

“Our Reputation”
Romans 1:8
(Preached at Trinity, December 3, 2006)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been examining **Verses 1-7** of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. These verses contain his salutation but, as we’ve seen, we must not look at these verses as a mere formality. No, Paul has been skillfully plying Biblical truth. One of the most important teachings he develops in these early verses is the nature of the Gospel.
 - A. Beginning in **Verse 8** and continuing through **Verse 15** Paul writes in a more personal tone; it is more pastoral in nature. He’s interested in their mutual encouragement and edification.
Romans 1:12 – “. . . that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.”
 - B. In **Verse 16** Paul will return to the subject of the Gospel
Romans 1:16-17 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
2. Although Paul does not intend to be doctrinal in these verses, he is doctrinal. Paul continually teaches and applies Biblical truth.
3. Paul begins by expressing the thanksgiving he offers up before God for them.
Romans 1:8 – “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”
4. Paul is grateful for their reputation, their consistent testimony to the world. Our reputation is that part of our character that others know us by. Our reputation identifies us before others. They may know you as an honest person, as a caring person, an humble person, or they may know you as dishonest, proud and arrogant, selfish. They may know you as a person of principle who consistently follows the path of truth and righteousness or a person that changes with every wind of opinion easily swayed by other people.
5. How important is your reputation? Paul saw the reputation of the Roman Christians as being so important he thanked God for it.
 - A. Paul wasn’t just talking about any reputation
 - B. Everyone knows the names of Bill Gates, Michael Jordan, Sadaam Hussein, Oprah Winfrey – I’m not talking about just being well known.
6. What was the chief element of their reputation that others spoke of? Their faith. “that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”
7. But what is this faith? What does faith mean to you?
 - A. Some see faith as some religious feeling. They say, I have faith that I’m a Christian. It is purely subjective. I’m a Christian because I believe I am. It’s all about feelings.
 - B. For others faith is more of a high optimism. I have faith that they’re going to find a cure for my cancer. I have faith that I am going to get that job. It is nothing more than wishful thinking.

8. Paul is talking about a particular faith that manifests itself in particular ways.
- I. The first aspect of this is saving faith, Paul is talking about the manifestation of their salvation
 - A. The church of Rome was made up of believers
 1. Paul was praising God for His saving work upon the members of the Church of Rome
Romans 1:8 – “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”
 - a. They were beloved by God
 - b. They were called to be saints
 2. Salvation is a work of God through Christ. The Gospel centers on Christ – Christ is the distinguishing mark of the Christian
 3. As the world looked upon the church of Rome they could see evidence of this miraculous work of God.
 4. Paul isn’t saying that there were no unbelievers in the Church of Rome. There may have been some self-deceived hypocrites in the church but as far as anyone could witness they were all believers.
 5. That Paul was commending their testimony to the world tells us this church was concerned about holiness which means discipline was being practiced.
 - a. Discipline is essential if holiness is to be maintained.
 - b. Robert Haldane wrote of their faith – “If any were discovered who had crept in unawares, or were convicted of unbecoming conduct, or who had a form of godliness, but denied its power, from such they were commanded to turn away.”
 - B. Paul was thankful because their genuine faith demonstrated the power of God
 1. It is God’s work from start to finish so God rightly deserves all the praise
 2. Salvation is not just convincing a man to decide to follow Christ – no man would ever do that. Salvation is a supernatural work of God
 3. Listen to the testimony of Scripture
Romans 1:16-17 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
1 Corinthians 2:1-5 – “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: ⁵ That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

1 Thessalonians 1:2-5 – “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; ³ Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; ⁴ Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. ⁵ For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance”

- C. God powerfully moves upon His people granting unto them faith
1. Faith is the source of every action in the Christian life
Without faith our labors are without substance
Hebrews 11:6 – “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
 2. It is by faith that the great name of God is exalted

II. Second, their faith was marked by a great confidence in God

- A. Paul says, “I thank my God” and knows that God has become their God. The expression “my God” is a wonderful statement of faith for Christians
1. It is a testimony to God’s Covenant promise
Jeremiah 31:33 – “But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
2 Corinthians 6:17-18 – “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”
 2. This is our great confidence
Psalms 18:2 – “The LORD *is my* rock, and *my* fortress, and *my* deliverer; *my* God, *my* strength, in whom I will trust; *my* buckler, and the horn of *my* salvation, *and my* high tower.”
Galatians 2:20 – “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.”
 3. Such language is the privilege of the believer – it comes by faith and results in great confidence before God. Is God your God?
- B. Through every trial we have learned to trust God
1. God is our God and we are His people
 2. We know God is on our side – He is working on our behalf
 3. The world is watching – they know the source of our confidence.
 4. How do you respond to adversity?

III. Faith’s Fruits

- A. Salvation doesn’t just produce an invisible faith
1. Faith is lived, it is demonstrated – it can be seen
 2. Faith that isn’t seen is a false faith
James 2:20 – “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”

3. We often hear people say in our corrupt religious society, “My faith is a personal thing.” This usually means their faith is non-existent
- B. Believers live according to the testimony of genuine faith - what are some
1. The life of faith is a life of love – it is God’s mark upon us
1 John 4:7-8 – “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. ⁸ He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”
 2. The life of faith is a life of discipline
1 Corinthians 9:27 – “But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”
^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 9:27** – “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”
 3. The life of faith is a life given away
1 Corinthians 6:20 – “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”
 - a. The child of faith lives a life of sacrificial service to Christ
 - b. This is a testimony to the world
 4. The life of faith is a life of contentment
Philippians 4:11-13 – “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. ¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”
 5. The life of faith is a life of joy
1 Peter 1:7-9 – “. . . Jesus Christ: ⁸ Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: ⁹ Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls.”
 6. The life of faith is a life of holiness
 Holiness
Hebrews 12:14 – “Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”
 7. The life of faith is a life of peace
Romans 1:7 – “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- B. These things are demonstrated to the world
1. They will hate us because our lives condemn them
 2. They will hate us because we belong to Christ
 3. But let them marvel at us and hopefully glorify God in their salvation
1 Peter 2:11-12 – “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; ¹² Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

- IV. We can also see faith here as the system of belief – our faith that must be shared – It can be equated with the Gospel.
- A. This is a fitting statement in the context of Paul’s salutation
 - 1. He stated in **Verse 1** that he was “separated unto the Gospel of God”
 - 2. He defined this Gospel in **Verses 2-5** – It is the message of Christ
 - 3. He stated in **Verses 6-7** that the Romans were blessed in this Gospel – they were the beloved of God, called to be saints.
 - 4. They were brought into the faith through the Gospel of Christ
 - B. Now he states that their faith was spoken of throughout the world – the people around them
 - 1. This has evangelistic overtones
 - 2. Their lives and message was having an effect upon the world
This was the same testimony that the Thessalonians had
1 Thessalonians 1:8 – “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”
 - 3. Their faith was going forth in the world as an example. Most important, Paul was grateful that the name of Christ was being spread throughout the world. When faith spreads the name of Christ is exalted.
 - C. Our faith must be sound abroad
 - 1. This should always be on our mind
 - 2. Do you live your faith so that it sounds forth to all men?
 - 3. It’s by genuine faith that we are able to reflect the light of Christ and shine forth in this world of darkness.

Conclusion:

1. How are we to evaluate a church?
 - A. Which is better – a church of 300 members where most are carnal and living in unbelief or a church of 50 members who love Christ with a passion?
 - B. How often do you hear the charge of hypocrite leveled at local churches?
 - C. Rome was a church with many members whose reputation was well known
 - a. What kind of reputation does our church have?
 - b. First, to have a reputation at all demands that others know us
If we never do anything we will have no reputation at all
 - c. When others look at our church what do they see?
2. What effect does your membership have on our church’s reputation? Do you promote it? Does your life paint a positive reputation for our church?