

Romans - Gospel of God Exalted

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

April 27, 2023

Memory Verse

Romans 1:16-17 (NASB95)

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

True Spiritual Leadership – Part 2

Romans 1:12- 15 NLT

¹² When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours. ¹³ I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles.

¹⁴ For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world, to the educated and uneducated alike. ¹⁵ So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.

POINT 1- HUMBLE SPIRIT

that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. (1:12) NASB

Lest his readers think that he had in mind a one-way blessing, Paul assures them that a visit would be to his benefit as well as theirs. Although he was a highly-gifted and greatly-used apostle, having received revealed truth directly from God, Paul never thought that he was above being spiritually edified by other believers.

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The truly thankful, concerned, willing, submissive, and loving spirit is also a humble spirit. The person with such a spirit never has a feeling of spiritual superiority and never lords it over those he serves in Christ's name.

Commenting on this passage in Romans, John Calvin said of Paul, "Note how modestly he expresses what he feels by not refusing to seek strengthening from inexperienced beginners. He means what he says, too, for there is none so void of gifts in the Church of Christ who cannot in some measure contribute to our spiritual progress. Pride, however, prevents our deriving such benefit from one another" (John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960], p. 24).

Peter warned elders not to lord it over those given to their care but rather to be examples to them. In doing so, "when the Chief Shepherd appears, [they would] receive the unfading crown of glory" (**1 Pet. 5:3–4**). He then went on to advise both older and younger men to clothe themselves "with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (**v. 5**).

Paul, the greatest theologian who ever lived, was also one of the most humble men of all. He was blessed beyond measure, yet he had no spiritual pride or intellectual arrogance. Because he had not attained spiritual perfection but genuinely pursued it (cf. Phil. 3:12–14), he was eager to be spiritually helped by all the believers in the Roman church, young as well as old, mature as well as immature.

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It is unfortunate not only that many learned and gifted leaders in the church think they are above learning from or being helped by younger and less-experienced believers but also unfortunate that less-experienced believers often feel they have nothing to offer their leaders.

POINT 2 - A FRUITFUL SPIRIT

And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far) in order that I might obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. (1:13)

Paul frequently used a phrase such as **I do not want you to be unaware** as a means of calling attention to something of great importance he was about to say. He used it to introduce his teaching about such things as the mystery of God's calling Gentiles to salvation (Rom. 11:25), spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1), and the second coming (1 Thess. 4:13). Here he uses it to introduce his determined plan to visit the saints at Rome. **Often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far)**, he assures his readers. As far as his own plans were concerned, he would have come to them long beforehand had he not **been prevented from doing so**.

His intent was not to make a social call but to **obtain some fruit among** the believers in Rome, **even as among the rest of the Gentiles** to whom he ministered.

Paul's ministry was an unending quest for spiritual **fruit**. His preaching, teaching, and writing were not ends in themselves. The purpose of all true ministry for God is to bear fruit in His name and with His power and for His glory. "You did not choose Me, but I chose you," Jesus declared to His disciples, "and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (**John 15:16**).

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In regard to spiritual life, the Bible uses the term **fruit** in three ways. In one way, it is used as a *metaphor* for the attitudes that characterize the Spirit-led believer. This nine-fold “fruit of the Spirit,” Paul tells us, “is *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (**Gal. 5:22–23**).

In a second way, spiritual **fruit** refers to action. “Now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God,” the apostle declares, “you derive your benefit resulting in sanctification” (**Rom. 6:22**), that is, *holy living*. The active fruit of a Christian’s lips is praise (Heb. 13:15), and the active fruit of his hands is giving (Phil. 4:16–17; “profit” is literally “fruit”).

In a third way, spiritual **fruit** involves addition, the increase of converts to Christ and the increase of their spiritual growth in Him. Among the Romans, the **fruit** Paul longed for was of the third kind, addition. It included both new converts and maturing converts. They were spiritual **fruit** in the broadest sense of being the product of the gospel’s power in men’s lives, both to save and to sanctify. The apostle wanted to be *used* to help the Roman church grow through new converts and grow in sanctification, which includes growth in service to Christ. When, some years later, he wrote to the Philippian church from Rome, he was able to give greetings even from believers within “Caesar’s household” (**Phil. 4:22**), believers he may have been instrumental in bringing to Christ.

As already noted, in the name of the Lord’s work some people strive for prestige or acceptance or money or crowds or influence. But a Christian who serves from the heart and whose spiritual service is genuine strives only to be used of the Lord to bear fruit for Him. The Christian who settles for less is one who serves only externally.

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Nothing is more encouraging to pastors, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, and other Christian workers than to see spiritual results in the lives of those to whom they minister. Nothing is more deeply rewarding than the lasting joy of leading others to Christ or helping them grow in the Lord.

Discussion Question

- 1. In verse 13, what did Paul want the Saints in Rome to know?**
- 2. Although we cannot repay Christ for all the things He has done for us; however, what are some ways we can demonstrate our gratitude?**
- 3. What stands out to you about Paul's humility?**
- 4. What are the three ways the Bible use the term fruit?**

POINT 3 - AN OBEDIENT SPIRIT

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. (1:14)

Paul continues to talk about his attitudes and reasons for ministry, explaining that he did not preach and teach the gospel because of personal reasons or because the calling seemed attractive, but because he was **under obligation**. "I am under compulsion," he said to the Corinthians; "for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me" **(1 Cor. 9:16–17)**.

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When the Lord called him to salvation and to apostleship, Paul was doing anything but promoting the gospel but was rather bent on destroying it at all costs. He seems to be saying to the Romans, in effect, “Don’t thank me for wanting to minister to you. Although I love you and sincerely want to visit you, I was sovereignly appointed to this ministry long before I had a personal desire for it” (cf. 1 Cor. 9:16ff.).

Every sincere pastor and Christian worker knows there are times when ministry is its own reward, when study, preparation, teaching, and shepherding are exhilarating in themselves. There are other times, however, when the work does not seem very attractive, and yet you still study, prepare, teach, and shepherd because you are under obligation to God and to those you are serving. Christ is our Lord and we are His servants; and it is a poor servant who serves only when he feels like it.

Paul was **under obligation** in at least two ways. First, he was under obligation to God on behalf of the Gentiles. Because God had appointed him as a unique apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5; Acts 9:15), he was under divine obligation to minister the gospel to them.

Second, he had an **obligation**, or debt, to the Roman believers directly, because of their spiritual need. That is the kind of obligation a person has to someone whose house is on fire or who is drowning. When someone is in great danger and we are able to help, we are automatically and immediately under obligation to do what we can to save him. Because unbelieving Gentiles, like unbelieving Jews, face spiritual death, Paul was obligated to help rescue them through the gospel.

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To Greeks and barbarians and to the wise and to the foolish seem to be parallel phrases, **Greeks** representing **the wise** and **barbarians** representing **the foolish**. The **Greeks** of that day included people from many lands who were educated in Greek learning and trained in Greek culture. They were highly sophisticated and were often looked upon as being on a higher level than others. They certainly looked on themselves in that way. The Greek language was thought to be the language of the gods, and Greek philosophy was thought to be little less than divine.

The term **barbarians** was frequently used to designate those who were not steeped in Greek learning and culture. In its narrowest sense, **barbarians** referred to the uncultured, uncouth, and uneducated masses, but in its wider sense it was used of anyone who was non-Greek.

Paul was therefore expressing his responsibility to the educated and the uneducated, the sophisticated and the simple, the privileged and the underprivileged. Like the Lord he served (1 Pet. 1:17), Paul was no respecter of persons. The gospel is the great equalizer, because every human being is equally lost without it and equally saved by it.

The first person to whom Jesus revealed Himself as Messiah was an adulterous woman who had a number of husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband. Not only that, but she was a Samaritan, a member of a race greatly despised by Jews. Yet Jesus drew her to Himself in loving compassion, and she was used to bring many of her fellow Samaritans to faith in the Messiah (see John 4:7–42).

POINT 4 - AN EAGER SPIRIT

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Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. (1:15)

Paul's external obligation to minister did not preclude his internal desire to fulfill that obligation. He not only was willing but **eager to preach the gospel to believers in Rome.**

He was as determined to **preach ... in Rome** as he was to go to Jerusalem, although he knew great danger awaited him there. "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me" (**Acts 20:22–23**). In his spirit he was compelled to go because that was God's will for him. Therefore he said, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (**v. 24**). Paul knew that "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (**Phil. 1:21**), that "to be absent from the body [is] to be at home with the Lord" (**2 Cor. 5:8**).

Paul had the same concern for the Roman believers as for those in Colossae, to whom he wrote, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (**Col. 1:24**).

Life had but one value for Paul: to do God's work. He was consumed by an eager desire to serve God, which included serving others in His name. That absolute commitment was shared by Epaphroditus, who "came close to death for the work of Christ" (**Phil. 2:30**). Such godly servants are like racehorses in the gate or sprinters at the starting blocks. They cannot wait to get on with the race of serving Christ.

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A final characteristic of spiritual service, a bold spirit, is seen in the following verse, which will be studied in more detail in the next chapter. Paul declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel" (**Rom. 1:16**). He knew that Rome was a volatile place and that Christians there had already experienced persecution. He knew that the capital city of the empire was steeped in immorality and paganism, including emperor worship. He knew that most Romans would despise him and that many probably would do him harm. Yet he was boldly eager to go there, for his Lord's sake and for the sake of the Lord's people.

Discussion Questions

- 5. In what ways would you like to be more like Paul?**
- 6. What was Paul's attitudes and reasons for ministry?**
- 7. What was most meaningful to you in this lesson?**

CLOSING PRAYER