

The Power of the Gospel Romans 1:8-17

by J.R. Miller

Paul's thankfulness for the Romans is due to their faith, which is spoken of throughout the world, and he desires to be a blessing to them and receive blessing from them.

Scripture: Romans 1:8

Topics: "The Power of the Gospel", "Mutual Encouragement"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the transformative power of the Gospel as articulated by Paul in Romans 1:8-17, highlighting the importance of faith and the unashamed proclamation of Christ. He reflects on Paul's deep affection for the Roman Christians, his gratitude for their faith, and the mutual encouragement that comes from sharing spiritual gifts. Miller underscores the idea that Christians are debtors to all, called to share the love of Christ with everyone, regardless of their background. He encourages believers to boldly confess their faith, especially in challenging environments, as the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a life lived in service to others, reflecting the love and grace received from God.

Transcript

The Epistle to the Romans was written from Corinth by an amanuensis named Tertius, at Paul's dictation. It was sent by Phoebe, a deaconess, who was journeying to Rome. The Christians at Rome were Jews and Gentiles, the latter predominating. It is not known who first preached the gospel at Rome--but it is probable that after the day of Pentecost, some of the Christians went to the imperial capital and set up the first church there. It is evident from chapter 25, that many of the members at that time at Rome, were Paul's personal friends. Paul had not visited Rome, when he wrote this letter.

One of the first things Paul said in his letter to the Romans was, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you." It is a good thing when we can thank God, for people. It shows that they are a comfort to us. We are not ashamed of them. They are not a burden or a perplexity to us. Some people are. There often are Church members for whom the minister cannot give thanks. They do not live so as to honor God and adorn the Church. Are we living so that our friends, our teachers and pastors and others--can give thanks for us and for our noble, beautiful life?

The reason for Paul's thanksgiving was stated, "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." It was not their wealth, their power, their fine talents, their large business, their beautiful homes, their princely entertainments, which were proclaimed everywhere. There are people living now who are known the world

over as millionaires, as great merchants, as brilliant statesmen, as eloquent orators, as owners of railroads. This is one kind of fame. This is the fame many people seek to win, oftentimes selling even their own souls to win it! But there are others in our own day whose faith is known everywhere. There are missionaries, or godly pastors, or men and women who have given up their lives to the service of Christ--and are so blessing the world by their ministry, that far and near their names are spoken with love and reverence. This is by far the worthier fame.

The depth of Paul's affection for the Romans, was further indicated by this assurance, "God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times." It is a sweet thing when one who lives near the heart of Christ, speaks our name before God in his prayers.

It is a sweet privilege to have our names mentioned to Christ. Paul unceasingly made mention to God of the names of his friends. There are many of us whose names are daily spoken to God. The other day I learned that a little girl in my parish, never says her prayers without praying for me. It filled me with a strange awe to know this. Few are the children in true homes, whose names are not unceasingly mentioned in prayer.

It was Paul's prayer that he might "have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come" to the Romans. His request was granted--but it was in a strange way. He went to Rome by and by--but it was as a prisoner in chains. We do not know what we are asking in our prayers. Yet God's way is better than ours. Paul would not have chosen to go to Rome as he went--but he went really in the best way. He was taken there under the protection of the Roman Government. His going cost him nothing--Rome carried him there, a missionary to tell the story of Christ. As a prisoner he was enabled to preach in the very capital, winning disciples in the very palace of the Caesars. God answers our prayers, in the way that is best.

The desire to be with the Romans was absolutely unselfish. He wrote, "I long to see you--that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift." This is a noble yearning for friendship. We ought always to desire to be a blessing to those we love. God sends many of his best spiritual gifts--through human hearts and lips and hands. There could be no fitter morning prayer, as we go out for the day, than that we may be permitted to carry some help, some comfort, some instruction, some inspiration, some courage or cheer--to every life that our life touches. There are always those who need such help, and no aim in life is nobler than to be a help to others in all gentle, quiet ways.

Paul realized that the Roman Christians would help him--as well as receive help from him. His explanation of his desire to be with them shows this. "That you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith."

I may need comfort as much as you do--but the best way to find it is to seek to become helpful to you. Being a blessing to you--blesses me. The attitude of true faith and love toward others, should always be that of desire to help, "not to be ministered unto--but to minister." Then all that we do for others--will bring back its reflex comfort to ourselves. "It is more blessed to give--than to receive." Some people are always wishing for "friends," wishing "to be loved," wishing to have others do things for them. This is not the way to begin--it is the selfish way. The true desire is to love others, to do for others, to become a friend to others. In cherishing this spirit, we get close to Christ; for that is the way he feels. Then it is the direct way to get the other blessing, the love of friends.

Some men are never willing to own indebtedness to others. Paul was not one of these. He said, "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise." "Debtor!" What does that mean? That I owe something, that I am in debt. "In debt!" To whom? To my friends, who have done so much for me--my father and mother, my teachers, my physician, who so tenderly cared for me in my illness and brought me through? Yes; there are a great many people to whom we are all in debt. They have done us some favor, brought some blessing or good to our life.

You read a book that helps you by its thoughts; you are in debt to the author. A friend, by wise, loving counsel, guides you through some perplexity. Another helps you in some difficulty. Another blesses you with sympathy when you are in sorrow. You are in debt to all these. Yes--but Paul meant more than that.

He was a debtor to people who had never done anything for him. He was a debtor to barbarians, to the ignorant, to his enemies, to everybody. As a man, he owed a debt of love to every other man. As a Christian, his debt was still greater, for he had something which had been given him in trust--the blessing of divine love and grace--which was his not to keep all to himself but to pass on. We are all in debt.

Elsewhere Paul says that we should owe no man anything but love; this is a debt we never get paid off. It would change our feeling toward people, if we remembered always--that we are debtors to everybody. We owe every man, woman and child: kindness, service, helpfulness, comfort in sorrow, sympathy in trial, strength in weakness. We owe to all who are not saved--the revealing of God's love. We are debtor to the Chinese, the Africans, the Hindus; we have the gospel and are under obligation to send it to them. Having obliges us to give, to share, to do for other.

Paul would give and receive blessing--by preaching Christ. Some thought it would have been the part of wisdom to say nothing of Christ--but he would not keep it silent. His reason was, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Some people are ashamed of the gospel. They profess to be Christians--but they have not courage to confess Christ out in the world. It is easy to confess him at the communion table, or in the Christian meeting, where everybody is Christ's friend, and where all are confessing him. But it is not so easy to confess him in the shop or office--where you are the only one who loves Christ, and where you must meet a chill and adverse response.

But the Christian should never anywhere be ashamed of Christ. The fewer Christians there are in the place or company, the more reason is there for the few to be loyal and courageous for him. Miss Havergal tells of going into a boarding school as a pupil just after she was saved. She was young and gentle-hearted and was startled to find that in a school family of a hundred, she was the only Christian. Her first feeling was that she could not avow her love for Christ in such a place, with all that company of worldly girls around her. But her second thought was that she could not but avow it, since she was the only one Christ had there to confess him and represent him. This thought was most strengthening, and from that hour she quietly but firmly took her place in the school, as a friend of Christ. It ought to help us, whenever we stand amid enemies of Christ and those ignorant of his love--to remember that he has put us there to represent him, and that if we are ashamed or afraid, we shall be sadly failing him and disappointing him.

The reason for Paul's glory in the gospel, was clearly stated, "It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes."

People like power. The gospel has power. We need only to look at its effects in the world--to see that this is true. It has wrought great moral revolutions. It has changed nations.

The gospel has transformed countries from scenes of savage barbarism, into places of moral beauty. We have all seen the results wrought by the power of the gospel in lives, in homes, in communities. Those who truly receive the gospel, experience its power in themselves, in the changing of their nature. Those who take the gospel and use it to help others, use an influence greater than any of earth's power, with which they can bless and help and comfort and uplift and save others. It is the power of God. It is God himself working in men's lives!

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