign will hinders us, how might we be wrongly understanding the relationship between providence and prayer? (An excellent book on this issue is J.I. Packer's "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God")

2. In vv11-13, Paul expresses how he longs to visit the Roman church so that they might mutually encourage one another. One of the great truths of the Scriptures is the priesthood of all believers. This doctrine was lost for centuries and rediscovered during the Protestant Reformation. It is the truth that all believers are ministers and have God given gifts for the building up of the church and the advance of the gospel (See Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Peter 4:10-11, and 1 Corinthians 12:12-26)

—Discuss the truth that all believers are gifted in some way by God for building up the body.

—How does an ordinary Christian go about knowing what their spiritual gifts are? (Note: In America we are often quick to think terms of spiritual gift inventories and questionnaires to help us determine our gifts. These types of tools are not necessarily bad, but they have significant limitations. Consider that for centuries, Christians have been working out determining and using their gifts in the context of the local church).

—What role should regular life in the local church play in helping individual Christians determine their gifts?

—Consider taking time in your group to speak into one another's lives about the gifts you see in one another (Note: Realize that the lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament are not exhaustive! There are many ways God gifts his people not specifically mentioned in the Bible)

3. In vv14-15, Paul speaks of his obligation to preach the gospel to all peoples, and his desire to preach the gospel to the Christians in Rome.

—Discuss what Paul means by feeling obligated to preach the gospel. While we may be inclined to think Paul means we are obligated to God, this line of thinking would seem to undermine the reality of grace. Our salvation has not put us in God's debt, otherwise grace would not truly be grace. Additionally, we could never truly repay God (Romans 11:35). So who is Paul a debtor to and why?

—Notice that Paul also desires to preach the gospel to people in Rome who are already Christians! This means that Paul thought Christians still need the gospel even after salvation. Discuss why this is so. How does the gospel speak to all of the Christian life, not just the beginning of it?