

ROMANS

LAYING A SOLID FOUNDATION



I. Ongoing Thrust of the Gospel {1:8-17}

The Roman Epistle

This portion of the introduction sent to the church at Rome reveals Paul's eagerness to visit in order to preach to them the gospel message (1:15). Paul focuses upon our clear purpose in the gospel to call others to the obedience that comes from faith (1:5, 17), and so now he prays for an opening to do so to those who are in Rome, because many times he had been hindered from coming to them (1:10, 13 ; 15:22-24). Paul praised their faith and obedience, for it had become widely known about (1:8 ; 16:19), and he sincerely desired to impart some spiritual gift which would strengthen the church in their faith (1:11-13). All of this was bathed in thankful prayer as Paul constantly remembered them before God and asked them to pray for him as well (1:8, 9 ; 15:30, 31).

A. On-going Thanksgiving & Intercessory Prayer: (1:8, 9, 10)

There is widespread gratitude in the heart when a faithful witness has been made. Prayers to God were offered continuously on behalf of the church growing in Rome.

Paul's Habit of Prayer

- ❖ "...how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times..." Romans 1:9a-10b
- ❖ "I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking ..." Eph. 1:16-17
- ❖ "... since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you ..." Colossians 1:9
- ❖ "... night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers." 2 Timothy 1:3
- ❖ "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ..." Philippians 1:3, 4

Paul expresses a genuine desire for their welfare as he mentions his faithful prayers on behalf of those in Rome (1:9, 10). Evidently, he had "*planned many times to come*" but was prevented from doing so, a desire he had nurtured "*for many years*" (15:23). The reason he was unable to go centers around his obedience to preach the gospel "*from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum*" to those who had not heard (15:19). But Paul's plans included going farther on into Spain (15:24, 28).

B. On-going Spiritual Training: (1:11, 12, 13)

Paul desired to bring forth fruit in their lives to more firmly establish them. The hopeful result was mutual encouragement in the faith. He also made them aware of the difficulty he faced in attempting to come to minister among them.

"For God whom I serve in my spirit... (v. 9)"

Paul, "*less that the least of all God's people*" (Eph.3:8), yearned to impart to others what he had been graciously given. This man who was "*once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man*" was shown mercy and appointed to Christ's service (1 Tim.1:12, 13). Claiming to be the worst of sinners, Paul marks himself out to be a prime "*example for those who would believe on him (Jesus Christ) and receive eternal life*" (1 Tim.1:15, 16).

Paul expresses a longing to impart some "*spiritual gift*" (1:11). It is not certain just what "gift" means here, but it is unlikely that he is referring to a specific gift such as the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Cor.12 & 14. The purpose of this gift was to strengthen the brethren, a strengthening of faith that Paul expected to benefit from too (1:12). Paul speaks about coming to them with "*the full measure of the blessing of Christ*" (15:19) and "*with joy*", in such a manner as "*to*

be refreshed" together (15:32). All such comments indicate his idea of "spiritual gift". True to his calling, Paul deeply desired to have a harvest among them (1:13), and to "preach the gospel" to them (1:15).

C. **On-going Proclamation to Unbelievers:** (1:14, 15)

Paul then mentions his deep obligation to preach the Gospel to them: the full scope expressed using two sets of contrast (Greek / barbarian & wise / foolish).

"Paul had long been **"eager to preach the gospel"** to those in Rome (1:15). Paul considered this his *priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God*" (15:16). Paul clearly understood that it was Christ accomplishing through him, the work of "leading the Gentiles to obey God" in all that he had said and done (15:17,18).

The word "gospel" essentially means good news. This is a "gospel of God" (1:1), a "gospel promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (1:2), and a gospel which is to be proclaimed (15:16) for it is the gospel of "his Son" (1:9). This gospel reveals "a righteousness from God" (1:17), a righteousness apart from law, "to which the law and the prophets testify" (3:21). Paul signifies here a fulfillment of the central thrust of God's Old Testament promise, for indeed this gospel would be "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (1:16).

Paul explains that the gospel he preached was "not something which man made up" but that it was the direct "revelation from Jesus Christ" (Gal.1:11,12). Indeed Paul claimed to have been "set apart" since his birth, called explicitly by God's grace for this very task which took him before "Gentiles and their Kings" as well as before the people of Israel (Gal.15,16). It was a calling in which he would "suffer much" for the name of Christ (Acts 9:15,16).

D. **On-going Power of God to Save:** (1:16, 17)

Paul explains that the Gospel reveals the power of God for salvation to those who believe. For in it God's righteousness is revealed, a righteousness that we embrace in a life of obedience that comes from faith (1:5). In 1515 Martin Luther experienced a "Tower Experience" in relation to verse 17. As he worked through teaching it to his students, he came to encounter God's truth about the true meaning of the 'Gospel'. This set in full motion the Reformation that God used him as an instrument to bring about.

"... your faith is being proclaimed throughout the world"

It is a faith which manifests in obedience (1:5), a faith of those in Rome which became "reported all over the world" (1:8), and a faith that mutually encourages (1:12). It is a faith in the gospel which is the power of God for salvation (1:16), a faith which justifies apart from observing the law of God (3:28) but results in upholding the law (3:31). It is a faith "from first to last" that is inseparably linked to the revealed righteousness from God (1:17), which means essentially that it is a "faith in Jesus Christ" (3:22).

Faith + Good Works => Salvation

Faith => Salvation

Faith => Salvation + Good Works

We are saved by faith alone, but not a faith that is alone!

All saints, both Jew and Gentile (1:16), belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and are loved by God (1:7). Paul wanted to encourage the church at Rome in the righteousness of Christ, received by faith, from first to last: evidenced by true obedience to God (1:5, 17 ; 16:26). Indeed, the gospel graciously makes known the power of God to save from sin (1:16), a gospel revealed by the command of God Himself (15:21 ; 16:25-27), so that people from all nations might belong to the Lord Jesus Christ (1:6).

Discussion Questions:

1. In what way is Paul's prayer life essential to his ministry? How is your prayer life in interceding for others?
2. Like Paul, we need not be ashamed of the gospel. Do you speak of your faith with those who do not know the Savior? If so please give an example: if not please help us know why not? (Are you interested to be trained to do so?)
3. If we are saved by faith alone, can you explain to others the relationship of faith in and obedience to God?