

## Signs of Life

In the coming weeks a yearly ritual will begin. The days will begin to warm, grass will once again sprout, and wildflowers will dot the hillsides as creation once again wakes from its winter slumber. When spring comes we see signs of life everywhere, so when God begins to stir in the hearts of his people, we see signs of life that indicate growth. Sometimes as we look at our own lives, we go through long stretches of winter where growth and even life seem absent. Just as spring interrupts the silence of winter, the stirrings of God's Spirit become apparent, and we see signs of life everywhere.

This week, we see some remarkable signs of life and growth in the Apostle Paul. What will we see if we look at his life? Well, we will see Paul's courage, his teachable spirit, and eagerness for the things of God. These are just some of the many signs of life that we may observe in those who are growing in Christ.

### Monday – Paul's Passion for People

1. Please read Romans 1:7-17. Does Paul think that the Romans would be the only beneficiaries of this visit to Rome (see verses 11 and 12)? Who else would benefit? What does this say about Paul's ideas about church and leadership?
2. Why do you think Paul is so motivated to see people he has never met and preach the gospel where he has never been? Is there a principal we can draw from this desire for our own context?
3. Though Paul was thwarted in his plans to travel to Rome, he responded by praying (see verses 8-10 and 13). Take some time to pray for people you know and people you don't know but whose faith you have heard about.

### Tuesday – Obligation and Eagerness

*"Not all of us will be called to engage in evangelism full time... We will struggle to balance the demands of life with those of evangelism. But every Christian should have the same sense of obligation that Paul speaks of in Romans 1:14-15."* Doug Moo - The NIV Application Commentary

1. Please read Romans 1:11-15 giving notice of Paul's use of the words *obligation* and *eager*.
2. Who does Paul feel obligated to? Very often we view "obligation" in a negative sense. An obligation is often seen as something that is not heartfelt and done out of duty. How did Paul's sense of obligation integrate both heart and duty?
3. What Christian practices do you see as obligations? Which do you take on with eagerness?

### Wednesday – Ashamed?

*"In today's Western world, people are often ashamed of the Christian gospel. It is often mocked, sneered at and dismissed...on the radio and TV... But in Paul's day there was a different challenge...Caesar claimed to rule the world; God's gospel claimed that Jesus did."* NT Wright - Romans for Everyone

1. Please Read Romans 1:14-17 and Psalm 119:46. Why does Paul say he is not ashamed? What does he think the gospel is? Is this how you view the gospel?
2. When was the last time you spoke of Jesus without shame? When was the last time you were afraid to speak of Jesus in a context that would have been appropriate but unpopular?

**Prayer for Grace** – Spend some time asking God for the grace to speak of the gospel without shame.

### Thursday – Courage to Testify

*"One man with courage makes a majority."* Andrew Jackson

1. Please read Romans 1:16 and 2 Timothy 1:6-12. Timothy, who was given to timidity (verse 7), faced the temptation of distancing himself from the gospel and Paul (who was in prison). What is Paul's encouragement to him?
2. Why does courage require a willingness to suffer? Why was Paul willing to suffer for the gospel? Why should we be willing?

**Making it Personal** – Where do you need a measure of courage in your life right now? Ask God for a measure of grace to step out in faith and courage.

### Friday – A New Kind of Righteousness

*"I had greatly longed to understand Paul's letter to the Romans, and...one expression, 'the righteousness of God', because I took it to mean the righteousness whereby God is righteous and acts righteously punishing the unrighteous...Night and day I pondered until...I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is the righteousness whereby through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith."*

Martin Luther speaking about his conversion

1. Please read Romans 1:14-17 and Habakkuk 1:1-2:5. From where does the gospel say righteousness comes from?
2. How are righteousness and faith connected?
3. Paul's statement about righteousness finds its origins in the book of Habakkuk. What is the context of the verse in Habakkuk?