

## 7. The Book of Romans 1:8-10

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*Paul's Epistle to the Romans*  
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier  
(2-15-23)

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### **Romans 1:8 (NKJV)**

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

Remember, this dynamic church wasn't started by an apostle or any 'big name' believer, it was started by ordinary people—probably by Jews visiting Jerusalem on the Feast of Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out and the Church was born in Acts 2:1-4, [10](#).

In other words, this church wasn't a plant from any other church—it was a total and spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit!

However, every work of the Spirit will be attacked by the devil using whatever means at his disposal to squash what God is doing—it was no different in Rome.

History records that in 49 A.D. (8 years before Paul wrote this epistle) the Roman government under Emperor Claudius banished the Jews from Rome.

The Roman historian Suetonius writes that Claudius banished Jews from Rome because they were—*"indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus."*

There have been many attempts to explain who 'Chrestus' was—but there is no record of anyone at that time bearing that name.

A likely solution is that he (Suetonius) was referring to 'Cristos' (Christ)—but writing some seventy years after the events, had the name somewhat mixed up.

Historian and scholar F.F. Bruce said—

*"It seems that the expulsion had to do with 'dissension and disorder within the Jewish community of Rome resulting from the introduction of Christianity into one or more of the synagogues of the city.'"*

And so, Claudius had the Jews banished from Rome—which forced Jewish believers in Jesus to leave the city as well (causing the church in Rome to be made up of Gentiles believers).

These Jewish believers in Christ went out in every direction from Rome taking the gospel with them to new places and people.

Sometimes events that seem bad—are actually being used by God for good—for the spread of the gospel.

This very thing happened in Jerusalem 25 years earlier (Acts 8) and led to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus in Acts Chapter 9—

**Acts 7:59–60 (NKJV)**

<sup>59</sup> And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” <sup>60</sup> Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

**Acts 8:1–4 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. <sup>2</sup> And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him. <sup>3</sup> As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison. <sup>4</sup> Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

**Romans 1:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> **For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son...**

Paul, being a Pharisee, had seen so much done in the name of religion that was superficial and artificial—nothing more than corrupt religiosity.

In fact, it contained the same ‘spirit’ back then that dominates so much of what goes on in religious circles today—nothing more than pure professional hucksterism!

Paul knew that not all service for God was pure and sincere—much of it was motivated by legalism and by greed and blatant self-interest rooted in the desire for prestige, power, and personal glory.

In contrast to this—Paul wanted them to know where his heart was at as a servant of God—and so he said, “**For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son...**”

We use ‘spirit’ in the same way as Paul uses it here—in athletics we talk about ‘spirited’ play—as in *lively* and motivated with *passion*, doing it with all of your heart.

The Greek word for ‘serve’ in verse 9 is ‘latreuo’—a word that is used in the N.T. only of *religious* service to God.

Frequently, this Greek word is translated ‘worship’—in fact, it’s interesting that in the N.T. this word is used to describe both—*service* and *worship* to God:

**Romans 12:1 (NASB95)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [*the sum total of your whole life*] a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*.

Serving God is a form of worship—the greatest of all worship you can give to God—your life in service to Him as a living sacrifice!

But understand, if our service for God is going to truly be worship to Him, holy and acceptable—it has to be done out of the right heart and with the right motives:

### 1 Corinthians 3:9-15 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building. <sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

The Day will come when we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and our work is tested—not the *quantity*, but the *quality* of the work we did for Him.

Understand, the fire does not test the *worker* (though Roman Catholics use this passage—1Corinthians 3:13-15, to teach purgatory)—the ‘fire’ will test their *work* or *workmanship*.

The distinction isn't between the *lost* and the *saved* but between the faithful saved and the unfaithful saved—between those who built *well* and those who built *poorly* (or didn't build at all—i.e., ‘*didn't serve God during their time on earth*’).

You see, the Bema Seat Judgment (1 Corinthians 3:9-15) for Christians isn't a *punitive* judgment—it's a *rewards* judgment (think of the judge's seat at the Olympics).

Those who stand before Jesus on that Day are all believers who have already made it into heaven where this judgment takes place.

But understand—for many Christians this will not be a time of great rejoicing—it will be a time of great sorrow because they have nothing to show for their life on earth.

They lived worthless, wasted lives during their time on the earth spiritually speaking—and therefore will receive little if any rewards on that Day.

*“That's not fair, I wasn't able to get out of the house to serve God—I was a shut in... or I was too busy raising my kids and now my grandkids....”*

Understand, that the greatest ministry is prayer (Anna in Luke 2:36-37)—something any Christian can do even if they are bed ridden. (Corrie Ten Boom)

A big part of the judgment of that Day will be to reveal whether Christians' service was self-directed, or Spirit directed—and did they serve for His glory or theirs?

What was the motivation in their heart when they served Him—only God knows and will reveal it on that Day—

### 1 Corinthians 4:5 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

The only work that God recognizes, and the only work He rewards—is work done in the Spirit and not in the flesh—for the glory of God and not for the glory of self.

As we have said many times—the church started out as a work of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) but has in so many ways devolved into a work of the flesh. (Elaborate)

A.W. Tozer—

*“If the Holy Spirit was removed from the early church 90% of what they did would have come to a halt. If the Holy Spirit was removed from the church today 10% of what we’re doing would come to a halt.”*

**“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son...”**

Only the true ‘*gospel of God*’ is good news—because only the gospel of God saves.

The Gospel of God is a Person—He is the Lord Jesus Christ—He is the Good News—God who became Man and died in our place, as payment for our sins!

The gospel of God isn’t a set of moral principles, or a codified set of religious laws to be obeyed and if obeyed allows a condemned sinner entrance into heaven.

That’s the ‘gospel’ of legalism in the flesh—not the gospel of grace in Christ.

**Romans 1:9–10 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> 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...****

When you read Paul’s epistles—one of the things you come away with is that he really believed in the power of prayer.

Throughout the history of the Church, we see those who, like Paul, really understood how powerful prayer is and how essential it is for the work of God to be accomplished—let me give you a few examples of this:

One author shared this story—

*“Some years ago, a young girl was very sick and not expected to recover. Because of her love for Jesus, she was troubled that she had not been able to do more for Him in her short life. Her pastor suggested that she make a list of people in their little town who needed Christ and pray that they might put their faith in Him. She took his advice, made a list, and prayed often for each person.*

*Sometime later God began to stir a revival in the village. The girl heard of the people who were coming to Christ and prayed even more. As she heard reports, she checked off the names of those who had been led to the Lord.*

*After the girl died, a prayer list with the names of 56 people was found under her pillow. All had put their faith in Christ—the last one on the night before her death.*

*Such is the power of definite, specific, fervent prayer. Do you have a prayer list?”*

In his biography of evangelist D. L. Moody, author Lyle Dorsett relates the following story of God’s amazing faithfulness:

*“It was the spring of 1862 and the Civil War had taken its toll on troops and citizens alike. Evangelist D. L. Moody was frequently seen on the battlefields, ministering to soldiers on the frontlines. During one instance, late at night after a weary day at war, the party of Christian workers was walking among the body-strewn fields searching for survivors.*

*The hundreds of men they came upon were wounded and famished, and a search of the area produced little nourishment for the weary men. Desperate, the small band of workers gathered together asking God to provide*

*the needed supplies. "Later" tells Dorsett, "Some workers admitted that they were doubtful God would respond."*

*As the first gleam of morning light rose above the battlefield, a wagon appeared on the horizon. As it approached the workers, they realized it was a large farm wagon piled high with loaves of bread. God had provided: manna from heaven!*

*The driver approached the men and told the following story: "When I went to bed last night, I knew the army was gone and I could not sleep for thinking of the poor fellows who were wounded and would have to stay behind. Something seemed to whisper in my ear, 'What will those poor fellows do for something to eat?' I could not get rid of this voice."*

*That faithful servant of God could not sleep, so he woke his wife, and she began baking as much bread as possible. Meanwhile, he hitched up his wagon and called on his neighbors to gather additional food. Said the man: "I felt just as if I was being sent by our Lord Himself."*

Charles Finney shared this—

*"I have never known a person sweat blood; but I have known a person pray till the blood started from his nose. And I have known persons pray till they were all wet with perspiration, in the coldest weather in winter. I have known persons pray for hours, till their strength was all exhausted with the agony of their minds. Such prayers prevailed with God. This agony in prayer was prevalent in Jonathan Edwards' day, in the revivals which then took place."*

(Speak of Daniel Nash)

Another Christian author said this with regard to prayer—

*"We refuse to so strive and should not be surprised at the lack of God's mighty stirrings. Is it not amazing that we have no problem with people wearing themselves out in sports for pleasure, work for money, politics for power, and programs for charity, but think it fanatical to so pray for souls? We would die for national freedom, but never for progress in the Kingdom of God. Is it any wonder we see so little of God's great working?"*

This was not true of Paul the apostle—he was a true prayer warrior.

#### **Romans 1:9 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> 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,**

I appreciate that Paul says he makes 'mention' of these people in his prayers.

Not all prayers need to be lengthy and detailed for God to hear them—it is appropriate to make mention of people (some prayers require us to fall on our faces before God and pour our hearts out to Him like Jesus did in the garden) we are praying for since God knows the details.

One of my favorite examples of Paul's prayers for believers comes from Ephesians 3—

#### **Ephesians 3:14–21 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, <sup>17</sup> that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height—<sup>19</sup> to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, <sup>21</sup> to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Samuel Chadwick said in the early 1900's—

*“The church that multiplies committees and neglects prayer may be fussy, noisy, enterprising, but it labors in vain and spends its strength for naught. It is possible to excel in mechanics and fail in dynamics. There is an abundance of machinery; what is lacking is power.”*

➔ Mention Spurgeon—*“The powerplant of the church...20 years of revival...”*

**“...making request to the Lord if, by some means...I might find a way to come to you—in the will of God.”**

**1 John 5:14–15 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

*“Lord, teach us how to pray.”*

**Matthew 6:5–10 (NLT)**

<sup>5</sup> “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. <sup>7</sup> “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. <sup>8</sup> Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! <sup>9</sup> Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. <sup>10</sup> May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

It’s been well said—*“Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man’s will done in heaven, but for getting God’s will done on earth.”* (Explain)

One author—

*“Ruth Bell Graham has said she is glad God did not listen to her foolish demands in her younger years, or she would have married the wrong guy fifteen times. But she ended her prayers wisely by saying, “Not my will but Thy will be done.”*

*How do you pray? Do you pray in simplicity, “Father, Thy will be done”? Or do you pray with a demanding mentality, “You listen to me, God. I want this?”*

*For us to pray as Jesus taught us we must believe in the character and wisdom of our Heavenly Father—that He loves us and wants to do the best for us, and that His will is perfect.”*

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