

#5 - Romans 1:8-15

I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine... I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, in Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given to me that he had taken my sins away, even mine; and saved me from the law of sin and death. (John Wesley)

Paul's Missional Thanksgiving

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you

- Notice:
 - Paul's givenness to deep emotion (thank, long, eager, etc.)
 - Jesus is our heavenly Mediator ("through Jesus Christ" - cf. 2:16; 5:1, 11, 21; 7:25a; 15:30; 16:27)
 - "Christ is Mediator not only of God's approach to men (as, e.g., in v. 5), but also, as the risen and exalted Lord, of their responding approach to God in worship." (Charles Cranfield)
 - Our prayers and thanksgiving are always and only received by God through the Jesus Christ!
 - "To give thanks to God is to offer him a sacrifice of praise, and therefore he [Paul] adds "through Jesus Christ," as through a high priest. Anyone who wants to offer a sacrifice to God ought to know that he should offer it through the hands of a priest." (Origen)
 - Paul's has not even met this church. He shows deep thanksgiving for local churches that he doesn't even know all that well.

Because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

- Rome is the Capital City and the gospel is thriving there!
- Those who had bowed the knee to Jesus are worshipping the true Lord right in the backyard of Caesars home.
- "His emphasis is not so much on the content of what they believed as on their act of "faith" and their actions of "obedience" in response to God and his salvation as provided 'in Christ.'" (Richard Longenecker, 190)

Paul's Missional Petition

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son

- Excurses: The Challenge of Interpretation
 - List from Longenecker, p. 194

- 1. It refers to the Spirit of God who dwells within Paul and so should be translated “through the Spirit of God imparted to me.”
 - 2. It refers to one’s spiritual (i.e., Christian) service on behalf of God, as contrasted to a carnal (i.e., pagan or Jewish) service.
 - 3. It refers to “wholehearted” service to God.
 - 4. It refers to worship and service done “sincerely.”
 - 5. It refers to “the organ of service,” that is, “the sphere in which the service is rendered.”
 - 6. It refers to one’s whole person, which is sometimes designated as “one’s spirit,” by which one serves God completely.
 - 7. It refers to “the spiritual side of his nature,” as contrasted to the material aspects of his life.
 - 8. It refers to “the inward side of his apostolic service contrasted with the outward side consisting of his preaching, etc.”
 - 9. It refers to “his prayer life, the chief concern of which is, of course, the progress of his missionary work,” and so should be understood as his inward intercession “for the churches and for the progress of the Gospel.”
- 50
- An “Average Joe/Jane” Study Tip: Check out different versions and note minor distinctions.
 - ESV, CSB, KJV - “whom I serve with my spirit”
 - NIV, NASB - “whom I serve in my spirit”
 - NLT - “whom I serve with all my heart”
 - The Message - “whom I so love to worship and serve”
 - Gospel of his Son (cf. verse 1) - Paul uses “God” and “Son” interchangeably!

That without ceasing I mention you, always in my prayers

- **Entrance:** *Asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you...I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented),*
- **Encouragement:** *That I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.*
 - “Spiritual gift”
 - Only time these two Gk. words appear together.
 - Could be many things: one of the gifts in Rom. 12 and 1 Cor. 12, a general beneficial outcome, or the letter itself that Paul is writing.
 - Mutual Edification: Whatever Paul wants to impart it’s going to be for their edification. This is the goal of grace-gifts.
 - “Part of what the obedience that comes through faith is...is obeying

Christ by having the humility to serve, and be served by, his people....We should never leave our church meetings, having spent time surrounded by beloved, distinctive people of Fatih, without feeling encouraged.” (Keller, 15)

- **Evangelism:** *In order that I may reap some harvest among you as well among the rest of the Gentiles.*
 - The harvest is both...
 - The strengthening of the faith of the believers in Rome
 - The increasing movement of the gospel word as more and more come to “the obedience of faith.”

Paul’s Missional Obligation

I am under obligation both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish.

- *Jeremiah 20:9 - If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.”*
- “It is illustrative to think about how I can be in debt to you. First, you may have lent me \$100 —and I am in debt to you until I pay it back. But second, someone else may have given me \$100 to pass on to you—and I am in debt to you until I hand it on. It is in this second sense that Paul is ‘obligated’ to everyone, everywhere....Paul owes people the gospel.” (Keller, 17)
- “The obligation laid upon him in his commissioning by the risen Christ was to take the gospel to all Gentiles without regard to Gentile distinctions of race and status.” (Dunn, 36)

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

- “In days when many of the cultural, societal, psychological, and ecological ramifications and benefits of the gospel have taken center stage in Christian preaching and counseling, it is well to remind ourselves of the centrality of the gospel message itself. For though the Christian gospel has implications for all of life and though as God’s people we are called by God to work out these implications in our own lives, in the lives of people individually, and in society corporately it yet remains true, as Paul says only a few verses later in this same letter to Rome, that it is “the gospel” that is “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (1:16). All-too-often contemporary Christian preaching and counseling have turned the gospel into some form of “religious humanism,” which only uses Christian imagery and Christian jargon in a humanistic fashion for motivational purposes. But it is the gospel message of what God has done “in Christ” in “reconciling the world to himself” (cf. 2 Cor 5:19), as

illuminated and applied by God's Spirit, that changes our sinful human condition and that alters our confused human circumstances." (Longenecker, 162)

- "Rome, Paul hopes, will be the crucible in which his missionary projects will come to birth." (Thiselton, 73)

Application:

I. The Power of Missional Prayer

"For in the recognition that Paul was a man of prayer, there comes about also the growing realizations (1) that his dependence was on God, not on himself, and (2) that his strength and accomplishments came about because of the enablement and working of God's Spirit, and not just because of his own abilities or endeavors." (Longenecker, 209-210)

II. The Worship of Gospel Proclamation

We deduce from this some useful teaching which ought to add no small encouragement to ministers of the Gospel when they hear that in preaching the Gospel they are rendering an acceptable and valuable service to God. Is there anything that should prevent them from doing so, when they know that their labors are so pleasing to God and approved by Him as to be considered an act of the highest worship? (John Calvin)