

Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to know...

II. That he prayed all the time that he might come to them (9-10)

For God, is my witness
whom I serve [worship]
in my spirit
in the preaching
of the gospel of His Son,
as to how unceasingly
10 I make mention of you
always
in my prayers
making request,
if perhaps now at last
by the will of God
I may succeed in coming to you.

“For God... is my witness” -- This phrase appears first in the Greek unlike the NASB. Why does Paul call God to be his witness as to his prayers for the Romans? It at least ramps up the importance Paul placed on them knowing this about himself. It was not just true that he made request of God to be able to come to the Romans, but he really wanted them to know for certain that this was the case.

“God whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son” -- repeating some truths about himself already stated in v.1 (“whom I serve” -- cf. v. 1, “a bond-servant of Christ Jesus”; “in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, cf. v. 1, “set apart for the gospel of God... concerning His Son... (v.3)) could be emphatic and indicative of Paul’s strong desire for them to know him in this way.

“serve” -- Here different Greek word than δούλος in v. 1. Here, λατρεύω M&M: serve, **worship**. So Moo, and so Wright: “Paul worships God in his spirit

“in my spirit” -- Moo: with my deepest longings... more than a reference to the holy Spirit.

“in the preaching of the gospel of His Son” -- Wright offers two possible meanings w/o specifying the one he prefers: 1) Paul’s “announcing of the gospel constitutes in itself an act of worship”, 2) Paul “worships the God he sees revealed in ‘the gospel of his son’”. p.422.

“unceasingly I make mention of you always” -- perhaps hyperbole indicating consistent prayer? Note at the very least that Paul was much in prayer for the saints in Rome.

“now at last” -- conveying long standing desire deferred

“by the will of God” -- indicating both means to the end and perhaps the thought of only if and when God wills it.

“I may succeed in coming to you” -- main verb is ‘may succeed’ while “coming” is an infinitive completing the thought.

TRANS. -- The logic of 9-10 ends at the hopeful outcome of Paul’s success in coming to the Romans. Paul wanted his Roman readers to know this is what he hoped and prayed for, all by and in the Lord’s will, “in God’s good time” as Wright says (p.422). We are left at the end of verse 10 to wonder why Paul made such unceasing frequent prayer requests of God to be able to go in person to the Romans. Let’s read on and find out.

Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to know...

III. That he longed to see them for their mutual benefit (11-12)

11 For [The reason I make such unceasing prayer request to come to you is because...]
I long to see you
so that [for the more ultimate purpose that...]
I may impart some spiritual gift to you,
that **you** may be established; [aor. inf. pass]
12 that is, that **I** may be encouraged together with [aor. inf. pass] you
while among you,
each of us
by the other's faith,
both yours and mine.

12 τοῦτο δὲ ἐστίν [that is, I mean]
συμπαρακληθῆναι [to be encouraged along with -- to be mutually encouraged]
ἐν ὑμῖν [in you]
ἐν ἀλλήλοις [in each other]
διὰ τῆς πίστεως [through the faith]
ὑμῶν τε καὶ ἐμοῦ. [of you and me].

“for” -- as above in []

“I long to see you” -- longing is a stronger idea than just wanting. According to the Free Online Dictionary (because M-W.com now has so many adds that it takes too long for impatient me to use), longing means, “A strong persistent yearning or desire” ILLUS. I want to see my dog Jamie later on today. I long to see my daughter Kara who is sailing across the Atlantic and my parents in Hawaii who are getting older. Paul strongly, persistently yearned, longed to see his Christian brethren in Rome.

“so that” -- seeing them was not his final goal. I confess with my daughter and my parents who are far away just seeing them is close to the end of what I want, besides perhaps giving and receiving hugs that convey our shared love. But not so with more noble minded Paul. He desired to see them for a greater purpose: “so that”...

“I may impart some spiritual gift to you” -- Has God invested Paul with the authority to impart spiritual gifts? Perhaps this is better taken to mean “that God might impart some spiritual gift through my ministry.” What this means is further explained in v.12, Stott points out that elsewhere God is said by Paul to be the giver of spiritual gifts, Rom. 12:6, Eph. 4:11, 1 Cor 12:11. Therefore Paul is more likely using this phrase “spiritual gift” in a more general way. Stott offers, “Perhaps he is referring to his own teaching or exhortation which he hopes to give them when he arrives...” p. 57.

“that” -- M&M: “in order that” indicating Paul’s even more ultimate intended result. Paul desired to come (10) because he longed to see them for the purpose of imparting some spiritual gift to them for the ultimate purpose that...

“you may be established” -- established = strengthened (Wright). And what this phrase means is unpacked by the next.

“that is that I may be encouraged together with you...” -- Verse 12’s English translation proves difficult but the meaning of mutual encouragement by means of each other’s lives of faith is clear. Mutual encouragement each by the other’s faith lies at the end purpose of Paul’s prayed for visit.

ILLUS. -- There is something that could be likened to our life sustaining act of **breathing** in Paul’s desired interaction with his Christian brethren in Rome. Receiving, giving, receiving, giving, mutual encouragement, building each other up....

It strikes me that this is the God intended functioning for all the interacting parts of the one body of Christ. It is a goal (the goal?) we should have toward each other even in this local church and the church universal. As the apostle Paul intended to give and receive encouragement amongst his brethren in the church of Rome so too should we seek the same in our interaction in the Church today. May such God ordained intentions and realities be worked out in the life of this church. When we ‘come’ ‘see’ ‘each other’ may it be to strengthen and encourage and to be strengthened and encouraged. Dangers of only seeing our role as givers: Never receiving the edifying ministry of God ordained messengers... Dangers of only being receivers: not using the resources God has given you for the purposes God entrusted them into your care...

TRANS. -- What else did Paul want the Roman saints to know?

Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to know...

IV. That he had planned to come and productively minister the gospel among them (13)

13 I do not want you to be unaware, brethren,
that

often
I have planned to come to you
(and [I] have been prevented so far)
so that [the purpose of Paul's planning to come to them]
I may obtain some fruit
among you also,
even as
among the rest of the Gentiles.

“I do not want you to be unaware” -- This implies that Paul perceives a danger/potentiality of their being unaware. He is alerting them to a potential blind spot.

“brethren” -- Paul sees himself in a brother relationship with the members of the church in Rome. Wright points out that term expresses ‘intimacy and mutual belonging’ beyond that expressed in the word ‘friend’ see note 34 p. 422.

“that” -- here comes the content of what Paul wants them to know

“I have planned to come to you” -- Here is the main thought, but one that needs no explanation.

“often” -- frequency

“(and have been prevented so far)” -- Indicates that Paul's planned visit had been prevented by some force or set of forces outside of himself. This could be God, Satan, both, or simply the general life circumstance that attend a bond-servant of Christ Jesus who, while having his own desires, does not set his own agenda, deferring instead to that of his Master. In this letter Paul implicates even his own desires (to evangelize amongst people who had not yet heard the Gospel and to not build on another man's foundation) as forces that had prevented his coming to them. Cf: Ro 15:20-22, 2 Cor 1:15-19, Acts 16:6, 1 Thes 2:18...

“so that” -- Points to the following purpose for Paul planned coming to them

“I may obtain some fruit among you also” -- What ‘fruit’ did Paul hope to harvest? I think he is hoping both for the fruit of people entering into the KOG (more citizens of Rome becoming citizens of the KOG) and the fruit in those people of spiritual maturity; i.e., of both people being joined to Christ and Christ being formed in those people (Gal 4:19), both salvation and sanctification/transformation. See: [John 4:36](#); [15:16](#); [Phil 1:22](#); [Col 1:6](#) Moo translates fruit as harvest and says it refers to “the product of his apostolic labors... including here probably both an increase in the number of Christians through evangelization.. and a strengthening of faith... (cf. v. 11b ” (p.61).

“even as among the rest of the Gentiles.” -- What fruit had Paul harvested among the rest of the Gentiles? He had preached the gospel and people had believed, strengthened Christians and established churches (Acts 13:12, 48; 14:1, 21-23...)

TRANS. -- Here in verse 13 then Paul clearly establishes not only that he had long planned on coming to them, but that his intention in coming is that he might harvest some fruit both of people believing and entering the KOG but also of those believers being established and strengthened in their faith. May we be modern day recipients of Paul's gospel ministry and may the fruit of God's intention be produced in us. In verse 14 Paul gives an additional reason behind his intention to minister amongst the Romans.

Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to know...

V. That he was obligated by God to preach the gospel to them (14-15)

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

15 So, [because I am under obligation]
 for my part,
 I am eager to preach the gospel
 to you also
 who are in Rome.

“I am under obligation” -- Paul is saying, my desire is not of my own fancy, but from God's calling (v.1, Acts 9, Eph 3:8...). Paul was obligated by God to the Gentiles, including those in Rome. What had God obligated Paul to do? To give them the message of the Gospel. Read again Acts 9:15 and 1 Cor 9:16.

“both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish” -- Wright: “all categories of non-Jewish humanity. Cf. also Rom 1:5, 11:13, Gal 2:8, Eph 3:8, 1 Tim 2:7 for texts where Paul's ministry to the Gentiles is expressly stated.

“So” -- Therefore, (inferring from what precedes) i.e., because I am under obligation by God to preach the Gospel broadly to the Gentiles...

“for my part” -- Possibly, as opposed to whatever the disposition of the Romans might be

“I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome” --

- The logic: Because God had obligated Paul to minister the Gospel to all Gentiles, in order to discharge his responsibility to God, he was eager to preach to the Gentiles in Rome.
- Re: eagerness: speaks of being ready and motivated
- “to you also who are in Rome” -- To whom does Paul intend to preach? Context argues that it is to his Christian readers. Some think it odd that Paul would want to preach the gospel to Christians. What do you think? It is certainly possible that the preaching of the Gospel is needful for the ongoing development of those who who have already been initially evangelized. It is so in my case. Moo citing Dunn sees the preaching of the gospel referring to “the ongoing work of teaching and discipleship that builds on initial evangelization” p. 63.

Regarding our obligation and eagerness -- They are not always coupled our lives. Some of what we are obligated to we are less than eager to embrace. Perhaps this is because of an under-formed realization of our obligation as a believers. How about you? Do you carry with you a sense of obligation from God to others as Paul did? Paul was a called apostle (1), called by God and obligated to carry out the tasks associated with his divinely appointed office. But Paul has already made clear that he regards the members of the Church in Rome to be called by God as well, ‘called saints’ (6-7). We did not spend much time unpacking it in verses 6 and 7 but that divine calling that all Christians share, the calling of being a saint, carries with it the obligation to bear witness of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. We Christians are all under divine obligation to be and to live out the redeemed lives God has given us in our union with Christ. God has in Christ adopted us into the family and Kingdom of God and inherent to being sons of God is our responsibility/obligation to represent Him, even to mediate the knowledge of Him to the rest of the world. Peter speaking to his predominantly Gentile Christian readers in 1 Peter 2 says,

9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; **10** for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

TRANS. -- Be reminded of our shared obligation to bear the apostolic Gospel to mankind. And if your eagerness seems but a smoldering coal, a poor pairing for God's obligation, ask the Spirit to fan it to the point that it ignites into action. Paul gives us further reason for his eagerness to preach the gospel in verses 16-17 which also concisely state the main theme of his letter. Today we will look only briefly at these important verse and will give closer attention to them next week.

Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to know...

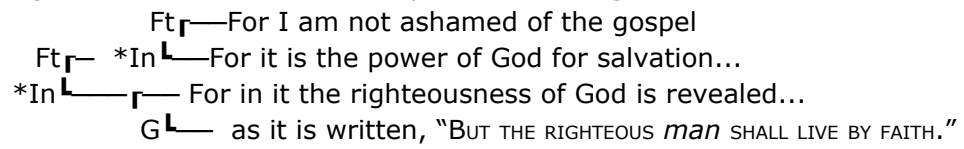
VI. That he was NOT ashamed of the gospel, and why he was not ashamed (16-17)

16 For [The reason for my eagerness is that...]
 I am not ashamed of the gospel,
 for [the reason Paul is not ashamed of the gospel]

it is the power of God
 for [the purpose of bringing about] salvation
 to everyone who believes,
 to the Jew first
 and also to the Greek.

17 For [the ultimate/most important point Paul is making]
 in it
 the righteousness of God is revealed
 from faith to faith;
 as it is written,
 "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Here Paul logically progresses to his most ultimate point: **God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel!**



Why was Paul eager to preach the Gospel? Because he wasn't ashamed of it.
 Why wasn't Paul ashamed of the Gospel? Because it was and is the power of God for salvation.
 Why is the Gospel the power of God for salvation? Because in it the righteousness of God is revealed...!

That is the logic of verses 16-17.

Next week we will look at the meaning of the various parts of 16 and 17 and see how it introduces and summarizes Paul's main theme that he will develop in the rest of the letter. For our purposes today see it as the last and most important thing Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to know.

Conclusion

These personal disclosures of his feelings, thoughts and intentions towards them prepared them to receive the rest of what he had to say, Paul next in verse 18 begins to talk about matters concerning the gospel without primary reference to himself or to them. Having said 1-17, now let's talk about God and what He has done in Christ with neither Paul nor the Romans as the subject or topic, but God and His dealings with His creation and especially mankind who stands in jeopardy of His wrath. But that is for next week.

Once again I call you to take note of this man Paul and see him not as an ancient apostle to the long lost Romans, but as the chosen instrument of God whom Jesus called and tasked to communicate the life-giving "obedience of faith"-producing gospel to the Gentiles among whom you are counted. As God gives love to parents for their children, so it would seem that God has given a pastor's heart to Paul. May we allow him to be our pastor and speak God's truth into our hearts and minds. May we pay careful attention to what he is saying and delight in the knowledge of God Paul is helping us see.

Stewardship -- With the time and resources that God has entrusted into your care, may you be faithful stewards. Some of you have 15 minutes a day to sit at Jesus' feet and study the words of this book, some of you have 15 hours a day. May each of us be faithful to God as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, citizens of heaven, strangers and aliens passing through a congested city full of fallen humanity and its consequent dis-ease, knowing that you possess in the gospel the power of God for salvation to all who would believe.

May we walk with joy for the hope that we have in Christ. May we learn to live in the settled confidence of our salvation as lights shining in darkness. May we see the hardships of our lives as difficulties God sends us through on mission for Him. And knowing both that nothing escapes God and that His love for us is pure and strong,

- may we look upon each other as beloved brethren of Jesus, fellow members of the same body of Christ, people whom God has obligated us to serve and love. And further beyond our local church circle...
- may we look upon those outside the body as men and women to whom we are also under obligation (14) to minister the gospel
 - according to the common new creation nature God has given us in our union with the one Christ Jesus, and
 - according to the various gifts and resources He has entrusted into our care for humanities good and His glory.

May we put on the lenses ground by God as we carefully consider His word, lenses that enable us to see life as God has restored it in Christ and His Kingdom. Then perhaps we may see people differently, correctly.

- Oh, he is not an obstacle in my way, he is the one to whom God has called me to minister the gospel.
- Oh, she is not a hurdle to get over, she is a minister of the gospel to me.

With the lenses of the gospel, we see by faith what God has done in Christ and what He is now doing in the affairs of our daily lives. Beloved, walk by faith and not by sight.

Let's pray!