

Romans 1:8
Faith is our Testimony

Romans chapter 1 verse 8,

- 8) First, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ on behalf of all of you, that (or because) your faith is being spoken of in the whole world.**
- 9) For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always upon the occasion of my prayers,**
- 10) making petition if, now at length, I might have a prosperous journey in the will of God to come to you.**
- 11) For I long to see you, in order that I might impart unto you some spiritual gift, toward the goal that you might be established;**
- 12) that is, that I might be comforted together with you through the mutual faith (that is, *the faith among ourselves*) both of you and of me.**
- 13) Now I intend you not to be ignorant, brethren, that often I purposed to come to you, but was let hitherto...**

The word *let* in King James means *hindered*.
And *hitherto* means *in this*.

- ... that I was hindered in this, that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.**
- 14) I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise, and to the unperceptive.**
- 15) So, according as is in me, I am prepared (or *ready*) to preach the gospel to you, the ones in Rome also.**
- 16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto (or *for*) salvation to everyone who is believing, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**
- 17) For in it the righteousness of God is being revealed from faith unto faith; as it has been written, "The just (or *righteous man*) shall live from out of faith."**

The book of Romans is The Constitution of the Christian Faith. If a believer can learn and understand in a systematic way all that is written in the book of Romans, you will have a thorough understanding of systematic theology of the Christian faith. Every doctrine, every teaching, is presented in the book of Romans. Every verse is full of theology and truth for the believer.

Paul introduced himself in his capacity as a slave of Christ), an apostle by calling, and his consecration - he had been separated unto the gospel. The promises: **this gospel which God**

promised before through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning His Son. And then he gave His pedigree: **that is the one who has become from out of the seed of David according to the flesh; His humanity: and the one who has been declared Son of God in power, according to the Spirit from out of the resurrection of the dead;** and then he identifies the one who has been declared Son of God: **Jesus Christ our Lord.**

His Provision: **through Whom we received grace and apostleship.** As we saw last week Paul says everything that he does, and everything that he is, and all through his letters is that grace, it is all based upon God's grace to him. By the grace of God I am what I am. God supplied His grace to Paul for the work of ministry. He says, **We received from Him grace and apostleship for obedience of faith** (that is, *to obey the faith* - the persuasion of God) **among all the nations, on behalf of His name.** And he is saying that is whom we represent.

Among whom (that is, the nations) **you yourselves also are the called of Jesus Christ.** And that is a title. Everybody who is genuinely born of the Spirit of God and belongs to Christ has been called. That we belong to Christ because of His calling, because of His invitation, because of His drawing us to Himself. Not because of the merits that we have done.

Verse 7, the people involved: **To all the ones who is in Rome, beloved of God.** All of God's people are beloved, that is, they are the objects of God's love. **Called saints.** Not *called to be saints*, but *called saints*. That is, saints by calling. The word *saints* means *set apart*. It does not mean *purity*, it means *set apart*. A *saint* is somebody who has been set apart for Christ and for His purposes. And then the preface, **Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Verses 1 through 7 ends the first part of the three-part introduction. Verses 8 through 15 is the second part that we will start today, as Paul expresses his personal care over them.

Verse 8, he says, **First, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ on behalf of all of you.** Paul always giving thanks. But he also listed why he gave thanks for people.

But notice, he gives *thanks to my God*, he says. Someone who is personal. He gives God the credit in the thanks for all the things being done in believer's lives. He *prays through Jesus Christ*. There is no other to pray through, or to go through, or mediator between God and men but the man Christ Jesus. And he says, "I am giving thanks on behalf of all of you."

And then he gives the reason: **Because your faith is being declared (or announced) in the whole world.** Again, notice what the emphasis is: *your faith*. *Faith* in the Bible is not a human practice. *Faith* in the Bible is trusting Christ, believing in and surrendering to the persuasion of God's Spirit through His word, and trusting Him. We come to realize that as we study God's word that God's word magnifies Jesus Christ to our hearts and there is a reason for that. There is a reason why the Bible does not list every single thing that God wants us to know and to understand. It is because if we know Him, you do not have to know anything else. I do not have to understand. I do not have to understand all that He is doing. I just have to understand who He is. That He has designed everything. He created me. He designed me. He put me here on the Earth at a specific time in history. And it is for a purpose that He has, one for

my benefit. A restoration project, He saved me out of sin and He is restoring me back to the person that He originally intended me to be. It is a growing process. It is a changing process. But He is also using me for His purposes amongst God's people. Just like He is doing with every single believer. There is a purpose and He has called us in that purpose.

But the testimony is faith. It is not how successful we are. It is not what presentation we make. It is about faith - that no matter what happens, we trust the Lord. That no matter what happens, we understand who He is. And since He is God and since I, not just have the belief, but I have the realization that He is in charge of everything, I do not need to know everything. And that I can trust Him. That is what it's all about.

So you might ask the question, "Well, how do I know that I trust Him?" You can evaluate your situation as to whether you are looking to be in control. What can I glean from the Bible to give me a principal to practice so I can be in control to make things happen the way want them to? That is not trust. The more I let go and trust the Lord, not only in the situation but also to lead me in what He wants me to do in the situation, that is faith. But I do not have to know what it is. I do not have to know what His answer is. He does not have to put it in human form and let my mind receive and understand human thoughts about the situation to understand it for me to trust Him. He does not need to do that. I need Him to do that but He does not need to do it.

Paul always emphasized that he thanked God when people have the testimony of faith. Just trust the Lord. So when we gather together around His word and we learn, we learn for a purpose. Not just to learn the Bible but to be constantly exposed about the truth of who God is and what He has to say to us about how we need to trust Him. That might not sound too exciting. But then when certain issues take place in our lives and we, like many people have called it this week, freak out, we have an initial human reaction. That is not the problem. The problem is that we recognize that we have a human reaction and we also recognize that there is not anything that my mind can process to use for evaluation nor my feelings that can dictate as to what the situation is all about. And that, literally, I must follow Jesus in this circumstance. You say, "Well, if I do that maybe nothing will happen." Well, it just did. Nothing happened. Maybe I am the one that says, "Something has to happen." The Lord says, "I do not know what your plans are but I did not have any plans of anything changing."

Like John said in I John chapter 5 in verse 14, that if we have confidence that God answers all of our prayers because we pray for His will to be done - if we have confidence, see he is the saying there are probably some people that do not have confidence. Do you have the confidence that if you pray, "Lord, let Your will be done" that it will be done, period, no matter what it is? Sometimes we do not have confidence. Because all of a sudden we look and see what is happening. "That cannot be God! He would never let that happen." But if we have confidence that God hears us whenever we pray for His will to be done then we know that we have, presently, the answers to the request that we have made to Him. We have right now. This is it. "Lord, let Your will be done." Okay, it is going on. But can I have confidence that it is Him? And we have preconceived ideas of who God is and what He supposed to be doing for us. He certainly would not let anything in the human physical realm that is valuable to me and

means something to me, He would not let anything happen to that, certainly. Just as we have been discussing this week.

Paul said in II Corinthians 11 that after he left Corinth other teachers came in and he says, "You are following another Jesus. You are listening to another gospel and you are following a different spirit." A spirit was preaching and teaching out of the word of God and the Spirit was teaching and preaching a Jesus, but Paul says, "That is a different one."

That is why the first hour when I talked about the litmus test - some people will read and hear what God's word says and the response is, "That is not the Jesus I believe in." Yeah, I know. There is a biblical Jesus, that is, the Jesus of the Bible teaches about. But not all teachings taken from the Bible teach about this Jesus. Because this Jesus would never do some of the things that I think you should not do. Confidence. Because the only reputation we have, and the only testimony that we have as Christians, is faith.

Why are you giving up your only chance to make something of yourself in the world? Why are you seeking to be at peace in your situations and trust in the Lord? Should you not be doing something? I mean bare minimum knocking people off or doing something. You know, you have to do something. You cannot just trust the Lord, people are coming up against you. It is just strange. What is it? I just trust my Lord. I am not the testimony. Christ is the testimony. And when I can trust a God who is bigger than everything, has created everything, and is in control of everything that is what people get ministered to by. Not my happy disposition in my successful lifestyle. It is the fact that I can go through just as many hardships as the nonbeliever, and even worse than the nonbeliever, and yet I can trust Him. See that is my testimony. When I trust Jesus Christ that is my testimony. That is when He's manifested in my life. That is what my life expresses. It is not my words.

Even Peter in I Peter says, **Be ready to give an answer to everyone that asks you for the reason for the hope that is within you.** Everybody that asks you for the reason. We get frustrated because nobody sees anything to ask about. You get your car repossessed? Yeah, me too. Boy this government is rotten is it not? I think we ought to - you know. There is no difference. The Lord is not going to shelter us so that we do not experience hardship. In fact, He is going to make us experience hardships that are so difficult the human being cannot do it. It has to be God. And we get frustrated because we try to do it. We try to use our human resources and we try to accomplish these things.

Paul all the time, even in our study on Tuesday night in I Thessalonians, he says, "I thank God and I praise God because your faith is being spread all through the Mediterranean area." Their faith. Paul came into Thessalonica, preached the gospel, and immediately for the new believers they were persecuted. Paul even had to leave town because they were specifically after him because he was the leader.

And once he left town and moved on to Corinth, and then Athens, he was concerned. I mean, you do not have the communication system back then like we do now. He did not know what happened to the new believers in the midst of the persecution and he was concerned about it. So he sent Timothy back, "Find out what happened." Timothy comes back with a report,

"Guess what? They are standing strong. None of them fell away." Right away. These are brand-new believers. And when they were threatened, and persecuted, and everything taken away from them, they stood strong. Paul says, "Wow, boy, what a relief, comfort."

And not only have you stood strong but that testimony of standing strong in Christ trusting Him is now the testimony for the whole churches. And Paul says, as we will see later on, "I am using you as the example for all the churches." Why would he use them as an example? Because he would show up at churches and here would be believers that were ten years old in the Lord and they are going, "I really have a tough time trusting the Lord." Guess what? Day one, over here, their lives were threatened. Their possessions threatened. They trusted the Lord. You can too. It is pretty simple. Actually trusting the Lord is not difficult. It is letting go of things to trust Him. I have trouble letting go. "Lord, I am praying about this. I am praying for Your will to be done. You know, I have a handle on it in case it gets away from Him, you know? It case it goes in a direction I do not want Him to go!"

No, I have trouble trusting the Lord because first of all, I do not know what He is going to do if I ask for His will to be done. And secondly, when He does do something it could be terrible in the human. Not in the spirit but in the human, terrible thing, for me. Somebody else would say, "What is your problem?" I prayed for Lord's will to be done and His will was done, so what is the problem? Except that I have things in my life that mean a lot to me. Trusting the Lord is easy. It is letting go of things to trust Him is the problem. I am not too sure what He is going to do.

But I thought it interesting that their faith is being proclaimed and announced in the whole world. Not their doctrine, not their successes, but their faith. And that is what Paul looked for. Remember the big three: labor of love, patience of hope, and work of faith. Love, hope, and faith.

Why do we gather here? It is not to build a physical church but rather grow to a point that our love for Christ and our love for the brothers grow. To be concerned about a spiritual welfare of them, not a human welfare. That our hope and our expectancy for the future carries us as we look at a world that is without hope and basically deteriorating daily. But we have a living hope. Not a wish but an expectancy for the future. It is a done deal. And then the work of faith. Not human work, but trusting the Lord through everything.

Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes will He find faith on the earth?" Because the things of the world are going to get worse and people are going to be reaching out trying to grab and hold on to things as everything starts sliding into the pit. As we reach out and try to hold on to things and try to hold the physical world together Jesus said, "Will I find the faith? Will I find people trusting?" It is going to be even more difficult in the last days for people to trust the Lord. It is more difficult for us today than it was people twenty years ago. I look around see these little babies. I see the young children and realize, "What is going to happen when they are adults? What is the world going to be like?" It is not so much how difficult life is going to be. The point is will we teach them? Will they learn from our fellowship together and around the word, will they learn to trust the Lord no matter what? Let it go. Let it go. Pray for the Lord's

will to be done. Pray for the Lord to lead you in the way that He would have you to go. Stop being in control. Let His will be done. But that all depends who you know the Lord to be.

I have doctrinal beliefs about who Jesus is. But my realization as I live out my life that expresses who I know Him to be on a personal basis. I have my theology. He is God in the flesh. 100% God, 100% human when He came. Suffered, died, was buried, rose again on the third day, sitting at the right hand of the Father. You know, Apostles Creed, whatever you want to quote. That is what we believe. But tomorrow morning, or this afternoon, do I have the realization that He is in charge and whatever is happening He is speaking, He is moving, He is telling me? The only reason it happens is because He has a way that He wants me to go, He has a path He wants me to go, He has things that He wants me to do. But how is He going to tell me?

And some people say they hear His voice. Well, that is nice, but do not tell people that you hear voices, they get the wrong idea. We cannot tell by voices, it is faulty. There is no guarantee it is the Lord. We can believe it, but that is no guarantee. The guarantee is that we can trust that the Lord is working out His will. We do not have to reach out and try to change it. Let Him change it.

This week people called to say, "How can I prevent this from happening?" And I will say, "Did you just hear what you just said? How can I prevent this from happening? Maybe it is what God wants to happen."

"Don't say that."

Again we are holding on. And I do not say that to bring guilt. This is a lifetime process of learning to let go and just trust the Lord and follow Him. It is a lifetime. Because whatever I am holding on to now I did not hold on to five years ago. Whatever I am holding on to now probably five years from now I am not going to have any problem with it, it will be something else. You know waking up every couple hours to see if somebody stole my false teeth off my dresser. You know, problems I never had before.

It is never ending. It is a constant approach to life. As I said the first hour to apply spiritual truth it has to be applied to the physical world in which I live. It cannot just be reserved for the religious part of my life. Because that Spirit realm that I know to be true is functioning in and amongst the physical realm that I am in. There is more than one dimension that I am involved in in every situation in life. But I get one dimensional because it is just so natural to feel and think and have opinion in the human. What does God's word say? It is not a matter of being narrow-minded and saying, "I am just going to believe what the Bible says and I am not going to believe anything else." There has to come a point of realization that God in order to reach us in our human dilemma inspired people to write something down in a book. Over a couple thousand years the different writers and they all say the same thing. Whether it is English or Greek or Hebrew the concepts behind the teachings are spiritual truth.

Scientists - two different scientists can talk about the law of gravity and talk about it and express it in a different way, but it is still same law. Whether English says it, or Greek says it, or

Hebrew says it, it has to all be the same concept. It is a spiritual law. That is what we are studying, spiritual laws. If you go against the spiritual law, if you say, "I do not believe it." Okay, go ahead and walk off the roof if you want to. You would be foolish to do that. Well, there are spiritual laws too that are even more foolish to mess with. But God gives us the opportunity to study about the Spirit realm. And what is true, not because this book is our textbook for our religion and other religions have their own textbooks.

This Jesus says that He is not just a prophet or teacher, He is God. This book says that the things inspired in it have been inspired by God, not by a prophet or a teacher. And we have to deal with that. People say, "Well, you have to respect everybody else's book too, everybody else's Bible." Except theirs is written by a man, who is a prophet, who came up with human ideas and principles. They were not God and the books are not claimed to be inspired by God. The people might say that, but the books do not.

I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ on behalf of all of you because your faith is being declared or announced in the whole world. That is it? That is that our testimony. We are either trusting the Lord and following the Lord, or not. It does not make any difference how loud we preach, or how many stickers we have on our car, or anything else. We either manifest in our life the greatness of our God by trusting Him, or it is just religious talk. There will be no effectiveness in it at all. If I control my own life and I control God, how can I persuade you to receive Christ? Others will surrender when I display my surrender. Others will be ministered to by my submission to and following of Jesus Christ.

And if you want to know why do I what I do, Peter says, "Be ready to give an answer." I will be glad to tell you. But may people see us trust Christ. May our faith be announced and declared in the whole world. Maybe not in the whole world but you know, in the Christian community. That we can learn and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Not grow in our Bible knowledge and education. But grow in Him. Trusting Him. That our trust in Him will display actively who He really is.

Let's close in prayer.