



10/19/26

My favorite quote from Sunday's message ~ "My name is written in the Book of Life, and it's not written in pencil." Amen!!!! Our God is so good! He makes us blameless. As Tim said in the message, because He makes us blameless, "Obedience is celebrated. Disobedience is covered by the blood of Jesus Christ." Amen!!!!

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Romans 1:8-17

This week we're studying scripture on the theme, Community of Love. One thing I see in every letter of Paul's, in the letters written by Peter, by James, and by John is these leaders all speak with great love for the believers... even believers they've never met. There's such a bond that can be built between believers when we're all fixing our eyes on Jesus, the God who is love.

Today, I look at Paul's love for the believers in Rome. This was one of the earliest letters written. The gospel had been spread but a deep understanding of the gospel was written in this letter so that people who had no other scriptures could begin to understand the Lord in a deeper relationship and devotion. I pray I will never take for granted how blessed I am to have God's word right in front of me!!! 66 books written over 1500 years by 40 different authors... all moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit who helped them write the truth.

Paul loved these believers even though he had never met them... yet. There is a lot of warning and training in this letter, and there is A LOT of hope in this letter. O Lord, please teach me more about being a community of love from these Spirit inspired words.

Vs. 8 ~ "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world."

How cool. In an age when there was no internet, no cell phones, no cars or trains or planes to carry letters, news of the Roman believers was spreading throughout the world. What were people hearing about them? Their faith in Christ. When faith in Christ is genuine, Hebrews 11:6 tells me that God is pleased. It's like He's the Dad making sure everyone knows how proud He is of His kids. Father, I pray that if I'm known for anything, it will be for my faith in You and Your Son. Please let it be known that I confess Jesus Christ as my Lord. Please let it be understood that I trust You in good times and bad, sickness and health, poverty and wealth. I believe in my heart that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and I confess Him as Lord, Master of my life. I desire that Your love will be the motivation of my heart, mind, thoughts, and actions.

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."

First, from Paul's example, what is the most loving thing I can do for someone? Pray for them. I know that I have very little power to affect lasting change in someone's life. And though I should not ONLY pray for others, but also actively love them in deed and in truth, I should start with praying to the one who knows them and loves them and knows exactly what they need more than I will ever will. He is the one who can change a heart, and He knows how to do it.

Paul understood that. He wasn't anywhere near them geographically. He knew that the Lord was the one who would answer his prayers in His timing and wisdom. Paul also was excited at the prospect of coming to them. He wanted to meet them. For this reason, he continued to pray... because somehow in God's plan "the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

What was Paul hoping to do with a visit to the Roman Kingdom Outpost?

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's whole desire was to be an encouragement to the believers in their faith... to strengthen them. At this point in time, Nero had been in power for about three years. He was causing massive, evil persecution among believers. Paul knew the dangers of what Nero was doing, and the dangers of distraction, and the dangers of all kinds of trials. He wanted to give them a "spiritual gift", not something that could come from his own strength, but from the Lord. Paul understood that salvation is only the beginning of the relationship, but there's way more treasure to find in the Lord as we grow in Him.

He also said he wanted them to be "mutually encouraged by each other's faith." I think that's beautiful. No matter how strong someone is in their faith, they can always be encouraged more and inspired by others' faith. Paul was an APOSTLE! I know that nothing was going to derail his

faith, and yet he still had the capacity to be joyfully encouraged by others. I pray that I will be humble and joyfully receive the blessing of inspiration by the faith of those around me.

I think of the faith of my daughters... watching them live for the Lord truly inspires me. They teach me the wisdom of God by how they live and love. I think of the faith of other friends who "call on the Lord from a pure heart." I learn so much from them. I think of the excitement I see when I counsel a woman and get a front row seat to watching the Lord grow her faith. That is SO inspiring and awesome and it totally ignites my worship. I think of the faith of my husband... so practical in wisdom and discernment, and so sweet as he gets those man tears when he shares what he's learning with me. I love how the Lord gives us relationships with each other where we can be mutually encouraged! Yes, my relationship with the Lord is personal and individual. And yes, He not only gives me Himself but also brothers and sisters in Christ who lock arms together and encourage each other. That's His plan!

Paul said in Ephesians 4:15-16, "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." O Lord, please help our Kingdom Outpost to be equipped to build the body of Christ up in love. Please let nothing... no opinion, feeling, or circumstance... distract us from the purposes You have for us.

Vs. 13-15 ~ "I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. 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."

Paul had been praying to be able to see the Roman believers for a long time. The Lord had not yet opened the door, and yet I know that door was eventually opened... at the government's expense. Paul was always looking for an opportunity to "reap a harvest", to see more and more people hear the gospel and come to salvation.

He said he was under obligation to every kind of person... civilized, uncivilized, wise, foolish... and also to the Romans... to preach the gospel. He knew his mission and he never wavered from it. That is the mission of every believer... to live the gospel, to rehearse the gospel, to share the gospel. We can be distracted by so many things. O Lord, please help us all to see the priceless value of the gospel and let that hope motivate everything we do!!!

What is the value of the gospel?

Vs. 16-17 ~ "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

This is the whole crux of the rest of this letter to the Romans. How does the gospel impact our lives. Why is Paul not ashamed of this gospel that cost him so much? It eventually cost him his life. But even before that, he had faced many challenges!!! 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 explains the cost he experienced, and he considered it all worth it... "Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches."

He was definitely NOT ashamed of the gospel, and he proved it. He knew that this life is temporary, but salvation is eternal. The gospel is the power of God to save us... the good news that we can be set free from the domain of darkness. Navy Seals risk their lives to go in and save one person in captivity. That's a temporary struggle. Believers are called to live our daily lives with the purpose always in our minds, hearts, and prayers to be a light for others, that they too might have an eternal hope that we could not have without Jesus.

Paul said the gospel is the power of salvation for EVERYONE who believes. At the time, the gospel went to the Jews first. A lot of Jews were being saved. But then the gospel spread also to the Gentiles. Paul's main ministry was to the Gentiles, although he never stopped sharing with the Jews who were willing to listen. The wonderful news is, it doesn't matter who a person is... neither social status nor ethnicity nor male nor female nor any other distinction can hinder someone from coming to salvation through Jesus if they believe in Him with their hearts. That is the hope of the gospel. No one who puts their faith in Him will be turned away.

How big is the gospel? It starts with salvation, but then it reveals the righteousness of God so that our faith can grow from one degree of faith to the next. I'm so thankful that God doesn't expect our faith to be fully grown from the moment of salvation. Just like relationships grow closer with people, our faith in the Lord grows stronger as our relationship with Him grows. Relationship and faith are highly intertwined. From the Old Testament, it has been said, "The righteous shall live by faith."

So with the gospel comes salvation, deliverance from sin and death. Faith begins with the gospel and it continues to grow over time. As faith grows, my righteousness grows. And according to Hebrews 12, as my righteousness grows my peace grows. Is there anything more beautiful than the gospel?

So Lord... in this community of love, I pray that I will love Your people, pray for Your people, encourage Your people and be encouraged by them. I pray for opportunities to be an encouragement to others in the gospel. I pray that my life will be a reflection of Your love

through faith. Let me never be ashamed of the gospel, and let me never be apathetic to the gospel. Please grow my faith and my righteousness and my peace. I know You're my answer.