

A Pastor's Heart
Romans 1:5-13
Pastor John Miller

We're going to go right back to verse 1 (because we only have four verses covered) and get a little running start down to verse 5. Follow with me beginning in verse 1.

"Paul, a servant..." a *doulos* or a bondsman, "...of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle..." the words "to be" are italicized so it is, "...called an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God..." there's the theme, the good news that comes from God, "... (Which he..." that is, God, "... promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.)" The moment he introduces, in this greeting or salutation in the first seven verses, he mentions the gospel, and then he mentions the fact that God promised this gospel through his prophets and the scriptures. Notice verse 3, "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord..." so Jesus is the center and the theme of the gospel. You take Christ out of the gospel, you have no gospel. Then it says, "...which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." That is Christ's humanity and the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. Verse 4, "And declared to be..." or declared, horizoned off, "...the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." We saw in the opening last Wednesday that Paul viewed himself as a servant (verse 1) or a slave of Jesus Christ. He viewed himself as an apostle (verse 1). He was not self-appointed, he was an apostle of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, (in verse 1) he was separated unto the gospel, the good news, which centers in Jesus Christ. He then broke down the gospel. I want you to notice in verses 2 and 3 that it is the gospel of God; that is, its source or its origin is not of man, it's not created by man, it actually comes to us from God Himself.

Someone said the word "gospel" is used four times as frequently in the epistles of Paul as in the other New Testament books combined. Paul was all about the gospel, the gospel, the gospel. By the way, the gospel isn't just for non-Christians to hear that they need Jesus Christ, but the gospel is also for believers. In a sense, what we are going to find to the book of Romans is that this is a breakdown of the gospel for the understanding of the Christian, the child of God, of how we're saved by the grace of God, how we're sanctified by the grace of God, how we serve by the grace of God, and one day we will be glorified by God's grace. I can't wait to get to Romans chapter 8. There is now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose, and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. It opens with no separation, and it goes to no condemnation and no defeat. What a marvelous thing. He goes all the way from our need for the gospel, (we'll start that two weeks from tonight) to the gospel and how it sanctifies us and one day will glorify us.

In verse 1, Paul points out that the gospel came from God. In verse 2, it was promised in the Old Testament by the prophets, and then in verse 3 it's centered in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. He focuses on Jesus Christ, in verses 3 and 4. He mentions His name, that He is the Son and that He is Jesus, that He is Christ, and that He is Lord. So from all eternity He has

been God the Son, the second person of the Godhead. He is Yeshua or Jehovah saves; Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins; and He is the Christ, which in the Hebrew is the Mashiach, it means the Anointed One; and He is our Lord. In verse 3, his humanity is mentioned (I am just surveying what we covered), made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and then His deity in verse 4, He was declared to be or horizoned off to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.

Now, verse 5, we didn't get there last week and I want you to look at it. "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: 6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: 7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." We see Paul's view of himself, we see his view of the gospel, and we see Paul's view of Jesus Christ. Now, we see Paul's view of his commission (verse 5) or his calling. He says in verse 5, "...we have received grace and apostleship, for the obedience to the faith among all nations for his name." When Paul says, "we received grace," he could be thinking of other apostles, or he also could be thinking of all believers. Not all believers are apostles in the primary sense that they have the authority to write scripture and they saw the risen Christ, so we're not in the train of the apostles, but we are apostles in the sense that we're all sent out. We are all commissioned to be a witness for Jesus Christ. In the context of the gospel, what Paul is talking about is his ministry. He's going to move, in just a couple of verses here, into a disclosing of his heart and who he is to the Romans. He'd never been to Rome. They didn't really know him that well, so he wanted them to know why he hadn't come to them yet, who he was, and that he was all about preaching the gospel. He wants them to know that he was called and commissioned by the grace of God. God called Paul by His grace to be an apostle.

God gave Paul gifts according to His grace, and God enabled Paul by His grace to use those gifts to bless others and to glorify God. Let me apply that to you and me. I believe it perfectly applies to every one of us. I am not an apostle, but I was called by God's grace to be a Christian. I was saved by His grace. After being saved by His grace, I was called by the grace of God to preach His Word and to be a pastor. The other day when I was studying this, I flashed back to when I was 20 years old. My goal in life was to make surfboards, honestly, it really was. That was all I wanted to do, make surfboards and surf as much as I can. Those were my great aspirations. Then, God saved me by His grace, and I began to wonder what God's will for my life was. What is the direction of my life? I mean, you're 20 years old and you wonder, "What am I gonna be? What am I gonna do?" I barely got out of high school. Literally, I am embarrassed to even admit that, but I kind of faked my way through high school. I could barely read. I got all D's and F's. I came up at the end of my senior year and they had to give me credits to get me off the campus to let me go. Some of you are going, "And, you're my pastor?!" It's called the grace of God! Amen? I had never read until I got saved. I learned to read after I got saved, and my sister gave me a Living Bible. It was so simple and easy for me to read. I actually learned to read after I graduated from high school because I wanted to know the Bible. I wanted to learn the Bible, and I read and read and read and read. I couldn't get enough of the Word of God. That was about 44 years ago, and I haven't stopped since. I continue to have a hunger for God's Word.

Then I began to realize that God had called me to teach, and God began to use me in that way. I was actually teaching before I realized this is what God has called me to do. I started a home Bible study in 1971, and I was teaching at age 20. We used to have over 100 people crammed in our house. We opened the windows and they'd sit outside. They were sitting on all the counters, down the hall, everyone in the rooms. I just started teaching. I taught for almost a year before I realized, "I think maybe God is calling me to do this!" I just found myself doing it, and I found that God was using it, and so again that awareness.

I believe that every bit as much as God has a call on my life, God has a call on your life. Not everyone is called to public ministry or preaching, but we are all called to some kind of service. God has given us some gift. Every Christian, the Bible actually teaches this, every Christian has been given at least one gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit divides them as He wills. So, we don't really choose, "Hey, can I have this one? Hey, can I have that one?" We don't choose. The Holy Spirit gives them to us, and we need to just surrender and prepare our hearts by reading, seeking and serving the Lord. Have you ever noticed that a parked car is kind of hard to steer? So, we need to put it in gear and start moving down the road. Then, God will lead us and guide us. Some people sit around waiting for Billy Graham to call them on the phone to take over his ministry. Instead of just, "Okay, they need help in the Children's Ministry," "Okay, they need help with greeters," "Okay, I can start ushering," "I can clean the church," "I can come and pray." "What can I do to serve the Lord?" As you start moving, God will start directing you. If you stand still, it's going to be pretty hard for God to direct your life. Just pray, and when you see an opening to serve, roll up your sleeves and get busy, and watch God direct your life. So Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, like we are, like we all have been. God gave Paul the "gift" of apostleship, and He has given you and me a "gift."

After He gives us that "gift," (I am spending more time on this than I planned) but after He gives us that "gift," He gives it to us by His grace. I didn't earn, I didn't merit, I didn't deserve the "gift" that God has given me. After He gives us this grace gift, the word grace is *charis* where we get our word charismatic, so it is a grace endowment. After He gives us that, then He gives us grace to exercise it, to use it. I rely daily and weekly as I preach and teach on the grace of God. Every time I get up to preach, I stop and say, "Lord, I can't do this without Your grace. I can't do this without Your help. I pray that You would enable me. I pray that You would speak through me. I pray that You will use the gift that You've given me for Your glory and for the good and edification of Your people." God's gifts, by the way, are not for proselytizing. They are not for your advantage. They are for others and the glory of God. Amen? So God gives us His grace to save us, to gift us and to sustain us, and then all our ministry, our life, is the grace of God. I love that. So, I am called to be an apostle by the grace of God. It's the undeserved gift of apostleship and the ability God gives to use that grace.

Notice in verse 5, "... for obedience to the faith among all nations..." so God called him to trust Him and to put his faith in Him. The gospel is about our obedience of faith, and it is a message that is for all nations. Paul is alluding to his apostleship to the Gentiles for His name, which means for His glory. Then I love in verses 6-7 he talks about his view for the readers there in Rome. Again, this is a fitting description of the believer or the Christians, you and me, today.

Notice in verses 6-7, "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: 7 To all that be in Rome..." we are "...beloved of God..." we are "...saints..." then he wishes them, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Now I want you to note these three things that describes the Christian. This is true of every one of us. We are the called of Jesus Christ, verse 6. We've been called out of the world. If you are a Christian, guess what? Which, by the way, a Christian is somebody who has been born again. You were called by God. God called you. Remember when you were walking in darkness and then all of the sudden someone witnessed to you? Or, you heard a sermon, or you read something or you began to feel empty or realize your need for God, and you knew that you were a sinner. Guess what that was. God calling you. Isn't that an awesome thought? You were running from God, and God was calling you, convicting you, drawing you. Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father unless the Holy Spirit draws them." And, that's what God did for you. If you are a Christian tonight, if you are a child of God, you are because God called you and He called you by your name. I don't know about you, but that just overwhelms me to think, "Why would God call me? I didn't know how to read. Why would He want me?" Because the Bible says He's chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, right? When you're a foolish thing, you're a candidate for the glory of God. And, God calls us. That's what a Christian is. I love that! We are called out of the world, called together in fellowship. Think about that. You're here tonight on a Wednesday night because God called you to gather with other believers and worship Him.

When we leave here tonight we go out to preach this gospel that comes from God and centers in His Son and is about His grace. One day, guess what? We will be called up to meet the Lord in the air. Amen? And so shall we forever be with the Lord. So, those whom He calls by His grace He one day will call up by His grace. I love what Jonathan Edwards once said. I've quoted it before, I don't know if I gave him the credit, but he said, "What begins with grace ends in glory." You're going to see that laid out in the book of Romans. What begins with God's grace call, ends with God's glory call. He's going to call us up, and we are going to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we forever be with the Lord. Not only are we the called of Jesus Christ, verse 7 says that we are also the beloved of God. Notice it says, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God..." I love that! The word "beloved" of God. God calls you His beloved. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world..." that's you and me "...that He gave His only begotten Son."

Then we are the saints. So we are called to Jesus Christ. We are called by God, and He loves us, and we are the called who are the saints. I love there in verse 7, "called saints." Now my King James Bible says "to be" in italics, between called and saints, "to be." I've drawn a line through those two words. I pointed out that wherever you have those italicized words, the translators did that to show that it is not in the Greek. It's not in the Greek manuscripts. It is inserted because taking the Bible from Greek to English is very difficult. Sometimes we have to put some words in there to smooth it out. So, whenever it wasn't a transliteration carrying over, they would throw that in there but italicize it so you know that. Sometimes it is better omitted. We are not going to be saints. Guess what? We are saints. I love that expression, "Either you're a saint or you ain't." I don't want to spend much time on this, but check this out. Every

Christian is a saint, right? Some of you are going, "You don't know me, Pastor." I want you to grab ahold of this thought. A lot could be said about this, but this is very important. Being declared a saint is what's called positional righteousness. That means that your standing in Christ positionally. Your sainthood is imputed from God, the righteousness of Christ, you stand in that complete. It's not the way you live that makes you a saint. When you are a saint positionally, it should then manifest itself practically in the way you live. What you need to understand is that you are righteous before God. You stand complete. You cannot get any more righteous, as far as God's concerned. You can pray, you can read, you can discipline yourself, you can fast, do everything you want. You're not going to make yourself more righteous before God positionally. When you grab ahold of the truth that, "I am a saint. I am in Christ. I am righteous before God." Not in and of myself, but given the righteousness of Christ, then what it does is it changes your heart, mind and attitude. You say, "I'm going to start living like a saint."

The story is actually told that Queen Victoria, when she was a very young girl, it was hid from her that she was going to be the Queen of England. No one told her as a young girl. They didn't want to spoil her. "You're the next Queen of England." I think when she was about 12 years old they told her. "Elizabeth, you're going to be the Queen of England." Do you know how she responded? She stood up and she actually said, "Then, I will be good." Knowing who she was influenced how she would live. That's what a lot of Christians don't get. They just try to be good enough so God will love them and accept them and they can be righteous before God. They don't realize, I am accepted in the beloved. I'm loved by God. I'm forgiven by God. I'm a saint of God. You say, "If I'm a saint, then I think I'll be good. I think I'm going to live like it." So the whole goal of the Christian life is bringing up your practice to the level of your position, which is a saint. You are the saints of Jesus Christ. Nowhere in the Bible does it tell us that a saint is somebody that you pray to and he heals people, and their canonized by the church, an elite special group of people. The whole concept in the Roman Catholic church that they give sainthood to certain individuals is not biblical or scriptural. Every Christian is a saint. Some of you are Saint Mike, Saint Susie, Saint Pete, Saint Fred, Saint George. How about Saint Irving. My name just really flows with that, "Saint John." It has a nice ring to it. What you need to understand is that you are the called, you are the loved, and you are the saints of God. What a glorious thing that is.

Beginning in verse 8-13, let's read it. Paul opens his heart. This is still introduction. The introduction goes all the way to verse 17. We won't finish it until next week. So he says, "First, I want to thank my God..." Paul using that endearing term "my God," "...through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers..." notice that double positive-negative, without ceasing and always, and then notice verse 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." Paul has never been to Rome. It's a church that he didn't start. He wasn't the founder of that church. Probably believers came from Jerusalem at Pentecost. They were there and got saved. Then they migrated back to Rome, and a church was born. There were probably multiple little house churches. He says, "For I long to see

you...” (verse 11) “...that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established: 12 That is...,” he explains it in verse 12, “...that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren...” someone said that is the largest Christian denomination in America, the ignorant brethren. Paul actually used that phrase many times. “... that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you...,” that is, he was wanting the Romans to know, “I want to come to you.” They might have been upset that Paul hadn’t visited them yet. You know, “We’re the head of the world, the capital of the world, the Roman empire. We’re a Gentile church and he’s the apostle of the Gentiles, why hasn’t he come to us?” Paul did purpose to come to them but was hindered (verse 13) “...up till now, that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.”

What we are going to find in this passage is Paul’s pastoral heart. I want you to write these down because it is so practical. He gives us a picture of a servant’s heart. He gives us the picture of the heart that we should all have when it comes to serving the Lord. Now, he’s talking about himself. Believe me, you can emulate Paul. He is a man worth emulating. This is a pastor’s or a shepherd’s heart, but we are all to have a servant’s heart, a desire to be used by God and to be a blessing to others. I want you to notice these characteristics of serving the Lord from my heart. That’s what he actually says in this passage. Notice it in verse 9. He says, “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit...” what does that mean? He means that he’s not just doing his duty. It’s not just external obligation, but it comes from his heart and is energized by the Holy Spirit. Here are the marks, write them down. A true servant of the Lord has a thankful heart. We see that in verse 8. “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” Do you have, like Paul, a thankful heart? Do we start our day with saying, “Thank you, Jesus.” When you wake up do you say, “Good morning, Lord,” or do you say, “Good Lord, it’s morning!” Do you pray and say, “Lord, I love you and I thank you. Lord, I thank you for my wife. I thank you for my husband. I thank you for my children. I thank you for my church...” and throw your pastor in there, “I thank you for my pastor. Thank you for all those believers at church that encourage me, and Lord, let me be a blessing to them, and all the blessings.” Paul had a thankful heart. We ought to serve the Lord with gladness. It is a privilege that God has given to us that we can be thankful. Notice Paul says, “I’m thanking God.” Paul wasn’t thanking the Romans, he was focusing on God. When we focus on God, we will have a thankful heart. He’s thankful for God’s blessings. He saw God’s hand on his life and on the Romans.

Now, I want you to notice he’s thankful for God’s blessings in their lives. Notice what he says here in verse 8, “I’m thankful for your faith.” “I thank God that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” You know when you think about the church, and when I think about Revival Christian Fellowship, what am I thankful for? I’m thankful for your faith. I’m thankful for your faith. I’m thankful that through faith you trusted Christ and were born again. I’m thankful that through dark and difficult times, you’re trusting God. I don’t take any pleasure in seeing God’s people going through difficulties, but I do take great pleasure and great joy in knowing that when they go through them they trust in the Lord. Over and over and over again, my counsel to people who are going through the furnace and going through the fire and walking in the darkness is ~ trust Him. He loves you. He’s in control. He’s trustworthy. Trust Him. Trust Him

with your life. You can trust Him with your health, trust Him with your marriage, trust Him with your kids. You can put everything in His care. Trust Him. My desire for us as a church is that we would be known, not for our building, not for our praise team, not for some of the things we do, but that we would be known for our faith in Jesus Christ. We really believe God, believe in God, and we step out and live a life of faith and trust in God. He was thankful for their faith.

Secondly, notice that he had a servant's heart. In verse 9 he says, "...I serve with my spirit..." that word "serve" is a unique Greek word translated "serve" in the English. It's a word that always and only means "sacred service." It was used of the priests in the Old Testament when they would actually do their service before God. Sometimes the word is actually translated "worship." So our service comes from our heart, which is to be thankful, and it is to be an act of worship before God. I want to speak to you as servants of the Lord and servants here at Revival Christian Fellowship, that your service be an act of worship to God. You don't do it out of obligation or duty, but you do it with a thankful heart and with a worshipful heart. You say, "Lord, I worship You." In Romans 12, we'll get there in many months, but Paul says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." In some Bibles it translates this very same word, "worship," which is your act of worship. I believe that when we come, we worship in singing, we don't just sing, we worship. We worship in prayer. We worship in giving. We worship in preaching. Sometimes before I preach I'll pray saying, "Lord, help me to preach as an act of worship." Do you know that when you're listening to me right now, as you listen to me and we expound God's Word, do you know that you should listen to me as an act of worship? That you should actually listen to God's Word as an act of worship, which means to bow down and be obedient to that. When God speaks, that we should listen, worship and we should bow down. So, everything we do is an act of worship. Paul is doing it from his heart. Colossians 3:23 says, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." Do it from your heart. How important that is. So, is your service sincere and wholehearted, an act of worship?

Thirdly, at the end of verse 9-10, Paul was a man of prayer. He had a prayerful heart. So, he had a thankful heart, a worshipful heart, and now he has a prayerful heart. At the end of verse 9 says, "...I make mention of you always in my prayers..." then he breaks it down in verse 10, "Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey..." then he throws this in, "...by the will of God to come unto you." Do you know that prayer and service go together? Prayer and service must be integrated and go together. You can't say, "I'm a serving Christian, not a praying Christian. There's people that pray and there's people that serve. I'm not a pray-er, I'm a server." You can't serve if you don't pray. Prayer is what energizes, directs and gives us the right attitude. It makes us what we need to be in service, right? So, if you're serving the Lord, then you need to be praying. It also works the other way, if you're praying, guess what you need to be doing, serving. Sometimes we say, "Oh, Lord, save the heathen. Oh, Lord, in Jesus name save the heathen. Lord, especially that one across the street. My neighbor, he's so wicked, vile and wretched. And, I pray, Lord, that you'll save him in the name of Jesus." I don't know if you sound like that, but... Then the Lord says, "Why don't you go witness to him." "No, no, Lord, I pray in the name of Jesus, whoa rebuke you Devil. I pray that

someone else, I pray, that someone will witness to them.” The Lord says, “Why don’t you go over and share with him.” “Oh, no, Lord, You save him.” You know, there’s a time to pray, and there’s a time to get off your knees and to roll up your sleeves and get busy. Amen? Sometimes I think we use prayer as an excuse for not doing the will of God. “Hey, will you teach the Sunday school class?” “I’ll pray about it.” Then you leave thinking, “There ain’t no way I’m praying about that, man! No way am I going to get in there with those brats! Yeah, yeah, I’ll pray about it, I’ll pray about it.” Then you smile and say, “I’ll pray about it.” You think, “I ain’t going to pray about it!” Prayer and service go together. Paul was a great theological mind. He was a missionary and an apostle, and he had all these gifts. You know, he was an evangelist, but he spent time on his knees. He didn’t just spend time on his knees, he also got out and got busy. So, I want to encourage you, if you’re going to be an effective servant of the Lord, have a prayerful heart. Prayer must direct our service and prayer affects our service. Prayer changes the one who is praying so that we become the kind of person through whom God can accomplish His purpose.

Now, in the text, I want you to look at it with me in your Bible, verses 9-10, I want to break down some important aspects and characteristics of prayer. His prayer was consistent, verse 9, “...without ceasing.” Do you pray consistently, without ceasing? His prayer was personal, “...I make mention of you.” I must confess, I mean I have hundreds of people every week asking that I pray for them. A lot of times I say, “Well, I’ll be praying for you,” and I don’t pray for them. Do you know how many times people have come up to me and said, “Pastor John, would you pray for me this week?” I say, “Yeah, I’ll pray for you, God bless you.” Then I don’t pray for them. I don’t even think about it, I forget. Pray for me that I’ll pray for you. Seriously! Then, they come up to me the next Sunday and say, “Oh, Pastor John, thank you for praying for me! God answered your prayer!” I say, “He did?! Wow! That’s amazing because I didn’t even pray, I forgot.” Paul the apostle prayed personally and individually for individuals. When we gather on Tuesday with our pastoral staff, we pray for this congregation. We pray for the members of this congregation, for the leaders of this congregation. Paul’s prayer was consistent, it was personal, and it was specific. I think we should ask God for specific requests. Notice verse 10, “...that I might have a prosperous journey.” Paul says, “I’m praying that God will get me to you in Rome. I want to get to Rome.” It was the capital of the Roman empire. “I want to get there and share with you.”

Fourthly, it was submissive. We are getting this on Sunday morning in our Lord’s prayer, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. But notice verse 10, “...by the will of God.” I’ve had a lot of questions in just the last couple of weeks since I started the Lord’s prayer about praying for God’s will. How do we know God’s will? We know it in God’s Word. Should we be saying not my will, but thine be done? I say yes. Ask Him. Ask Him specifically. Ask Him personally. Ask Him directly, and then be willing to accept His answer. You got that? If you’re not willing to accept God’s will and God’s answer, then you ought not to be asking Him. “Well, I want to pray, but I want to pray that it’s God’s will, and I’m gonna tell God what I want Him to do, and I don’t want God to do anything else.” We do that! “God, I really want you to heal him. Lord, I really don’t want you to let him die.” “Lord, I really don’t want this to happen.” “Lord, I really want that job.” “Lord, I really want that job, and if you don’t give me that job I won’t go to church Sunday.”

Like God's response is, "Huh? Oh no." We try to manipulate God. Faith and the prayer of faith accepts God's will. Just a little footnote, Paul prayed that he could have a prosperous journey to the people at Rome. He said that up to now I've been hindered. You that know the life of Paul, guess what? He didn't get to Rome when he wanted, the way he wanted. He got to Rome, but do you know how he got to Rome? He was arrested and thrown in prison, and it took years to get there. He was in chains on a Roman ship, which is kind of cool, he got there for free. You say, "Well, I don't know about that, Pastor." God is interested in economy. "Paul, you want to go to Rome, you don't have the money, okay, then I'll get you busted, thrown in jail and they'll send you to Rome." And not only is he in chains, not only on a ship, not only shipwrecked and he got on an island, a snake bit him! He's wet, cold, shipwrecked, they're getting wood and a snake bites him to top the day off! I'd be like, "Where are you, God?!" When he finally comes to Rome, he comes in chains and is a prisoner under house arrest, and he gets his house there. That was God's plan. I don't know about you, but this literally thrills my heart! You say, "Oh, you're weird!" It thrills my heart that God knows how to answer our prayers, knows when to answer our prayers, and He answers them in ways that we could never, ever fathom or imagine. I have had a bunch of prayers that God said no to and He had different answers to, and His answers were better than what I asked him for. Initially, when He said no, I threw a tissy fit. I got all mad at God. Now, I look back and I say, "Wow! That's unbelievable the plan that God had! I can't believe what God was doing." God is not just interested in answering your prayers, He's interested in making you the kind of person through whom He can use for His glory. So, don't be discouraged today. If God is saying "No, no, no," God has answered your prayer. He is really wise, and He's really loving. He's got a plan that is more than you could ever imagine, if you trust Him. So Paul says, "I prayed, and God answered the prayer but it wasn't the way I thought it would be."

Paul also was praying with a loving heart, and this is my fifth point. Notice in verses 11-12 and we'll wrap this up. In verse 11, "For I long to see you...", a pastor's heart. He loves the people. "...I long to see you...", why? "...that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift." I believe that this would be through Paul's preaching and teaching. That through Paul's teaching, as he would instruct and edify them, they would discover their gifts, and they would use them in love for the glory of God. I think one of the best things I can do for you as your pastor is teach the Bible so that you grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and you discover your gift so that you can begin to serve God and exercise your gift in love. That's what God wants me to do. The Bible says in Ephesians, that God has given them pastor-teachers for the maturity of the saints so that they can do the work of the ministry so that we're not like children cast to and fro with every wind of doctrine by the slight and cunning of men so we could grow up in Him, and that we could serve Him. Paul's loving heart, I long to see you. First of all, to impart a spiritual gift to you. Secondly, so that they would be strong in the Lord. Notice that in verse 11, "...so that you may be established." Every pastor wants God's people to be established or strong in the Lord and then to experience encouragement from them. Mutual encouragement. I love verse 12, "That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." What Paul is saying is, "I want to come. I want to use my gift of teaching. I want you to mature. I want you to grow. I want you to use your gifts." But he says, "I don't want you to think that it's all about me. I come because I know you are going to bless me, and you're going

to encourage me, and you're going to strengthen me." Here is an apostle, a pastor that is recognizing that ministry is mutual encouragement. Ministry is mutual encouragement. You will never know, not only myself but the other pastoral staff, that as a congregation your prayers, your words of encouragement, your love, your testimony of what God's doing in your life comforts me. It comforts us and encourages us and blesses us. Every Sunday, at least one or two people will tell me what God's doing in their lives, give me a word of encouragement, and I'll say, "You know what? You made my day. You've made my day, you've made my week." Just to know that God used a teaching, a message or a word, or whatever it might be, someone else in the church, to transform your life. That's what leaving a legacy is, by the way, it's our lives impacting other lives. Christian ministry is not being a celebrity. I'm not a celebrity. We're to be ministers of Jesus Christ. Should the Lord take me home while you're still here, I want my life to have impacted yours and that I leave that legacy. You should want your life to impact others'. "Lord, make me a blessing. Make me a blessing to my wife. Make me a blessing to my husband. Make me a blessing to my children. Make me a blessing to my grandchildren. Make me a blessing to the church, the congregation, to other people, my co-workers. Make me a blessing." Paul says, "I also receive the blessing as well as give the blessing." Mutual encouragement. What a blessing that is.

Here is his last point. I want you to notice verse 13. "Now, I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you..." the reason Paul would say that was because the Roman Christians were actually wondering, "Why hasn't Paul come here?" Paul says, "I tried. I care about you, but I was hindered. I was hindered." Interesting that the great apostle Paul wanted to get to Rome, and he prayed about it, but for some reason God put a blockage in his way. I do believe that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord if he delights in His ways. I also believe with all of my heart that the "stops" of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his ways. Not only have I had many unanswered prayers that God had a different plan, a different time, a different way, but I've had many roadblocks and disappointments, where I've prayed, and I've labored and God says no. He shuts the door. Anytime God shuts the door on one thing, He opens the door on another thing. That's why we need to trust Him. That's why we need to look to Him. That's why we need to be patient. We panic and freak out, and God says, "Look, I shut the door. Do you see that other one over there behind you that's open? I want you to go a different direction." "Oh yeah, duh, duh, duh." You know, you go in the other direction. "Thank you, Lord." I would've never thought of this door. All of the sudden after time you realize, "You know, I think God's pretty smart! I think He's got an idea I didn't even think about. Man, why didn't I trust Him?" So Paul says, "I purposed to come to you, but I was hindered," Paul's purposeful heart.

The point I want to make in verse 13 is the purpose of his heart was that he wanted to have fruit among them even as among other Gentiles. Do you know what every servant should want, especially every pastor should want in context here with Paul? Do you know what we want? Fruit. Not loot. Sorry, I just had to throw that in there. Isn't it interesting, Paul says, "I want to come to Rome because I want to make some loot!" No. He said I want to have some fruit. Paul says, "I want fruit among you as among other Gentiles." I'm telling you, not flippantly, not being silly, I know I'm being a little silly tonight, but with all my heart what I'm praying for at

Revival Christian Fellowship is for fruit, spiritual fruit. Not religious nuts...that's not original, I got that off a bumper sticker one time. It actually said, "God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts." I thought, "That's awesome!" I'm not praying for a bunch of nuts. I want fruit, spiritual fruit. Let me mention the three categories that we look for. We look for attitude fruit. I want God to change our attitudes. Love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, self-control. That's what I want to see in this church. I want to see spiritual fruit. Did you know that the greatest evidence of the spirit-filled life is fruit not gifts? Gifts are great. Gifts are incredible. Pursue gifts, use them for others for the glory of God. You can have a gift and be unspiritual. You can't have fruit and character and be unspiritual. Synonymous with the fruit of the Spirit is Godly character. The Corinthians were the most gifted church that Paul ever wrote to in the New Testament, at the same time they were the most carnal. What God wants is spiritual fruit.

The second category is action. The way we live. The attitude of our heart in the way we live. The third category is addition. God wants to save souls. How exciting it has been at Revival these last three-plus years to see so many people come to Christ, so many people giving their hearts to Jesus. So we want to see our attitude change, our actions change and we want to see addition. The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Amen? We should be praying for souls, and we should want souls, we should be witnessing to people, we should be sharing the gospel, inviting them to church and praying that God uses us as His ambassadors. That we would be sent out to share the good news of Jesus Christ; He came from heaven, died for our sins, rose from the dead so that we could be forgiven and have eternal life. Let's pray.