

ROMANCE
with
ROMANS

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TED E. HURLBURT



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To the readers of this book: that you may be enriched in your faith and love of God, which will assure you of a lasting relationship with Him.

To receive the greatest blessing from this book, I suggest the following steps be taken while reading the book:

1. Open your Bible to the passage being studied.
2. Read the verses three times. The first time to see what it says and the second time to look for a key verse, one that just speaks to your heart. The third time is to allow His Word to soak into your heart and fill it with His truths.
3. Now you are ready to look into the content of *Romance with Romans*; you are ready to receive the most that this book has to offer. God will bless you.

Mr. Ted



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INTRODUCTION

AS I HAVE taught and preached over the years, I have found that down-to-earth, easy-to-read, and understandable studies of the Bible intended for use by individuals and study groups are hard to come by. This observation has inspired me to develop an approach that will fill this void. In addition, I believe there is a great need for a commentary that weds two vital factors in a romance. These are: knowledge about the object of our adoration and feeling for the object of our adoration. Maybe I should explain further. The exposing of God's revealed Word to us by others ought to be aimed at stimulating our ears (knowledge) and stirring our hearts (feelings). The aim of this book is to provide for both these segments of our being, and hence, to enhance our love for God's Word. If we just play to the intellect and do not touch the emotions, we have missed the depth of the greatest love story ever written.

I wish very much for the readers of this book to have a better understanding of its content and to have a real love affair with the book of Romans. That is why the book is titled *Romance with Romans*. The approach that I have taken is set in this direction. Both the intellect and the emotions should be married together in our pursuit for truth as it is found in God's Word. As an example of this approach, let's consider the author of the book of Romans, Paul of Tarsus.

First, let's show an intellectual approach. Paul was born in Tarsus, which is located in the southwest corner of Turkey. After being schooled and trained at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the noted scholars of the Jewish Law, he became a Pharisee of Pharisees, extremely zealous for the preservation of the old covenant described in the Old Testament. However, after his confrontation with the Lord on the way to Damascus, he became a Christian and an evangelist.

Paul wrote Romans around 57 AD, on his third missionary journey, while at Corinth. Although he didn't fully realize it at the time, he was on his way back to Jerusalem to be jailed

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for two years before setting out for Rome under much different circumstances than could probably be imagined.

While all of that is well and good and true, often the hearer will say, “So what? How can a layman better understand what Paul was writing about?” In the pages of this book I will attempt to respond to this intellectual “so what.”

Second, let’s look at an example of the emotional approach. Paul was a man chosen by God to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. He uniquely fit the qualifications needed to become the great evangelist he was. He was born among the Gentiles and had his early rearing (probably up to the age of 12) influenced by the Gentile’s thinking and culture. At that age he would have gone to Jerusalem for his Bar Mitzvah. For his further training, sometime later, he was either sent to, or his family moved to, Jerusalem, where he became thoroughly and fully indoctrinated with the Jewish Law. His brilliance led him to become a Pharisee of Pharisees, highly motivated to protect the Law of God at all costs.

When Christianity came in with the force of the Holy Spirit so that thousands and thousands (well over five thousand men) became Christians, Paul became their avowed enemy. Seeking the destruction of this “new cult,” as the conservative traditionalist Jews called it, he asked for and got permission from the leadership to persecute those in it. After that, Paul journeyed afar, even to Damascus in Syria, to stamp out this perceived threat of this enemy to God’s Law.

It was on his way to Damascus that God touched this man’s life and heart—a man whom God knew understood the Gentile culture and who deeply appreciated that perfect Law that God had handed down to the Jews centuries earlier. God knew of his zeal, his marvelous way of communicating, and his heart’s sensitivity. Paul was the one man who would go time and time again, missionary journey after missionary journey, to the Gentiles, a people whose lifestyle and thinking he knew and understood. Yet his devotion and compassion for the Jewish people never slackened. Paul was motivated by love, a love that drove him through stormy seas and hostile environments—suffering human abuse and being ridiculed and rejected by his own people. Yet Paul’s love was so great that he would have tasted their hell, if it meant they would receive his heaven (Rom. 9:3).

Paul’s love is poured out in the book of Romans. While we look at and view this letter—as great a doctrinal thesis as it is—remember that we will miss the great power of the book if we do not see the romance that Paul had with God and people.

Now we are ready to journey into a *Romance with Romans*. In our journey, we will observe that God’s love for both the Gentiles and the Jews was exhibited and poured out by this one man. We will see both Paul’s intellect and feelings playing out in this romance. They are poured out because of the wisdom of a great, powerful, and understanding God. In a like manner, I have taken in hand to create a commentary approach that shows both of these ideals, that is, his intellect and emotion.

INTRODUCTION

This book has been divided into sixteen chapters, which generally follow the chapters of Romans. Throughout, the New American Standard Bible is used. Study guide questions have been provided throughout and at the end of each chapter. The Bible and self-reflection provide the answers.

It is my prayer that as you read through *Romance with Romans* you will find in the epistle of Romans a deep love and appreciation for the message that this man, Paul, sent by God, has written to us.

Chapter 1 

THE GOSPEL—THE THEME

ROMANS 1:1–17

WE ARE GOING to have a Romance with Romans because we are going to fall in love with this book. We will fall in love with the message and the theme of this book and fall in love with the logical, orderly way in which Paul teaches.

By way of introduction, there are points of importance. From a logical standpoint, this book is one of the most fascinating books in the New Testament. It is a book in which Paul will ask a question and then, step-by-step, demonstrate how the answer to that question is derived. As a question is answered, it leads to another question, then another; and this is what makes this book so tremendously interesting. This is a pure “Paul style” of writing.

Remember that while the writers of the Bible were given the liberty to utilize their own style by God, they were nonetheless inspired in what they wrote. So there is really but one author of the sixty-six books of the Bible, and that is God. Still, each of about forty-four different writers of the Bible has his own particular, unique way of conveying the message of truth that God inspired.

As Paul writes in his unique style, we will see the attention he gives to two main cultures—the culture of the Roman Empire and the culture of the Jewish religion. The culture of the Roman Empire was centered on its imperialistic nature and dominating conquests of areas that today are Western Europe, all of the Balkan countries, all of the mid-east, and Northern Africa (as far south as Ethiopia and perhaps further). This vast conquest brought great wealth to the Empire, a sense of superiority, and a highly-inflated ego that led to the view that the need for any outside source for assistance or advice was unthinkable.

The Jewish culture was of a religious nature. The Jewish people felt that they were the chosen of God, protected and provided for by Him, and hence, superior to the entire

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Gentile world—even with the Roman supremacy. In this line of thinking, they preached one message; but in their highly-inflated ego, they practiced a lifestyle foreign to the message. The thought of anyone other than a Jew being included in the family of God was unthinkable to them.

As the book of Romans focuses on these two cultures, it beautifully, sometimes tenderly, sometimes with tough love, points out the absolute need of each culture to be kissed by the grace of God, which is achievable only through faith in Jesus Christ.

Introduction to the Letter

Generally speaking, we should start at the very first verse of a book. But being the non-conformist that I am, I want to start with the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the first chapter. Verse 16 says, “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.” Verse 17 states, “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, *‘but the righteous man shall live by faith.’*”

These two verses state the theme of the book. Everything within the book, or at least within the first eleven chapters of the book, relates back to the theme. The theme is: the Gospel has power. The power of the Gospel leads to salvation for everyone who believes. The faith factor comes in, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (or the Gentile, the non-Jew), and it reveals the righteousness of God from faith unto faith. (Faith unto faith has reference to the faith of those who lived under the Old Covenant as well as to the faith of those who live under grace or the New Covenant. See Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 11.)

The Gospel must be articulated and understood so that the power that leads us to salvation leads us to a place where, through the Holy Spirit, human reason, and stable faith, we can accept the truths that are within the Gospel. Here, within this power, we find a relationship with God regardless of our supposed secular or religious superiority. As expressed in Romans 10:11–15: “For the Scripture says, *‘whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.’* For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for *‘whoever will call on the name of the lord will be saved.’* How then will they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him 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!’*”

Introduction of Paul and the Gospel

Romans 1:1–2

Now, let's return to Romans 1:1, which says, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God..." There should be no question as to who is the writer of the book. This specifically states that Paul is the writer. Asking who wrote Romans would be about as intelligent as asking, "Who is buried in Grant's tomb?"

Paul starts by stating three positions that he holds. First he describes himself as being a "bond-servant of Christ." This is not the only time that he describes himself as being a bond-servant. The book of Philippians and the book of Titus begin by saying Paul is a bond-servant. Then the book of Philemon starts out by saying, "Paul, a prisoner of Christ." I like that. He has been captured, and he is captivated by the glory and the beauty of Christ. He didn't say "a prisoner of Rome," because he would not succumb to his being in prison as an inhibiting factor—he was a prisoner of Christ.

To better understand what a bond-servant was, we need to look at the different types of servant's in Paul's day. There were three forms of servitude in the Roman economy in the first century. First, there was a very trusted servant; he was so trusted that he was almost counted as a part of the family. Because of the lack of rapid transportation and fast communication, people sent out these trusted servants with sometimes large amounts of goods or money to invest for them in other places. Their means of communication would just drive us wild today; we couldn't handle it. (We think our snail mail is slow compared to our e-mail.) One example of this type of servant is the story about Philemon and his servant Onesimus, who betrayed that trust. The second kind of servant was the domestic servant, who would do tasks such as gardening, being the nanny for the children, and doing the housework. The third type of servant was the bond-servant, the lowest form of a servant. That is literally what they were: They were shackled. They would work in the salt pits or work as oarsmen on the boats; and if the boats sank, they were shackled to them! The bond-servants felt the lashes of the task master. If they were not literally in chains they were branded as a slave (Ex. 21:6).

Paul places himself in the lowest category of servitude. He places himself in that position before he places himself in the position of an apostle. He does so because this is the position in which he viewed Christ when He offered Himself for us, as seen in Philippians 2: 7, "...but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." I think this attitude and posture of the apostle Paul is what made him great. God was able to work through his bond-servant, because Paul took that position. He ascribes to Jesus as being a bond-servant, even unto death, and that was the ultimate destiny of the bond-servant. He was lashed, shackled, and chained or nailed to the place of his death. It was Paul's desire to spiritually emulate Christ's life in his life (Gal 2:20).

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How many “men of the cloth” today do what Paul did? We all must have the letters (or degrees) behind our names and all the reverence and the most high and the most holy and the most something or other in front of our names on the church marquee. I have yet to see a church marquee that said the name of the preacher was “bond-servant.”

The second position of Paul was that he was “called to be an apostle.” The closest thing that we have to an apostle in the secular world today would be an ambassador to a country. There was more than one apostle, but there is usually just one ambassador to each nation. That person may have a lot of underlings, but there is only one who is sent to be the spokesperson for the government to the government that has been recognized. The apostles were not representing a country, however; they were the ambassadors of God. They were the ones who were sent to represent the great kingdom of God and of Christ Jesus. So Paul was called to be sent, and then he was set apart. He was set apart for the Gospel of God. He was set apart to articulate the “glad tidings” or “Good News of God.” We could follow no greater example than Paul’s in being an articulator of that Good News.

The third position that Paul occupied was being “set apart for the Gospel of God.” His life was to be spent in articulating that Good News of salvation to the Gentile world. If he had to use his skills as a tent maker, it was only to earn money so he could continue to preach. The setting apart to the Gospel was not a vocation, a profession, or an occupation; it was an obsession. Paul was ordained by God, was set apart for the Gospel, and was God’s ambassador to the Gentiles. Paul was compelled by a servitude that was so binding that he chose to articulate the Gospel above his own personal welfare. His being set apart for the Gospel cost him much suffering—he was stoned, whipped, imprisoned, and, ultimately, paid the supreme price of having his life taken because of his articulation of the message of God. (Parenthetically, may I add, we need more pastors and ministers cut from the same cloth as Paul.)

Let’s continue with Romans 1:2, which states, “. . .which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures. . .” This Good News Paul is sharing is the long-promised message of inclusion and redemption. Of what did the “glad tidings” or “Good News” consist? In verses three and four, we find what is articulated or defined as the Gospel. The Gospel was promised beforehand through God’s prophets in the Holy Scriptures so that the promise of Good News did not come at the event of Jesus’ ministry. It was a promised Gospel that began at the birth of Jesus. There is a Gospel message in the Old Testament, and that Gospel message consists of all the messianic prophecies regarding the coming of Jesus Christ, who is the Good News. It hadn’t arrived then, but in Bethlehem it did, just as it was promised beforehand by God (Matt. 2: 5–6). These scriptures, then, are the messianic scriptures, or those of the coming Messiah. That word “messianic” may sound bad (messy), but it is a good word. It has reference to the Messiah and means “according to or concerning God’s Son.”

THE GOSPEL—THE THEME

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF PAUL AND THE GOSPEL

1. Memorize Romans 1:16–17.
2. Name the two cultures that Romans addresses and tell about them.
3. How did Paul identify himself? (See verse 1.)
4. What three levels of servitude were there when Paul wrote Romans?
5. How do you personally feel about being a bond-servant to Christ?
6. Is there a difference between the author and writer of Romans? Who is the author, and who is the writer?
7. How does the theme of the book describe the Gospel? (See verses 16–17.)
8. How does this information apply to your life?

Introduction of Jesus, the Good News of God

Romans 1: 3–7

The way God identifies His Son to the Romans is shrewd—it really is! He states here in Romans 1:3, “...concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh...” This is saying that Christ had in Him royal blood. From an earthly or fleshly standpoint, He could hob-knob with the kings and the rulers of the world. Isn’t it fascinating the way Paul kind of slips that in there? He just points out to the Church of Rome that they need not be intimidated by the power of Caesar. They were, and we as believers today are, following One of royalty. Fascinating! And that is Good News; it especially was to those who were in Rome.

Romans 1:4 goes on to say, “...who was declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord...” Jesus was born of a woman, born of the flesh, and was declared with power. How was Jesus in His ministry declared with power? There were two ways. First, He was declared with power by His teaching. Mark 1:22 states, “They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” Jesus preaches to us, not as one who is parroting or repeating others, but rather as one who is initiating what He taught. All of our teaching

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and all of our preaching really is parroting, isn't it? In other words, we are reciting that which has been handed down to us; thus all of our teaching is parroting. Those in prior times also were simply articulating what others had taught, but not so with Jesus. His teaching was with authority, as though it had been initiated by Him. This is what makes the teachings of Jesus so absolutely phenomenal. This is what gives Him the breath of freshness. This is that which lifts Him above other teachers; He is the initiator of truth, and in His teachings He articulated that which He Himself initiated.

The second way Jesus was declared with power was through His works. The miracles that He performed demonstrated the power that was His. This is so beautifully seen in John 2:11: "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." This was in the wake of the first miracle that Jesus performed. It set the pattern for other miracles. His doing miracles that displayed His power does not mean that Jesus was lacking compassion when He performed miracles. He was (and is) indeed a compassionate God. Jesus had compassion for the blind, for the deaf, for the sick, and for those who had suffered great loss through death. He had great compassion for those who were taken in the very act of sexual immorality. He had compassion for those who had lived a sordid life. He had compassion for the crooked politician. But the miracles that He performed were not only motivated by this compassion, but also demonstrated His authority over sickness, nature, death, and demons. His miracles gave credence to and confirmed the truths He was teaching. We see His miracles and teachings working hand in hand.

There was no activity that Satan could produce that could overwhelm the power of Jesus. John points this out. John 1:5 says, "The Light shines in the darkness; and the darkness did not comprehend it." If the world could have overcome the power of Jesus, we wouldn't be here. But Jesus' power prevails, in spite of walls, in spite of dictators, and in spite of those in false religions who kill Christians (and even themselves) because they are not of the same order. Amazing! Jesus' power prevails over all. There is no power that can withstand the Spirit of Holiness. This is the power, the great power in the Son of God, and this power is dynamically manifested in all of Jesus' miracles. Jesus also dynamically manifested this power upon the cross. Then the most dynamic manifestation is seen in the emptiness of the tomb. Of course, there could not have been a resurrection that meant so much had there not been the passion of Christ that led Him to the cross to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).

As we saw before, Romans 1:4 says, "...according to the Spirit of holiness..." Let's look at this from a grammatical standpoint. You have a prepositional phrase "of holiness." A prepositional phrase goes back and modifies or clarifies its antecedent, which in this case would be "the Spirit." The prepositional phrase can also be a possessive phrase, and this is one of possession. In other words, "the Spirit" that possesses holiness is the "Spirit of holiness." Initially, the term "holy" was used as an adjective that donates or speaks in regard to the character of the subject. "The

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spirit” being the subject, “holiness,” then, was a description of the subject. Later, because it was so unique, for there is only One who is holy, the term “holy” no longer was an adjective, but a part of a proper noun, which denotes the name “Holy Spirit.” So these two terms can be used interchangeably, whether it is “the spirit of holiness,” which denotes possession, or the “Holy Spirit,” which denotes character as well as possession.

Paul goes on to talk about the benefits of the Gospel in Romans 1:5: “through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake.” The benefits of Jesus being born of the flesh, the benefits of that power, the benefits of the resurrection, the benefits of that spirit of holiness cause in us a desire to be obedient. As Paul talks about those benefits, the first thing that he brings out is “through whom we have received grace.” There isn’t one of us who deserves what God has given, but neither is there one of us who cannot receive what God has given. That’s the beauty of grace, the unmerited gift of forgiveness from God. That sums up in a capsule, and probably in an over simplistic manner, the beautiful nature of grace. We will see that concept really develop as we get into the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Romans.

Consider the phrase in verse 5: “...through whom we have received...” Paul is speaking here using the term “we,” so much, that I’m going to offer an opinion: Paul’s relationship with the Lord was so great that he felt as though it was no longer “I” but “we.” Paul uses the term “we” more often than he uses the term “I.”

Verse 5 says, “...through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith...” First of all, we have indicated the action of God, undeserved by man yet available to man—grace. Then we find the response to that action—an “obedience of faith.” Faith is not just a mental belief in deity, nor is it just belief in the deity of Jesus or the articulating of that through a prayer. Faith has responsibility—“obedience” through faith. We are going to see this later, in the third and fourth chapters, where there is a work of faith. This is not to be misunderstood as a work apart from faith. The works apart from faith cannot save; also faith apart from works cannot save (James 2:17). So how do we correspond and relate with faith and works? That will be fully discovered as we go through this book of Romans.

See how this introduction is so full of the gems that we are going to be digging up as we delve deeper into our romance with Romans? Take the gem in Romans 1:5: “...the obedience of faith among all Gentiles, for His name’s sake...” Oh, I am so glad that is there, because that’s like my name and your name are written here in the Scriptures (since I am a Gentile). This verse is a reemphasizing of Acts 2:39. A demonstration of this is Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles over the previous years, including all three missionary journeys and one later back to Jerusalem.

Romans 1:6 continues, “...among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ...” Consider the grammar in this verse. You can turn it around the other way and say Christ Jesus, the Messiah Jesus. The term “Christ” was an adjective used to describe Jesus. But “Christ” was so commonly used with the name Jesus that it became a part of His name. Hence, both are capitalized.

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As we move to Romans 1:7, it says, "...to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul is writing this to those recipients in Rome who had received grace, and oh, if there was ever a city that didn't deserve it, it was Rome. There would only be one that deserved it even less, and that was Jerusalem. Yet here, they are called the beloved of God through their obedience to faith. In spite of great oppression, they exercised that obedience and committed their lives to the lordship of Jesus. Let's continue in verse 7, "...Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." We see another adjective or proper name that is associated with Jesus. Sometimes we drop that first name (Lord) and think of Jesus Christ as our Savior. We need to come to grips with His being the Lord of our lives, with our being bond-servants in chains to His will. That is really getting to know God.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION FOR INTRODUCTION OF JESUS, THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD

1. Name the two ways in which Jesus demonstrated His Power. (See verses 3–4.)
2. What part of speech was "holy" when used with "Spirit" before, and why is it now used differently? (See verse 4.)
3. Grace is the result of what events? (See verses 4–5.)
4. How can this information apply to your life?

Giving Thanks To God

Romans 1:8–17

In Romans 1:8–15 we find that there are a number of thanks to God. We see thanks made to God for the recipients of the letter, beloved ones in God's eyes, and thanks made to God for Paul, himself, and more so for the ministry that he had, denoting his desire to share this good news with them. Let's quickly go over these thanks.

First of all, Paul wants to thank God for the recipients of the letter (Romans 1:8–10). Verse 8 says, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world." Do we ever take time out to run down the church roster and bring each member there before the throne of grace and say, "God I thank you for that person"? They may not be all that I expect them to be, but then I'm probably not all that they expect me to be. I can just thank God for them. I can find some qualities in their lives for

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which I can thank God. If we as a church would do that type of thing more often, there certainly would be a lot fewer criticisms within congregations regarding one another. We don't know the journey people have taken, the steps they have had to climb, the cross they have had to bear, or the progress they have made. It may to us seem minuscule, but to them it is monumental, and we need to thank God for everyone who walks with Jesus.

If I could make an assignment for you, it would be this: Go home, take your church membership book, and before the sun sets again, spend some time going down through every name. Even though you may not know them, just thank God for them, and ask God to be close to them. Pray that God will help them carry whatever burden they have this day. Tell God that you love them. What a bond of great Christian love and faith there is and would be in all of the congregations if this were done. Paul just thanks God for every one of them. What a way to open a letter!

Verses 9 and 10 say, “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, always in my prayers making requests, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.” Paul had tried many times to go to Rome, but he had always been diverted. Then there was the matter of funds. A trip to Rome was expensive. Well, Paul's prayer to go to Rome was soon to be answered in the most mysterious way. God heard Paul's prayer, heard the longing of his heart, and created a way in which Rome itself would pick up the tab for his voyage. That is the way God works. It might not be the way that we would have anticipated (it wasn't first class lounge berths). However, Paul turned out, though a prisoner, to be the captor's savior—not spiritually—but physically, and that is also the way God works. Physically Paul was a prisoner on a boat caught in a storm and doomed to destruction. When all seemed hopeless and lost, the very presence of Paul allowed them all to reach land safely (Acts 27:42–44).

Romans 1:11 says, “For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established...” We have done such an injustice to this verse by limiting it to the qualifications of a certain number of gifts that are mentioned (see 1 Cor. 12). All of us have a spiritual gift we can give to people. Everyone in some way has shared a spiritual gift. I have been buoyed and strengthened by the spiritual gifts people have imparted. Consider the non-believer—for example, a non-believing clerk in a grocery store. Sometimes clerks have a pretty hard time. They get some pretty nasty people in there. If we, as Christians, can just go in and have a smile and say a good word and ask them how they are doing, it means a lot. The next time we go through a checkout line, the clerks are going to remember us, because we imparted a type of spiritual gift to them. We buoyed them up in their hearts and in their distress. We helped to smooth the way. This is so easily done. When we see and greet one another, it can be done with warmth, compassion, and love for all. We are imparting a spiritual gift. It doesn't mean that we have to learn how to speak or how to play the piano or how to lead singing or

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how to sing solos or how to be good in youth work or anything else. All of those are spiritual gifts, and they do bless us. However, we can be the drabest person on the totem pole as far as personality is concerned and still share a spiritual gift with another person. That should be our goal. God help us this day to share a spiritual gift—to show to others the radiance and peace of Christ that is in our lives.

Paul continues in Romans 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." Now consider the results of sharing a spiritual gift. This establishes the receiver of that spiritual gift. When others see you and see you work through some of the struggles that you have had and see your courage, what does that do to them? It establishes their confidence in Christ. They are more rooted and grounded so that it is not only the person who gave the spiritual gift that is blessed but also the recipient of that spiritual gift. Verse 12 contains the phrase "encouraged together with you." That is the spiritual gift as I understand it. I would completely divorce the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 from this verse. What Paul is talking about here, is each of us by faith—both yours and others'—imparting that gift of spirituality to one another. Isn't it great to belong to the family of God and to have the fellowship and warmth that is seen in a congregation?

Romans 1:13 says, "I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles." Wow! Here is this apostle, this great articulator of the Gospel, an evangelist who overshadows Billy Sunday and Billy Graham and all of the rest of them, saying (my paraphrase), "I want to come to you because I want to share in your fruit. I want to be spiritually blessed by you." There is no room for arrogance in leadership!

Paul goes on to say in Romans 1:14, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish." In other words, he is saying (again, my paraphrase), "My apostleship is not a vocation, an occupation, or a profession; it is an obsession. I am obligated." Oh, if that could be the hearts of the ministers today. It is disturbing to me that so many preachers are being turned out by so many of our theological schools whose first questions are about what the medical benefits and vacation benefits are and what the salary is going to be. They ask this before they ever ask about the spiritual dynamics—it is truly heartbreaking.

Let's move on to Romans 1:15–17. Verse 15 says, "So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." Paul gets to the theme in this verse. We know what the Gospel is, what it contains, and what affect the Good News has, both to the bearer and to the recipient. Thus, like Paul, I am not ashamed—no fear, no shame. I am not ashamed in Christ Jesus, who is the promise revealed in the prophecies. I am not ashamed in Christ Jesus, in the articulating of this Good News of the power of God unto salvation. As Paul says in verse 16, "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." After the resurrection of Jesus, God gave

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His people forty years to accept Him. Forty years is typically used in the Scriptures as a time of trial. He gave them forty years. Forty years almost to the day is when, in 73 A.D., Masada, the last fortress of Israel, fell. Three years before that, Jerusalem fell.

Verse 17 says, “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, *‘but the righteous man shall live by faith.’*” Did God reveal this righteousness in the Law? Yes, He did. But in the Law the consequence is justice without mercy and there is very little, if any, grace. In Christ there is the revealing of the righteousness of God, not in a code written upon cold, dead stone by the blazing finger of God like in the Old Testament, but in Jesus, who came to earth in the flesh. Hang on to that bit of righteousness, because we are not going to lose sight of it as we delve into Romans. Grab hold of verse 17: “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, *‘but the righteous man shall live by faith.’*”

In the next chapter we are going to show how needed, how absolutely needed, this Gospel message is. There is, never has been, and never will be, one person, regardless of background, who is not in need of this great Gospel. We have laid the groundwork, and now we are going to plow into the great need of the Roman Empire, with its supposed superiority, and the false Jewish concept that they would forever be the only children of God.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION FOR GIVING THANKS TO GOD

1. Paul was thankful for whom? (See verse 8.)
2. What would be a blessed homework assignment?
3. Why was Paul eager to go to Rome? (See verse 11.)
4. What is revealed in the Gospel? (See verses 16–17.)
5. How can this information apply to your life?