**PREACHING NOTES: DON’T LOSE THE WONDER!**

**(A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS)**

**WEEK: 3**

**"I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL ..."**

**(Simon Nunn)**

**FOR READING/MEDITATION:** Romans 1 (esp. v.16-17); 3:20-26; 4:20 - 5:2; 8:28-30.

**WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?**

It is the 'good news', the 'glad tidings' of the realisation of God's Kingdom in the hearts of His people. It is 'Good News' because we need it! Chapter 1: 18-32 shows how Man has turned his back, rebelled, against God, and how God has responded by 'giving over' sinful man to depravity and corruption. The list of sins and evil behaviours listed here is a fearful one. God's wrath and judgment stands against sinful man.

The gospel, the 'good news', is that God continues to love his people, despite their sinfulness, and has provided a way whereby mankind can not only be forgiven, but can be restored into relationship with Him, with the gift of everlasting life in His presence.

Because God is just, and perfectly righteous, this restoration can only be achieved by:

* Man's sin being punished according to the Law - and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).
* Man being forgiven by the submission of an appropriate sacrifice - which because of Man's propensity to sin, requires a permanent, perfect and effective sacrifice, which Man himself and the slaughter of animals could never provide.
* The only solution acceptable to God was to send His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in human form and thus born under the Law, to live a life in perfect obedience to the Law. He was thus the only sacrifice acceptable to God for satisfying the Law's penalty for sin, and all sins, for all time.
* By His death upon the Cross He took our guilt upon himself, and bore its punishment, thereby satisfying all the just requirements of the Law.
* But this declaration of 'not guilty' for the sinner is a gift given only to those who put their trust in Christ; those who acknowledge and repent of their past sin, who believe that Christ can save them from their sins, and seek God's forgiveness.
* But God does not stop at the point of declaring us to be no longer guilty. For relationship with God to be fully restored, which is God's desire, we have to become righteous in His sight. This we cannot achieve in our own strength. So God's solution is to 'impute' the perfection and righteousness of Christ to our account. So the most amazing and wonderful aspect of the whole gospel is that we are enabled to stand in the presence of God, clothed and robed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.
* This is ALL of God's doing, and Christ's merit - none whatsoever of ourselves. All that God asks of us is that we place our trust and faith in Him, and acknowledge His Lordship over our lives. The Holy Spirit then comes and dwells within us, and progressively 'sanctifies' (i.e. renews our minds to be God-centred) in preparation for our 'glorification', when we are received into Heaven to be in full and permanent relationship with our God.

So the gospel is that God, through the work of Jesus Christ:

* **Acquits** us of sin;
* **Accepts** us as being fit to stand in His presence;
* **Embraces** us as His adopted children, declared to be the Sons of God, with eternal destiny in Heaven.

**NOT ASHAMED?**

Why does Paul say that he is "not ashamed" of the gospel, when really he is saying he is very proud of it? Is it because he is sensitive to the pressures upon Christians in Rome, the imperial capital, where they are exposed to the Emperor-cult and all the secular forces there, poised to ridicule and persecute the Believer? It is likely that many of the Roman Christians were tempted to 'keep quiet' about their faith. Paul wants to strengthen and encourage them (1:11-12) and empathises with their difficulties, whilst wanting to see a spiritual harvest (1: 13). He has a similar message for his assistant, Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6-9), to whom he gives the encouragement to 'fan into flame' the gift of God.

**SOME DISCUSSION POINTS FOR CONNECT GROUPS**

* In thinking about the gospel, has anything struck you afresh about your relationship with God, and what God has done for you?
* How has that realisation affected your attitude towards God, towards fellow Christians, towards other people generally?
* There may be times when we find it difficult to speak about our faith, because we are afraid of the reaction we might get, or we simply think it might create tension in what is presently a comfortable, but non-spiritual, relationship. What might we do, with God's help, to change that? Can we help and support one another?