

Romans 1:8~15

(Part 3, Verse 10)

I can't begin to fathom the number of different styles of lamps there are in the world... Different shapes, different sizes, different materials, colors, etc... But as different as they are, it's interesting to note the things every single one of them has in common. Regardless of the *external* makeup of the lamp, the *internal* construction is all the same.

Each one must have a receptacle... Each one must have an electric cord... Each one must have a plug, properly attached on the end of that cord... Each one must have the other end properly attached to the receptacle... Each one must have an on/off switch... And the, each one must have a bulb...

A lamp that does not give light, regardless of its external beauty, is not very useful... But, a lamp, that is properly prepared, regardless of its external beauty, when such a lamp is connected to "The Power Source"... Walla... LIGHT!

I like this illustration, mainly for the fact that the lamp must be both "Properly Prepared" and "Properly Connected" to the power source! And when it is, it will fulfill its intended purpose in this world... Beloved, there are all "kinds" of people in the world, different shapes, colors, races... But all were designed by God, and for His Purpose... to bring honor and glory to his name!

Q: Are You Usable? **Are you & I vessels that God can work his mighty works in?**

Contained in section of scripture, verses 8~15, are characteristics that helps us to understand, the type of person God uses... We are going to see, just what it was that made Paul the man he was for the gospel!

I want you to hear what I'm about to say...

It is not "Your Past" that makes you unusable to God...but "Your Present!"

God can use anybody...but not just anybody can be used!

You see, like the lamp, our hearts must be properly prepared... If the heart, the "dwelling place" of the Holy Spirit, is properly prepared... LIGHT!

In this passage, we are given insight to the condition **of Paul's heart!** We will see that his impact on society had nothing to do with great skill, or abilities, but simply a man, whose heart was properly conditioned, and prepared for use! And upon examining the heart of Paul, we must take what we learn, and lay it along side our heart...and see, if we, are useable like Paul!

I. (Vs 8) **The first Characteristic...** Paul's heart for the "**Faith...**"
He had a deep love for the person and work of the gospel...

Q: A church may *love each other, enjoy activities...* **But do they love the gospel?**
A church that "**Loves the WORD...will love the WORLD!**"

II. (Vs 9) **The Second Characteristic...** Paul had a "**Pure, Sincere**" heart...
God knows my heart... Two words that will totally change your life...

III. (Vs 10) We find a Third Characteristic... ¹⁰*Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*

The Third Characteristic of the person God uses, is revealed *in the words* of his prayer...

I have found over the years, that praying is an area that many Christians struggle with. You could liken this to the lamp cord... Many feel like they don't have a good connection, even powerless at times. If this describes you, listen closely...

Q: What was it about Paul's prayer life that moved God?

Well, it certainly wasn't his choice of words...

What I mean by that is, many feel like they don't know how to pray, because they can't find the right words! But as we study Paul's prayer, we'll find out, it has nothing to do with the right words...for his prayer is a very simple prayer...

Paul says... ***"My prayer is this ...Lord, if you can use me, to help those in Rome, I ask you to make it possible for me to go, however you want to, whenever you want to..."***

Notice there's nothing special about the words themselves...

It wasn't so much the words Paul said...but rather what the words had to say about Paul!

Praying has nothing to do with the right words...but a right heart. A right heart will produce the right words!

In praying...It's better to have a heart without words, than words without heart!

His words reveal... *"A Broken, Contrite, Surrendered heart"*!

(Vs 10a) ¹⁰Making request, if by any means...

Lord, my prayer is, *"Do whatever you have to do...whatever it takes..."*

Notice, Paul places *"No Conditions...No Restrictions"* on his service...if by any means...

Q: Is that how you pray?

I am convinced, that herein lies the *"Very Reason"* why our prayer lives often seem powerless! Because of the fact, we often pray with *"Restrictions..."* If you know anything about electric...it always takes the path of least resistance! Thus in our prayers, we often have *"restrictions"* that hinder the flow of the Holy Spirit!

We often tell God what we want, how we want him to do it, and when we want Him to do it...

Beloved, that's a far cry from saying...

"Lord, whatever you want to do.....I willing."

"Lord, however you want to do it.... It's fine with me."

"Lord, whenever you want to do it...I'm ready."

James said it this way...

... yet ye have not, because ye ask not. ³Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (**your desires**...)

The *"Key"* to *"Effectual Prayer"* is that it comes from a totally surrendered heart... One that is free of our own will and desires! Allowing an *"open path"* an *"Unobstructed path"* for the flow of the Spirit!

(Vs 10a) ¹⁰Making request, if by any means... now at length I might have a prosperous journey...

Lord you decide... just get me there... Paul's prayer contains only one desire... And that was, he just wanted to get to Rome, to help the people there with the gospel of God.

Q: How would you define a "*prosperous journey*?"

Notice, according to his prayer, he didn't care *how* he got there, just that he got there...

Is that your heart? Paul didn't ask, for a "**good flight over...**" He didn't ask for a "**Ocean view cabin**" on a "**Comfortable Luxury Cruise liner...**" He didn't ask to stay in a "**5 Star**" Hotel, eat at the "*finest restaurants*"...etc.

I'm afraid, that many times we pray in a much different manner...

You talk about a passage that will really put you to the test...to see where your heart is!

There are only two sources of our prayers... The flesh and the spirit...

- The "*Flesh*" or "*Our Nature*" will reveal itself by it's concern for self...
- While the "*Spirit*" will reveal itself by its concern for the gospel!

"Lord, watch over us, keep us safe, protect us from harm..."

Lord, remove all obstacles...

Lord let us have a Good Trip...

Beloved, I'm telling you, it doesn't take much to hinder the gospel today! Just let it be a little hot! Just find out that its going to require some walking. Or having to eat some things that aren't your favorite food. You let least little thing goes contrary to the way we want it to...we get tore up!

Q: We better ask ourselves... Who's will are we seeking to please?

Beloved...what would happen, if we prayed like Paul did... Just asking God to USE us for his purposes, any way he wanted to!

What if we asked him to "*Do what he had to do...*" just use us!

What if we told God that comfort wasn't our concern...people were!

*...if by **any means**...* When Paul prayed this, he didn't have a clue what he was "*asking for...*" He had no idea by what means or circumstances God would use to answer his prayer... He left that up to God.

Beloved, that shows trust and faith in God, that is the complete turning over of your life to Him! No restrictions, no conditions...

Q: By the way, God answered Paul's Prayer...

Know did Paul end up getting to Rome?

He went as a prisoner! He was "*extradited*" there to stand trial... God honored his prayer...He allowed him to preach in Rome! But he was in chains when he did it, but he did it! And you know what else... Rome would be his last journey! He **died** there in Rome. That's why God had always intervened, and hindered his efforts every time Paul tried to go. God was not done with Paul... And when Paul had accomplished everything God had for him to do, he made provision for him to go to Rome...

(Acts 20:22~27) ²²*And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:* ²³*Save that the Holy Ghost witness in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions*

abide me. ²⁴*But none of these things move me, **neither count I my life dear unto myself**, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.* ²⁵*And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.* ²⁶*Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.* ²⁷*For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

(Acts 21:10~14) ¹⁰*And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named **Agabus**.* ¹¹*And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, **Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.*** ¹²*And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.* ¹³*Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.* ¹⁴*And when he would not **be persuaded**, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.*

If you read on there in Acts, you find where Paul went to Jerusalem, and sure enough...he was arrested, and eventually sent to Rome to appear before Caesar! It took around 8~9 years, but God finally answered his prayer! He was headed for Rome! And in Rome, he would preach his last sermon...

Beloved, if we are ever going to see God move like he did in the early church...we are going to have to start praying the way the early church prayed!

Q: Church... I want to challenge you...to examine your prayer life...
Is there "**restrictions**" on your prayers?

Beloved, there is "only one RIGHT way" to pray...and the strange thing is, in one sense, it has nothing to do with words...

The only way to pray, is with a "**Surrendered heart...**"

★ Listen very closely...**Do you pray that way?**
If it's not...It doesn't matter **WHAT YOU SAY!**

Listen... I'm going to ask you this morning, to be "*Transformed*" by the Gospel of God! By totally surrendering yourself to God...thus making yourself "*Usable!*" You'll never be used of God, until you make yourself usable! And that simply comes by complete surrender of "Your Will!" No conditions, No restrictions... Just yielding your life for his purposes! No longer thinking of yourself, but only of the gospel! Trusting God with your life...

The Just shall live by faith...