

Dear Friends and Family,

“For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine.”

Romans 1:11-12

Each week you receive this devotional and I pray that it has, and will continue to, bless and teach you in your spiritual development.

When I set out to create this devotional I did so with the following three goals:

1. Provide quick and concise Biblical insight regarding a few relevant passages of scripture which can be used as a tool for personal and family devotions. (Spiritual Formation)
2. Challenge each person who receives the devotional to be daily in the Word, meditating on scripture, and praying. (Spiritual Growth)
3. Encourage each of you to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others, either by personal testimony, sharing the devotional, inviting others to church, or in any other manner; thereby working for the Lord. (Kingdom Growth)

It is on goal 3 that I would like to focus this week.

As I have been reading Romans 1, these particular verses stood out.

That you may be established!

That I may be encouraged!

BOTH of us, by the other’s faith.

I have taken the time this morning to simply pray over each of you who will receive this.

Many of you I know personally, some of you all my life.

While others, we have never met face to face.

My prayer for you is that as we study through Romans, that God will establish in you, a firm, resolute, unshakable, faith!

What I ask in return is that you encourage me by your faith.

Look at goal #3.

Pray about who you will share the gospel with this week.

Tell someone your personal testimony.

Email this devotional to someone and encourage them to read it and study Scripture.

Invite a neighbor or co-worker to church.

Share with me what the Lord laid on your heart to do and how you did it.

Pastor's Point of View

The big question: **How can you personally help the kingdom of God grow?**

Day 1 - READ Romans 1:1-7

1. Notice how these 7 verses are one long run-on sentence. Apparently Paul has some important things to say here and doesn't want to break up the thought.
2. List out all of the character traits of Paul and Jesus expressed in these verses.
3. Why is it important for Paul to make these declarations up front in his letter?
4. What was significant about the role of Apostleship in the first century?

A good article on the subject can be found here:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-an-apostle.html>

Day 2 - READ Romans 1:8-10

1. What do you notice here about the urgency of Paul's prayer?
2. Who do you pray for in this manner?
3. Reflect on those in your life, maybe a close friend or family member, perhaps someone who has walked away from their faith. Pray for someone who may be like the Romans, those who are standing firm in the face of oppression. Stop and pray for them right now.
4. Focus your day today on prayer, prayer without ceasing. Journal your prayers specifically with today's date so you can look back on your prayers and see how God answers them.

Day 3 - READ Romans 1:11-15

1. Have you ever missed church for a few weeks? Perhaps afterward you felt as though something was missing from your life? When you returned, were you rejuvenated by the fellowship of believers?
2. Christian fellowship can be defined by some notable qualities. We are to encourage one another. How has your faith encouraged someone else recently? How has someone else's faith encouraged you?
3. Note Paul's obligation in verse 14. Paul was a highly educated Jewish scholar, yet he was sent as a missionary to the Gentiles. This is important to note, sometimes God calls us out of our comfort zone to serve others.

Day 4 - READ Romans 1:16-17

1. We close this week with a familiar passage of scripture. It comes immediately following Paul's declaration of his obligation to Greeks and barbarians in verse 14, as well as his eagerness to preach the gospel to them.
2. Now in verse 16 he declares boldly that he is not ashamed of that message. Paul doesn't care where he finds himself, if he is in public, even if he will get arrested or stoned for his testimony. He is not ashamed and he will preach the gospel.
3. In what areas do you need to work to be less "ashamed" of the gospel?
4. Are there specific people you have been hesitant about witnessing to?
5. Do you feel as though you don't know enough to share your faith?
6. How can you work this week to be bold and wise in sharing the gospel with others?

It may seem counterintuitive that Paul, the most devout of all Jews, a scholar and certainly zealous, did not preach to the Jews, but instead, to the Gentiles. The end of his life was spent in chains, away from his homeland and his people, yet he still preached, to the Gentiles. God called him to a specific task in a very specific way for a very specific time period. Paul's chains and imprisonment served a great purpose. Letters became the only way for Paul to communicate and encourage those beginning churches, Corinth and Ephesus. God, sovereign and mighty, did not allow Paul's circumstances to be without fruit. Instead, God uses what we may perceive as terrible for his good. Over half of the New Testament is comprised of Paul's letters!

God's divine purposes are always at work. So be encouraged today in your faith. The trials you experience, the heartache and sorrows, always are with purpose and meaning, for God uses all things together for his good.

“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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

- Romans 1:16-17

Peace be with you all!
Pastor Matt

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*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **RUN** with endurance the race that is set before us -- Hebrews 12:1*