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## **Evidences of a Truly Caring Heart** **Romans 1:8-15**

### **Introduction:**

In **1920** a young man named **Oswald Smith** was standing before an examining board for selecting missionaries. More than anything else he wanted to be a **missionary**. In addition to all of his **planning** and **preparing**, he often **prayed**, “Lord, I want to go as a **missionary** for you. Open a door of service for me.” Now, at last, he believed his **prayer** would be answered. But the examining board turned him down because he did not meet their qualifications.

What do you do when your **plans** don't work out and God doesn't answer your **prayers** the way you desire? You continue to **trust** the Lord! As **Oswald** kept praying, God planted another idea in his heart. If he could not **go** as a missionary, he would **plant a church** that would **send** out missionaries. So that is what he did. In **1928 Oswald** planted ***The People's Church*** in **Toronto, Canada**, and for **30 years** he developed it into one of the **greatest missionary churches** of that time. **Today** this church currently supports **153 nationals** and over **300 missionaries** around the world.

How are we to **handle** the **disappointment** of **our plans**? This is one of the things we will be looking at this morning. As we continue on in our study of **Romans**, we now come to **1:8-15**. In this passage we will see that although Paul did not personally **found** or even **visit** the church at

Rome, the **love of Christ** still moved him to **deeply care** for the Roman believers. Turn with me in your Bibles to **Romans 1**.

**In Romans 1:8-15 we see five evidences of a truly caring heart for others spiritual welfare that every believer should manifest.**

The **first evidence** is:

### **I. Thanksgiving to God for Faithful Believers**

- A. Look at **v. 8**: **First**, I **thank** my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your **faith** is being **proclaimed** throughout the **whole world**.
1. Paul **thinks God** for what He has done among the **Romans**.  
Now the word “**First**” (proton) doesn’t imply a “**second**,” but simply shows that **thanksgiving** to God for **other believers** is a **first priority** in Paul’s heart.
  2. Throughout Paul’s letters his **pattern** is always to **thank** God for the **grace** He has bestowed upon churches and individuals (1 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3-4; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:3; Philem. 4-5). The only **exception** was the **Galatians** who had **defected** from the **true gospel** of grace to a **works system** of righteousness.
  3. Notice that Paul’s **thanksgiving** reveals his **personal relationship** with God, “I thank **my God**.” It is as if Paul is saying, “I am **His** and He is **mine**.”
  4. **What a privilege** we as believers have as **children of God** to call the Almighty God of the universe, “**my God**.” **Romans 8:15** says that we can even cry out to Him saying, “**Abba! Father!**”

5. But notice that since it is only “**through Jesus Christ**” that  **blessings** can be **received**, it is only “**through Jesus Christ**” that **thanksgiving** must be **returned**. Jesus Christ alone is our **great High Priest** who has made **access** to the Father possible.
  6. Describing His death, **Matthew 27:50-51** states, “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and **yielded up** His spirit. And behold, the **veil** of the **temple** was **torn in two** from **top** to **bottom...**” At that moment the **tearing** of the massive curtain that **separated** the **Holy of Holies** from the rest of the sanctuary “**from top to bottom**” showed that **no man** had done this, **God** did it.
  7. This **signified** that the **way** into **God’s presence** was now **open** to all **through Jesus Christ** alone (Heb. 10:19-22). **First Timothy 2:5** says, “For there is **one God**, and **one mediator** also between **God** and **men**, the **man Christ Jesus**.”
  8. And Jesus Himself declared in **John 14:6**, “I am the **way**, and the **truth**, and the **life**; **no one** comes to the Father, but **through Me**.” (Heb. 4:16; 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5)
  9. So here in **v. 8** Paul “**thanks** his God **through** Jesus Christ” for “**all**” the believers in the church at Rome.
- B. And his **specific reason** for his thanksgiving is that their “**...faith** is being **proclaimed** throughout the **whole world**.”
1. Concerning their faith, **Douglas Moo** correct states, “Nothing is **implied** in this about their **faith** being particularly **strong**; the **very fact** of their **faith** is **sufficient reason** for giving thanks to God, the **author** of **faith**.”

2. Now “**the whole world**” in which their faith is being “**proclaimed throughout**” is a reference to the **entire Roman Empire**, which was the **known civilized world** during the apostolic age (Lk. 2:1).
3. Since at that time “**all roads led to Rome**,” it is **no wonder** that **everywhere** Paul went he heard about **God’s grace** at work in the **capital city** where people had **bowed** their knees and **worshipped** the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. The **second evidence** of a truly caring heart is:

## II. Praying to God for Other’s Needs

- A. Look at **vv. 9-10**: 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, always in my **prayers** making request, **if perhaps** now at last by the **will of God** I may **succeed** in coming to you.
  1. Before Paul tells them that he is **praying** for them, he briefly states his God-given ministry. The word “**serve**” (latreuo) here refers to the function of a **priest** in the temple and is also used for “**worship**” (Phil. 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:3).
  2. In other words, Paul’s **service** and **worship** were inseparably connected—his **service** was an act of **worship**, and his **worship** was an act of **service**. The same is **true** for **us!**
  3. Therefore, Paul says, “I **serve** and **worship** God **in my spirit**,” which means “**with his whole heart**.” And he did so “...in the **preaching** of the **gospel of His Son**.”
  4. The “**gospel of God**” (v. 1), which **originated** from Him, is here described as the “**gospel of His Son**” because Jesus Christ is its

**substance.** But also **integral** to Paul's **worshipful service** to God was his **intercessory prayer** on the behalf of other believers (Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:3; Philem. 1:4).

B. In these **two verses** we see how Paul **inseparably connects** his ministry of **preaching** and **prayer**. He **models** for us **five aspects** of what **true prayer** should **look like** in our lives:

1. **First**, true prayer is **sincere**. Paul says, "For **God...is my witness...**"

- Since the Roman believers had only known about the prominent apostle from what they had **heard** and had **never met** him personally, Paul knows that his **claim** to be "**praying** for them" may seem difficult to believe. So by stating, "**God is my witness,**" he makes a **serious oath**.
- He **appeals** to the **omniscient (all-knowing)** God, who **alone** knows the **reality** and **sincerity** of Paul's prayers for them, to **testify** on his behalf. He wants them to **know** that he **meant** what he said.
- He is sincere and genuine; he is not merely stating some **pious platitude** or **Christian cliché**. Likewise, whenever you or I tell someone "**I'll pray for you,**" we need to make sure that we do what we say!

2. **Second**, true prayer is **constant**. Paul says, "**...unceasingly I make mention** of you, **always** in my **prayers** making request."

- The words “**unceasingly**” and “**always**” show that Paul **constantly** included the Roman believers in his prayers. He never took them off his prayer list.
3. **Third**, true prayer is **personal**. Paul says, “I **make mention of you.**”
- He always prayed for **particular** churches and individuals by name.
4. **Fourth**, true prayer is **specific**. Notice that Paul asked that “I may **succeed** in coming to you.”
- Here he prays for **traveling mercies**. There is **no detail** in life that is **so trivial** that we cannot make it a matter of **specific prayer**.
  - The word “**succeed**” (euodothasomai) here means to have a **prosperous** journey. Paul was about to leave **Corinth** for **Jerusalem** to deliver the special offering from the Gentile churches for the poor Jewish saints.
  - From **Jerusalem** he then planned to visit **Rome** before going on to **Spain**. But it is **significant** that the word “**succeed**” is in the **passive voice** in the Greek, meaning that **none** of his **travel plans** could be accomplished unless **God permitted** them to happen.
  - The **sovereign providence of God** that is **implicit** in the passive form of the word “**succeed**,” is **explicitly** reinforced in the phrase “**by the will of God.**”
5. **Fifth**, true prayer is **submissive**. Paul says, “...if **perhaps** now at last **by the will of God** I may **succeed** in coming to you.”

- Although Paul deeply desired to be with them, he never **presumed** to **know** what God’s will was or **demand**ed his will from God. Instead, he **humbly submitted** his will to God’s will—“...if **perhaps** now at last **by the will of God.**”
  - **God’s will** in all of this was **much different** than what Paul would have **planned**. In **Acts 21-28** we see that while in **Jerusalem** the Jews wanted to kill Paul.
  - He was **arrested** in the temple, **falsely accused** by the Jewish authorities, and after various **court appearances** he was finally **sent** as a **prisoner** to **Rome** to be **tried** before **Caesar**, but not before the **ship** he was traveling on was **shipwrecked**.
  - Have you ever noticed that **God’s will** for our lives includes **suffering**? This is because God is more concerned about our **Christlike character** than He is our **earthly comfort**.
  - Eventually Paul did **arrive** in **Rome** where he stayed **two years** under **house arrest** chained around the clock to a Roman soldier. But because Paul was always **humbly submissive** to the will of God this kept him from getting **angry at God** for what He allowed him to go through or getting **depressed** and just giving up on serving the Lord.
6. **Prayer** is truly the **greatest ministry** that we as believers have the **privilege** of rendering to God and His church. It is not only to be the **priority** of the **Elders**, along with the ministry of the **word** (Acts 6:4), but also it is the ministry that can be done by any believer, especially when **age, illness**, or even

**imprisonment** limits us from serving in other areas (Lk. 2:36-38).

7. Never forget that we **truly care** for others spiritual welfare when we are **faithful** to **pray** for them.
8. The **third evidence** of a truly caring heart is:

### III. Longing for Others to grow Spiritually

A. Look at **v. 11**: For **I long to see you...** (Stop there)

1. Paul tells the Roman believers that he **continuous “longs”** (epipotho—**present tense**) or **desires** to see them and be with them. The **love of God**, which had been poured out within his heart by the Holy Spirit (5:5), literally made him **homesick** for these **fellow believers** that he had never met. (1 Jn. 3:14)
2. With these **strong words of love** for them, Paul gives **three reasons** for his continual longing to visit them. The **first reason** is that Paul desired to **strengthen** their faith.
3. He goes on to say in **v. 11**, “...so that I may **impart** some **spiritual gift** to you, that you may be **established.**” The “**spiritual gift**” (charisma) that Paul is talking about here cannot be the **gift** that every believer receives at the moment of salvation because these gifts are **bestowed** by the **Holy Spirit** not **men** (Rom. 12:6-8, 1 Cor. 12:9-10, 28-30; Eph. 4:11; and 1 Pet. 4:10).
4. I believe **C.E.B Cranfield** is right when he states that “...it is probably **better** to take the word here in a more **general sense** as denoting a **blessing** or **benefit** to be bestowed on the Christians in Rome by God through Paul’s presence. There is an **intentional indefiniteness** due to the fact that he has not yet

**learned** by personal encounter what **blessing** they particularly stand in need of.” (Cranfield pg. 79)

5. Notice the **purpose** of this **blessing** or **benefit** was that they “**may be established.**” The word “**established**” (sterichthenai) speaks of **solidifying, stabilizing,** and **strengthening** believers in their faith.
  6. In other words, it refers to **spiritual growth** toward **maturity** in Christ. And again the **fact** that the word “**established**” is in **passive voice** shows that **God alone** causes spiritual growth to happen in our lives.
  7. It was this **spiritual growth** and **maturity** that Paul was intent on seeing take place in every believer’s life. He states in **Ephesians 4:13**, “Until we **all** attain to the **unity** of the **faith**, and of the **knowledge** of the Son of God, to a **mature** man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the **fullness** of **Christ.**”
  8. And in **Colossians 1:28** he says that his passion was to “**...present** every man **complete** in Christ.”
- B. The **second reason** is that Paul desired to be **encouraged** by them. Look at **v. 12**: That is, that **I** may be **encouraged together with you** while among you, **each of us** by the other’s faith, both **yours** and **mine**.
1. No sooner had he said these words that he seems to sense their inappropriate **one-sidedness**, as if only he has everything to give and nothing to receive. So he immediately states, “That is, that **I** may be **encouraged together** with you...”

2. Notice that this **mutual encouragement** happens by **each other's faith**, "both **yours** and **mine**." Even the great apostle Paul never thought of himself as **above** being spiritually edified by other believers.
  3. **John Calvin** said it well, "Note how **modestly** he expresses what he feels by not refusing to seek **strengthening** from **inexperienced beginners**. He means what he says, too, for there is **none** so **void of gifts** in the Church of Christ who cannot in some measure **contribute** to our spiritual progress. **Ill will** and **pride**, however, **prevent** our deriving such benefit from one another." (Mac pg. 44)
  4. **Beloved**, we all **need** each other! **Proverbs 27:17** says, "Iron sharpens iron, so **one man** sharpens **another**."
  5. This **interdependence** upon one another's spiritual giftedness is how Christ has **designed** His church to function. There is a **contribution** that every one of us as believers are to make to the church family as we minister our gift.
  6. **No one** is **excluded**! It is **beautiful** when this happens, for **Ephesians 4:16** says that "...the **proper working** of **each individual part**, **causes** the **growth** of the body for the **building up** of itself in **love**."
  7. But when believers **choose** to **not minister** their gifts, it is to **that degree** that the body **lacks** and **fails** to grow in the way God designed.
- C. The **third reason** is that Paul desired some fruit in Rome. Look at **v. 13**: I do not want you to be **unaware, brethren**, that **often** I have **planned** to come to you (and have been **prevented** so far) so

that I may obtain **some fruit** among you also, even as among the rest of the **Gentiles**.

1. Calling them “**brethren**” (adelphoi), a term of **endearment** and **loving affection** for fellow members of God’s family, Paul wanted them to understand that he had **often** made **definite plans** to visit them, but he was “**prevented**” (ekolothēn) or **hindered** from doing so.
2. He hadn’t **neglected** them, for they had never been out of his **praise**, his **prayers**, or his **plans**. There is nothing wrong with making **plans**.
3. However, **Proverbs 16:9** clearly states that, “The mind of man **plans** his way, but the LORD **directs** his steps.” And that was **Paul’s point!**
4. The **only reason** Paul had not come sooner to them was because “**by the will of God**” He sovereignly “**prevented**” him because God had a **different plan** for him at the time.
5. In this case, Paul was **hindered** because of his other missionary work in **Asia Minor** and **Greece** that God had him doing (15:22). **Yes** Paul made **his plans**, but he **handled** the **disappointment** of his **plans** by holding them with **open hands** in **humble submission** to the **sovereign will of God**.
6. Is that how you look at the **hindrances** in your life? **Alva J. McClain** said, “**Hindrances** are not always an evidence that our **purposes** are wrong. Too often we **purpose** to do something that we think is according to the divine will, and when we start to do it, a **hindrance** comes up (or two or three). Immediately, with unseemingly haste, we decide that this is not

God's will for us, and so we **abandon** it. But our **purpose** may be **exactly** according to the divine will, only perhaps we are trying to carry it out at the **wrong time**, and the very **hindrance** that appears as an **obstacle** in our path may be a **divine testing** of our **purpose**, as well as the **assurance** that it will be carried out at God's **appointed time**." (McClain pg. 51)

7. So Paul's **plan** to go to Rome was indeed **God's will**, but when he got there was an issue of God's **way** and **time**. But he wanted to go there, "...so that I may **obtain some fruit** among you also, even as among the rest of the **Gentiles**."
8. The word "**fruit**" (karpon) here is used not of the "**fruit of the Spirit**" (Gal. 5:22-23), but the **fruit** of both **new converts** and **strengthening believers**. The **apostle to the Gentiles** **longed** to be used of God to **obtain** some **spiritual fruit** in the **capital city**, as he did elsewhere throughout the Gentile world.
9. Now since only the Holy Spirit can **produce fruit** in people's lives, if we **truly care** for others spiritual welfare we too will **long** for the Spirit to work through our lives to **help** others **grow spiritually**.
10. The **fourth evidence** of a truly caring heart is:

#### **IV. Feeling an Obligation to all People**

- A. Look at **v. 14**: I am under **obligation** both to **Greeks** and to **barbarians**, both to the **wise** and to the **foolish**.
  1. The word "**obligation**" (opheiletēs) here refers to a **debt**. Paul felt an **obligation** or **indebtedness** to the entire world to **proclaim** the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. He said in **1 Corinthians 9:16**, “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.”
  3. But Paul isn’t the **only one** who has this **obligation**. **Leon Morris** accurately states, “The gospel imposes a **debt** on **all** those who **receive** it, a **debt** which calls for **repayment** by **passing** the gospel on to someone else.”
  4. **Beloved, all believers** are **obligated** to share the gospel. Jesus said in His **Great Commission** in **Matthew 28:19** that we are to “...**make disciples** of **all the nations**.”
- B. Notice how Paul **describes** the entire **Gentile** world that he was obligated to, “...both to **Greeks** and to **barbarians**, both to the **wise** and to the **foolish**.”
1. The **Greeks** and **barbarians** and the **wise** and **foolish** seem to be **parallel phrases**. The “**Greeks**” (Ellesin) were considered “**wise**” (sophois) because they spoke the **Greek language** and had assimilated the **Greek culture**, which the Romans embraced in forming their own **Greco-Roman** world.
  2. And they called all of the **non-Greeks** “**barbarians**” (barbarois), a word which **imitated** the unintelligible sound of foreign languages (bar, bar, bar—onomatopoeic). The Greeks considered these foreigners “**foolish**” (anoetois) or **uncivilized** and **uneducated** because they neither spoke the **Greek language** nor adopted the **Greek culture** as their own.
  3. But Paul was **no respecter** of **persons**. He felt an **obligation** to **all people**, regardless of their nationality, their cultural background, or their level of education.

4. Likewise, when we **truly care** for others spiritual welfare we too will feel an **obligation** to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ with all people.
5. The ***fifth evidence*** of a truly caring heart is:

**V. Having an Eagerness to share Christ**

A. Look at **v. 15**: So, for my part, I am **eager to preach the gospel to you also** who are in **Rome**.

1. Paul not only felt **obligated** and **indebted** to share the gospel with a lost and dying world, including **Rome**, but he also was **eager** (prothumon) and **ready** to do so. How encouraging, for what if he wasn't?
2. If he wasn't **eager**, then during his **two year imprisonment** in Rome under **house arrest** he would have been sitting around **bitter at God** and full of **self-pity** instead of **writing** what is known as the **prison epistles** (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon), and **witnessing** to everyone who came to see him, including all of the Roman soldiers who happened to be chained to him.
3. But because of his eagerness, we are told in Philippians that the gospel of Christ went out "throughout the whole **Praetorian Guard** and to everyone else (1:13) and even into **Caesars** household (4:22). **What a testimony!**
4. And since the words "**you also**" refer to the Roman believers themselves, for Paul to "**preach the gospel**" to them refers to the ongoing work of **teaching** and **discipleship** that builds on **initial evangelism**. When we **truly care** about others

spiritual welfare then we will be **eager** to share Christ, whether it is for their **salvation** or for their **spiritual growth**.

**Conclusion:**

In closing, these **five evidences** from the **example** of Paul are **God's way** of showing us whether we **truly care** for others spiritual welfare. May we all, **like Paul**, allow the **love of Christ** to so flow through us that these will be **manifested** in our **daily lives** to the **glory of God**.