

# “Good People, Good News, and Good Plans”

Message 3

5.5.24

Romans Series

“Good People, Good News, and Good Plans”

## **Romans 1:8–15** (CSB)

<sup>8</sup> First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because the news of your faith is being reported in all the world. <sup>9</sup> God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in telling the good news about his Son—that I constantly mention you, <sup>10</sup> always asking in my prayers that if it is somehow in God’s will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you. <sup>11</sup> For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, <sup>12</sup> that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.

<sup>13</sup> Now I don’t want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles. <sup>14</sup> I am obligated both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. <sup>15</sup> So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

## Introduction

A. I love the local church.

1. And I feel like I can relate to what the Apostle Paul is saying in this passage.
2. I truly thank God through Jesus Christ for all of you.
3. Healthy churches need pastors who love the people and people who love their pastors.

4. When you have good people, a Good message, and good plans, you have the makings of a healthy church.

B. Today's passage reveals Paul's perspective of the Church, not just in Rome but Universally.

1. This understanding or theology is called Ecclesiology.

2. You can't read Paul's letters for very long to see that, even though the people of God can be a mess at times, the people of God matter and are loved.

C. As we think through this passage today, there are lots of things that can be said.

1. But I want to focus on 3 things:

2. Good people, Good News, and Good plans.

## 1. Good People.

A. Paul didn't know them well, but he assumed the best.

1. He had heard of their reputation.

2. What Paul heard encouraged him: the church was strong and the people were following the Lord.

B. Paul constantly mentioned the Romans both in prayer and in conversation.

1. And what he had to say was positive and good.

2. The Good News of what God was doing in them was spreading in all the world.

a. This is the way it should be.

b. Last week, I was blown away by what our missionary friend had to say about this church.

c. When I'm at conferences and meetings, I consistently come across people who say they are talking about what God is doing here in Licking.

d. People are talking:

1. Behind doors you haven't opened.
2. In conversations you aren't invited to.
3. In hallways you have yet to walk.
4. In rooms you have yet to enter.

3. The health of a church depends on both the pastor and the people.

- a. Sometimes the pastor is the problem.
- b. But sometimes it's the congregation.
- c. But when both desire to honor the Lord and serve Him, beautiful things happen like what was happening in Rome and what is happening here.

C. Why does this matter?

1. Healthy bodies of believers are more effective and fruitful than unhealthy ones.

- a. The local church is designed to glorify God, minister to the lost, disciple the found, and publicly represent Jesus in the community.
- b. But communities won't listen to the Good News if they have to wade through gossip, slander, and untruth.
- c. Communities don't want to be disciplined by people who live lives contrary to what they proclaim.
- d. Communities don't want to be part of church families that fight, bicker, and are mean.
- e. Healthy churches are fruitful.

2. The Church, the Body of Christ, is the physical representation of Jesus in the community.

a. Nothing is sadder than seeing Jesus with a sick, cancerous, or divided body.

b. When we are divisive, when we are arrogant, and when we walk in openly in sin and unrighteousness, we are not presenting Jesus' body as something good, holy, and healthy.

c. 1 Peter 2:11–12 (CSB)

<sup>11</sup>Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul.

<sup>12</sup>Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.

D. Thankfully, the Church in Rome was healthy.

1. They still had room for growth, which is why Paul desired to visit and to impart some "spiritual gift."
2. Paul desired to help them become even more fruitful and see even more people added.
3. But they were healthy, and that was good news.
4. Here at Licking AG, We are a healthy church with room for growth.

## 2. Good News.

<sup>9</sup> God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in telling the good news about his Son

A. The people are good because the message is good.

1. The message that Jesus is the resurrected Son of God and is crowned as King of Kings is GOOD NEWS.
2. It is the message that makes the people good.
  - a. Even when the Church is at its worst, the message of what Jesus has done is still good news.

- b. This is why we must be careful.
- c. The Good News changes us into Good People.
- d. Apart from the Gospel, we are not good.

3. **Jesus is what makes me good.**

- a. So when the Church is at her worst, that is no excuse for people not to be part of the Body.
- b. I suggest that when believers like you and I are at our worst, our messiest, and our most broken, we need the body of Christ more than ever before.
- c. Apart from Christ, there is nothing good about me.
- d. And I cannot be connected to Christ while ignoring the rest of His body.

B. Paul says the message about Jesus is Good News.

- 1. Is the Gospel, is the message, good to you?
- 2. The Gospel is sometimes confusing, sometimes uncomfortable, sometimes hard, but ALWAYS good.
- 3. The news that Jesus is the resurrected King, who is in power and coming in power is Good News.
  - a. It's good for those of us who dealing with difficulty.
  - b. It's good for us who are watching our national leaders and wondering about our nation's direction.
  - c. It's good news for the hurting mom, the anxious dad, the confused grandparents, the lonely widow, the professional, the wealthy, the rich, and the poor.

### 3. Good Plans.

Romans 1:9–13 (CSB)

<sup>9</sup>God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in telling the good news about his Son—that I constantly mention you, <sup>10</sup>always asking in my prayers that if it is somehow in God’s will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you. <sup>11</sup>For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, <sup>12</sup>that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.

<sup>13</sup>Now I don’t want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles.

A. One of the Apostle Paul’s life goals was to minister in Rome.

1. This was a Good Plan.
2. The people were good, the message was good, God is good.
3. But Paul’s plans were delayed.
4. Sometimes everything is good, but our timing.

B. Right actions and Right motives are dangerous when you have the wrong timing.

1. Good timing is something God teaches; but He teaches slowly.
2. Ask Joseph, Moses, Job, David, Abraham, Peter, or Paul about God’s timing and they will all tell you:
  - a. God’s timing is perfect.
  - b. But His timing is different than ours.
3. God created time, and therefore, God is outside of time.
  - a. We are created INSIDE of time.
  - b. Therefore, our days are numbered, and we are ruled by seasons, schedules, plans, rotations of planets, and a finite amount of time.

C. Paul wanted to go to Rome but being in God’s timing mattered.

1. Paul said he had been prevented thus far.
2. But if it was God's will, he would visit and impart some spiritual gift to strengthen the believers there.

How do we apply this today?

### Application

#### 1. Godly leaders pray for their people.

A. When you read Paul's letters, you read of a man who prayed for the people.

1. Paul, without ceasing, remembered them in his prayers.
2. In other words, when Paul prayed he did not stop praying for them.
  - a. He didn't grow tired of praying for them.
  - b. He prayed for their spiritual benefit that they would be encouraged and part of the Kingdom of God.

B. One of the best investments you can start making today is to start praying for people in your area of influence.

1. Pray for your spouse because they are your first responsibility.
2. Pray for your kids:
  - a. It's good for the kids' teachers or grandparents or children's leader to pray for them.
  - b. But the prayers of a parent are of a different weight.
  - c. Don't let someone else carry the responsibility of praying and interceding for your kids.

#### 3. Leaders, pray for those you lead.

- a. Your teachers, your officers, your clerks, your office mates.

- b. Who should you pray for?
- c. If you know them by name, call out for them by name!
- d. If you are led to pray for someone, be as specific as you can.

4. If you are not the boss, pray for your boss.

5. And pray for our national leaders.

C. Paul was a prayerful person.

1. This is an area that this church needs to grow in.

2. Let us grow in prayer, together.

## 2. Reputation matters.

A. Paul said that their faith was proclaimed in all the world.

1. The news about the Roman believers was GOOD.

2. Rome was a mess, but the Church in Rome was not.

a. Oh my friends, America is a mess.

b. But what is the Church's reputation?

c. I'm afraid that the people of God look too much like the messiness of our world instead of the righteousness of Jesus.

B. What is being reported about you?

1. What is your reputation in town?

2. People get all sorts of upset about being judged by others, but make sure your reputation can handle it.

3. Your reputation matters because you represent the Body of Christ.

a. Have you ever been getting dressed up and then got a stain on your khakis?



b. Even though it was a just a little stain, most of us will go in and change because we don't want that stain to poorly represent the rest of the outfit and us.

c. My friends, our reputation matters because we are part of a larger outfit, the body and Bride of Christ.

4. Paul reminded the Romans they were loved by God and called to be saints.

a. While saints are normal people they are different.

b. Their life, language, and outlook are different.

c. Our reputation matters.

C. The reputation of your church matters.

1. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he was upset because a man was openly sinning and no one said anything.

a. The man's name is not mentioned, but the Church is.

b. His actions reflected poorly upon the whole body.

2. The reputation of our church matters.

a. We want a church we are not embarrassed to attend.

b. We want a church that we can invite our friends to.

c. We want a church that the community respects.

d. All of this matters because it all reflects Jesus.

3. We are not and will not be perfect.

a. But this does not excuse sinful or poor behavior.

b. Brothers and Sisters, our reputation matters and someday we will be judged by someone greater than public opinion or a jury of our peers.

c. But instead, we will stand before the thrice holy God.

d. Individually and corporately, let us strive for a reputation that honors God in all things and all places.

### 3. Make plans, and hold them Loosely.

#### A. I don't like undefined plans.

1. I want to know where I'm going, when, and how to get there.

a. God knows that.

b. And that is why He is often general and vague with me, requiring me to trust Him for the details and specifics.

2. Others in the room may prefer to be more free-spirited; go with the flow; nothing definite or permanent.

a. And God knowing that, gives you specific, detailed instructions requiring determined obedience.

b. Why?

#### B. Servants and slaves don't have their own plans, but only the master's.

1. Paul described himself as a servant of Jesus.

2. He is also an apostle:

a. Apostles don't carry their own message, they carry their Lord's.

b. Paul desired to visit Rome, but the timing, purpose, and plan were all up to the Lord.

3. This is why he prays, "if God wills, I will come and visit you."

a. Paul is saying that the desire is his, and he believes that God is in that desire, but that desire was entrusted to God.

b. If God wills, I will come to you.

c. Paul couldn't force it, will it, manifest it, or anything else.

d. If God will's I will go.

C. Is it appropriate to pray "If God will's?"

1. Yes, but not for things that have already been confirmed.

a. In Acts 18:21 and Romans 15:23, Paul says he hopes to do something, if God will's.

b. He is uncertain of what God's definite plan was, so he prayed "if God will's."

2. We can pray "if it is gods will" if His will has not already been revealed.

a. Often Christians appeal to a prayer that Gideon prayed, and we call it putting a fleece before God.

b. **Super quick.** The Lord told Gideon what to do, but Gideon wanted that word confirmed, so he asked for two different signs, which God confirmed.

c. But should we seek signs to confirm when we KNOW what God has said?

1. **As Spirit-filled believers who also have God's Word, we must be careful in demanding a sign for what we know to be true.**

2. The sin of the Jews was to look for a sign when they already knew God's will.

3. A sin for believers can be the insistence of a sign to confirm what we already know to be true.

4. To seek a second opinion when we know what to do.

D. Servants do not dictate God's plans; they obey them.

1. It is BIBLICAL to hold our plans and our future loosely.

2. Paul submitted his future to God's will and the Book of James makes this absolutely clear:

## James 4:13–17 (CSB)

<sup>13</sup>Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.” <sup>14</sup>Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes.

<sup>15</sup>Instead, you should say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” <sup>16</sup>But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup>So it is sin to know the good and yet not do it.

3. The future is in God's hands alone.

- a. He is the only one that is eternal.
- b. He is the only one that is infinite.
- c. We work for Him.

### E. Our task as God's servants is to steward today.

1. Jesus said Don't worry about tomorrow; it doesn't add to our days.

2. Don't sacrifice the journey because the journey matters as much as the destination.

3. Paul desired to visit Rome, and he did a short-time after this letter.

- a. Paul had a plan and the plan was good.
- b. But when you trust your life to Jesus, you must include your plans for the future.
- c. Make plans, but hold them loosely.
- d. Because we are here on Earth to bring God glory.

Prayer Time: Good People, Good News, Good Plans

