

Lesson 2: Paul's Thanksgiving and Prayer for the Romans

Romans 1:8-15

Thanksgiving

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all,
because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

Prayer

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, ¹⁰ always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

¹¹ For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; 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. 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.

¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

NASB

Thanksgiving and Prayer

Like any good letter, the letter to the Romans starts with an introduction. This is our second of three lessons on Paul's introduction. In the first lesson we considered Paul's greeting and blessing. In this lesson we will look at his thanksgiving and prayer. Through our series we will stay focused on one particular passage with each lesson, observing and interpreting that passage. The difference is in the introduction.

Observing the introduction provides a good opportunity to pick up as much as you can about the context of the letter. Who wrote it? Who received it? What was the purpose? In our first lesson, I ventured outside of Romans chapter 1, mostly to Acts to gain more context about the author Paul and about the Roman recipients.

In this lesson, I will again be going outside of Romans chapter 1, looking also at the end of Romans. We can get a lot of context by looking at the beginning and the end before getting into the meat of the message. Also, in the case of Romans, there are significant parallels between the introduction and conclusion which will help us consider the question of purpose. Since I will refer often to the conclusion, before we read Romans 1:8-15, if you have your Bible with you, you might consider pausing the recording and reading yourself or skimming over the conclusion which is 15:14-16:27.

[Read Romans 1:8-15.]

The statement of thanksgiving in verse 8 is quite brief. "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world." It is a very positive statement. Knowledge of the Roman community and their faith in Jesus has spread. I imagine that Paul means that the growing movement of Christian churches in and around the Roman empire have heard of the growing community of believers in Rome's capital. At the end of the letter, in Romans 16:16, Paul tells them, "All the churches of Christ greet you." By bringing greetings in his letters, Paul encouraged among the churches the perception that each one is part of something much larger than their own local community. Paul is thankful that the Roman community contributes positively to the growing Christian movement by being an example of faith in Jesus. It would have been encouraging for churches around the empire to know that in the central city there also existed a fellowship of believers walking with Christ.

Paul's mention of the whole world does not need to include North America or Australia. In context it communicates that knowledge of the Roman's faith is not limited to the Roman empire but has gone beyond its borders, spreading as the church spreads, spilling over the boarder of the empire into the wider world.

The prayer section of the greeting is more extensive than the thanksgiving, taking up verses 9-15. Paul lets the Romans know that he prays for them often, even unceasingly. And then Paul tells them about his personal prayer request that he might come to see them, to have a ministry among them. Paul knows that he has something to offer to the Romans to help strengthen them in their faith, to produce fruit among them. And he feels an obligation towards them as the apostle to the Gentiles.

One way to observe this section of thanksgiving and prayer is to consider, not only what Paul says, but also how Paul says what he says. In courses on communication and preaching, I was taught to consider three things in my introduction: ethos, pathos and logos. Ethos is the speaker's credibility. You are answering the question that your listeners are thinking, "Who are you to be talking to me about this topic?" Pathos connects to the heart, answering on the emotional level the listeners' question, "Why would I want to listen to you?" Addressing logos, the speaker answers the question, "What is it you want to talk to me about? What is your topic or message?"

The Greeks wrote the book on the art of rhetoric. Ethos, pathos and logos are all Greek terms. Our understanding of these ideas in communication starts with the Greeks. We noticed in the first lesson that Paul's introduction follows the Greek standard of letter writing, including a greeting, blessing, thanksgiving and prayer. Paul knew how to write a Greek letter. Paul would have also been aware of basic principles of Greek rhetoric. So, to gain insight into how Paul communicates, it makes sense to consider how Paul addresses the rhetorical questions of ethos, pathos and logos in his introduction to the Romans.

Ethos

We will start with the ethos question, "Who are you to be talking to us about this topic?" Church members familiar with their own pastor usually do not need a lot of convincing in regard to the first part of the question, "Who are you to be talking to us?" They understand that he is the pastor and it is his job to preach on Sunday. Usually church members, listening to their regular pastor, do not consider the second part of the question much either, "Who are you to be talking to us *about this topic?*" Though a young single pastor would be wise to take into account the question of credibility when preaching about how to parent your teenagers. The church members would understand his role to preach while naturally wondering who are you to preach to me about parenting.

Paul had never been to Rome. Nor was he involved in pioneering the work of the gospel in Rome. Understanding the importance ethos, Paul establishes his credibility right from the start of his greeting. In verse 1 Paul identifies himself as a servant of Jesus and also as an apostle. An apostle is one sent out with a message. The message for Paul is the gospel. This begins to move into the question of logos, "What do you want to talk to me about?" Clarifying the common ground of a message can also build ethos. I have learned this principle working in partnership with other Christians. We can be excited about plans and strategies and initiatives to care, to witness, to worship, and I can get excited about those things. But I am going to remain reserved until I know what a potential partner believes about Jesus Christ, about the Bible and about the gospel of grace. Are we coming from the same central beliefs, the same heart for Jesus? If we can establish that, then I can focus on the other details. Paul builds this common ground early. He tells the Romans that his message flows out of the holy Scriptures. And he describes this message as having to do with Jesus Christ, the son of God who is man, messiah and God. Paul's audience is Christian, so he builds common ground with them from the beginning by affirming the Bible and Jesus. This helps establish his credibility with his listeners.

Paul further answers the ethos question, "Who are you to be writing to us about this topic?" by clearly communicating his special commission from Jesus to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Verse 5, "we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles." He repeats this idea in verses 14, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish." And when he concludes the letter Paul will say in 15:15, "I have written very boldly to you...because of the grace that was given me from God to be a minister of

Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.” Paul has unique credibility that no one can really match. When asked, “Who are you to speak to us on this topic?”, he responds, “I am the one appointed by Jesus Christ to take the gospel to the Gentiles.”

Pathos

Establishing that you have credibility to speak to an audience on a particular topic, does not guarantee that your listeners will receive your message. They must want to listen to you. Pathos reaches out to the heart, motivating the audience to want to listen. For me, the most interesting element in how Paul communicates through his introduction is the element of pathos. It is interesting to notice the effort Paul makes to connect, not only to the mind, but also to the heart.

Priscila and Aquila, who had worked with Paul and who are now back in Rome (16:3), probably looked forward with great eagerness to hear Paul’s letter read. Not only because of the credibility he held in their eyes, but just as much, because of the close relationship they shared with one another. They would have wanted to hear from Paul, both because in their mind they knew him to be a gifted teacher and also because in their hearts they shared relationship with Paul. They knew his heart and trusted him.

But few of the believers in Rome had any relationship with Paul at all. Paul begins to build relationship by taking time in his introduction to express his feelings for the Romans. He mentions that he prays for them unceasingly. Though he does not know them personally, they are on his mind and in his heart. Consider these phrases he uses: (1) “if perhaps now *at last* I may succeed in coming to you”; (2) “For *I long to see you*”; (3) “*often* I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far)”. He uses similar language in his conclusion, writing in 15:23, “I have had for many years *a longing to come to you*.”

Paul explains that his failure to come to Rome did not have anything to do with personal desire or feeling towards the Romans but everything to do with God’s call on his life. In 1:13 he explains that he has been prevented from coming to the Romans without explaining what prevented him. We see in the conclusion that it has to do with his obligation to the Gentiles. The same sense of calling urging him to Rome also required him to work elsewhere before being free to come to Rome. He explains in 15:19, “from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ...for this I have often been hindered from coming to you.” He could not come until he finished his work in the eastern half of the Roman empire.

Paul connects to the heart by communicating his desire to come and the positive reason for why he has not yet come. Paul also connects to the heart by communicating his desire to receive from the Romans. Though a skilled apostle with a special commission and years of missionary experience, Paul indicates his belief that he too has something to receive from the brothers and sisters in Rome. After writing that he wants to impart some spiritual gift to the Romans, he comments in 1:12, “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.” He expects not only to give but also to receive. Similarly, in the conclusion in 15:24 he writes, “I hope to see you in passing [on my way to Spain], and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while”. Paul communicates two things in both of these verses. He communicates the expectation to receive from the Romans. And he communicates the expectation of encouragement through the fellowship of their company. Paul affirms the Romans by acknowledging they too have something to give him and by stating his expectation to enjoy being with them. Wouldn’t that make you feel good, to hear the apostle Paul say, “I look forward to the blessing I can gain from you and also to the enjoyment of just being with you.”

One final observation about pathos comes from Paul’s concluding greetings in chapter 16. Paul greets 24 believers by name along with several groups of believers. It is by far the longest list of personal greetings in any letter from Paul. If Paul has never been to Rome how is it that Paul knows more people here than anywhere else? Perhaps Paul has here named every single person he knows in Rome. Writing to the Thessalonians or Ephesians, Paul would not be expected to greet a long list

of people by name. He would have to greet everyone in the church. Greeting all these Romans he may be recognizing that relationship is often transferable. Acknowledging the relationships he has with several believers in Rome may open the hearts of others to hear his message. A brother in Rome may have thought, "I do not know Paul, but Priscilla knows him well and so do Ampliatus and Patrobas. If they approve of him, I guess I do, too." Mentioning all these relationships bonded through the work of ministry helps Paul build bridges of both pathos and ethos. It adds credibility and motivates the heart to listen.

Logos

A third question should be addressed early in the introduction of a talk or long letter, especially to an unfamiliar audience, and that is the question of logos. "What is the topic of your message? What do you want to talk to us about?" Paul's message is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The first mention of gospel is in verse 1. And in verse 2 we are reassured that the gospel is centered in Jesus. That this whole letter is going to be about the gospel begins to come out in verse 15, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." Focus on the gospel carries into this thesis in 16-17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel..." What Paul is going to say about the gospel is stated in the rest of the thesis, which we will look at in the next lesson. For now, it is enough to recognize that Paul forecasts to the Romans that the message he wants to give them concentrates on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In answering the assumed questions of ethos, pathos and logos, the skilled communicator Paul prepares the way for his message to be heard. Another question that comes to mind as we interpret Romans is the question of purpose. "What are you trying to do through this message Paul? You have built credibility, you have connected to the hearts of your listeners, you have announced that you want to talk about the gospel, to what end? What do you hope to accomplish?"

I will give you four possibilities of purpose. And we do not need to limit ourselves to one of them. A skilled communicator can accomplish more than one purpose in one letter.

Purpose

1. Introductory

The first purpose of Paul's letter to the Romans is introductory. Paul uses Romans to introduce himself and his message in preparation for his coming to Rome to have a fruitful ministry among them. Paul directly states his intentions of coming to Rome and engaging in ministry, "I long to see you that I might have fruit among you." This letter helps prepare the way.

While introduction in preparation of future ministry clearly comes through as one of Paul's objectives, it hardly explains the length of Romans. This is Paul's longest letter according to the Greek word count. Why would he write such a long letter, if he only intended to announce to the Romans his plan to come to them? Certainly, there is more to it.

2. Missional

As a second possible purpose, we also recognize that the letter is missional. This may be hinted at in the introduction when Paul indicates the scope of his calling, "to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles." The missional intention comes out clearly in the conclusion when Paul communicates that he has preached the gospel from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum and intends to go to Spain. Paul is on a mission to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Having completed a stage of ministry in the eastern territory of the Roman empire, he is now ready to turn to the west.

When considering the completed mission, Paul refers to the Roman province Illyricum which covered approximately the territory of the Illyrian peoples. The province had stretched in the south from modern Albania up northwards through Dalmatia in modern Croatia. Romans are famous for their roads. One of the more famous roads, the Via Egnatia, began after crossing the Adriatic sea from the back heel of Italy over to the modern city Durres in Albania. Beginning at Durres, the Via Egnatia crossed from West to East through Macedonia to Thessalonica and then on to Byzantium which is now Turkey's Istanbul. Built to extend Roman control over the area, the Via Egnatia served Paul in

the spread of the gospel at least on his journey from Philippi to Thessalonica. It is not clear how or when Paul took the gospel to Illyricum. Possibly, on his third missionary journey, during an unrecorded period, Paul followed the Via Egnatia up to Durres and so carried the good news to Illyricum's border.

Having spread the gospel throughout the eastern Roman Empire, leaving churches to continue the witness, Paul now has his sights turned to Rome and beyond Rome to the rich fields of Spain, rich in wheat and wine and olive oil. Spain is an important Roman possession in the west. Explaining his desire to go there, Paul states for the Romans in 15:20 his personal ministry strategy, "I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation." According to this strategy, Paul is not planning to set up shop in Rome, where the gospel foundation is already laid. As further explains his plans in 15:23-24, "but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain – for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you when I have first enjoyed your company for a while." Paul's vision is to preach the gospel in Rome for the benefit of the already established church and then to continue on to Spain. And he wants the Romans to help him on the way.

We can conclude that Romans is the most theologically sound support letter ever written. Paul is asking the Romans to join him in the mission, helping him on the way. Why, then, go into such a long explanation of the gospel? One reason is to create vision among the Romans, vision for a worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The more excited you are about the gospel for yourself and your own community, the more passion you have for others to know the good news. It is really good news! We are called to proclaim it. As Paul writes in 10:14-15, "How shall they believe in whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!'" Paul wants to proclaim the gospel to all the Gentiles. And he wants fruit. He wants to see the obedience of faith working in their hearts. He is coming Rome to go to Spain. He does not just want help. He wants to create enthusiastic support and vision among the Romans for the mission. What better way than stirring up their hearts with the gospel and inviting them to join in.

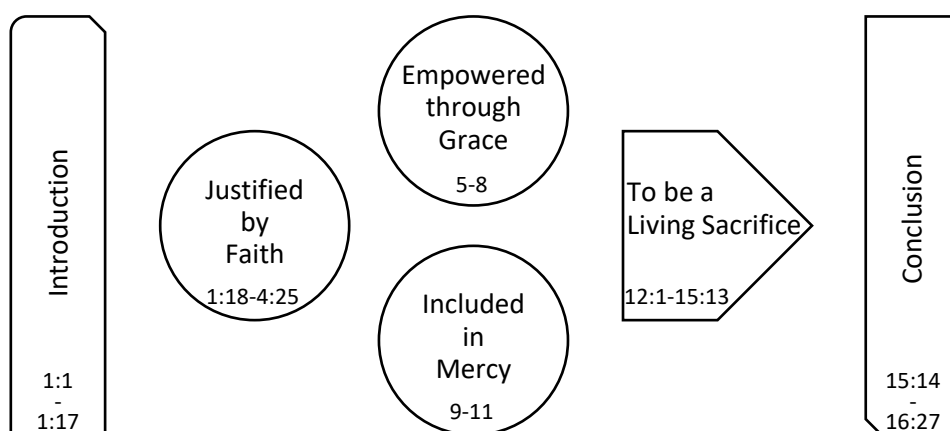
This missionary purpose of the letter is clearly stated in the conclusion. And we can see how an explanation of the gospel enhances the invitation to join in. Yet, we come back to the same issue as before, "Why such a long explanation of the gospel if the purpose is simply to stir up hearts for the mission?" That could be accomplished with a much shorter letter like others Paul had written.

3. Apologetic

Another possible purpose of Romans is apologetic. Paul's style and structure indicate that he is concerned with providing a defense for the gospel that he is preaching. That is what apologetic means in this context. Apology is not saying sorry, but providing a defense for what you believe. In regard to style, Paul creates a literary antagonist that he uses throughout the first 11 chapters. The purpose of the antagonist is to raise questions against Paul's argument, so that Paul can then answer for us those questions. For example, at the end of chapter 2 Paul concludes that being a Jew outwardly is not what counts, but having a changed heart that leads to obedience, that is what counts. The literary antagonist then asks in 3:1 "Then what advantage has the Jew?" It's a good question. One that Paul answers briefly in chapter 3 and then more fully in chapters 9-11. In chapter 6 we get the classic criticism of the gospel of grace, when Paul's opponent asks, "Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?" Paul's typical short response follows, "By no means!" Then he gives a longer defense, explaining how it is that grace brings about righteousness. Those are just two examples of the way Paul raises questions against his own message, so that he can then provide the answers. This stylistic use of a literary antagonist suggests that Paul's purpose is apologetic. He wants to provide a defense for the gospel.

The structure of the letter supports the idea that Paul is making a defense. Chapter 1:16-17 give us the thesis that God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel. In chapters 1-4 Paul states the foundational truth of this gospel, that a person is justified or declared righteous through faith when they accept the grace of God in Christ. That foundational truth of justification by faith raises two major objections, which I alluded to in the earlier examples. If righteousness is a free gift then no one will try to live righteously. That is the major objection Paul addresses in chapters 5-8. The second major objection asks, "What about the law of Moses and the place of the Jews?" If grace matters and not law, then does God show himself unfaithful to his Old Testament promises. That second major objection is addressed in chapters 9-11.

So, in the argument section of the letter, Paul states his case in 1-4 and then proceeds to answer two major objections in chapters 5-8 and 9-11. In his argument section he is providing a defense of the gospel. I have included a chart in the notes at observetheword.com if you would like to check that out.



Through style, using a literary antagonist, and through structure, stating his case and answering major objections, Paul presents a defense or apology for the gospel. Perhaps Paul, on his way to Jerusalem and not knowing what will happen there, has taken time to write out this defense for the sake of future believers. However, even though there are apologetic elements in the letter, classifying the whole letter as apologetic does not best fit the context of the letter, nor even the content of the argument. Paul is not using Romans as an occasion for the writing a general apologetic tract or theological tract about the gospel for future believers or believers in general. Paul's letter to the Romans is contextualized. He is writing to the Roman church, acknowledging them and even addressing in chapters 12-14 specific issues that apply to them. Also, when we look closely at the way Paul answers his literary antagonist, we will see that the answers are not intended primarily to convince a non-believing sceptic of the validity of the gospel, but to provide deeper understanding for those who have already accepted the gospel as truth.

4. Pastoral

There is another possibility. The fourth possible purpose is pastoral. Paul has announced his intention to come to Rome to have a gospel ministry among them. Why does he then write such a long letter about the gospel? Because, knowing that he still has a long trip to Jerusalem ahead of him (15:26) and not knowing when he will eventually make it to Rome, Paul is not content to wait until he gets to Rome. Paul's eagerness compels him to begin preaching the gospel to the Romans in written form. I believe I can best show the pastoral purpose of the letter by bringing your attention parallel themes in the introduction and conclusion. The themes Paul addresses at beginning and end help us to understand what he hoped to accomplish among the Romans; not only after arriving, but even before that through the teaching in this letter.

The repeated themes are especially apparent between the introduction and the last three verses of the letter. Let's consider those last three verses carefully. 16:25 begins "Now to him..." Paul does not complete that thought until the end of verse 27. "Now to him...to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen." This is the benediction of the letter to the Romans and the overall purpose of Paul's life. To God be the glory through Jesus Christ! Amen! Packed in between the "to him" and the "to God", Paul repeats four themes already raised in his introduction. They are (1) the center of his message, (2) the continuity of his message, (3) the scope of his message and (4) the purpose of his message. It is that purpose we want to recognize. The center of Paul's message is Jesus Christ. As in 1:2, he repeats here in 16:25 "according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ." His gospel is the preaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the center of the message. The continuity of the message was also affirmed in 1:2 and again here in 16:26, "by the Scriptures of the prophets." Paul's message now revealed flows from God's earlier revelation in Scripture. It has continuity with all the covenants and promises that preceded. As with 1:5 the scope here in 16:26 is "all the nations." It is a worldwide scope. So, the center is Jesus, the continuity is from the Old Testament, and the scope is all nations. The repetition at the end of the letter of center, continuity and scope shows us that Paul is coming back at the close to repeat major overarching themes he indicated at in the opening. This is true also of his purpose.

I am going to point out two phrases that Paul uses only in the introduction and conclusion. He does not mention these two phrases anywhere else in the letter, just once in the beginning and once in the end. (1) The first phrase is obedience of faith. We saw this phrase in 1:5, and we see it again in 16:26, "[the gospel] has been made known to all the nations, leading to an obedience of faith." Paul desires to see a transformation in the lives of Gentiles that flows out of faith in Jesus Christ. This is the overall structure of the letter to the Romans. First, we have the gospel message in 1-11 and then gospel practice in 12-15. Deep understanding of true faith in Jesus Christ leads to life transformation, to true obedience. Obedience of faith. We need an ever increasing understanding of our faith that we might have ever increasing practice of our faith. Paul is not content to begin that process with the Romans until after he has arrived among them. He starts the process with this letter. With the eager heart of a pastor, Paul explains the gospel to change the way the Romans think and the way the Romans live. That's the purpose of this letter.

That purpose is confirmed in the second phrase repeated only in the introduction and the conclusion; not really a phrase but a word. In 1:11 Paul says, "I long to see you that you may be *established*." And in 16:25 he writes, "Now to Him who is able to *establish* you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ." Instead of "established", your Bible might have "strengthen." As in the ESV, "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to *strengthen* you." And, "Now to him who is able to *strengthen* you..." The Greek word means strengthen, establish, confirm or support. That is what Paul is about here. To strengthen or establish the Romans by the written preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Interestingly, Paul is eager to preach the gospel to the Romans who he has already called "beloved of God" and "saints." Nowhere in the letter does Paul question the orthodoxy of Roman belief or the reality of their faith. Of course, Paul wants to preach the gospel to non-believers. That's why he went to Spain. We see here that he also recognizes the importance of preaching the gospel to believers.

Two things I have noticed in Christian ministry about the need to preach the gospel to those who have already believed. First, I have noticed a fuzziness among believers about the core truth of the gospel. Recently, I taught at a Christian conference in another country, where I had the opportunity to get into a conversation with a young Christian woman who had just completed Bible school. She was able to share with me her own experience of coming to faith in Christ, and I could sense in her a genuine relationship with Jesus. As we continued in conversation, I asked her how she would answer the question, "Why did Jesus have to die?" I found it interesting that she really struggled to answer the question. And I was pleased that she and another participant made an appointment with me

later to talk about how to answer this question. What I have noticed is that many Christians who are walking in a living relationship with Jesus struggle to communicate clearly the how of the gospel. They know it has to do with sin and grace. But often the answer is a bit fuzzy, not precise or specific or confident. There is a struggle to clearly explain why Jesus had to die and what his death and resurrection accomplish. And if you have trouble communicating concepts that have to do with the gospel, that suggests you could benefit from closer examination and teaching of the gospel to better understand your faith.

The second thing I have noticed is how good evangelical churches and movements can be at communicating grace to non-believers and yet how poor at living out grace in Christian community. We are better at offering grace to outsiders while often requiring law from those on the inside. This is not surprising. Human nature and human society are legalistic. We know of no other way to live. Grace is counter-intuitive and counter-cultural. Though the gospel message is simple and understandable, really available to all, that does not mean it is easy to apply. There is some deep work that has to happen in us if we are to live out the gospel. Work that takes time and some struggle.

The gospel message is elegant. It can be faithfully expressed in terms simple enough for a child to receive and yet, speak with power into the deepest nature of God and man. I love the booklet I use to share the gospel with people. Even if I don't use the booklet, I have the outline memorized, and I have the app on my phone. It is simple and biblical and powerful. It helps me present the core truths of the gospel message in a clear way. While I love using a simple presentation of the gospel, I do not want my understanding of the gospel to remain simplistic. This is what I love about the letter to the Romans. As we maintain the simple expression of the gospel, Paul is challenging us to think more precisely and more deeply about gospel truth and how that truth plays out in gospel living.

Paul wrote Romans to introduce himself to the Romans, to invite the Romans to join in the mission to the nations, to answer some of the challenging questions proposed by sceptics. But when asked, "Why did Paul write Romans, the whole long message from beginning to end." I answer, "Paul wrote Romans from the heart of a pastor who believes in the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a pastor who recognizes that believers need to be pushed to go deeper into their understanding of the gospel to be established in their faith, strengthened for transformation." That's why Paul wrote Romans. And that's why we study Romans. We put in some tough work of observation and interpretation, to go deeper in gospel truth, that we as individuals and as churches would have our worldview shaped by the gospel and our lifestyle transformed by the gospel. And we do this for God's glory. Its not just about us. It is about faithfully representing the glorious gospel of our Father in heaven and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

1. In Romans 1:8, Paul thanks God that the faith of the Romans is proclaimed throughout the whole world. Do you feel connected to a worldwide movement? What helps you connect with the reality that you are part of something much bigger than your local church?
2. What do you think was the reality of Paul's prayer life? How do you imagine that he prayed unceasingly for the Romans? What might that look like practically? Why do you think the Romans were so strongly on Paul's heart?
3. Who has God put on your heart to pray for? Is it a person, a group of believers, a nation, a people group?
4. Read the last three verses of Romans, 16:25-27. Identify the center of the message, the continuity of the message, the scope of the message and the purpose of the message (or purposes).
5. Paul is excited to preach the gospel to Christians in Rome. What excites you about the gospel? What aspects of the gospel do you preach to yourself or what aspects of the gospel would you love for your family and friends to really get?