

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Unleashing the Gospel

Romans 1:8-17

2000

Introduction

The letter to the church at Rome reveals that Paul not only had the passion of a prophet, the intellect of a scholar, and determination of an apostle; but also the heart of a shepherd.

I Paul Prays For The Believers

A. He gives **thanks** to God for them

Thanks = Eucharisteo = "To be grateful, or to express gratitude"

It seems that in every letter Paul was expressing his thankfulness for the positive, redeeming qualities of the fellowship. Even when he was writing primarily to correct the church, he always managed to find something in those churches for which he could be thankful.

Years later, when Paul was a prisoner of Rome, he was still thankful!

While there he wrote four Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). In each of these letter he gives thanks for the believers to whom he writes.

Eph 1:16 "I have not stopped giving thanks for you."

Phil 1:3-5 "I thank my God every time I remember you."

Col 1:3-6 "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you."

Philemon 1:4-5 "I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints."

Paul's thankfulness did not rise and fall based on his circumstances, but on his confidence in the sovereignty and love of God.

1Thes 5:18 "... give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Application:

This attitude of gratitude is one of the clearest evidences of spiritual maturity. *Is your life marked by an attitude of gratitude?*

And if you are a leader, there are few things more encouraging to those under your leadership than an attitude of appreciation for God's work in and through others.

1. For their world-renown faith

Some churches are famous for their pastor, or their magnificent facility, or the size of their congregation, or the size of their annual budget. But the church in Rome was famous for its faith!

1 Thessalonians 1:8 "The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia-- your faith in God has become known everywhere."

Faith = Pistis = "Trust, persuasion, belief, conviction"

Paul's primary focus here is not their initial faith that led to their salvation, but their persevering faith and trust that produced spiritual growth and maturity.

It is produced by exposure to God's Word (Ro 10:17), and it expresses itself through obedience to God (Rom 1:5; Gal 5:6).

B. He constantly remembers them in prayer

Constantly = Aialeiptos = "Uninterruptedly, without ceasing"

2 Tim 1:3 "I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers."

Why was Paul so committed to prayer?

Because prayer is powerful! He was convinced of the power of prayer!

Application:

So often we struggle on our own with all kinds of problems:

Financial problems, marriage problems, work related problems, relationship problems, and family problems.

But how much time do we devote to bringing it before God in prayer? Usually not very much! Why?!

1. They are so accustomed to dealing with things in their own -- so self-sufficient -- that it rarely even occurs to them to pray.
2. They pray as a last resort -- not completely convinced that prayer really can change things. It's an act of desperation!
3. They avoid prayer because deep down they know that prayer will require a yielded and obedient life to God -- and they are ready for that kind of personal death to self.

1. Calling God as His witness:

a. Whom he serves with his whole heart

Serve = Latreuo = "A hired menial laborer"

Paul served God with everything he had -- with his whole heart.

Col 1:28-29 "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me."

Application:

One of the greatest acts of worship that you can offer God is your total, wholehearted service.

Rom 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship."

b. Whom he serves by preaching the gospel

2 Tim 4:2 "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great patience and careful instruction."

C. He prays for an opportunity to come to them

1. He **longs** to see them

Long = Epipitheo = "Intensely crave, desire greatly"

Phil 1:8 "God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus."

Application:

Paul loved the believers in Rome! Why?

1. They belonged to the same family -- the family of God.

2. Paul was obedient to the command to love others.

3. But most importantly -- Paul had prayed for them!

Nothing will produce a genuine love for others like prayer.

II Paul Explains His Intentions To The Believers

A. He wants to impart some spiritual gift to them

Gift = Charisma = "A free gift"

Paul wants to contribute to their spiritual growth through the spiritual gifts that God has given him. And he anticipates that they will minister to him with the spiritual gifts that they have; thus they will be mutually strengthened by one another's faith. That is how God wants a church to function -- the saints ministering to each other, building up one another by their faith and sharing and exercising the gifts God has given them.

Notice that the focus was not on Paul or on the gift itself.

Paul's desire was ...

1. To **strengthen** them

Strengthen = Sterizo = "To set fast, to fix, or to establish"

1Thes 3:2-3 "We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith."

Application:

So often people come to church thinking only about receiving something from God -- but we should be coming ready to *strengthen others*. You can spot these kind of folks quite easily. They are the ones serving, the ones praying for others, the ones taking a genuine interest in others, the ones extending themselves to new people.

2. To be **mutually** encouraged

Encourage = Sumparakaleo = "To console or to comfort together"

Although Paul was a highly gifted man, an apostle of Christ Jesus, the most prolific NT writer, and the recipient of God's direct revelations, He never considered himself above being spiritually encouraged by others -- no matter how young or spiritually inexperienced they were in the Lord.

1Thes 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

- a. By one another's faith

3 Jn 1:3-4 "It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

Application:

If you want to experience the full joy God has created you for, then hang around new believers. Even better -- win them to Christ yourself and disciple them. You'll never be the same! Their joy, freedom and zeal are infectious!

- B. He wants to have a **harvest** among them
Harvest = Karpos = "Fruit (as plucked)"

All of Paul's efforts had a strategic end goal in mind -- FRUIT!

The New Testament uses the word *fruit* in a number of ways:

1. The attitudes and actions that should characterize a believer - Gal 5:22-23; Phil 1:11
2. The addition and multiplication of spiritual converts
John 15:8, 16 "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples ... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last."

Application:

A true servant of God -- a *doulos* -- pursues the objectives and goals of the Master. Jesus clearly said that His objective for his servants is that they would bear much fruit and lasting fruit for His glory. Although it is important to assess our lives in terms of spiritual growth and maturity, it is equally important to assess our lives in terms of spiritual multiplication -- bearing much fruit, lasting fruit.

- C. He wants to fulfill his **obligation**:
Obligated = "A debtor or sinner"

Note: Paul's debt is to God, but the payment is to men.

1 Cor 9:19 "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."

1. To preach the gospel
 - a. To the Greeks and non-Greeks
Greeks = The educated, learned, trained, the highly sophisticated.
Barbarians = Those who were considered uneducated, uncouth, unsophisticated.
 - b. To the wise and foolish

Application:

Paul was expressing his responsibility to the educated and the uneducated, the sophisticated and the unsophisticated, the privileged and the underprivileged. The gospel is the great equalizer, because every human being is equally lost without it and equally saved by it.

III Paul Proclaims The Power Of The Gospel

Gospel = Euaggelion = "Good news."

In the Septuagint (which is the Greek version of the Old Testament) this same word is used for the people of Israel who were released from the Babylonian captivity. It meant " Good news! You can go home. You're free!"

A.B. Simpson, the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance church, is reported to have said that the gospel:

tells rebellious men that God is reconciled, that justice is satisfied, that sin has been atoned for, that the judgment of the guilty may be revoked, the condemnation of the sinner canceled, the curse of the Law blotted out, the gates of hell closed, the portals of heaven opened wide, the power of sin subdued, the guilty conscience healed, the broken heart comforted, and the sorrow and misery of the Fall undone.

A. The gospel is nothing to be **ashamed** of
Paul was never deterred by opposition, never disheartened by criticism, and never ashamed, for any reason, of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Application:

We never need to be ashamed of the gospel. What is remarkable is that God is not ashamed of us!

Two reasons that people are afraid of sharing their faith:

1. Fear of rejection

Prov 29:25 "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe."

Mark 8:38 "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

2. Fear of not being able to respond to unbelievers' arguments

2 Tim 2:15 "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

1 Pet 3:15 " Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

B. The gospel is the **power** of God

Power = Dunamis = "Dynamite"

The gospel carries with it the power of God. And it is that power alone that is sufficient to save men from sin and give them eternal life. The gospel doesn't talk about the power of God -- it is the power of God.

1 Cor 1:18 "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

Illustration:

Macy's Day Parade Helium Balloons:

Garfield the Cat: Limp, deflated, awkward

Has to be inflated and brought to life through the efforts of man.

The gospel:

Like a caged lion:

All we have to do is open the door and set it loose!

Man is powerless:

To control life's circumstances

To merit forgiveness

To remedy guilt

To achieve deep and lasting peace

To know God

To earn salvation

To be assured of eternal life

Paul says that is why he is so proud of the gospel -- because it is the power of God to do those very things that men cannot do. We never need to apologize for the gospel. All God calls us to do is to unleash it!

C. The gospel is the means of **salvation**

Salvation = Soteria = "To rescue or deliver"

The gospel alone declares we were saved from the penalty of sin [justification] that we are saved from the power of sin [sanctification] and that we will be saved from the presence of sin [glorification].

D. The gospel is **universally** available

Believes = Pisteuo = "To have faith in, to believe in or put one's trust in"

John 1:12 "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

John 3:36 "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

1. First for the Jew
2. Second for the Gentile

It was to the Jew first because Jews are God's specially chosen people, through whom He ordained salvation through Jesus Christ.

Rom 2:9-11 "There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism."

E. The gospel reveals a **righteousness** from God

Reveal = Apokalupto = "To take off the cover, to disclose, to unveil"

Righteousness = Dikaiosisune = "Justification"

It is not human righteousness, but the "righteousness from God."

It is a righteousness originating in God, prepared by God, revealed in the gospel of God and offered to us by God.

You can't earn it, you certainly don't deserve it, but it is given by God because of the finished work of Christ on your behalf.

Martin Luther misunderstood this verse for years, thinking that the righteousness that Paul spoke of was God's righteous judgment. Because he recognized himself as a wretched sinner, this text drove him to despair. However, when he finally understood that "a righteousness from God" referred to God crediting to man his own righteousness through Christ, it turned his life right side up.

Rom 3:21-24 "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

F. The gospel requires a life of **faith**

The phrase, "From faith to faith" is a Greek intensification meaning, "entirely of faith."

Faith -- or simple belief in God's promises -- is not only the starting point of your salvation. It is also the finishing point of your salvation.

Application:

Here's where many of us are vulnerable to error. We know salvation is from faith because we begin by simply embracing the Good News of the Gospel. But then we make a subtle transition from faith to works.

Gal 3:1-3 "You foolish Galatians! ... After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?"

Col 2:6 "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him."

Conclusion

Euaggelion! "Good news!"

It is possible for you to stand sinless before God.

It is possible for you to know that you have eternal life.

It is possible for you to be free from the frustration of trying to earn righteousness and Heaven.

The only requirement for this glorious gift is simple faith.

This is the Euongellion; the Good News that you are righteous and FREE!