



Sermon Notes | Proclaimed in All the World | Romans 1:8-15

INTRODUCTION

Christianity is a Christian faith and a worldwide faith. There are followers of Christianity found in every country and every corner of the globe. They are found in the Ancient Far East, the developed West, in the cold of the North, and in the hot South. Disciples of Jesus Christ are all over this sphere.

It is true that other religions and movements have also spread to a degree. This is not being denied. Muslims are found outside of the Middle East, Buddhists are found on this side of the Atlantic, witches are in the cities and country, and sadly, cults are found in more places than isolated farms. These false faiths have also spread, and may appear at times to be growing, often because global inhabitants are looking for something to belong to, are looking for identity, a system and a meaning for their lives. Where do I belong? And false faiths pedal identity for sure. So, with force, deception and fear backing them, they can spread, but they do not SAVE! They transmit, but they do not TRANSFORM!

Only Christianity makes a true difference. The difference, the new life, comes by faith, a faith in which converts are truly transformed, are made different, and then engage in different behaviours. Only that faith, only in Christian faith, only faith in Jesus Christ Alone, brings on this new life. It saves and it transforms, and therefore, it impacts the world. Thus, Christianity is a world-wide faith. Its disciples are not hollow shells, are not walking around doing strange things, wearing odd robes, engaged in rites and rituals. No. The Christians are new creations, regenerated beings, transformed from the inside out. They are no longer the dead walking.

Followers of the true Jesus Christ impact the world because their lives proclaim Christ; their lives declare the Gospel. Speaking with transformed lips, they are spreading the Gospel, and living out their transformation. This good news is life changing, is real salvation, and it is being proclaimed in all the world.

This same reality that is happening today, 2000 years later, was true back in Rome. The same gospel of God was spreading from Rome by transformed Romans. Saved by Christ and living for Him, sent and going to the highways and byways, the gospel of God was flowing from that ancient metropolis, and Paul confirms it.

Let us read that Roman testimony and consider the implications of that testimony.

Romans 1:8-15

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. 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. 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 others faith, both yours and mine. 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."

Faith, your faith, Romans, is being proclaimed in the world! By way of Roman testimony, Roman faith, and Paul's faith also, is being proclaimed, announced, made public. A ministry of proclamation is happening. What makes it so? We will consider four elements of ministry proclamation today.

I. THANKFULNESS (v. 8)

Romans 1:8

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

Paul states, "First", establishing the priority of what he is about to say, meaning, to open, above all, foremost. Twelve out of thirteen of Paul's letters begin this way, stating/starting with a reference to a prayer of thanksgiving or a blessing of thanks (as in Ephesians).

Ephesians 1:3

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

The only letter not beginning this way, that being Galatians, is addressing a specific problem, and gets to the problem immediately. But the common pattern for Paul's letters, and the priority of Paul's communication, is thankfulness, and the instrument of his thankfulness is through Jesus Christ. Apart from Jesus Christ, there is no thankfulness, truly, and without Him, there is no reconciliation, no access to the Father, fundamentally, no new life, and no new will that aches and beats to be thankful. It is all impossible without Christ. Paul points to Jesus, and the mediatory priestly work of Jesus, He being the Second Person of the Trinity. Later in Romans Paul reminds us that Christ died, and was raised, and now sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for us. This is mediatory priestly work on our behalf.

Romans 8:34

"...Christ Jesus is the one who died — more than that, who was raised — who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."

It is only this that is granting us access to the Father; our own prayers, only being possible because of Christ and His interceding work. Even the offering of our thanks, or any other prayer, is dependent on His intercession, and is conditioned on our relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul's point then, is, there is thankfulness to God, but without the mediation of Christ, it is meaningless, empty, goes nowhere, and has no effect, because it is cloaked in our filthy righteousness. Without Christ, it is not cloaked in pure righteousness, and therefore is unacceptable to God. We need the access made possible by Christ. We need this conduit, the divine mediatory tunnel of Jesus Christ. We need His Access. In this age, this day, our filthy righteousness falls short, which we will see in Romans chapter 3. Our only hope, the righteousness of God, comes via the access that is from Him, that is about Him, that access that comes through Jesus Christ in the gospel of God. WE NEED HIM!

Romans 3:23

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

The righteousness of God, manifested in the work of the Second Person of the Trinity, is the work of Jesus Christ, Son of God. His work, as the GOD/MAN, is our hope, and is the only hope of the world, whether they recognize it or not. The hope of the world: JESUS CHRIST and HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

II Timothy 4:18

"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Through Christ, not only do we have the grounds and means for thankfulness, we also have the first and foremost piece of a ministry of proclamation.

Paul expresses that he is giving thanks for their faith, their Roman faith, which is being proclaimed in all the world, a faith that is worthy of being proclaimed to the world, far and wide. The same faith that many had found in Jerusalem, was now being proclaimed in Rome, and the same faith was also spreading to other cities, and Paul, therefore, is thankful to God for this happening. It was a faith divinely given, divinely inspired, and therefore thanks belonged to God.

He is thankful through Jesus Christ, the One who had saved him, and now He is the one to whom he offers up thanks — thanks through Him for the scope of faith. The foremost element of Paul's ministry of proclamation is thankfulness.

And so, confronted as we are with verse 8 this day, what of us? What is our priority? Are you first and foremost thankful? Is this where it starts for you? Would you, like Paul, also say, First? Would you also declare, I am thankful? Does your ministry start with

thankfulness? Are you thankful that this same faith is still being proclaimed today? Or, are you more concerned with angst and complaint about false faith rather than thankfulness? Or, rather than thankfulness do you have fretfulness about false proclamation being pumped out towards the next generation in the schools and the marketplace? But what we need to do is to trade fret for true faith and for thankfulness. Why? Ultimately, false faith is impotent, and has an expiry date, and will fail. Ungodliness will not prosper. The Day of Reckoning is coming. The same faith that was in Rome is the same faith as today. The same good news that started in the Garden of Eden, contains, sustains, and is believed till this day.

Genesis 3:15

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

This verse is the first good news announcement. It points forward to the offspring of the woman who will defeat Satan, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is this proclamation that establishes the faith of the ages, the same faith of Abraham, of David, of Paul, of Polycarp, of Luther, Ryle, and of you. Is faith stopping? NO. This same faith continues to be proclaimed in the world today. Lost souls are being saved. New saved souls are happening everyday. This faith cannot be stopped, and the ministry of proclamation begins here with thankfulness for that truth.

II. SERVICE (vv. 9-10)

Romans 1:9-10

"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."

Paul had not yet visited Rome, but he desired to, and had plans to. He was on his way to them at last, via Jerusalem, en route to untouched Spain. He testifies in verse 9, that though he has not seen them yet, God is his witness, of the seriousness of his testimony, that though he is not yet intimate with the Roman church compared to other churches which have been planted and visited, yet without ceasing, he is faithful to pray for them. Though never yet face to face with them, this ongoing and never ceasing prayer for them demonstrates the depth of Paul's exceptional prayer life, which goes beyond this particular group of Romans, for he speaks of prayer in connection with his other associates as well, and encourages the saints to be steadfast in their prayers. For Paul, anchoring in God's will in his prayers was the foundation for service to God. Praying for God's will revealed a heart that wanted to serve according to God's will, and not his own.

Colossians 4:2-3a

"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ..."

Romans 12:12

"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."

Paul was a very busy Apostle, but not too busy to pray for Rome ceaselessly, even though he did not yet know them personally. He is a man of prayer in quantity and in quality. He prays in terms of by Gods will, not of his own will. Verse 10 is clear: by Gods will he will visit Rome.

Jesus taught that prayers should be made in this manner. Pray like this, He instructed. And He modelled this approach to God in His own prayers, as He did on the eve of his crucifixion.

Matthew 6:10

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Matthew 26:42

"Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed. My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, 'your will be done'."

James also teaches that we ought to say, "If the Lord wills."

James 4:13-15

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit' — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.'"

Make this the framework of your entire life. The book of Proverbs also makes the point clear. Man plans, but God establishes our steps by His ordinance.

Proverbs 16:9

"The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps."

So, like thankfulness without Christ, so too prayers without Gods will are ineffective. Therefore, thank you without Christ (that which is prayer according to our will) is useless, impotent, and is not prayer at all. "God, I need," and "God, I want," or any prayer that starts out in such a way is the wrong direction for prayer.

We need to approach God Almighty with the mindset of Paul: "Your will be done!" Verse 9 demonstrates the heart of Paul's witness. Paul's ministry is given to seriousness and divine alignment. He serves God with his spirit (small s, and not to be confused with the Holy Spirit). His will, the core of his being, the will of his old self, the inner man, has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, and the new creation given by God, his new inner man, is given back by Paul to serve His God. Paul encourages the other saints to do likewise. While he is in jail, he writes to the Philippian Church.

Philippians 2:12-13

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

God regenerates the spirit, and works in you so that you might in turn, work for His pleasure. He has regenerated your spirit, therefore, work out what He has given you and serve Him. Service is in view, not just in acts and deeds, not just in our works, but in the sum and total of our being. The new inner man is to focus on serving Him in totality. Paul includes this practical aspect of how to live as part of his letter to the Romans.

Romans 12:1-2

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

This is the same idea of reasonable service that we find in verse 9. Your whole life is to be placed on the altar, and sacrificed with no holding back of parts of life, no inner recesses. It is to be a whole hearted ministry, wholehearted service, spiritual service in the ministry of proclamation. This is how we are to serve our God, with wholehearted service. We are to give all to God! It is not about communicating halfheartedly. Too often we want it to be a halfhearted service so that it will fit into our calendar, our fleshly attitude, our schedule. But Christian service does not fit around other activities. Paul's service was committed to wholehearted service. Christian service, given its proper place, as Paul does, is serving with our spirit in the gospel of His Son (vs 9). Wholehearted service in the gospel of God and the gospel of His Son Christ, that being, the gospel of the Triune God, is the gospel from His plan. It is about God, through Christ, and because of Christ's Work, taking on humanity and living the perfect life so that He might redeem us. Christ Jesus, the Son, who gave His life, and was raised in power.

Romans 1:4

"...and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord..."

Being in Christ, the first-fruits of those who follow Him, repenting of their sin, now living life in Him, are to be committed to wholehearted service, bought, not just at salvation, but every day, every minute. Christ owns you. It is a union with Christ, ongoing, and there is no time or domain where He does not own you. Therefore, live in light of that. Live as though you have been bought, because you have been. Your life is not your own. Honour Him, in word, in thought, and in deed. You belong to Him.

If that is you, you are united with the Son of God. Do you grasp this? You have union with Him. Are you living as such? It is not a duty or a task among other things. No. It is to be your purpose, your service, a ministry of proclamation. It's everything you are to do, all of the time, every day, and with all of your heart.

III. SUPPORT (vv. 11-13)

Romans 1:11-13

"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 others faith, both yours and mine. 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."

Paul tells the Roman saints, "I long to see you." He wants to impart to them from his own spiritual gifts, to help them, to strengthen them, gifts from God which will be used by God to encourage them, and for His purposes. God is known to do this from ancient times. We read in Exodus, for example, when the first temple was being built, that God provided giftedness, abilities that served the building of the temple with skill.

Exodus 31:1-6

"The LORD said to Moses, 'See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Abisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you.'"

I Corinthians 12:7

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Paul knows that he too has gifts. All Christians are granted gifts. We don't know what Paul's specific gifts were, but we know that gifts come from God, and the gifts are given for the purpose of service. While Paul's composition of gifts is not known, it comes out "I have giftedness." This is the economy: Paul is of the Spirit, and therefore He has something to help the saints, a gift, for the purpose of strengthening and building up the saints. Paul has probably just finished writing I Corinthians 12-14, and so the topic would have been fresh on his mind.

I Corinthians 12:4-11

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit; who apportions to each one individually as he wills."

Let us consider the details concerning Divine Gifts:

1. You cannot impart divine gifts from afar. Paul states that he needs to be with them, in person, in order to impart the spiritual gift. He cannot do this from a distance.
2. Gifts are given for mutual benefit, for reciprocation. They will provide mutual support and benefit. These gifts to be imparted to Rome will also bring benefit to Paul. They will be mutually encouraged. The blessing is mutual. This is the economy of God. Paul puts it all together in verse 13. He wants them to be together, for mutual purposes, and stresses his sincere intent to do so.

Romans 1:13

"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."

Support in a ministry of proclamation is based on being together. Paul wants to come, wants to visit the Roman church, but has, thus far, been prevented. He states clearly that he knows he is missing something because he has not been physically with them. He is missing the lasting fruit, the ties that will bind them together. Being there in person will bring him, and them, fruit. Not being there has limited his reaping the harvest, the fruit, not that there cannot be some fruit from a distance. Paul has been with them in spirit, and has written letters with long distant encouragement, but the true harvest comes by being together. The support is not just a matter of one support, an email, or financial support, or prayer support. It needs a lived out blend of all these things. It bears fruit, it strengthens. Fruit effectiveness builds up the church.

IV. OBLIGATION (vv. 14-15)

Romans 1:14-15

"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's ministry to the Gentiles is ministry to the *ethnos*, referring to ethnicity. It represents all the nations that are NOT Israel, the Jews and all the other groups (Gentile) that are outside of Israel. Paul has Rome in view of the overall ministry, all the nations going through the busy city of Rome. Prior to the Ministry of Christ, the Gospel was available to all, but was not proclaimed to all. Initially it was given first to the Jew, but in Paul's day, and up to now, it was given to all. Once Jesus came, the Gospel was given to all.

Isaiah 52:10

"The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

Romans 1:16

"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."

We are made aware of the faith of a Canaanite woman, for example, whose daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. She seeks out Jesus for mercy. The disciples wished to send her away, but Jesus stopped to speak to her.

Matthew 15:24-28

"[Jesus] answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' And he answered, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.' She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters table.' Jesus answered her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed instantly."

And at the time of Jesus's crucifixion, a Roman centurion was watching Him die, and Mark records that the man acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God, an indication of his faith.

Mark 15:37-39

"And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom, And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'"

And also in Mark we read about yet another conversion, how Jesus healed the Gentile demoniac, and how the tormented man, the formerly demon possessed man, became of sound mind and then longed to be with Jesus.

Mark 5:6-8, 11-13, 18-20

"And when he [the man with the unclean spirit] saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.' For he [Jesus] was saying to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!' Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they [the Legion of spirits] begged him saying, 'Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.' So he [Jesus] gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea. ... As he [Jesus] was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. And he [Jesus] did not permit him but said to him, 'Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.' And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marvelled."

So, while the Gospel was proclaimed to the Jews first, Paul, Jewish himself, was chosen by the Lord for the special commission of taking the Gospel beyond the Jews and to the nations, to the Gentiles. We read how Paul/Saul was given his commission from the Lord by a surprised disciple named Ananias. The Lord had commanded Ananias to

seek Paul/Saul out and lay hands on him. The formerly troublesome Saul was now to be used by God to proclaim the gospel.

Acts 9:13-22

"But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.' But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.' So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.' And all who heard him were amazed and said, 'Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?' But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ."

The chosen Paul confirms this role he has been given, stating that he is under obligation to carry out this deed of ministry.

Romans 1:14

"I am under obligation both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish."

The reference to the Greeks and Barbarians is pointing to the Greek lineage of the day, which Alexander the Great took over, leaving behind the imprint of Greek culture on the large middle class in the territory he overtook. It was not just the cultured Hellenistic Greeks, but Greek infused to the uncultured as well, even the barbarians. All of the Gentiles, both wise and foolish were influenced by this Greek influence. And man falls into either one or the other of the two categories, being either wise or foolish, and therefore, all needed the gospel and salvation. Paul is clear. The gospel is for all, to all. His mission is to all. No one will be left out. The Psalms and Proverbs speak to all kinds of people also. It is a mission field to all, for all, and Paul is eager to reach out to everyone. Rome was filled with many, and Paul was eager to meet with them face to face.

Are you eager or reserved to spread the gospel? The harvest is grand for sure. But eagerness is not enough. It is easy to excuse and neglect, easy to say, "I am not an evangelist," "it is not my thing," "I am busy already." But the reality of ministry is that it is an obligation. Never mind excuses! Paul states clearly, "I am under obligation," (v. 14). It is my charge. I am locked into a debt. I am responsible. It is my duty to the owner. I have been bought with a price and have been sent. I am not my own. Woe to me if I do not preach.

I Corinthians 9:16

"For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

Thus is the ministry of proclamation. It is a ministry of obligation. It is the servant/slave doing his masters business. Not my will, but God's will be done. It is stewardship. IT IS THE MASTER'S WILL! It is the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19-20

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

TEACH THEM AS I TAUGHT YOU!

Jesus Christ must be proclaimed to all the world. Teach them, that others will be sent. The nations are here in Peterborough, therefore we know what we must do. May God, the God of the nations, give us resolve to do so in thankfulness, with wholehearted service. May we be given to obligation, to wholehearted ministry, fully supported, eager to share the gospel, to make disciples, teaching them, as Jesus taught you.