

Unashamed #3 Romans 1:8-15 Sermon for CCH

3rd part in “Unashamed” series. Travel plans. V11.

▲ You can tell a lot about someone’s priorities from their travel plans.

If you’ve had the privilege to travel either in the UK or overseas, I wonder what was on your itinerary...

- the beaches of North Norfolk
- The art galleries of Paris
- the Munro mountains of Scotland
- the Sound of Music tour of Salzburg.

Travel plans show priorities!

I’ve been rereading a travel diary to Emma 25 years on from when I visited Australia, and **embarrassingly** it seems to be that **food** was my **priority!** Macdonalds in 7 countries in the world!

This is one of two passages in Romans where we see something of *Paul’s travel plans*- his longing to come to Rome. And through it we learn about his priorities- particularly the priority of sharing the gospel with the Christians in Rome.

Last week we were introduced to **Paul** (v1) apostle who speaks for Jesus (acted by Alaster) writing his letter from Corinth to the **Christians in Rome**, capital of the Roman empire (v7), in our sketch the Festus family in at their breakfast table! And we saw something of his **message** (v2-6). The gospel.

That is to say the good news all about Jesus, who by his resurrection 3 days after death was proved to be the King of the Universe- the Son of God. And now he calls all people everywhere to follow and trust him.

Well let’s look at the three paragraphs of our passage in 8-15, and then I’d like to draw out a lesson and a question...

1) Paul wants to visit “already” Christians... (v8-10)

V8

Often the first part of a letter after the introduction was a **thanksgiving** and prayer, and there’s no exception here.

But did you see what he thanks God for... V8

Now that’s quite interesting. He’s writing to people who are already Christians.

How would you define a Christian? A Christian is someone who has put their trust, their hopes, their confidence in Jesus Christ.

Have you done that? They had...

And that’s what Paul is really pleased about. In fact he sees it as God’s work in their lives.

Do you see he doesn’t pat them on the back for their amazing Bible knowledge, their church planting skills, their united gospel entrepreneurship, or their hard work.

In fact he doesn’t pat them on the back at all- he focuses on their faith.

And that’s going to be one of the major themes of the book. Paul’s good news that he has received from Jesus is not “be great”, or “be good”, “be special”, “be impressive”, it’s you are not great, good, special or impressive, but Jesus is. **It’s not about our work, it’s about Jesus work.**

And if you trust in him, no matter who you are or what you’ve done, you can be forgiven as a free gift. And that’s for everyone. **GRACE-** phar&taxc.

So he thanks God for them- they have already become Christians.

And then he prays for them v9. If you promise to pray for someone, no-one else sees if you actually have, but God does. And God is his witness that he’s constantly praying for them- it’s almost like he’s in the courtroom.

(that’s a challenge to me to make sure I do pray when I say I will).

But what exactly does h pray for? V10

Here's the travel plans (**hence little map**). Paul wants to come to Rome.

He hasn't been able to see them before now (you get a hint of that in v10- "at last"), and you get it explicitly in v13 ("but have been prevented from doing so until now", and in chapter 15 you get the reason.

He's been busy preaching the gospel all around the Eastern Mediterranean. One of Paul's priorities is to get the gospel out to unbelievers- he's constantly sharing the good news with those who don't haven't heard it.

But now he hopes he can come and see them... (v10, v11, v13)

Why? Let's read on to the next para....

2) ... to strengthen them... (v11-13)

V11

Paul wants to strengthen the Christians in Rome.

▲ There's a picture of a guy in the gym there.

He wants them strong and healthy in their faith.

He wants them stabilized, strengthened, established, secure in their faith.

And to do that he wants to share a spiritual gift v11.

Normally a spiritual gift, like the ones we see in chapter 12 are gifts given by God the Holy Spirit to build up the church (encouragement, serving, giving, care for others). But here Paul seems to be speaking about a more general encouragement- building up the Roman Christians in their faith.

Isn't that a brilliant thing? Isn't that what we need too. It's not easy being a Christian. ▲ Driving along with bike on back of car, stop and tighten the support ropes.

But it's not just one way traffic with Paul, like some expert doctor who treats the patients. Christianity isn't like that- it's a team effort, and it's very mutual. Look at v12.

So Paul is longing to come to them to encourage and strengthen them in their faith. Or to put it another way in v13, he wants a harvest. V13

That might be longing to see new people come to follow Jesus (we'll see more of that next week) but he certainly wants to see the harvest of a crop of healthy Christians yielding the fruit of the spirit- Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

That is the obedience that comes from faith V5. That they might take on an increasing likeness to Jesus every day as they trust and follow him.

And how is he going to strengthen them?

We've already had a hint in v11 & 12- mutual encouragement from one another's faith.

It's made explicit in verses 14 and 15 V14-15

3) ...by sharing the good news with them (v14-15)

He's duty bound to share a message with people of all backgrounds. But he wants to share the good news with THEM- Christians in Rome.

▲ **Listen to a little made up story.** A small nation had a great King. King Joshua. But the people in the country thought they knew better and wanted to take the throne instead. So they killed King Joshua and tried to live as King instead. But the rightful Ruler, King Joshua the Great back from the dead and takes the throne again.

And then True King Joshua the Great sends his messenger with a megaphone "Harry the Herald" to the cities of the country to declare that Joshua once more is the true and good ruler of the nation, and if they submit to him, he will pardon all their previous rebellions against him as a free gift! Don't have to achieve, just need to receive. But if they carry on in rebellion against him they will be in trouble.

Well Paul sees himself as that messenger with the megaphone. Harry the Herald. Jesus Christ has won an amazing victory even over sin and death itself, and has been declared to be the victorious King over the whole world.

No city of the world, whether it be the city of the Greeks or the non Greeks, the wise or the foolish is excluded from the reign of the new king.

Huntingdon, Godmanchester, Hartford, St Ives.... All these places belong to Jesus now. And what a great King he is. A kind and forgiving King who now rules the world.

Paul must spread the message urgently! He's indebted v14 to them to pass on this message.

But here's the surprise! It's not just non-Christians who need the gospel.

Christians need the message too.

Yes it's the power of God for salvation for those who haven't believed (we'll see that next week), but it's also powerful to strengthen Christians too.

Romans 16:25 (p1143- keep a finger in it) "Now to him who is able to strengthen or establish you according to my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ".

Otherwise, why would Paul be writing this **whole letter** about the gospel to a group of people who are famous for their faith 1:8.

Using our story...

▲ Those who have are still rebels to the new king need to hear for the first time who is really King, and turn back for pardon.

But those who have already responded need to hear for the the second or third time need to keep hearing it too will be strengthened by it too.

Especially if they can't see the King right now, and others around them don't believe it.

He really is the King. And he really has accepted them.

So that brings us to our big lesson for today, and it's quite simple.

Christians need the good news.

1), 2), 3) . It's not just Non Christians who need to hear about Jesus. Christians need it again& again!

Yes Unbelievers do, and we are encouraging everyone in our church to reach out to Huntingdon so that those who don't know about Jesus will come to discover him for themselves.

[If you are not convinced Christian, please understand that Jesus is the King of all nations, and you need to submit to him for pardon. Not by working, but by trusting.]

But if you have already become a Christian, you need to grow in the gospel.

▲ I've used this analogy before.

ACORN- what needed to germinate?

OAK TREE- grow from a small to big tree. Grow healthy strong. No longer vulnerable to the winds that come.

Same things needed to start and to grow.

This is quite surprising.

Who doesn't want to grow as a Christian?

But sadly sometimes people take on the wrong food.

They think that you start with the gospel, and then you move onto something else. The latest trends from a conference or book. A new technique in prayer, A Holy feeling from visiting a sacred place.

But we need the gospel- at the start, the middle and end. The good news of Jesus, found in the Scriptures, and focused on the gift in Jesus.

We need the good news all over again.

It's not that we need to become a Christian all over again.

It's not that it's all simple. There are depths and complexities in the Christian message it's not all simple. [This book is quite detailed, and goes into real depths about the gospel. You might like to read it sometime].

But if you ever come to church and think we've **heard this before**. Then good! We need to hear it again. We need to hear of the things that Paul talks about the Gospel:

- A God who created us
- All of Humanity who has rebelled.
- The anger of God against sin
- The inability to get to God through rule keeping
- God sending Jesus to be our King and Saviour.
- The incredible sacrifice of Jesus at the cross in our place
- The free gift of Jesus' righteousness that clothes us when we come empty handed to him in faith.
- The implications of that free gift for the way that we live.

We don't move on from GCSE Christianity to Alevel Christianity. We stick with Christianity 101- the gospel. Because we stick with Jesus.

Christians need the Good news.

If we don't dive deep into the gospel for ourselves then this will happen....

Let me remind you of our vision statement as a Church.

If we don't

1. go deep with Christ,
2. we won't grow deep as Christians,
3. and then we won't want to share the good news.

So here's my question.

How can you and I a) delight in the message for ourselves.

And then b) strengthen others in that message.

I'm not going to give you the answer to that question. You can think of 1 idea for each over coffee, and more at your life group this week.

But I'll tell you some of the things that have helped me lately...

- Digging into new parts of the Bible and finding Jesus there.
- A text message from a Friend.
- A great new or old Christian song that reminds me of grace.
- A short book about Rest, and how taking a rest each week reminds us that we aren't saved by what we do.
- Another short book by a pastor who rediscovered grace and wrote short messages on cards to carry around in his back pocket.
- The list goes on...

It may be that we just need to talk more about Jesus. If we can't talk with other Christians about Jesus, what hope have we got of talking with those who aren't Christians.

- And Maybe we just need a few questions up our sleeves
 - What has God been teaching you lately?
 - What has God been reminding you of lately?

If we are going to help Huntingdon to get excited about Jesus, we need to be excited about Jesus ourselves!

To give you a bit of inspiration, we're going to listen to a song. It's called ["Live in the gospel" by Colin Buchanan](#). Remember- gospel= the good news message about Jesus.

No need to sing along. But let it remind you that the gospel isn't just a message on a page. It's to be delighted in yourself, and with others.

Let's listen to this and then Mercy will come and pray before we take communion together- another great way of delighting in the message ourselves and encouraging one another.