

Romans 1:8-10

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The faith of the Roman believers is being talked about throughout the world; Paul thanks God for their faith and prays for them unceasingly. Paul has never met these believers, but hopes to.

With the salutations ended, Paul begins: *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.* The Apostle Paul is thankful to God through Jesus Christ (v 8) for the Gentile believers in Rome who have been redeemed by grace through faith in the shed blood of *Jesus Christ*.

Paul is also thankful to God for these Gentile believers *because their faith* is so strong that it is *being proclaimed throughout the whole world* (v 8). Rome was the center of the world at this time, and what happened in Rome was news in the entire world. The faith of these Gentile believers was so exceptional that news of it traveled the entire Roman world.

Since Paul had not visited these believers in Rome, he based the strength of their faith on the testimony of others, likely his ministry partners Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3). Christianity was unlawful in Rome at this time, so there was no social or political advantage to believing in Jesus. The Apostle Paul would eventually meet his death in Rome, by order of the government, on account of his testimony about Jesus. The many stories of Christian martyrs losing their lives in the arena or being burned on a cross to light up the night come from Rome or Roman cities.

If these influential believers in the most important city in the Gentile world believe the slander against Paul's good news, it could jeopardize the entire mission God gave him. Further, Priscilla and Aquila are his partners in ministry. So, it will come as no surprise that Paul's passion exudes from this letter.

Paul exclaims *For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you* (vv 9-10).

Paul often mentions his *prayers*. It is instructive to note the things Paul prays for. We typically think of praying to God somewhat like a visit to Santa Claus, where we list all the goodies we want to get. Not so with Paul. Here are some of the things Paul prays for:

- to be allowed to impart a spiritual gift (Romans 1:9–12)
- that you [the believers in Corinth] do no evil, that you should do what is honorable (2 Corinthians 13:7)
- that you may be made complete (2 Corinthians 13:9)
- that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment (Philippians 1:9)
- that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power (2 Thessalonians 1:11)

- that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Colossians 1:9)

Paul's overriding concern is for the growth and discipleship of the Gentile believers to whom he is called to minister. In order to *serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son*, Paul went to places where the good news of Jesus had not been preached to the Gentiles. He spent much of his time establishing churches and growing leaders in the churches. Jesus calls believers to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) and that is exactly what Paul exemplifies.

God is also Paul's *witness as to how unceasingly he makes mention of the Gentiles in Rome* (v 9). *God* is the *witness* because He is the recipient of Paul's prayers. Paul's prayer for the Roman believers is constant and consistent: he *always in his prayers is making request of God* concerning these Roman believers.

Part of Paul's prayer is that *perhaps now at last by the will of God* he might *succeed in coming to visit the Gentile believers in Rome* (v 10). Paul hopes God will allow that he come to Rome and meet these faithful Gentile believers in person. It is interesting that he uses the words *at last...I may succeed*. It seems Paul had desired to come to them for some time.

Paul actually has this prayer answered, but it leads to his death. Later in Paul's ministry he ends up in Rome under house arrest (Philippians 1:12-14), and eventually is martyred in Rome (2 Timothy 4:6).

The phrase *by the will of God* is also instructive. Creation is paradoxical because it reflects a paradoxical Creator. Paul here recognizes that God is God and therefore is in control of all things. And yet God answers prayers and gives humans real choices. Later in chapter 11 of this letter, Paul sums up the appropriate sentiment for contemplating such mysteries:

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."
(Romans 11:33–36)

[For more on God and paradox, read our article, "Founding Paradox."](#)

Biblical Text

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