



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

September 3, 2021

DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence

“And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:6)

Did You Know?

- The letter to the Romans was written by apostle Paul. “No voice from the early church was ever raised against his authorship”.
- Scholars date this book about AD 57, more precisely at “early spring”. Very likely Paul was on his third missionary journey, ready to return to Jerusalem with an offering from the mission churches for poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem. In 15:26 it is suggested that Paul had already received contributions from the church of Macedonia and Achaia.
- The original recipients of the letter were Christians living in Rome. Chapter 16 suggests that there were at least five house churches in the city.
- Paul's primary theme is the basic gospel, God's plan of salvation and righteousness for all humankind, Jew and Gentile alike. (See 1:16-17) In verse 17 *righteousness* means the right relationship with God.

(The NIV Study Bible; Romans)

Personal Insight

What stood out to me in the recommended reading from Paul's letter below can be summarized in the verse 6: “... **you ... who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.**”

Right relationships and belonging to someone who loves us have utmost importance in our physical, spiritual and mental well-being. Without these we wither just as plants and flowers wilt in drought. Science also recognizes the significance of connections and relationships in preventing or slowing down dementia. The wisdom of the Scriptures is valid even in fighting this disease: **“It is not good for the man to be alone.”** (Genesis 2:18)

We need loving and healthy human relationships to thrive; but we also need the connection with our Creator God, who knows – as we were reminded by Psalm 139 in the previous days – even “when [we] sit and when [we] rise”; who “perceives [our] thoughts from afar.” (Verse 2). And as Paul reminds the believers in Rome, we also **“are loved by God and called to be his holy people.”** (Romans 1:7)

May this good news give us encouragement and inspiration! We are loved, and through Jesus are called to belong to not less than the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer God! May this ‘glad tidings’ heal and nourish our relationships with one another as well.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



The Power of the Gospel

I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

Romans 1:15

READ Romans 1:1–7, 14–17

Ancient Rome had its own version of “the gospel”—the good news. According to the poet Virgil, Zeus, king of the gods, had decreed for the Romans a kingdom without end or boundaries. The gods had chosen Augustus as divine son and savior of the world by ushering in a golden age of peace and prosperity.

This, however, wasn’t everyone’s idea of good news. For many it was an unwelcome reality enforced by the heavy hand of the emperor’s army and executioners. The glory of the empire was built on the backs of enslaved people who served without legal personhood or property at the pleasure of masters who ruled over them.

This was the world in which Paul introduced himself as a servant of Christ (Romans 1:1). Jesus—how Paul had once hated that name. And how Jesus Himself had suffered for admitting to being the king of the Jews and Savior of the world.

This was the good news Paul would explain in the rest of his letter to the Romans. This gospel was “the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (v. 16). Oh, how it was needed by those who suffered under Caesar! Here was the news of a crucified and resurrected Savior—the liberator who conquered His enemies by showing how much He loved them. – By **Mart DeHaan**

REFLECT & PRAY

Loving God, thank You for the good news. Give me the boldness to share the gospel with those around me. Amen.

As you read Paul’s opening words to the Romans, what phrases describe the good news to you? (1:1–7). Why would Paul, who had once hated Jesus so much, now want everyone to believe in Him? (See Acts 26).

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The letter to the Romans opens with Paul identifying himself as “an apostle . . . set apart for the gospel of God” (1:1). His letter is written “to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people” (v. 7). Yet Paul singles out the gentiles for special mention (vv. 5–6), perhaps because their inclusion in the family of faith was still a radical concept. Paul reiterates this cross-cultural unity later in the chapter: “The power of God . . . brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” (v. 16). – By **Tim Gustafson**

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