

Paul's Interest in the Church: Enslavement to the Gospel, 1:8-15

A Concerned Spirit

2. (1:9) 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,...

Gospel- Salvation- Decision: the gospel subjected Paul's spirit to God's Son. Every human being should subject their spirit to God's Son. Why? Because of the gospel, the glorious salvation that is in Christ Jesus: the deliverance from sin, death, and hell. When a person considers that they are enslaved by sin and that they are actually going to die and have to give an account to God, it is most foolish...

- not to accept the salvation that is in God's Son.
- not to subject their spirit to God's Son.
- not to serve in the gospel of God's Son.

3. (1:9) Prayer: the gospel stirred Paul to pray without ceasing. Paul was a man of intercessory prayer, a man who always prayed for others. Note two points.

1. Paul called upon God to bear witness that he prayed. He did not...

- just talk about praying.
- just tell people he was praying for them as a courtesy.
- just pretend to pray.
- just spend a few minutes in a religious exercise of prayer.

Paul really prayed; he took time to ask God to strengthen and help others. (See outline-

• Ephes. 3:14-21, and notes- • Ephes. 3:14-21 for the specifics of what Paul prayed. Also see note- • Matthew 6:9-13, and Deeper Study #1-Matthew 6:9-13 for what Christ tells us to pray daily. These two passages taken together tell us what we should be praying every day, both for ourselves and for others.)

“O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.” (Psalm 5:3)

“Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.” (Psalm 55:17)

“I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words.” (Psalm 119:147; cp. Luke 2:36; Acts 10:2; 1 Thes. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:5)

2. Paul even prayed for believers and churches whom he did not know. Remember he knew only a few of the believers in the Roman church; he had never met most of them. They were totally unfamiliar and unknown to him, yet he prayed for the church.

Think about it; Scripture is strong in its charge to us. We are to pray constantly and we are to pray for all believers throughout the world. Our prayers are not to be limited to a few minutes each day nor to our loved ones and close friends.

“And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” (Luke 18:1)

“Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (John 16:24)

“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,” (Ephes. 6:18)

“do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6-7)

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—” (Col. 4:2-3)

“pray without ceasing,” (1 Thes. 5:17)

“I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;” (1 Tim. 2:8)

“Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!” (1 Chron. 16:11)

Paul had a concerned spirit.

Paul's Interest in the Church: Enslavement to the Gospel, 1:8-15

4. (1:10-13) Gospel- Witnessing- Evangelism- Ministry: the gospel stirred Paul to seek people personally. He did not leave the ministry and the sharing of the gospel up to others. He became personally involved, so much so that he begged God to give him opportunity after opportunity—even to the point of letting him travel to the capital of the world itself to share Christ with its citizens. Note how deeply he was stirred: he made a request—if by any means, now at last—that he might be allowed to preach the gospel at Rome.

The point is forceful: Paul was stirred to seek people, for he longed to reach people for Christ.

1. Paul wished to impart some spiritual gift to the believers. Why? So that they might be more deeply established in the faith. The term spiritual gift (charisma^{PWS: 1671}) means a gift of grace. The term often refers to specific gifts given by the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:6-8), but here it means the truths of the grace of God, of His spiritual blessings to man revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Very simply, Paul longed to share the truths of the gospel with the believers at Rome.

God's spiritual blessings were overflowing in his heart, and he was aching to share the gift of God's blessings.

Thought 1. What an indictment against us! How many of us are so full of the gospel that we are aching to share it? How many of us even know the gospel that well, know God's gifts and blessings well enough to be overflowing with them?

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," (Ephes. 1:3)

"And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth," (2 Tim. 2:24-25)

"shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:2-3)

Note that God's spiritual gift establishes the believer. The word "established" means to fix, set, make fast, strengthen. Note the descriptive picture behind each word.

2. Paul wished to be encouraged together with other believers. The word "comforted" means to be strengthened and consoled together. Paul expected to be taught and strengthened by the believers as well as to teach and to strengthen them. There was to be a mutual sharing among all. Paul expected all believers to be actively sharing the gospel. He even expected them to share with him so that he might grow and be more firmly rooted in the faith.

Think about it; How many believers are actively grounded enough in the faith to share with Paul? What an indictment! Yet the expectation is that we are to be deeply rooted, ever studying the Word and learning. How much we need to awaken and arise from our slumber.

"rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving." (Col. 2:7)

[God] comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work" (2 Thes. 2:17).

3. Paul wished to bear fruit among them which would be; converts (Romans 1:13), righteousness (Romans 6:21-23), Christian character, the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Note Paul's world-wide vision. He wished to bear fruit among the citizens of Rome as well as "among other Gentiles."

Think about it; How desperately the world needs prayer and Christians with a world-wide vision!

"Do you not say, There are yet four months, then comes the harvest? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." (John 4:35)

“Then he said to his disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;” (Matthew 9:37)

“And he said to them, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Luke 10:2)

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9)

Paul's Interest in the Church: Enslavement to the Gospel, 1:8-15

5. (1:14-15) Gospel- Preaching- Witnessing- Ministers- Dedication: the gospel stirred Paul with a deep sense of indebtedness and a readiness to reach all men. Note two points.

1. The word "debtor" means to owe, to be obligated, to be bound by duty. The Greek is impossible to translate into English, for two ideas are being expressed by Paul. He was a "debtor"...

- because Christ had done so much for him (saved him).
- because Christ had called him to preach (given him a task to do).

The indebtedness was deeply felt by Paul. The idea is that it was intense, unwavering, unrelenting, powerful. The sense of debt just would not let Paul go. He was compelled to preach the gospel; therefore, he could do nothing else. He was obligated and duty-bound to preach it. He actually felt that he owed the gospel to the world; therefore, if he kept quiet, it would be worse than knowing the cure for the most terrible disease of history and refusing to share it.

Note how Paul declared his indebtedness to the whole world. He made a contrast between the Greeks and the Barbarians. He meant that he owed the gospel to all nationalities and cultures, to all the peoples of the earth whether civilized or uncivilized, industrialized or primitive, rich or poor. (The Greeks considered everyone a barbarian who did not speak the Greek language and adopt Greek culture.) He made a contrast between the wise and the unwise. He meant that he owed the gospel to the educated and the uneducated, the learned and the unlearned, the motivated and the unmotivated, the seeking and the complacent.

Think about it; Paul sensed a deep indebtedness to share the glorious news of salvation with the world. The answer to eternal life is now known and must be proclaimed to the whole world. To keep the message to oneself is the most inexcusable and criminal act in all of human history. The glorious news that death has been conquered and that man can now live eternally must be proclaimed. We who know the wonderful news are indebted to get the news out to the world.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is

now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” (John 5:24) “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.” (Romans 1:14-15)

2. The word “ready” (prothumon ^{PWS: 3168}) means an urgent willingness. Paul experienced both a willingness and an urgency to preach the gospel. Note the words, “as much as in me is.” Paul wanted to take all that was in him and pour it into people—all the energy and effort, all the truth and knowledge of the gospel. There was nothing that could keep him from sharing the gospel, not if he had a chance to share it. He allowed no hindrance to enter his life that would affect his message. He was possessed and obsessed with a readiness to preach the glorious message of the living Lord.

“For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16) “And proclaim as you go, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 10:7) “What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.” (Matthew 10:27) “And he said to them, Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” (Mark 16:15) “And Jesus said to him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:60) “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.” (John 9:4) “for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:20) “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.” (Acts 5:20) “If I say, I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name, there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.” (Jeremiah 20:9) “The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3:8)

(1:9) **Serve** : labor of hire, service that is bought. Paul says, “I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son.” Note three points.

1. The believer's labor and service is bought and paid for by the precious blood of Christ.

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28)

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Phil. 2:5-8)

2. The believer owes his labor and service to the Lord. Once he has surrendered to the gospel, he has no choice. He is to diligently serve and work for Christ.

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

3. The believer is to serve God in his spirit and in his body. The spirit controls the body. What the spirit does, the body does. Therefore, if the believer is serving God in spirit, he is serving God in body. If a man’s spirit is right, then his body will be right. For example, a man may feel bad; he may be down, depressed, and oppressed; but if his spirit is strong, he arises and conquers his feelings. He controls and overcomes the oppressing circumstances, and he lives a victorious day. But if his spirit is weak—whether at work or at play—he often wallows around in self-pity, grumbling and griping, and living a defeated day. And too often the day stretches into weeks and months until a person’s life is down more than it is up: all because the spirit is too weak to conquer.

Think about it; The point is this: As believers we are to serve God in our spirit and in our body. We are, • to keep our spirit strong, • to conquer our emotions, • to overcome our weaknesses, the ups and downs of our body.

Once a believer does this, service to God to the fullest extent is possible.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2)

“And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,” (Deut. 10:12)