

Romans: To Strengthen the Saints

The purpose of Paul's work as a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ was to persuade people to enter into the obedience to the faith. To this end, the Apostle Paul was sent to the Gentiles to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:5-7 NKJV Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul had neither visited nor personally met the church in Rome.

Why would he want to write people he had never met?

Look at verse 5.

The purpose of His work is two fold. First, he had received grace and was living in obedience to the faith. Second, he wanted to persuade other believers to obey God's commands.

Paul was not writing just because he thought he had something to say.

He was not just sharing his opinion with the Romans. He was writing because he could do nothing else. He was compelled by the Holy Spirit to share the gospel with the whole world. He was enslaved by the gospel and to Jesus Christ.

The church in Rome had a reputation or testimony that had spread throughout the whole world.

Romans 1:8 (NKJV) First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

This is a tremendous statement. During this time the church was spreading across the known world. Asia, Macedonia, Greece and Spain was receiving the gospel message. The believers in Rome had a great faith. Everywhere Paul traveled, he had heard about the faith of the people in Rome.

What made the church at Rome so strong?

Two significant things are seen in the Scripture.

1. The believers were living pure lives in the midst of an immoral, base, and unjust society.

The Greco-Romans were known for their extensive paganism. To the Romans, Jupiter was the most powerful of the gods. His temple was shared with Mars, Quirinus, and later Juno and Minerva. Several Greco-Roman cults, gods and goddesses thrived in the myriad of temples in Rome. Among them, Romans worshiped Isis, the Egyptian goddess of wisdom and magic. The citizens of Rome were known for their immorality, wild parties, licentiousness, and drunkenness. The Greco-Roman social life involved the worship of their many deities, extravagance, selfishness, and indulgence. They were greedy, materialistic and wicked.

In the midst of that environment, Roman believers were standing firm for Christ.

Their faith was strong and they were living pure lives. They proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ and declared the need for morality and justice among men.

2. Believers served Christ faithfully and labored diligently for the Lord.

The Roman believers were constantly sharing Christ and ministering to people. Several Roman believers were known throughout the church world. (Romans 16) Phoebe, Pricilla and Aquila were among many who worked with Paul and risked their own necks for his life.

The church in Rome stood as a testimony for every church.

No matter how immoral, polluted, and corrupt a society is, we are to stand firm for Christ.

Romans 12:2 NKJV And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

1 John 2:15-16 NKJV Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

Regardless of where we are, we are to be witnesses for Christ.

Acts 1:8 NKJV But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

1 Peter 3:15 NIV But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

We all should have a strong testimony for Jesus Christ. Every church has a testimony.

We must have a witness of the grace, favor, and power of God.

If you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ there has been a true change in your life.

We live in the hope of His glorious salvation. The Roman believers are an encouragement to all of us who face a perverse and wicked society. They had a strong testimony of faith and service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider the Apostle Paul's prayer life.

Romans 1:9 NKJV For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,

1 Thessalonians 3:10 NIV Night and day we pray most earnestly

I am sure that many of you pray. You have a prayer life.

Listen to what Paul said: “Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers”

Ephesians gives us an example of Paul's prayer.

Ephesians 3:14-19 (NIV) For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Paul really took time to ask God to strengthen and help others. He even prayed for believers and churches he did not personally know. We should take up the challenge to pray for others.

Believers should pray constantly.

Luke 18:1 NIV84 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

John 16:24 NKJV Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Ephesians 6:18 NKJV Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...

Colossians 4:2-3 NKJV Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 NKJV pray without ceasing,

Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Why should we constantly pray?

Paul had a great spiritual drive (longing) to see the Roman Christians so that he may accomplish three ministry goals.

First, he wanted to impart some spiritual gift to them.

Romans 1:11 NKJV For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—

Paul does not explain what “spiritual gift” he wanted to impart. In Romans 12:6-8, he talks about prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and showing mercy. In 1 Corinthians 12 he spoke of nine diversities of spiritual gifts. He specifically listed: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healings, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues and the interpretation of tongues, (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

Since Paul had received grace from God, he wanted to pass that grace to other believers.

This “spiritual gift” may also be the deep truth of the gospel that had been revealed to him. Take note that the spiritual gift has a result of establishing or strengthening believers.

Paul said the spiritual gift would establish them.

The word established means to fix, set, make fast, strengthen.

Second, he wanted them to be mutually encouraged.

Romans 1:12 NKJV that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

This is an amazing part of ministry. Every time ministry is received and shared it brings mutual encouragement. The body of Christ is always strengthened when members share and exercise spiritual gifts in the body of the church. Corporate worship and prayer has specific and general benefits for everyone.

Third, he wanted to have a harvest or some fruit among them.

Romans 1:13 NKJV Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.

There are several ways to bear fruit.

- ***There is the fruit of converts - Paul wanted to win the Greek, barbarians, and Romans to Jesus Christ.***

Romans 15:20 NLT My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard, rather than where a church has already been started by someone else.

- **He wanted to bear the fruit of righteousness.**

Romans 6:21-23 NKJV What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

• ***He wanted to bear the fruit of the Spirit, Christian character.***

Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Why is it important to demonstrate Christian character before the world?

Your fruit is the testimony of the grace of God. Your fruit is a witness of the abiding presence of God's Spirit within your life. This is more than religious rhetoric. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is good news. The fruit of Christian character would be necessary for the Romans to win their world.

The world needs to see believers with a living manifestation of God's fruit.

Romans 1:14-15 NKJV I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

Paul was deeply indebted, obligated, or bound by duty to share this gospel to the whole world.

He knew that he had the solution for the Greeks and Barbarians. He remembered being lost and without hope in this world. He knew what it was like to be religious and not know the power of God that saves.

He was ready to preach the gospel.

The Holy Spirit had put an urgent willingness to share the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:16 (NASB95) For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

Romans 1:16 (NASB95) 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.

Paul said:

I am a debtor to the Greeks and to barbarians, to the wise and unwise.

I am ready to preach the gospel

I am not ashamed of the gospel

Here are three points for our lives.

- We have a debt to the sinner.
- We must be ready.
- We must not be ashamed.

The world must hear the good news about Jesus Christ.