

Romans Chapter 1

Verses 8 -17

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January, 2011

In verses 1 – 7, Paul has introduced himself and greeted those to whom his letter is addressed. In verses 8 – 17, he will state his personal concern, support and prayers

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. ⁹For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, ¹⁰always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. ¹¹For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; ¹²that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

¹⁴I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

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First and foremost, Paul thanks God, through Jesus Christ for those in Rome.

This verse is close to 2000 years old and the warmth of Paul's affection for these brothers and sisters he has never met still comes through. They

There is a reason why he thanks God for these brothers and sisters. He is grateful for their faith and because the faith they express is so strong that it is being talked about across the world. It is not the size of the sanctuary in their church, or their family life center, welcoming hall or majestic bell tower. It is their faith. They were a church of great faith.

Everything starts with faith. Before belief, we have faith, In order to trust in the Lord we must have faith. We are moved from stillness to action largely because of faith. It is the foundation of our

belief and Paul tells those in Rome that their faith was well known (proclaimed) throughout the whole world.

Paul wants the Roman Christians to know with certainty that they were in his prayers. In fact, he , unceasingly (without stopping) remembers them in his prayers.

This letter is almost 200 years old and the warm affection Paul feels for the Church in Rome still comes across. In his Daily Study Bible, William Barclay writes about "Paul's great heart throbbing with love for the church he has never seen"

One problem we have in the church today may well be that we do not pray for other congregations enough. Paul knew the value of prayer and his prayers were woven with lifting others up to the Father. It was his way and what he taught. As Christians we have the privilege and duty and responsibility to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ. As Paul did in his time, we should also in our time lift up fellow Christians around the world to our Heavenly Father and Lord. In Christ we have unlimited access to the throne of Grace. While we are there, we need to hold up others in our prayers.

Again from Barclay: "Even if we are separated from people and even if there is no other gift we can give to them, we can surround them with the strength and defense of our prayers."

The prayers of others lifted up and held this congregation before God!

¹⁰always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

Not only did Paul pray for his Christian brothers and sisters, but he prayed that he would be allowed to visit them. Paul's desire was to have face to face time with the church in Rome.

We need to remember that Paul had never been to Rome, but he still prayed for these Christians without ceasing. He constantly prayed for people, many (perhaps all) of whom he had never met. They remained in his thoughts and prayers. It was his desire to visit Rome and one that he never backed away from as he ministered to others.

Paul wanted to share his faith with the Christians in Rome, understanding that they had as much to give to him as he had to share with them. This mutual sharing is what makes Christ's church strong. As we minister to (pray for, fellowship with) each other, we strengthen God's kingdom.

Those we like to call "Prayer Warriors" know and understand the power of fervent communal prayer. This fact that comes so easily to the understanding of those who are close to the Lord is one of the Great Mysteries Paul writes about. It is a fact that is lost to the unbeliever.

¹¹For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; ¹²that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

It is interesting to contemplate and speculate on what spiritual gift Paul thought he might impart (Give) to the believers in Rome. There is no indication here that Paul knew what gift he was to impart. Perhaps he simply looked to the past and knew that His faith joined with the faith of those in Rome would lead to incredible occurrences. Whatever Paul believed concerning spiritual gifts in

Rome, he believed that his visit and the transferring of spiritual gifts would in some way establish the believers on Rome – establish them in Greater faith, greater work for God's kingdom, Closer relationship with the Lord. He also leaves no doubt that he believes he will be as encouraged by those in Rome as they may be with him (each of us encouraged by the other's faith, both yours and mine).

In his humility, Paul understood that he had as much to gain from the church in Rome as they might expect from him. This is the beauty of Christian fellowship. As we give, so shall we receive. When people of faith come together in worship and fellowship, everyone gains and Christ's kingdom grows as everyone grows in Christ, together.

Paul may have been the greatest thinker of the early church, but he was not above a desire to grow from the Faith of the church in Rome as they benefited from his presence.

¹³I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

One of the great desires of Paul's life was to make his way to Rome. There can be no doubt that he knew the Great command of Christ in Acts 1:8

⁸ "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

There can be no doubt that Paul saw Rome (and as he will later state in this letter – Spain) as a necessary step in his efforts to spread the Gospel as commanded by the Lord.

Rome was in Christ's plan for the spread of His Church. As in Christ's plan, it was also in Paul's plan. He makes his desire very plain to the brothers and sisters in Rome. He intended many times to come and each time he has been prevented by circumstances he cannot control. His failure to come has not hindered his desire in any way.

Why?

He wants to obtain fruit from among those in Rome. What is the purpose of Fruit? Multiplication. Fruit serves no other purpose for the plant. It is only produced for reproduction.

Our fruit is the seed of reproduction for the Lord's Kingdom – Christ's Church. Paul has seen this fruit elsewhere (even as among the rest of the Gentiles). He wants to see it coming from those in Rome also.

¹⁴I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Paul states here that he is under obligation. What does it mean to be under an obligation? Webster defines obligation as "a duty (force) that binds one to the actions demanded by that force.

John D. Rockefeller said "Every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty."

As a part of his decision and commitment to be called a saint, an apostle and by his desire to be a bond-servant, Paul carries a responsibility, obligation and duty. He understands to whom he must

answer. He is a bond-servant to Christ Jesus and one who has answered the great commission of Jesus (Acts 1:8) “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

And, so Paul carries an obligation to both Greek and barbarian. He is under obligation to them for two reasons.

1 – To honor the great command of Christ to take the kingdom (make disciples) of both Jew and Gentile.

2 – They have treated him well. He had received much kindness from them over the years of his ministry. Many times, he was put down by the Jews in his efforts and found the actual advancement of Christ’s Church and support in the towns he visited from the Greeks and barbarians (Those who spoke Greek - the universal language of that time {Greek} and those who didn’t {barbarians}).

Paul carries duty to witness to both the wise and foolish. Years of service to the Master have shown him he has a part, and he is eager to serve as a witness (“preach the gospel”) to those in Rome.

He carries a duty to those who speak Greek and those who don’t. He carries a duty to bring the Gospel to the wise and simple, cultured and common, educated and uneducated. Paul understood what Jesus demanded. He had a message for the world.

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The Gospel is the Power and Righteousness of God

Paul writes that he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the Power of God, for Salvation. This is the great power that the Gospel contains. It is God’s truth, given to bring mankind to Him, through faith. Paul knows that the offer and gift of salvation is freely given both first to the Jews (Who are God’s chosen people), but also to everyone else.

The introduction of Paul’s letter has been completed. This is the statement of the theme of his letter. This letter is to be about (All About) the Gospel, facts about which Paul has no shame.

About this verse, Barclay writes:

“Paul has been imprisoned in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica smuggled out of Beroea, laughed at in Athens. He had preached in Corinth where his message was foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews and out of that background Paul declared that he was proud of the Gospel. There was something in the Gospel which made Paul triumphantly victorious over all that men could do to him.”

What in the Gospel made Paul proud?

Salvation – from our lost condition of sin and the wrath of a Just God. The one thing we are all searching for. In our flawed condition, we need the gift of salvation. It certainly is something we lack the ability to earn.

Faith and belief – the conviction that something is true. The belief in things that have no outward proof. Total acceptance and absolute trust.

¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

To Paul, the whole work of Jesus was that Jesus had enabled men to enter into a new and precious relationship with God.

The Gospel is the Righteousness of God. We might call this the worth. Through the Gospel, we are made worthy of God. Righteousness before God is worthiness before God. Our acceptance of the Gospel in Faith makes us worthy (righteous) before God. We know that only God is righteous and we have little hope of living in full righteousness. We remind ourselves (faith) that as we struggle in our daily lives, the Gospel has made us worthy in God's eyes. God loves us. He restored us through the gospel and gave us worthiness through our faith in the gospel.

The message to us as we witness and work for God's kingdom is the same as for Paul. There is no shame in the Gospel, because it is good news that comes from God. It is the guidance and Power of God to salvation, freely offered to anyone (everyone) who believes.

Paul had a great desire to share the Gospel with others (Greeks and barbarians) because he knew that regardless of their condition (wise and foolish) they needed it. In Paul's mind, Rome was no different.

The Gospel Paul wanted to preach was all of the great facts about humanity and about God - How he wants to have us (in faith) unite with God and in doing that enter into the process of becoming whole (holy).

"BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

The passage from Habakkuk that Paul quotes is the one that brought Martin Luther to an understanding of God's will and in doing that captured his heart. Paul writes that he had no shame in proclaiming this gospel to those in Rome. The fact is, He was anxious to do just that thing.

What does Paul mean when he writes "from Faith to Faith"?

"Righteousness of God is revealed from Faith to Faith"

"From Faith to Faith" = through faith for faith

"From Faith to Faith" = shared by Faith to produce faith

"From Faith to Faith" = Faith from the beginning to the end - by faith from first to last – start to finish

"From Faith to Faith" = from faith in the Law to faith in the Gospel

"From Faith to Faith" = from faith of OT believers to faith of NT believers

“From Faith to Faith” = from present faith to future faith

“From Faith to Faith” = from example of faith to example of faith

“From Faith to Faith” = (Romans 3:22) From God’s faithfulness to man’s faithfulness

“From Faith to Faith” = by faith and nothing but faith – faith alone

“From Faith to Faith” = duration, progression, repetition

“From Faith to Faith” = point of origin to destination

“From Faith to Faith” = through progressive levels of strength

“From Faith to Faith” = from faith of the old dispensation to faith of the new dispensation