

2020 VISION "GOSPEL COMPULSION" ROMANS 1:8-13

After Paul's first missionary journey, he wrote *one* letter, Galatians; during his second missionary journey, he wrote *two* letters, 1 and 2 Thessalonians; during his third missionary journey, he wrote *three* letters, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans; and during his first Roman imprisonment, he wrote *four* letters, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon, and Philippians. Then after his release, he wrote *three* more letters, 1 Timothy and Titus, before being jailed for the last time, and 2 Timothy from jail before dying as a martyr. In his letter to the Romans, Paul tells us what we all need to know about the "gospel of God . . . regarding his Son" (1:1-2)—using the term "gospel" in the broadest sense of all that pertains to "the ongoing work of teaching and discipleship that builds on initial evangelization" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 63).

Why write Romans? Commentators suggest that Paul had a number of reasons for sending the letter. Three are frequently mentioned. *First*, he wrote to prepare the way for his long-awaited visit to Rome. In the opening of his epistle, he tells his readers, "I long to see you" (1:11) and "I planned many times to come to you" (v. 13). *Second*, he wrote because he wanted to establish a base of operations in Rome for a later mission to Spain. Toward the end of his letter, he reveals his plans. He writes, "But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you

The preaching of the gospel is in Paul's blood, and he cannot refrain from it.

— F. F. Bruce

assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while" (15:23-24). And *last* but not least, he wrote because he wanted to minister to the spiritual needs of those in Rome. He wanted to impart a spiritual blessing to them (1:11) and to have a harvest among them (v. 13).

One commentator summarizes these purposes nicely. Following years of intensive evangelization in the territories bordering on the Aegean Sea, "Paul looked forward to the launching of a plan which had been taking shape in his mind over the past few years. With the conclusion of his apostolic mission in the Aegean lands, he must find fresh fields to conquer for Christ. In making choice of a new sphere of activity, he determined to go on being a pioneer; he would not settle down as an apostle in any place to which the gospel had already been brought; he would not 'build upon another man's foundation' (Rom. xv. 20). His choice fell upon Spain, the oldest Roman colony in the west and the chief bastion of Roman civilization in those parts . . . He knew that he would continue his journey to Spain with all the more zest if he could first of all refresh his spirit by some weeks of fellowship with the Christians in Rome" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, TNTC, 12)—not to mention, if he could gain their support for his mission.

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Faith – I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Paul was willing to relocate for the furtherance of his gospel mission. His base of operations had been in Syria. Barnabas brought him from Tarsus to Antioch (Ac 11:25), and from there he launched his first missionary journey into Asia Minor (13:1) and

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his second (15:35-16:10) and third (18:23) missionary journeys into Macedonia and Achaia. When he decided to go to Spain, he realized he needed to move his base of operations from Antioch to Rome. Round trips from Antioch to the western reaches of the Roman Empire were simply not practical, and he needed the support of the church in Rome.

Sometimes we must relocate for the sake of the gospel. Career ministers and missionaries do it when they move to train for ministry and move again to minister. Ruth and I moved from Michigan to Texas, from Texas to Missouri, from Missouri to Texas, from Texas to British Columbia, and back again to Texas for the sake of ministry. Lots of people make much shorter moves, moves out of their comfort zones, for the same gospel reason. They eat with coworkers rather than alone; they engage neighbors rather than ignore them, they cultivate relationships with unchurched acquaintances rather than neglect them; they volunteer rather than let others do it; and they pursue cross-cultural experiences in international ministries. They follow the example of Paul.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 1:8-13

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.

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.

Cf., another translation

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because the whole world is hearing about your faith. 9 God is my witness that what I say is true-the God whom I serve with all my heart by preaching the Good News about his Son. God knows that I remember you 10 every time I pray. I ask that God in his good will may at last make it possible for me to visit you now. 11 For I want very much to see you, in order to share a spiritual blessing with you to make you strong. 12 What I mean is that both you and I will be helped at the same time, you by my faith and I by yours.

13 You must remember, my friends, that many times I have planned to visit you, but something has always kept me from doing so. I want to win converts among you also, as I have among other Gentiles. (GNT)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "first" in v. 8.
- * Box "through" indicating *means* in v. 8.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 8.
- * Circle "world" in v. 8.
- * Bracket "in my spirit" in v. 9.
- * Bracket "of his Son" in v. 9.

- * Circle "constantly" in v. 9.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 11.
- * Circle "spiritual gift" in v. 11.
- * Box "in order that" indicating *purpose* in v. 13.
- * Circle "harvest" in v. 13.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What would you say Paul is "talking" about in verses 8-13?
2. Put what you think he says about what he's talking about in your own words.
3. Paul thanks God "through Jesus Christ" for all his readers in verse 8. What does this indicate about Jesus?
4. Specify what Paul means by "all over the world" in verse 8.
5. Paul apparently has strong feelings for his readers. How would you describe them?
6. Why would Paul appeal to God as "my witness" in verse 9?
7. Identify Paul's two-fold prayer for his readers (see "and" in v. 10).
8. Identify the two purposes behind Paul's longing to see his readers (cf., "so that" in v. 11 and "in order that" in v. 13).
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the roots of Paul's compulsion to visit Rome. Where does it come from?

Like all of Paul's letters, the book of Romans has an opening, body, and closing. The opening in 1:1-17 contains the apostle's typical greeting, "Paul . . . to all in Rome . . . Grace and peace to you" (vv. 1-7), which, in the case of Romans, includes a description of the gospel of God that the apostle preached, that is, the good news about God's Son (vv. 2-6). The greeting is followed by a thanksgiving and prayer (vv. 8-13), common in Paul's letters (cf., Eph 1:15-19a; Php 1:3-6; Col 1:3-13; 2Th 1:3-12), and ends with a powerful statement about the gospel, which introduces the body of the letter (vv. 14-17).

In Paul's prayer and thanksgiving (vv. 8-13), he talks about his interest in the saints in Rome. He begins by telling them how he prays for them (vv. 8-10). First, he thanks God for them, because news of their faith in Christ is being reported in churches everywhere the gospel has been preached (v. 8). Then, calling on God as his witness, he avows that he intercedes for them "constantly" (v.9), by which he means "that there is no great length of time between prayers" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:17). Perhaps, he prays three times a day, a common Jewish practice adopted by the early Christians, or he follows Jesus' practice of spending extensive periods of time in prayer, or he prays as the occasion prompts or as he travels. Perhaps, all of the above! Finally, he prays that God will open a way for him to visit Rome. What had prevented him from doing so in the past, he does not say. One commentator speculates: "With someone like Paul, who threw himself so unreservedly into his work, it might simply be that ever fresh opportunities and the particular problems of his already established churches, not to mention the organization of the collection (15:22-29), made unceasing demands on his time which he could not easily ignore" (James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38a, *Romans 1-8*, 32).

Paul continues by telling his purpose for visiting them (vv. 10-13). His two-fold purpose is introduced by "so that" in verse 11 and "in order that" in verse 13. He longs to see them so that he

might be a spiritual blessing to them and them to him, and "in order that" he might have a fruitful ministry among them. One translation renders the end of verse 13: "I want to win converts among you also, as I have among other Gentiles" (GNT). One commentator explains: "His hope to have 'a harvest' among his readers should not be interpreted narrowly, as though he is hinting that some in their ranks are not genuinely saved. His use of the word 'Gentile' instead of 'churches' may be a pointer for us, hinting that 'among you' is a reference to the community rather than to the church specifically, and that the fruit he envisions is the reaching of the unsaved. This would not exclude fruit-bearing in the sense of the development of the saints in character (Gal 5:22, 23), but the other meaning seems the more obvious" (Harrison, 17).

What makes Paul tick? The apostle tells us a lot about himself in verses 8-13 and very little about his readers or anything else. Keep in mind, whenever we read something essentially biographical in Scripture, we can respond in any number of ways. The character may set an example for us to follow or to avoid. Perhaps, we are convicted of sin or reminded the adage, "you reap what you sow" (cf., Gal 6:7). Maybe the character is the personification of a Christian virtue like love, faithfulness, gentleness, etc. In a nutshell, we learn from others. Paul, himself, tells the Corinthians, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1Co 11:1). In Romans 1, it appears that Paul's passion to serve God coupled with his deep appreciation for the marvelous gospel of his Son fuels his compulsion to bless believers in the church and to evangelize those in the community and sets an example for all of us.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

The desire to serve God should compel us, like it did Paul, to position ourselves to share the gospel of Christ in order to be spiritually fruitful.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the message of Romans 1:1-7 and your response to it.

Take your spiritual temperature. How passionate are you to serve God?

Identify one thing you might do to fuel your passion and raise your spiritual temperature.

Paul relocated in order to take the gospel to Spain and the western reaches of the empire. How can you “reposition” yourself to engage more unchurched people in gospel centered conversations?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 8 **first** Paul doesn't continue the series, so perhaps the sense is "Let me begin by . . ." (NEB), or perhaps "thanksgiving is Paul's first priority" (Dunn, 27), making the sense, "First and foremost . . ."
- v. 8 **through** Commentators disagree on the nuance of "through." "As it is through Christ that God's grace is conveyed to men (verse 5), so it is through Christ that men's gratitude is conveyed to God. The mediatorship of Christ is exercised both Godward and manward" (Bruce, 76). "Although this might mean that Christ, as High Priest, is the mediator of his thanks before God, it is better taken as an indication that Christ is the one who has created the access to God for such thanks to be offered" (Moo, 57).
- v. 8 **world** I.e., throughout the churches everywhere the gospel had been preached.
- v. 9 **in my spirit** Cf., "with my whole heart" (NIV(c)1984; cf., NLT; GNT).
- v. 9 **of his Son** Cf., "regarding his Son" (v. 3).
- v. 9 **constantly** I.e., regularly, not continuously.
- v. 11 **spiritual gift** "Paul does not mean here that he is going to bestow upon the Roman believers what is commonly known as a 'spiritual gift,' that is, a special enabling for service given to believers by the Holy Spirit. Instead, this is either a metonymy of cause for effect (Paul will use his own spiritual gifts to edify the Romans), or it simply means something akin to a blessing or benefit in the spiritual realm" (The NET Bible, 26sn on Ro 1:8).
- v. 13 **harvest** I.e., an agricultural metaphor. "'Harvest' refers to the product of his apostolic labors (cf. Phil. 1:22), including here probably both an increase in the number of Christians through evangelization 'among' the Romans and a strengthening of the faith of the Roman Christians themselves (cf. 11b)" (Moo, 61).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Years ago after homeschooling my 3 kids for several years, we made the decision to put our kids in public school. The Lord made it clear that this was the next step for our family so I, with much trepidation, enrolled our kids in the local elementary school. I was a mess that morning. With shaking hands and voice I filled out all the paperwork, asked one hundred questions and watched as they walked through the cafeteria doors into a world I was unfamiliar with. I obviously looked like I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown because the first mom I saw when I exited the school stopped and asked me if I was ok. I mumbled something about dropping my kids off at school for the first time and not being sure of what I would do that day. "Come with me," she said. She drew me a map and told me there was a group of moms from that school who were meeting that morning to pray for their kids. I knew the Lord had sent her for my encouragement. I followed the map, knocked on the door and met some godly women that are still my friends today. That is the mutual encouragement Paul talks about. Do you have a community of faith to surround you and encourage you in your walk with Jesus? If not, contact someone today about a Community or Home Group. You will not be sorry!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 1:8-13

1. How does Paul feel about the Roman Christians?
2. Why was he so anxious to see them?
3. What did he expect from the Romans?

What Do You Think

Paul was planning on heading to Rome soon and wanted to make sure the church knew he was coming. He knew he needed other Christians. Why is it important for us to have Christian friends?

What R U Going To Do

Who do you know that needs spiritual encouragement? Make an effort to do something kind for that person this week. Was someone encouraging to you? Thank God and then the person for encouraging you in the faith.

Core Comp

Giving Away My Faith - I tell others about Jesus to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Romans 1:16 - *I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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