

## **A Look Into Paul's Heart**

### **Romans 1:8-13**

In **verse 8**, Paul gives a testimony of the Church at Rome that ought to be the testimony in all places where the saints of God are assembled. The testimony was: “your faith is spoken of throughout all the world.” What a great way to get the attention of those serving the Lord at Rome! I imagine they were immediately engaged when they heard what Paul had to say about them and to them.

In fact, that is the method the apostle uses in his letters addressed to the Churches. He opens those epistles by commending them before he begins to correct and exhort them.

(I cannot help but wonder what is said about the Church where I attend and what the boundary of its testimony may be? I am certain that it has a testimony and I believe it is the right kind of testimony. What people say about any fellowship of faith, is determined by the life lived and the worship offered by those who make up the body of a particular fellowship of faith. All of us ought to be concerned about what our testimony is personally, and all of us ought to be concerned about what our testimony is collectively as being a part of an independent body of believers. We should all strive to make it a testimony that honors our Lord.)

In **verse 9** we find Paul calling on the Lord Himself as his personal witness in reference to his faithfulness in prayer for the Church at Rome. As we consider this prayer of Paul, from this we see he took prayer to be a very personal thing. And, according to his own testimony, he prayed for the household of faith, constantly. From all indication, he was very faithful in this particular ministry. In reading the other epistles penned by the apostle, we learn how much of an emphasis he placed on prayer. We also learn the priority Paul gave to prayer as it related, not only to his own spiritual welfare, but also for the spiritual welfare of the Church he was ministering to. From what we learn here from Paul about prayer, we ought to be challenged and motivated to make prayer a priority in our own spiritual life as much as the apostle did.

In this verse, we find the gospel mentioned once again. Here he refers to it as the “gospel of his Son.” In **verse 1**, he referred to it as the “gospel of God” because it originated with God the Father. Here, it is spoken as being the “gospel of his Son” because the message of the gospel is all about God’s only begotten Son, Jesus

Christ. Please take note of the capitalization of the word Son in this verse. The intent is to emphasize the uniqueness of this “only begotten” one of a kind Son of God. It is used to set Him off and above all the other sons of God.

I am afraid, in this day, the ignorance of many is made manifest as we hear some say things like “Since we are all (those who have been born again) sons of God, then Jesus is no longer the only begotten Son of God.” And, yet, that is exactly what the Word of God continues to say! Sadly, (in this day when access to knowledge is great), there are many who claim to have some new insight into Bible truth. But, when they are listened to and their words are weighed, it becomes apparent to anyone with a degree of spiritual acumen, that they lack the necessary wisdom and basic ability to rightly divide the Word of God! I am afraid this truth is all too true in this present age.

In **Verse 10**, Paul reveals to us a desire of his heart. That desire is the one (I believe) the apostle has had since the day Ananias prayed with him and told him the plans the Lord had for him, now that he was in Christ. Paul had a great desire to see Rome. When he went, he desired his journey to be a “prosperous” one. For that to be true, he knew the only way for it to be so was for it to be “in the will of God” which would mean it also had to be according to His timing. Would we not all be wise to pray in the manner in which Paul prayed? That is pray in full submission to the will of God. I believe the apostle would have prayed in that same manner, even if he knew his trip to Rome would involve chains, a storm, a shipwreck, and a viper. In fact, according to **Acts 21:13**, although the apostle may not have known the particulars he would face at Rome and getting there: he did state he was ready to die there if it meant he could preach the gospel to the people he had been called to minister to in that great Gentile city.

**Verse 11** continues the thought began in **verse 10**. In fact, as Paul opens his heart up to the believers at Rome (and to us), he states the reason for the deep passion he had towards them. He longed to “impart...some spiritual gift” to them. This means, I believe, he wanted to aid them in their maturation or maturing and growing in the Lord. He wanted to help them in any way and by any means he could. And, there is no doubt that is exactly what he did once he arrived in Rome.

As he continues bearing his heart, he did not want to seem as if he was placing himself above the believers at Rome that had never met him. In **verse 12** he claims that as much as he expected and longed to impart some type of spiritual benefit to

them, he also expected to receive some type of spiritual benefit from them. At least that seems to be the reason for him to say he believed he would “be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.” Actually, that is a great spiritual truth. When ministry is done as God intends for it to be done, it produces a reciprocating effect between a Pastor and his congregation or a teacher and his class whereby both are mutually spiritually benefited in some manner. If things happened according to the will of God, as a preacher/teacher communicates with the Church spiritual things, they will communicate back to him with both spiritual and temporal things.

Although the word “Now” begins **verse 13**, it also seems to indicate the apostle is summing up his personal testimony of purpose towards the Roman believers. He continues here by saying: “I would not have you to be ignorant.” May I say that any time the apostle uses that phrase in his letters he does so because the people he is writing to are ignorant! By that I simply mean they lacked some degree of knowledge. When he says he does not desire them to be ignorant, they actually are ignorant. (I cannot help but see a bit of humor in this.)

As he continues, Paul explains that although he had been “let (or hindered) hitherto,” from coming to Rome, he never waned in his desire to come and minister to them personally. He had a deep longing to be among them. Of the many reasons that may be a true statement, I believe the great apostle was expressing his understanding of the benefits of being assembled together with other saints in order to enjoy the fruits of Christian fellowship. I believe he understood clearly the reason the Holy Spirit moved “holy men” to employ the Greek word “*ecclesia*” in describing the Church as a called out assemble.

**Verse 13** closes this look into the heart of the apostle with a reference to “other Gentiles.” As Peter was particularly the apostle to the Jews, Paul was particularly the apostle to the Gentile and, I believe, he wanted all those at Rome to know that great truth. This verse, and many others like it found in his other letters testify, to not only the duty that possessed this great man, but also the desire this great man possessed. It was a desire to be a blessing to God’s people wherever and whoever they may be.

In the next section, we will discover the “I am” statements of Paul. We will also discover the theme of this great treatise of the Christian faith.

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