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Series: The Book of Romans

The Gospel and God's Righteousness

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(17)

[Romans 1:1-17](#)

(Continuation from 12/06/15)

B. Paul's Interest in the Church: Enslavement to the Gospel, [Romans 1:8-15](#)

In [verses 8-15](#), Paul's words suggest nine marks of true spiritual service:

Romans 1:8-10 (NASB)

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

⁹ 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,

¹⁰ always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

- 1) a **thankful** spirit ([v 8](#)),
- 2) a **concerned** spirit ([v 9-10a](#)),
- 3) a **willing** and **submissive** spirit ([v. 10b](#)),
- 4) a **loving spirit** ([v. 11](#)),
- 5) a **humble** spirit ([v. 12](#)),
- 6) a **fruitful** spirit ([v. 13](#)),
- 7) an **obedient** spirit ([v. 14](#)),
- 8) an **eager** spirit ([v. 15](#)).

A ninth, a **bold** spirit, is mentioned in [v. 16a](#).

Romans 1:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ 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.

1. ([Romans 1:8](#)) **Church— Rome— Testimony: the church at Rome was a great church—so great that Paul thanked God for the church “always”.**

Romans 1:8 (NASB)

⁸ First, **I thank my God** through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

In every epistle but one, Paul expresses gratitude for those to whom he writes. The exception was the letter to the church in Galatia, which had defected from the true gospel of grace to a works system of righteousness and was worshiping and serving in the flesh because of the influence of the Judaizers.

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It was not that the other churches were perfect, which is apparent since Paul wrote most of his letters to correct wrong doctrine or unholy living. But even where the need for instruction and correction was great, he found something in those churches for which he could be thankful.

Paul wrote the letter to the Romans from Corinth, and at the time the Jews there were plotting to kill him ([Acts 20:3](#)).

[Acts 20:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ **And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.**

He was on his way to Jerusalem, where he knew imprisonment and possibly death awaited him. **Yet he was still filled with thanksgiving.**

Some years later, as he was prisoner in his own house in Rome while awaiting an audience before Caesar, Paul was still thankful. While there, he wrote four epistles ([Ephesians](#), [Philippians](#), [Colossians](#), and [Philemon](#)), commonly called the prison epistles.

In each of those letters he gives thanks for the believers to whom he writes ([Ephesians 1:16](#); [Philippians 1:3](#); [Colossians 1:3](#); [Philemon 4](#)).

[Ephesians 1:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶ **Do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers.**

[Philippians 1:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ **I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,**

[Colossians 1:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ **We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.**

[Philemon 1:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴ **I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers.**

During his second Roman imprisonment, he may have spent time in the wretched Mamertine prison. If so, we can be sure he was thankful even there, although the city sewage system ran through the prison. I have read and been told on visits there by others that when the cells were filled to capacity, the sewage gates were opened and all the inmates would drown in the filthy water, making way for a new batch of prisoners. But Paul's thankfulness did not rise and fall based on his earthly circumstances but on the richness of his fellowship with his Lord.

The specific reason for Paul's thankfulness for the Roman Christians was their deep faith, which was being proclaimed throughout the whole world. From secular history we learn that in A.D. 49 Emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome, thinking they were all followers of someone named Chrestus (a variant spelling of Christ).

Apparently the testimony of Jewish Christians had so incited the non-believing Jews that the turmoil threatened the peace of the whole city. **The believers had, then, a powerful testimony not only in the city, but throughout the whole world. What a commendation!**

By faith Paul was not referring to the initial trust in Christ that brings salvation **but to the persevering trust that brings spiritual strength and growth.** Faith like that also may bring persecution. Believers in Rome lived in the lion's den, as it were, yet they lived out their faith

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with integrity and credibility. Some churches are famous because of their pastor, their architecture, their stained glass windows, or their size or wealth. **The church in Rome was famous because of its faith.** It was a fellowship of genuinely redeemed saints through whom the Lord Jesus Christ manifested His life and power, so that their character was known everywhere.

A thankful heart for those to whom one ministers is essential to true spiritual service. The Christian who is trying to serve God's people, however needy they may be, without gratitude in his heart for what the Lord has done for them will find his service lacking joy. Paul could usually find a cause for thanks so that he could honor the Lord for what had been done already and hope for what God would use him to do.

Superficial believers are seldom satisfied and therefore seldom thankful. Because they focus on their own appetites for things of the world, they are more often resentful than thankful. **A thankless heart is a selfish, self-centered, legalistic heart.**

Paul had a thankful heart because he continually focused on what God was doing in his own life, in the lives of other faithful believers, and in the advancement of His kingdom throughout the world.

[Romans 1:9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹ 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,**

[Romans 1:9 \(KJV\)](#)

⁹ 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;**

The word “**unceasingly**” or “**always**” shows that the church held a very special place in Paul's heart. This is significant, for Paul had never been to the church. He did not know the church personally; he only knew what he had heard about it.

But note: the church's testimony for Christ was so strong it was being talked about throughout *the whole world*. It had a phenomenal testimony, and wherever Paul travelled he heard about the strength of the church.