



7/8/25

The tragedy we experience in this world can be so overwhelming, and I'm grateful that we have a God who allows us to grieve and even comforts us in that grief. But I'm also deeply thankful to know that the sufferings of this world are temporary... just a blip in time. Because of Jesus, even the devastation of what's happening in Texas is something we grieve... but with hope. Our God who is the God of comfort is also the God who will bring us home to Him for all eternity. Amen!

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Romans 1:8-15 ~

I was just wondering who planted the church at Rome. I know Paul didn't, and he was the apostle who was given the mission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. So I had to look it up... The biblical scholars believe the church at Rome was founded by "visitors from Rome" who had been there on the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached the gospel moments after receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:10). That day in Jerusalem 3000 people were saved... some from Rome. They probably went back to their homes and decided they needed a church where they could gather and worship Jesus.

Vs. 8 ~ The Roman believers' faith was so evident that news about them spread. Paul was so excited to hear about their faith in Jesus that he continually thanked God and prayed for them. He said their faith was "proclaimed in ALL the world." What a cool thing to be known for... faith in Christ. I pray that above all other things about me, my faith in Jesus will be what I'm most known for... that He may be glorified. "Not to me, O Lord, not to me but to YOUR name give glory, because of Your steadfast love and faithfulness" (Psalm 115:1).

Vs. 9-10 ~ "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you." To be human is to be seen by the Father. "No creature is hidden from His sight" (Hebrews 4:13).

What a wonderful thing for Paul to know that what God saw was first was his spirit aligned with the Holy Spirit because Jesus saved him from sin and death... and gave him eternal life in Him. Let me just notice that Paul didn't speak of his flesh being devoted to the gospel, but his spirit. The Holy Spirit does not work with our flesh and our flesh can't do anything honorable for the Lord. Paul understood that. O Lord, please help me to understand that as well. My flesh is weak and corrupt, and it has no ability or desire to live for You. Please help me to set my mind and my spirit on You.

This is what God saw in Paul... a heart so genuinely devoted to the gospel, and so aware that the power to accomplish the work of the gospel comes from the Lord, that he continually prayed for the believers in Rome. He wanted to be able to go to Rome and meet them face to face but was not able to do so yet.

What Paul didn't know at that time was that God was going to answer his prayer. He WOULD go to Rome... as a prisoner for the Lord... about 2 years later where he stayed as a prisoner for about 5 years until he was executed. For those 5 years, he was able to minister to the people in Rome. I don't think Paul resented at all how God answered his prayer. I so desperately want to have that same mindset... that no circumstance could shake my faith and love for the Lord!

Vs. 11-12 ~ "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine."

Paul yearned to see these believers. His heart was so devoted to the Lord and to His people! In Philippians 1:8, he told the believers, "I yearn for you with the AFFECTION of Jesus." That's just beautiful.

His earnest desire was to go and spend time with them so that he could give them something from what God had given him through the Holy Spirit. Why? So that they could grow stronger in the Lord... so that they, like Paul, could have an unshakable faith. Truly, that's what I need more than anything if I want to be wholly devoted to the Lord... unshakable faith.

I love what Paul said here... it shows his deep humility, how he did not consider himself as more worthy than any other believer. But he knew there is no second place at the foot of the cross. We are all one in Christ, one in purpose, one in value... priceless to the Lord. That is beautiful.

Paul's desire was "that we may be MUTUALLY encouraged by each other's faith." I see this mutual encouragement in such a tangible way when we have baptisms. We hear each other give testimony of how Christ through the gospel has saved our souls, and how He's strengthening us in our faith as we grow in Him. I know my faith is deeply inspired when I hear the faith of others proclaimed, and I pray that my faith will be an encouragement to them. Hebrews 3:12-13 shows this need to encourage each other's faith because we are either moving forward or backward in our faith... never staying in one place. The author of Hebrews said, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from

the living God. But exhort (encourage) one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." We encourage each other in faith... so that we stand stronger in faith. Faith in Jesus. Not in SELF.

Vs. 13-15 ~ Paul wanted the Roman church to know that he had made many plans to go to them and mutually encourage one another but had so far been prevented from going. I imagine the despair hearts in the church (like me) appreciated that a lot... they would have all thought it was their fault he hadn't come yet. Hahaha

Paul's desire was to sow seeds of the word among them so that he could reap a harvest of righteousness among them. That was his desire for all "Gentiles" (non-Jews). He viewed his ministry as an obligation... that he OWED it to them to preach the gospel and give them truth. He said in 2 Corinthians 4:5, "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." Again... such a heart of humility!!!

Paul saw his obligation to Greeks and Barbarians... those who are civilized and those who are lacking culture. His obligation was to the wise, as Greeks viewed themselves... and to the foolish, as barbarians were considered. And his obligation was to the Italians! The Romans. To all people, Paul eagerly desired to preach the gospel. That was his mission. O Lord, let it be mine... regardless of the role I fill, let me understand that my first duty is to be YOUR ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Do I view my ministry as an obligation to those who the Lord has me serve? O Lord, please make it so... not just in word, but in truth! Please help me to be humble before You and toward others. Help me to see us all as having an opportunity to encourage one another. I see arrogance in my heart rise up. Please help me to crush it. Please let my faith be unshakable and my humility unwavering. Pride will crush both faith and humility. Please crush my pride. Amen.