

Romans 1:8~15

(Part 1, Verse 8)

There is so much we can learn from this passage... It is often sections of scripture like this one that we are apt to read over, and move on. But to do so, would be a great tragedy, for the loss of what we could learn from it. On the surface, these words seem to just describe Paul's desire to visit Rome. But a deeper look will reveal, the inner workings of the Holy Spirit of God inside this man Paul. Jesus said, "**Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks...**" A close examination of these words reveals some of the characteristics that made Paul the man of God that he was.

The first thing that "*jumps out*" here, is Paul's immense love for the "*Kingdom of God!*"

Paul begins his letter by *giving praise to God the Father for those in Rome...*

(Vs 8a) ⁸*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all...*

What makes this statement stand out, is the fact that he didn't know these people personally.

Paul is writing to a church, that he has never been too... The church in Rome that he is writing to, unlike most of the others we read of in his letters, was not founded by him. Historians believe that this church was formed out of the events of Pentecost! They believe that someone attending Pentecost, heard and saw the mighty works of God, in their own language, and were born again. Then as a result, upon returning back home, they started a church.

Now think about this... A people he's never seen, never met, he has a deep abiding love for! He longs to see them, he longs to help them... Beloved, that kind of love only comes as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart!

Q: I want each of us to do a "*heart check*" today... **Do you love "The Church?"**

Think about it before you answer... It's a tricky question... Because naturally, the first response we have is to look around us, and say yes. But that is not the question I am asking...

You may love this group of people... for various reasons... It might be because they are your neighbors; maybe you grew up with them, or maybe because many of them are your family members...

But the question is... **Do you love "The Church?"**

I'm afraid, if we are not careful, we loose sight of what "*The Church*" really is... There is only "One Church", that being the "*Body of Christ!*" We are just members of that body...

It's easy to get nearsighted... Beloved, I want us to re-think what we, here at Providence are about... Its easy to lose focus, by looking inward, by looking around, ministering to our own selves...

The question I'm really asking is... **Do you love "The Gospel of Jesus Christ?"**

Because that's what its all about... The church is not a social club... A place where we minister simply to ourselves! The Church is simply an instrument that God uses to influence this world with the "*Gospel!*"

Paul loved the Church!

Illus: True Test... *Winning others to Christ...* Johnny Hunt story...

Paul didn't seek to build up his own little empire, but rather sought to further the kingdom of God...

“I’ve never been so blessed, than I was by...” the way you gave to help see a Youth Center built in the Philippians. And still helping them... People whom we’ve never seen other than the pastor...

It’s all about the “Gospel of God...”

(Vs 8) ⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all...**that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.**

The “Gospel of God” **had changed their lives!**

And now, in return, their lives were affecting all those around them with the Gospel!

★ And to that...Paul gives praise to God!...Paul says, “I would like to start by just praising God, for the great and mighty work he is doing in your lives through His Son Jesus Christ!”

This is something that I greatly lack in... And for that, I ask God for forgiveness! I am prone to look on the negative many times... On what is wrong, instead of what is right! I tend to be discouraged by those who don’t take it seriously, who take it lightly... Instead on being grateful for those who are digging in the trenches, those who are making a difference in this world for the gospel, those are sold out, and deeply committed to the cause! I’m sure the church at Rome had both kinds of people... But Paul chose to be grateful for those who laid down their lives for the gospel!

(Vs 8) ⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all...**that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.**

Think about it...here’s a handful of ordinary people... Brick masons, truck drivers, schoolteachers, carpenters...

Common, ordinary people...who had captured this world’s attention!

Q: What was it, that they were “Noticing” about these people?

(Vs 8b) Look closely...**that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.**

Now this is a really interesting statement, when you look closely at it...

He **is not** talking about their effectiveness in the preaching and teaching of the gospel throughout the world. Its not that they were sending people throughout the world preaching the gospel.

But what the world was saying about them, and the gospel!

...**that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.**

He is speaking to the “**reputation**” this church had acquired...

It speaks to the “**impact**” the “Gospel of God” had on the lives of these people in Rome!

The Church in Rome became well known for the “**Changed lives**” that it produced there!
Their “**Belief**” in the “Gospel of God” produced “Works” that had the whole world talking!

This really encourages me...

As I thought on this, I realized, there's not a "better measure of the church..."

We are often prone to measure the church, by:

- The size of the building...
- The architecture of the building...
- The preacher...
- The music...
- The "Activities or Functions..."
- How many is coming...

But listen, don't miss this...

T: But the "Real Measure" of a church, is the influence it has on society!
Beloved, if we are not "impacting this world" for Jesus Christ...everything else is vain!

Whether it be *good, bad* or *indifferent*... The point is, the church should greatly influence society!
Not everyone is going to think good of bible preaching church!

Wouldn't it be great, if we became known for "The Gospel of God?"

Wouldn't it be awesome... That people all over Estill county was talking about the gospel, because of us!
That's what was happening in Rome!

Many of our churches today, listen, are little different than the Kiwanis's club, the Lion's club, the Mason's, etc... in the "eyes" of the world. Listen to what I just said... No doubt in my mind, these groups are good groups. Each one helps the community in some form...

But you know what...I don't know anything about those groups. I've never had anyone come to talk to me about their group. As far as I'm concerned, these groups are in their own little world... They meet regularly, they do good deeds, they seem to be good hearted people...

Now, this leads me to my point...

Looking through the eyes of the lost, how many see the churches, little differently?

(Vs 8) ⁸*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all...that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

Q: What are the people around this area saying about us here at Providence?

What are the people in Winston saying about us...

- Because of us, do these people know how much God loves them?
- Because of us, do they know, they are headed form destruction?
- Because of us, do they know of the certain wrath to come?

It's really a question of... **Love!** Because the bottom line is, if we believe the gospel, and love the gospel, we will reach out to those who don't know the gospel... We may look at our building, the number of people who come, even how much we are learning of the bible...

T: But the "Real Measure" of a church, is the influence it has on society!
Beloved, if we are not "impacting this world" for Jesus Christ...everything else is vain!