

Unit II. Faith and Salvation

A Gift to Strengthen You

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 71:1-6, 17-24

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 1

PRINT PASSAGE: Romans 1:8-17

KEY VERSE

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16, KJV)

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I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. (Romans 1:16, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Discern the power of God as illustrated in Paul's faith.
- Affirm the power of God's salvation in family and friends.
- Pray for the salvation of the world, believing that it is possible.

*Key Terms

Faith (verse 8)—Greek: *pistis* (pis'-tis): faithfulness; belief or trust.

Gospel (verse 9)—Greek: *euangelion* (yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on): the Good News of the coming of the Messiah; good tidings.

Prayers (verse 9 [KJV]/verse 10 [NIV])—Greek: *proseuché* (pros-yoo-khay'): requests; entreaties; pleas.

Serve (verse 9)—Greek: *latreuó* (lat-ryoo'-o): to serve, especially God (perhaps simply: "I worship").

Thank (verse 8)—Greek: *eucharisteó* (yoo-khar-is-teh'-o): to be thankful; to give thanks, express gratitude.

Witness (verse 9)—Greek: *martus* (mar'-toos): a record; an eyewitness or ear-witness.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

This lesson unit addresses “faith and salvation.” The first lesson addresses the power of the Gospel to strengthen us. Many Bible scholars believe that Paul wrote this letter to the Roman church from the city of Corinth during his third missionary journey, during or close to the year AD 58. Paul’s purpose for writing was to parallel the very purpose to which Paul committed his life—that of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul notes the ungodly characteristics of the Romans in this book so we can also assume that some were misguided in their adoration of those who had riches and power. During this time, those in leadership in the Roman empire were notably brutal against the powerless Jews in the region; their hatred fell on the churches as they began to grow and become more diverse, becoming a congregational mix of both Jews and Gentiles. Paul directed his epistle to this mixed group of believers in an effort to lay a strong doctrinal foundation for their faith. The early verses build up the underlying assertion of the whole book—namely, humanity’s need for salvation; and Paul begins by addressing the sinfulness of humanity and noting the rampant idolatry in Rome, which calls to mind the state of our own nation today.

Introduction

As quiet as it’s kept, life is hard. That is why everyone, regardless of his/her broad smile or upbeat outward demeanor, needs to hear a word of encouragement. We can enjoy stronger bonds of kinship, friendship, and Christian fellowship through the practice of routine encouragement. Someone once said that people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. Paul was not only highly educated, but also he had been blessed by God with a wealth of spiritual revelations. In his dealings with other believers, Paul never boasted about what he knew. In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul reached out with words of genuine comfort, compassion, wisdom, and spiritual insight. Those who are curious about how to touch lives for Christ should read between the lines of what Paul has written to the church. He does not merely impart lofty doctrinal truths, but reveals his own heart of concern for their well-being as well. We do not know much about Paul’s personality—whether he was outgoing or reserved, extroverted or introverted. But what we do know is that Paul won numerous souls to Christ and ministered encouragement to countless others because he knew the power of

love. He never offered dry doctrine or bold condemnation that was void of compassion and a human touch. Paul extended greetings to the saints, calling persons by name. He made mention of his frequent prayers on behalf of the saints. Even the length and substance of his letters reveal how dearly Paul held his audience in his heart. One of the saddest realities of the modern church is the selfish tendency to focus more on being impressive than on being effective. Paul had a deep understanding of the Scriptures, but instead of seeking a reputation for himself, he strived to bring glory to God. His great humility, passion for souls, and eagerness for fellowship with God’s people made him one of the most remarkable witnesses for Christ in his generation. Paul teaches us that being effective in ministry begins with having a loving concern for others.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Thankful for the All-in Prayer (Romans 1:8-10)

KJV

8 First, I *thank* my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your *faith* is spoken of throughout the whole world.

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*;

10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

NIV

8 First, I *thank* my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your *faith* is being reported all over the world.

9 God, whom I *serve* in my spirit in preaching the *gospel* of his Son, is my *witness* how constantly I remember you

10 in my *prayers* at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

Paul begins his letter by thanking God for those Christians in Rome whose faith was being discussed locally and abroad (**verse 8**). The church in Rome had a good reputation, despite the wickedness and idolatry prevalent in the surrounding region. The Roman church was located in what was commonly referred to as the center or hub of the world—the capital city of the Roman Empire. Paul shared that he had faithfully remembered the Roman saints in his prayers and claimed God Himself as a witness to the fact that he prayed for them constantly (**verse 9**). The readers were likely comforted by Paul's words. Knowing that someone is praying for you is always encouraging, especially when the person is one whom you hold in high spiritual regard. Paul let the Roman saints know that his prayers for them also included a request for God to open a way for him to finally travel to visit them (**verse 10**). In just a few sentences, Paul conveyed his fond affection for the saints and assured them of the special place they held in his heart and mind.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you make a habit of letting others know when you are praying for them?

Trustful on the Way (Romans 1:11-13)

KJV

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

NIV

11 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—

12 that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

As Paul continues, he shared his longing to see the saints so that he could strengthen and bless them with the spiritual gifts God had given to him (verse 11). Paul clarified that his ministry on their behalf would serve a mutual benefit. As Paul ministered comfort to the church, he himself would be encouraged by their faith (verse 12). Often, God's people are blessed by hearing the witness of what God has done for others—especially those whom they know. The testimonies encourage and remind us that God is able to do great things for us also. This sharing of faith helps believers to grow in faith as they serve the Lord together. Paul wanted the church to be clear concerning the fact that he had not yet been able to visit them (verse 13). He assured the Romans that he had a genuine and eager desire to be with them so that he might gather a spiritual harvest—that is, new souls for God's kingdom (verse 13). Paul hoped that the Jews in Rome would be just as open to receiving the Word as the Gentiles had been (verse 13). Paul's prayer indicated his trust in God despite the hindrances that had prevented him from travelling to Rome. Paul had entrusted the matter to God, praying that when the time was right, God would grant him the opportunity to go to Rome. Like Paul, we should pray that God would use us to gather the fruit of His spiritual harvest—blessing other believers and winning the lost.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Have you ever felt hindered in your desire or efforts to make a spiritual connection with someone who needs God? Did you give up, persevere, or wait for God to open a door?

Truthful—Do Not Stray (Romans 1:14-17)

KJV

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

14 I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.

15 That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Paul continued by sharing his own motivation for ministry. Specifically, he shared his conviction that God had called him to minister the Gospel to any who would hear him—Greeks and non-Greeks, educated and uneducated, Jews and Gentiles (**verses 14-15**). Because he knew the wonderful saving power of the Gospel, Paul was not hesitant to share it with anyone, even to those to whom it was strange or unfamiliar (**verse 16**). Paul emphasized that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for everyone. The inclusiveness of its message and impact is so thorough that it reveals the righteousness of God—empowering those who believe to live by faith (**verse 17**). The Gospel not only shows us God’s righteousness, but also reveals to every believer how he or she might ready themselves for eternal life. Paul explains that by faith alone, trusting God rather than rituals and routines, believers experience the righteousness of God. Because of our faith, God declares each of us, from first to last, as righteous (**verse 17**). Paul was not moved by ambition, ethnic loyalty, praise, or a desire for money. The thing that motivated Paul to endure the sacrifices of ministry was his deep passion and commitment for the spiritual well-being of others. Paul was just as enthusiastic about ministering comfort and encouragement to the church as he was about winning lost souls to God’s kingdom. Although he was a highly accomplished, well-educated Jew, Paul was no respecter of persons. He had a profound, heartfelt affection for God’s people and lost souls alike. Therefore, Paul longed to share the Gospel with people from all backgrounds and walks of life.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What does it mean to be “ashamed of the gospel” (**verse 16**)? With whom (which groups or types of people) are you more comfortable sharing your faith?

A Closing Thought

The lessons in this unit focus on “Faith and Salvation.” Many Christians are well-acquainted with those who consider themselves righteous to the point of bragging about how much time they spend in church on Sundays. God requires faithfulness, but He does not measure righteousness by the number of hours logged in the church building. God is actually more interested in the life we live outside of church. Those who are truly righteous are moved by their faith to live a life that is a convincing witness of God’s power. Paul had a dramatic life-changing encounter with God that impacted the rest of his life—

his priorities, his time, and all of his dealings with others. God's work in Paul's life fully convinced him of the power of the Gospel to radically change anyone's heart. Have you allowed God to touch and change you? If not, ask Him to do it. The power of the Gospel will not only change your heart but will also strengthen your witness, your ministry, your relationships with others, and everything you do for God.

Your Life

This week, thank God daily for His saving grace and pray for a greater burden for lost souls and a renewed passion for sharing the Good News with others.

Your World!

This week, instead of complaining about a community, national, or world concern, commit the matter to God and ask Him to show you how you can make a difference.

Closing Prayer

Lord, help us to stand in the strength of the salvation we have received in Christ Jesus. You have prepared us by Your Spirit to do Your will. Use us to bless and encourage others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen..

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

While reading the background Scripture, consider this thought: "What do you do to seek assurance?"

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY , July 12	"God's Covenant with Abraham"	(Genesis 15:1-8)
TUESDAY , July 13	"All the World's Families Are Blessed through Abraham"	(Genesis 12:1-9)
WEDNESDAY , July 14	"A Promise Realized by Faith, Not Law"	(Romans 4:13-15)
THURSDAY , July 15	"For All Who Share Abraham's Faith"	(Romans 4:16-18)
FRIDAY , July 16	"Abraham Believed despite Impossible Odds"	(Romans 4:19-21)
SATURDAY , July 17	"In Christ, Believers Share Abraham's Faith"	(Romans 4:22-25)
SUNDAY , July 18	"Abraham, Father of the Faithful"	(Romans 4:1-12)