

Community Group Guide

The Church at Martinsburg

“Our Obligation to the Unreached”

Romans 1:1-17

January 4, 2015

Scripture Passage

Have a volunteer read Romans 1:1-17.

Greeting

¹Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Longing to Go to Rome

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—¹²that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³I 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. ¹⁴I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

The Righteous Shall Live by Faith

¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Discussion Questions

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means.

1. How/why does ownership of the gospel create in Christians an obligation to the unreached? Consider Romans 1:16.
2. How does every person have knowledge of God? Why is this basic knowledge of God insufficient for salvation? See Romans 1:19-25. What is necessary for true knowledge of God? See Romans 3:21-26.

3. What is the good news that unreached and unengaged people groups need to hear? How do you articulate the good news? See Romans 3:21-26.
4. What are some practical things you (and your family) can do to participate in missions all across the world? Pray? Give? Go? Make a list of these things that you can meditate and pray on.
5. What is the ultimate goal in missions? See Revelation 5:9; 7:9-12; Psalm 67.

Sermon Outline

Our Obligation to the Unreached (The Book of Romans)

Lottie Moon background. – She was essentially calling the churches back in America during her time to take ownership of the missionary task.

This offering goes toward keeping folks like us on the field and creates the opportunities for others like us to serve among the unreached peoples of the world.

Read Romans 1:1-17

V 14 -Paul's ownership of the Gospel creates in him an obligation with the gospel. Because he owns the gospel, he owes the Gospel. If we fast forward to chapter 15 of Romans we see a clearer picture of why Paul is writing the Book of Romans in the first place. He's a missionary going to Spain and he wants the Church in Rome to partner with him

My prayer is that we as a Church would begin to sense this same sort of burden for the unreached peoples.

Our ownership of the gospel creates obligation with the gospel. (Romans 1:1-17)

We must pray relentlessly.

We must give sacrificially.

We must go willingly.

What does it mean to be Unreached?

There are currently about 2 billion people today that are considered unreached with the gospel.

There are in my state of 72 million people. Within our state there are at least 8 UUPGs with that consist of over 100,000 people. We're talking about a group of entire peoples, whose life style and language and culture are unique to themselves but have never had access to the Gospel.

I've heard many times people say to me, "why are you going all the way around the world when there are un-reached people right here in America? You might say your co-workers

or your neighbors are un-reached with the Gospel. We'll that's just simply not true because you work with them and you live within a few seconds walk of them. You are their access!

Put yourself in their shoes for a moment. You do not currently have **access** to the gospel. Unless something changes, you will likely be born, live and die without ever **hearing** the gospel.

You have **knowledge** of God. (Romans 1:18-20)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

- We've all been given the Common grace of General revelation
- All 7 billion people on earth today have some sort of knowledge of God. All peoples that have ever lived have encountered knowledge about God.
- Back when I was in college at WVWC, several of us used to frequent a spot in between Buckhannon and Canaan Valley called Bear Haven. We used to rock climb and hang out on this large boulders that overlooked the rolling hills of that area for miles. And it was right there at Bear Haven that one of my good friends from college believed in Jesus Christ for salvation after watching the sun go down one evening on those beautiful WV hills at the peak of the fall leaves. He was overwhelmed at that moment that the creator of such beauty must be God and he had heard about Jesus through the witnessing of another guy, Kirk. He became a follower of Christ largely by the way that God revealed himself to him in His Creation.
- I've often wondered why God doesn't reveal himself more in nature. Like writing John 3:16 in the clouds. Or spelling out with the stars, He's risen! But he doesn't. This is not his plan.
- Or you can think about it this way, have you ever heard someone tell you the reason they don't go to church is because being out on the river fishing (or hunting in the woods) on Sunday morning is their "sanctuary." They say that because, in some sort or way, they're experiencing what Paul is writing about, "his eternal power and divine nature perceived in the things that have been made." But, it's His divine nature reveal through creation that is meant to spur us on to seek more truth about God, not for us to turn his creation into becoming our god. People that make statements like this are mistaken because they believe that their experience with God in nature is enough for them. They don't realize that the same God that created the beautiful mountains and rivers we love to play in also commands us as the church to meet together regularly *to stir one another up in love and good works...*
- What the Scriptures also teach us about this is that all people, though they have knowledge of God - reject him...

You have **rejected** God. (Romans 1:21-25)

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they

became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen

- In other words we pay little mind to the author of life and we seek to create our own meanings and purposes and pleasures independent of Him.
- Literally stealing the glory of God that is rightfully his and placing that value on something
- God help us as a nation because, though we are not in a context where people literally worship a man made idol, we have taken many of the good gifts of God and made them out to be gods that we serve.
- If you were born into the context we serve in among Hindu's, you might literally offer incense before little idols in your home. You might designate a god for each part of creation. God of the Sun. God of the sea. God of fertility. Just think about it, you have some sort of knowledge but you create your own interpretation of who he is.
 - I've wondered as well why God doesn't open up the mouths of these idols for them to say, "Jesus is God." Or "I'm not the I AM". I mean if its true, as Jesus said that the "stones would cry out that Jesus is Lord." Why could he not choose to reveal himself to them in this way? This also is not God's plan

You stand **condemned** before God. (Romans 1:18-3:20)

- Paul goes to great lengths over these first three chapters of Romans to explain how all people are justifiably condemned before God for their sin.
- What about the innocent person in Africa who's never heard the Gospel? What happens to him when he dies?
 - There are guilty people all over the world, which is why they need to hear the Gospel.
- I hope we are feeling the weight of all of this reality

You have never heard the **good news** about how you can be saved by God. (Romans 3:21-26)

This is the difference between a lost person and an unreached person. A lost person has knowledge of God, rejected God, stands condemned before God, but has vast opportunities to hear the gospel. An unreached person has no access

The Good News: *For there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received. (Romans 3:22-25)*

Preach the Gospel

"The gospel is only good news if it gets there in time." (Carl F. H. Henry)

But I'm afraid for many people today, just in my state alone, its too late. You see because every day in my state 1631 people die. Now that vast majority, if not all, will step in hell, eternity apart from God, and will never have heard how they could have gone to heaven in stead.

Followers of Christ, aren't you thankful that someone came before you and took the ownership of the Gospel?

Why must we pray relentlessly, give sacrificially, and go willingly to the Unreached?

Because their knowledge of God is only enough to **damn** them to **hell**. (Romans 6:23)
For the wages of sin is death....

- There are currently 2 billion people on earth that have no access to the Gospel.
- 1631 people die every day in my state. The majority, if not all of them have little to no access to the Gospel when they die.
- Platt's story

Because the gospel of God is powerful enough to **save** them for **heaven**. (Romans 1:16)

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.

- Romans 10:13
- Story of Saif
- Luke 10:2

Because the **plan** of God warrants the **sacrifices** of His people. (Romans 10:14-15)

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?...

- Story of Cornelius and Peter - This is God's design for the un-reached peoples to hear. To send people like you and for you to send people like Peter...
- If this is true, then this ought to really shape everything we do. All of our activities and expenditures and motivations ought to be shaped by this reality.
- This is the purpose of the Church. Missions is not some program we use to motivate people to give more.
- We are some of the wealthiest people on the earth. What if God has given us this wealth not so we can be continually pressing the limits of comfort, but what if God has given us this wealth to leverage it toward really fulfilling the Great Commission?
- Some of us need to lay our lives before God and say, I'll go wherever you call me to go. Short-term, long-term. However you want us to go.
 - Moravians. 1 out of 92. They would look for jobs among unreached peoples. We don't think in those terms

Because the **Son** of God deserves the **praises** of all peoples. (Romans 1:5; 16:26)
He's worthy. His sacrifice warrants the praises of all peoples.

And so, we pray relentlessly, give sacrificially, and we go willingly. It's our obligation, but it's also our privilege.

Gallup poll showed that average holiday shopper plans to spend \$720 this Christmas season.

We have been given the grace of knowing God for a reason. We ought to be motivated and feel obligated to leverage that grace for the proclamation of the Gospel among all peoples

Miss a Meal for Lottie. \$10. Do that 5 times over the next month and you'll have an extra \$50

This is the purpose you have been given as the church. God help us to be bold enough to pray and give and go in a radical way.

Prayer

As you pray with your group, consider praying for the following things:

- Any personal requests. Pray for the personal requests that may have been shared in your group.
- A heart for unreached people groups. Pray that the Lord will send workers (like yourself) to those who currently have no access to the gospel.
- A greater desire to participate in evangelism and missions. Ask the Lord to help you take advantage of evangelistic opportunities to share the gospel in your daily life and to take the gospel to the nations.

Weekly Scriptures

Encourage your group members to consistently read Scripture. The daily Scripture reading plan from the church is be a helpful place to start.

Monday: Romans 1:1-17

Tuesday: Mark 16:15

Wednesday: John 20:21

Thursday: Acts 1:8

Friday: 1 Peter 2:9-10

Saturday: Luke 24:46-48

Weekly Update

Remind your group of some of the important things coming up for the church.

- **Living Sent.** As progress continues to be made over at 50 Monroe, encourage those in your group who may not be a part of Living Sent to jump in and get involved by giving to Living Sent and volunteering! Remind them to visit the Living Sent kiosk on Sunday mornings or to go to martinsburgchurch.org/livingsent.

Follow-up

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email, text, etc. to your group with some or all of the following:

- A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- Encourage individual members of your group with specific passages of scripture that deal with something they might be experiencing.
- Challenge your group members to consider how they can be involved in missions. Consider utilizing resources from the IMB (imb.org) and the Joshua Project (joshuaproject.net) as well as giving generously to mission efforts.
- A reminder to pray for the requests made during your group time.

Recommended Reading

Read the following article(s) for additional help to put the sermon's passage into practice in your everyday life.

30 Ways to Awaken Your Congregation for the Cause of Global Engagement

By John Piper and Mark Struck

In their 2010 year-end report, the Barna Group identified six major patterns emerging among Christians in America:

1. The Christian Church is becoming less theologically literate.
2. Christians are becoming more ingrown and less outreach-oriented.
3. Growing numbers of people are less interested in spiritual principles and more desirous of learning pragmatic solutions for life.
4. Among Christians, interest in participating in community action is escalating.
5. The postmodern insistence on tolerance is winning over the Christian Church.
6. The influence of Christianity on culture and individual lives is largely invisible.

Much could be said (and done!) about each of these. In response to the drift away from outreach and missions, as mentioned in the second point, we put together this list of 30 practical steps church leaders can take to see that their congregations stay alive and true to the global mission of God.

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1) Place a large laminated map in your church's lobby and ask every person to sign their name or initials on the nation for which they are burdened to pray regularly.

2) Host a visiting national pastor for a week or two of ministry and interaction with your church.

3) Budget for your pastors to make at least one cross-cultural ministry trip each year.

4) Identify a good book & study guide on global missions and lead your small groups through a church-wide study.

5) When your church sends out a short-term or long-term cross-cultural team, hang a national flag representing that country in your church lobby or sanctuary as a reminder to pray each week for the team or missionary.

6) Publish a list of recommended missions books and bios, and have the books available at the church.

7) Incorporate world-aware prayers into your worship services, and encourage the formation of an accessible, missions-focused prayer group in the church (perhaps based on the book *Operation World*).

8) Visit your missionaries. Have people help them move, and regularly send teams to minister to your missionaries and potentially aid in the work. Missionaries are usually more inclined to share needs with a visiting church member than their field supervisor.

9) Commission individuals and teams when they go, and set up an avenue for them to report on their work to the rest of the church.

10) Reach out to internationals in your own city. Invite them to dinner, ask them to come and fix a dinner for the congregation to share the foods of their nation, help them improve their English, teach them how to use public transportation in your area, etc.

11) Dedicate a week of the year to missions at your church, incorporating things such as special messages from guest speakers, ethnic dinners, documentaries on particular nations and people groups, missionary testimonies, and prayer meetings.

12) Send groups to local and national missions-focused conferences.

13) Take advantage of global events. When a crisis happens, address it in your services, pray, raise money, send a team. As a pastor, before church services always check websites like CNN, BBC, etc. to see if there is world news that the congregation should know and for which they should pray that very day.

14) Clearly distinguish between missions and evangelism, and continually preach the need for both. (The difference is also well defined in the book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*.)

15) Develop a succinct and memorable statement of your church's vision for missions, and post it in a visible place in your church. Have it printed weekly on the church bulletin until everyone can say it from memory.

16) Adopt a particular people group as a church, and direct specific prayer, giving, and service towards them. Set an annual goal of sponsoring at least one theological book in the heart-language of that people every year. (Contact *Desiring God International Outreach* for advice and plans for books.)

17) Set goals with your church on how to be involved in missions (this many people sent this year, this much money given, etc.).

18) Preserve (or establish!) the position of Missions Pastor at your church.

19) Hire an intern for your church from another country. While they may only be able to come on a student visa, your church could still offer an honorarium or stipend for expenses.

20) Attend or host the Perspectives course; or, as an alternative, direct your people towards the Let the Nations Be Glad DVD. It presents most of topics in the Perspectives course in six sessions.

21) Incorporate books and activities into your youth program that foster a cross-cultural missions mindset.

22) Buy in bulk and sell at cost large world maps that members of your church can post on their walls at home.

23) Distribute guides for the "30 Days of Prayer" programs for people from other major world religions.

24) Observe the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, which happens every November and is sponsored by Voice of the Martyrs and Open Doors.

25) Offer foreign language courses to your congregation that correspond to the people you desire to reach, whether locally or abroad.

26) Have a weekly missions focus in your church bulletin with famous missions quotes, statistics about nations and people groups, updates from your church's missionaries, etc.

27) Deliver a biographical message on the life of a great missionary (or lead your people in some other way of hearing their story). See, for example, John Piper's biographies of Adoniram Judson and John Paton.

28) Feature links on your church's website to other missions-related websites.

29) Encourage your congregation to subscribe to a world news source (such as a magazine, newspaper, or podcast) or to make it their Internet browser homepage. Some recommended sources are BBC, World, and, for this year, the White Horse Inn podcast, which is focusing their 2011 broadcasts on the Great Commission.

30) Attend, or perhaps even host, events and dinners put on by missions organizations in your area (Wycliffe, International Justice Mission, World Vision, etc.).