

"Looking at the Apostle's Heart"

Part 1

Romans 1:8-15

Introduction: In our study of Romans we have looked at Romans 1:1-7 which was the "GREETING" to the church at Rome. Tonight, as we continue we will get a glimpse into the heart of Paul as we look at several of his desires concerning the church at Rome and we will see the faith of the believers in Rome. As we consider this section we are going to list some characteristics about the Apostle Paul.

I. The Apostle

A. Paul was a Thankful Apostle.

Notice Romans 1:8

Paul was thankful for the faith of the believers at Rome because their faith was known throughout the entire Roman world. This is an amazing statement when we understand the history behind the believers in Rome. Life was not easy as a believer in Rome. Those who chose to follow Jesus Christ were hated by many of the Roman citizens. Let me show you several reasons why the Christians were hated.

1. They were associated with the Jews and there was anti-Semitism in Rome.
2. They rejected Emperor Worship and the worship of the Roman gods.
3. The Lord's Table was closed to the pagans and when the Christians talked about the flesh and blood of Christ the Romans viewed them as cannibals and rumors spread they ate babies and Gentiles.
4. There was the Christian kiss of love which the Romans did not understand and so in their perverted minds they accused the Christians of homosexuality.
5. They were also hated because many of the women embraced Jesus and the Gospel and with them came many of their children. The Romans viewed this as a religion that split families and caused women to stand independent of their husbands.
6. There was the talk among Christians of how the world would one day be destroyed by fire.

When Paul wrote Romans, Nero was the Emperor of Roman and it was under the reign of Nero that the hatred exploded. In AD 64 the city of Rome caught fire and it is believed that Nero is the man who set the city on fire. He had an insatiable appetite to build and so it is believed he burned the city to rebuild. When it was discovered that Nero set the fire

he immediately blamed the Christians who were already hated. This is when the persecution and the hatred exploded. We read of the severity of the persecution in 1 Peter.

Now the letter of Romans was written 4 or 5 years before the fire but these Christians were under the hatred of the Romans at the time this letter was written. So, life was not easy. To identify as a follower of Jesus Christ placed them in the cross hairs of the Romans. So, when Paul thanks God for their faith we can understand why he was so thankful. These people were not afraid to stand for Jesus Christ and the Truth of His Word.

When I read this passage, I see something here very interesting. Paul did not pray for safety or for the pressure to be lightened. He thanked God for their faith. Paul was concerned for their testimony and when he had heard they were growing in their faith and that their faith was widely known he praised God for those things. Let me show you 4 of Paul's prayers for the believers.

Ephesians 1:16-19

¹⁶ Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

¹⁷ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

¹⁸ The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

¹⁹ And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

Ephesians 3:14-19

¹⁴ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁵ Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

¹⁶ That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Philippians 1:9-11

⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

¹⁰ That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

¹¹ Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Colossians 1:9-12

⁹ For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

¹⁰ That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

¹¹ Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Every one of these prayers offered up for the believers wherever they were at, was a prayer for spiritual strengthen and growth. Paul prayed this way because he knew that strength and growth would mean a stronger stand and a great magnification of Jesus Christ.

Application:

There is nothing wrong with asking God to strengthen us or our friends and loved ones physically. But often we get so focused upon ME or MINE that we neglect to pray that in the midst of the storm or the trial Jesus Christ would be seen in us and He would be

magnified. As we pray in the times when life is difficult we should be sure to pray that in all we face Jesus would be seen. Let me show you what Paul wrote from prison.

Philippians 1:13-18

¹³ *So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;*

¹⁴ *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

¹⁵ *Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:*

¹⁶ *The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:*

¹⁷ *But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.*

¹⁸ *What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, **Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.***

His imprisonment caused Christ to be preached and so Paul could rejoice. He was willing to be in prison if it meant the Gospel would reach more people. He did not ask God to set him free because his life was NOT about him but it was about Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:21a

²¹ *For to me to live is Christ...*

Let us not forget the words of John the Baptist:

John 3:30

³⁰ *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

B. Paul was a Willing Apostle.

Notice Romans 1:9

When Paul referred to God here in this verse he makes mention that he serves him with his spirit. This means that Paul delighted in serving the Lord. He was not serving out of fear, he was not serving because he was pressured, and he was not serving for personal gain. He served the Lord because he loved to do so. Paul knew there was no joy in what the world had to offer. He knew that True JOY came from walking close to the Lord and serving him.

Paul's life confirmed what Jesus said in John 15.

John 15:4-5, 9-10

⁴ *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

⁵ *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

⁹ *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

¹⁰ *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

¹¹ *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

Application:

There are many reasons why believers serve the Lord. But the ONLY service that is accepted by God is that of a WILLING heart. In 2 Corinthians 8 Paul is addressing giving of finances to the poor but there is within what he wrote a principle that applies to our service also.

2 Corinthians 8:12

¹² *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

Let us notice what God had spoken to Israel in the book of Exodus.

Exodus 25:2

² *Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.*

Exodus 35:21-22, 29

²¹ *And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.*

²² And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the LORD.

²⁹ The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

C. Paul was a Longing Apostle.

Notice Romans 1:9-12

Looking at these verses we can see 3 things which Paul longed for.

1. He longed to walk in the will of God.

Notice Romans 1:10

Paul really longed to visit the saints at Rome but he was very careful not to force his way but instead he would only move if God opened the doors and He made the way. Paul knew that to step outside the will of God was dangerous. He knew the enemy had many traps that could be made to look good but would lead a believer down a path of shame and regret. Let us not forget Genesis 3.

Genesis 3:1-5

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

² *And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:*

³ *But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*

⁴ *And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:*

⁵ *For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

Satan convinced Eve that eating the forbidden fruit would be to her benefit. It was all a lie. Satan will try to convince any believer who will listen to step outside the will of God

and he will do his best to make it look like the forbidden path will benefit you. Paul was very careful not to step outside the will of God.

2. He longed to exercise his gifts to edify the church.

Notice Romans 1:11, 13

Paul knew his gifts and he knew that he had the responsibility to use them to edify the church.

Application:

The same is true for you and me also.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

⁴ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

⁵ And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

⁶ And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

3. He longed to have fellowship with the believers at Rome.

Notice Romans 1:12

Paul loved other believers and he longed to fellowship with them.

Application:

Loving other believers and the desire to fellowship with other believers are two of the marks of True salvation.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

⁹ But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

¹⁰ And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

"If you scorn the fellowship of the brethren, you reject the call of Jesus Christ, and thus your solitude can only be hurtful to you."

D. Bonhoeffer