

The Power of God at Work
Romans 1:8-17
Berean Baptist Church
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INTRODUCTION

Paul has never been to Rome, and he certainly has enough to keep busy in other places (2 Cor 11:26-28)! But his great heart overflows with a loving desire to serve the Roman church. Paul's intense Spirit led love gives us a role model to follow. Paul reveals true biblical affection for us to model, he shows how true biblical humility helps us during frustrations, and he shows us how to center everything on the Gospel of our salvation.

You may not be called to preach in a city on the other side of the world, but God has a call on your life! God has given you people to care for and love. This call involves service, humble flexibility, and it centers on the Gospel. This passage teaches you how...

You must serve one another in selfless love, be humble but proactive, and make it about the gospel!

Romans 1:1-8 Serving in Love

Paul's affection for the church at Rome works itself out in a living ministry of: thanksgiving, prayer, intense emotional desire tempered by a greater desire for God's will, a commitment to help, and a hope of being mutually encouraged with them.

This is a picture of true love in action! Paul subordinates all of his desires and hopes for the church at Rome to the will of God. His commitment is to the will of God for them even if Paul does not get what he "wants."

Vs 8-9 Thankfulness and Prayer - Paul says "First" here in order to point out how he is starting off this letter; "before I say anything else, I want you to know..." Paul thanks *his God through Jesus* for *their* faith and testimony.

We often pray that our lost loved ones would be saved, but how often do we thank God for the salvation and strong testimony of beloved saints?

Make a practice of thanking God for the faith of those that you love.

Vs 10-11 Intense Desire Submitted To God's Will - Paul longs (the word has the idea of intense emotional desire) to see the Romans but subordinates his love to the will of God. He loves them, and wants to be with them, but only in God's perfect timing. This is true love, not because it is intense and sincere, but because it is balanced by reverence for God.

Sin destroys lives and relationships by unbalancing love, either through making a person not love at all, or by making a person act on love in ways that are outside of the perfect timing and will of God.

Christian love seeks what is best for the beloved. If you love someone, put God's will first in their life and your relationship, because God knows what is best for that person.

Vs 11-12 helping and encouraging one another Paul has a deep and strong desire to use his spiritual gifts to help the church at Rome. Spiritual gifts in the Bible are used for strengthening the church, not for private use, and certainly not for personal fame. Paul's encouragement is their encouragement, Paul's faith is their faith.

If you truly care for someone you will work to build them up, to comfort and encourage them in the faith! Follow Paul's Spirit filled, great-hearted love, by giving thanks for one another, praying for one another, submitting to God's will in your relationships, and building one another up.

Romans 1:13-15 Serving with Proactive Humility

For all of his high hopes and plans, things did not always go Paul's way. But Paul had a way to stay encouraged: being humble and proactive.

Vs 13 “but was hindered until now” Paul does not say who does the hindering, but there are times in his ministry where the Holy Spirit hinders him (Acts 16:6), and other times where Satan hinders him (1 Thes 2:18). Paul did not always know God's will, *so don't be dismayed when you are mistaken about God's will.*

Vs 14 Paul owed something to all people: he was given the Gospel to preach to the Gentiles, but his bonds of kinship demanded that he preach to his fellow Hebrews. His ministry does not come from a sense of self-importance, but from a feeling of obligation to others.

Be humble; serve others because God thinks highly of them.

Paul was also ready, very eager, to preach in Rome. He was making plans and preparing the way with this very letter!

Being humble does not mean being passive!

Vs 15 Paul wants to preach the Gospel to Christians who already know the Gospel. Their faith is world famous, why do they need to hear the Gospel?

I suggest that Paul wants to “evangelize” the church at Rome for a different reason. The gospel message has the power to shape every part of our lives.

“Titus 2:11 ¶ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 **Teaching** us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”

We see this pattern in the Book of Philemon, 1 Peter 2:21-24, and in other places. Hearing the gospel does more than just point us to salvation, but it helps us overcome sin within, evil without, and to bear righteous fruit to the glory of God. The truth of the Gospel has a power in the lives of the saved as well as the lost.

Constantly surround yourself with the mighty gospel and let it drive your life.

When you don't know what do to: diligently do everything that you know to be right, prepare in the ways that seem most reasonable, and trust God. This will allow you to act when God opens a way, and protect you from bitterness when things don't go the way you hoped.

Serve humbly, hopefully, proactively, and make it about the gospel.

Romans 1:16-17 Serving in the Power of the Gospel

These two verses are the heart Romans. All 16 chapters draw their life from this powerful message of salvation through faith to all people.

Vs 16 “I am not ashamed of the gospel.” The gospel is radically counter-cultural; it goes against the course of the world and challenges the heart of every person. If the gospel has never made you uncomfortable then you have not yet understood it.

Because the gospel strikes at human pride and the way of the World it is inherently offensive. But it is true. And it is the power of God for salvation.

Vs 16 The salvation Paul talks about is more than just the decisive moment of trusting Christ and being born again. It is also the working of God in the life of the believer, and the eventual completion of the work when sin will be no more and we will see Him face to face. Paul uses the word “salvation” (or “to save”) to describe redemption by Christ (1 Tim 1:15), regeneration (Eph 2:5), sanctification (1 Tim 4:16), and glorification (Rom 13:11) of a sinner *saved* by grace.

This is why Paul wants to preach the gospel to those who already know it! The truth of the Gospel has power in every stage of the Christian life!

You must not be ashamed of the gospel because you and those you love need it at every moment of your life.

Vs 17 The “righteousness of God” is a human's status as righteous in God's sight; having the righteousness of God means that God has judged you and declared: “**Not Guilty!**” He does not see you as a sinner to be rejected, but as an obedient child to be received.

Paul uses the term eight times in Romans (1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3), and twice in the other letters (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

Having the “righteousness of God” is your only way to have a right relationship with God and your open hope of going to heaven. Everyone will stand before God and be judged. Those with the righteousness of God will enter into eternal life with God in heaven. Those without the righteousness of God will enter into eternal suffering apart from God in hell.

There are only two ways to have the righteousness of God: 1. be perfectly sinless like Jesus, or 2. have the “righteousness of God” revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

You must come to God in faith or He will never count you righteous!

Vs 17 “from faith to faith” Paul's point is that obtaining the righteousness of God has always been about faith, not religion or ethnicity. God's righteousness by faith was first revealed to Abraham and saving faith as passed down the line of God's people, from faith to faith, until today.

“The just shall live by faith” is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4. In context, Habakkuk is contrasting the arrogant who live by pride and do evil against the humble who live by faith and do justice.

Paul is very careful to point out in Romans that his teachings are not new. Paul grounds the doctrine of Romans in the Old Testament (Romans 3:28, 4:13, 10:1-8, and other places). For Paul, righteousness by faith through grace is nothing new, it was attested to by the Old Testament Law and Prophets!

CONCLUSION

Gospel power drives Paul to dynamic loving service. This is why he puts the will of God first. And it is the diligent humility taught by the gospel that empowers Paul to be proactive and endure when he does not know God's will. Every Christian can, and should, serve in this same way.

Like Paul, through prayer and thanksgiving, through service and help, through mutual encouragement and love, you must serve those that God has put in your care.

And like Paul, your love and affection for others that God has put in your life must be tempered by a submission to the will of God bringing all things back to the Gospel. Because it is God's power that saves.

Like Paul, your service must be proactive but still humble.

Like Paul, make your service about the gospel.

You must serve one another in selfless love, be humble but proactive, and make it about the gospel!