

Romans 1.8-15 Personal Introduction: Prayer, Plans & Maturity
008-010
Ray Mondragon

[Romans 1.8-10 Personal Introduction: Paul's Prayer 008]

Paul writes to Rome, the largest city in that day, the center of culture and economics—the forum was important and there are a lot of archeological remains. There were a many temples, Roman gods, Greek gods and mystery religions. So there was a lot happening—and a lot of corruption. And, since this is Scripture it applies not only to the Romans but to us as well.

This book is unique in that it has two introductions: the first more formal and the second a personal introduction. The personal one is divided into two parts.

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First, the Praising Prayers: Praise to God and the Proclamation of their Faith. Then the Prayer Proven by God: Prayer of Persistence and of Petition.

In any study, we start looking for a sentence. In verse eight there is one sentence (contrary to Paul's first sentence in the chapter which is seven verses and yet doesn't even have a verb—which we supplied). Secondly, we look at the main independent clause. In this case it is:

1.8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

The comma is a clue that this is the first clause. Then there is a dependent clause:

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1.8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

Analyzing the first, that is the independent clause: the subject is Paul; he identified himself in verse one. The verb is 'thank', so everything in this sentence has something to do with thankfulness or praising God.

'First' suggests *the most important*. This is a prayer, a revelation of Paul praying. Everything in verses eight through ten is an expression of prayer. He is saying: in your prayer life, start with praise. That is the beginning. We tend to start with petition, focusing on ourselves rather than on the giver or answerer of prayer. So praise is a priority. Think about how much time you spend in thanking rather than asking. If we are thankful in prayer—which is the priority—and have a thankful attitude, everything else will fall into place. God knows what we need anyway; in fact, we don't even have to make requests. That is what Jesus said in the sermon on the mount: He knows our needs already. So we should prioritize and think about spending more time in praising Him and allowing Him to do His will.

We can use Paul as an illustration of what prayer is all about. There will be seven applications. He prayed first with worship. This passage has four words related to prayer. The first one is *eucharisto* 'I thank'.

Prayer Terms

1. εὐχαρίστω - thanksgiving 8

The word for 'grace' is in this word, so it is related to God's graciousness.

Elements and Principles

1. Starts with thanksgiving - The first principle

1.8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

He refers to 'you all', the Romans, of course. The theme of thanksgiving is found throughout the Scriptures.

Thanksgiving

√ God Himself - Psalm 30.4 *Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name.*

A constant theme; in the Psalms there is more thankfulness than petition. Thanking God: we have a God-centered world view—that He is over all things. We want to praise and worship Him. That is one reason we gather on Sundays—to acknowledge who He is.

√ God's Attributes - Psalm 107.1 *Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*

Two attributes: the *goodness* of God. James says that all good things come from above—from the Father. The other: *lovingkindness* = *khesed* in Hebrew, a love of commitment. The other is the type of love for family, an emotional love, a love of attraction. But this is the love of commitment, the vow on wedding day. God is committed to us by *covenant* and contract along with the desire to do so. We praise Him for that; He is looking after our well-being, even when we are unresponsive to Him.

Spend time praising Him for His *omnipotence*, His power to answer our prayers. He has power to do anything He desires. He has the power to fulfill His plan that He has made. Praise Him for His *omniscience*; He knows all things.

He knows all the options and has chosen the best plan. We have a plan, the world has a plan, the politicians have a plan—oftentimes different from God's plan. But He knows all things and can effect what He has intended. He is omniscient and *wise*. He is ever present—*omnipresent*...*sovereign*, the ruler. Praise Him for all these things. You can find other passages—and praise Him for other attributes.

√ God's Works - Psalm 9.1 *I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders.*

Praise Him for His works. 'I will tell', I will broadcast...focus on His works, be more specific: What has God done? Read the book of Genesis. Praise Him for what He did with Adam and Eve, giving a plan of salvation that we enter into. Praise Him that He deals with sin; He judges sin and ultimately, in a final way, will bring sin to a conclusion and isolate it in the lake of fire. Praise Him for that.

You can read all the Scriptures and see what God has done historically in time; Psalm 9.1 just encourages to praise Him for His works in a general way. Romans 1.8 is referring to what He is doing also among other believers.

√ Growth of Believers - 1Thessalonians 2.13 *For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*

Paul thanks God that He produced responsiveness among unbelievers, working to convict them, to bring them to salvation, and He thanks the Thessalonians as well for responding implying that God is working within them to bring them to a saving faith. When people come to the Lord we can praise Him that He worked it all out in their experience and now they will continue to grow.

√ God's Word in others - Romans 1.8 *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.*

This verse we are studying has basically the same line of thinking: Paul is praising the believers at Rome because of what God is doing amongst them. These are just a few examples of that word for thanksgiving.

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1.8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

That is the content of the praise—it is because of their faith being proclaimed. It is visible; people can see it. He uses a word that is commonly used for proclaiming the Gospel or to preach the word—sometimes it is translated 'preach'.

1.8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

He is praising that their faith is being broadcast. It's not that the people are saying, 'Hey, have you heard about the faith of the Romans?' I think what he is implying here is that it is visible and people are seeing it. Not only that, but they were seeing it throughout the whole world. He is using a hyperbole—a figure of speech we use all the time; it gives

the impression something is being done on a large scale—it is not just local. Others are hearing of the expression of faith of the Romans.

Paul was aware of it as he was writing even though he had not yet visited Rome, so he had heard of their faith. He was praising God for this because it stimulated him, encouraged him to know that God is at work in far-off places. You can pray also for anyone you know of in distant lands, but start with praising God. It is God, with the Holy Spirit, that is accomplishing things that are visible not only where they are but beyond.

Elements and Principles

1. Starts with thanksgiving - The first principle
2. Prayer should be focused on what God has done and what is on-going.

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

Verses nine and ten: We have to isolate the sentence. This is his prayer ‘Proven by God’, God is his witness. The ‘For’ often introduces a dependent clause, but here it is just an introductory word. The independent clause is (underlined):

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

God is his witness of how unceasingly he makes mention of them. Again, the subject, *God*, is the thing that everything else is related to. The verb: *is*. *Witness* is a subject complement which tells us something about God. This is a prayer of persistence in verses nine and ten. God is his witness how *unceasingly* he makes mention of them in his prayers. That is persistence.

1.9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,...

And he elaborates God: whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son. He elaborates showing how God is a witness to his work. Breaking down the sentence like this enables you to ‘dig out’ the meaning of the text.

...*whom I serve*... is a subordinate, dependent, clause. We look at the heart of this—the word *serve*.

λατρεύω - (lah-trú-o) serve

1. δουλεύω - service of slave = δοῦλος as in verse one, the lowest of slaves in the first century. The verb form has the idea of serving as well. In some contexts it is translated simply ‘to serve’, sometimes referring to the service of a slave, the service of menial tasks.
2. διακονία - service of deacon This involves spiritual things, like a treasurer in a church. Or, they may do the maintenance.
3. λατρεύω - The word *latreuo* is different:
service in temple: in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, a function of the priest, the sacrificial system.
worship: Ana, in the temple, in Luke 2:36-37, was serving in a way that was worshipful.
In fact, all service can be worship.
spiritual service: includes prayer, being worshipful;
here: it includes the preaching of the gospel.
This prayer is in the midst of Paul’s spiritual service. And God is behind these prayers, acting, working, within His plan of God.

1.9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,...

He has the full assurance of the backing of God in his preaching the gospel.

Elements and Principles

1. Starts with thanksgiving - The first principle
2. Prayer should be focused on what God has done and what is on-going.
3. In the midst of ministry

1.9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,

God is his witness. He sees what Paul is doing.

Elements and Principles

1. Starts with thanksgiving - The first principle
2. Prayer should be focused on what God has done and what is on-going.
3. In the midst of ministry
4. With assurance of God

1.9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,...

He prayed always, unceasingly, for the Romans, the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, for other churches that are not even mentioned in the New Testament. We are to pray this way, not because God needs it but because *we* need it, to be in contact, to have our thoughts aligned. We need to think of what God is doing—how I can align myself so that I can pray continuously.

Prayer Terms

1. εὐχαρίστω - thanksgiving 8
The word for ‘grace’ is in this word, so it is relating to God’s graciousness.
2. μνεία - make mention 9
‘Make mention’ is a little Greek word; it is a prayer word—as he is praying he makes mention of things going on in Rome.

Elements and Principles

1. Prayer starts with thanksgiving
2. Prayer should be focused on what God has done and is doing
3. Prayer in the midst of ministry
4. Prayer with the assurance of God
5. Prayer requires perseverance
If He isn’t answering, maybe we need to realign our prayer and remember that God might be doing something different from what I may have in mind. Over time God may reveal more of what He is doing.

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

Prayer Terms

1. εὐχαρίστω - thanksgiving 8
2. μνεία - make mention 9
3. προσευχή - prayer 10
The common word for ‘prayer’

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

Prayer Terms

1. εὐχαρίστω - thanksgiving 8
2. μνεία - make mention 9
3. προσευχή - prayer 10
4. δέομαι - petition
He wants us to make requests, tell Him our needs—after praise

Elements and Principles

1. Prayer starts with thanksgiving
2. Prayer should be focused on what God has done and is doing
3. Prayer in the midst of ministry
4. Prayer with the assurance of God
5. Prayer requires perseverance
6. Prayer includes specific petitions

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

So far he has been describing prayer in more general terms, but now he is more specific: if ...at last...

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

He desires that God might clear the way that he might come to the Romans. On his third missionary journey, Paul wanted to visit them, but, because of the circumstances and the sovereign will of God, the opportunity was not there. God re-directed him with the Macedonian call, so he left Asia Minor and went to Macedonia—within the will of God. In fact, we know from the book of Acts that Paul returned to Jerusalem; God had other things for him there relating to the Day of Pentecost. Time ran out and he couldn't visit Rome.

So he does the second best thing and writes this letter and tells us that this is something he had been praying for—but it has to be by the will of God. He doesn't just say: I want to go to Rome from here, Corinth. But God diverted him with a different plan.

This leads us to the last principle: praying in God's will:

Elements and Principles

1. Prayer starts with thanksgiving
2. Prayer should be focused on what God has done and is doing
3. Prayer in the midst of ministry
4. Prayer with the assurance of God
5. Prayer requires perseverance
6. Prayer includes specific petitions
7. Prayer according to God's will

So, as we are praying, making our petition, we have to ask God, 'What is your will?' 'Should I have that...car...etc'

So prayer starts with thanksgiving, is focused on what God has done and is doing in the midst of a ministry that you might have. It is with the full assurance that God can and will answer, not lacking in power but rather if it is His will. It involves or requires persistence, includes specific petitions—in this case that Paul have an opportunity to visit the Romans according to God's will.

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

In this example of Paul's he assumes confession came first.

Prayer should be apart of our MINISTRY to our Lord!!! The beginning and the heart of our ministry.

[Romans 1.11-12 Paul's Personal Introduction: Plans 009]

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| 1] <i>Thankful no matter what</i> | |
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| 7] <i>Desire for fruitfulness</i> | |
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| 8] <i>Servant's approach</i> | |
| d. The Passionate Preaching at Rome | 1.15 |
| 9] <i>Eagerness to use gifts</i> | |

Continuing in Paul's personal introduction: If you were there in Rome in the first century, you would have seen sites like the coliseum, and Christians were already beginning to experience persecution and suffering.

Now, we are seeing ways of application to our own lives; once we study a passage we can apply it to our own lives because it is Scripture. Paul was not only an example of praising prayer, but he is an example of someone who was spiritually mature.

In his personal introduction we have seen his prayers including the content of his prayer for God's timing to visit Rome. Those were his plans, so his plans are based on what he had been praying about, thusly giving us a pattern for prayer.

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1. The Praising Prayers	1:8-10

1.8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

Being thankful is an evidence of spiritual maturity. If you can evaluate every situation and in it thank God, no matter what—a spiritually mature person doesn't get overwhelmed.

Spiritual Maturity: Nine Signs of Real Maturity. The major examples of Paul's maturity.

1. **Thankful no matter what** 8

1.8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

Being thankful is an evidence of spiritual maturity. A spiritually mature person doesn't get overwhelmed by the circumstances and recognizes God is sovereign, and no matter how negative things may be, still God is going to work all things for good. As a result we can praise Him. So a spiritually mature person can thank God no matter what the circumstances.

2. **Persistent in prayer** 9

Then, in verse nine,

1.9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,

A spiritually mature person is one who is persistent in prayer.

3. **Controlled by God's will** 10

1.10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

Paul always was sensitive to what God was doing in different circumstances; He opens and closes doors—in different ways: in a vision with a man inviting Paul to Macedonia, for example. We may not have a vision, but we have God's Word that guides us. So a mature person is controlled by God's will, recognizes that nothing can be accomplished that is eternal or spiritual apart from God doing it, using us. In this case there was nothing wrong with the desire to visit the Romans; it was a matter of God's timing. Hence, he wrote this letter, which, being *inspired*, is for us as well with the theology or doctrine that Paul would have given them had he gone there at that point.

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Now we see the content of his prayer: his plans had a definite *purpose*. First, plans that are productive. We isolate complete sentences and study sentence by sentence. This is the way that God has built in us to communicate thoughts. Going verse by verse may not give you a complete sentence and you miss the context of the material.

1.11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

12 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.

Verses eleven and twelve are a complete sentence; there is a semicolon at the end of eleven indicating a second independent clause in the sentence. In studying, it is best to use a more literal translation that is closer to the Biblical text. Some translations, like the New International Version, tend to smooth out the language so it is easier to read; there is nothing wrong with that—it is a different translation philosophy. The New American Standard is more 'choppy', more awkward to read but it reflects the Greek text more closely as we have in this sentence, verses eleven and twelve.

1.11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

12 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.

The independent clause (in this case the 'For' is introductory, not introducing a dependent clause) is 'For I long to see you'. The subject is 'I' (Paul) and the verb is 'long'. 'To see' is an infinitive which completes the idea of 'long' or desire, telling us *what* he longs for. Everything else in the sentence is just telling us something else about that plan, and that plan includes a purpose. There follows, then, a series of clauses—primarily purpose clauses, beginning with 'that':

1.11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

12 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.

All of these are the ‘purposeful’ part. These subordinate clauses are telling you something about his plan, his longing.

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1.11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;
 12 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.

Spiritual Maturity

1. Thankful no matter what	8
2. Persistent in prayer	9
3. Controlled by God’s will	10
4. Love for others	11

This longing was a love for others.

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2) Primary Purpose	

1.11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;
 12 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.

His primary purpose is to ‘impart some spiritual gift to them’. We look at the word ‘impart’ **μεταδίδωμι** (meh-ta-dí-do-mi): traducidá ‘conceder’ e impartir.

χαρίσμα πνευμάτικος (khah-reés-mah nu-máh-tee-koss = **spiritual gift**)

The word does not always refer to spiritual gifts; more often it refers to a non-technical sense, not supernatural.

- Bestow - share or impart
 First, ‘bestow’ means ‘share’; Paul has a desire to share something with them, not impart in a supernatural sense of laying on of hands where suddenly they have the spiritual gift. The word is never used in that sense. In Romans 12 it is used for giving the gift of giving, so the idea is of *giving*.
- Technical sense - spiritual gifts
 ‘Charisma’ can be used with ‘pneumátikos’ for the idea of giving spiritual gifts. But more often it is used in the *non-technical* sense: a spiritual gift of any sort, not just those described in Romans 12, 1Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 and 1Peter 4 where we have the use in a technical sense.
- Non-technical - blessing
 Here Paul uses it in the non-technical; he desires to bestow on them a general blessing that could include Bible teaching, fellowship, exhortation—a variety of things.
 Here are some other verses that seem to use the ‘charisma’ in a non-technical sense:
 2Corinthians 1.11 *you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.*
 Romans 5.15 *But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.*
 In this context, the single word ‘charisma’ is translated ‘free gift’ referring to grace
 16 *The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.*
 In both cases the ‘free gift’ is referring to salvation.
 Romans 6.23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
 The ‘free gift’ refers to eternal life, again salvation.
 This is a non-technical sense and it appears that Paul is using it this way in Roman 1.11

Also, in this passage, Paul indicates that he desires to bestow blessings that *edify* those at Rome that take on a variety of forms. It is not specific but a general blessing that could include many different

things, even material things. In the context of an introduction it seems to indicate not something supernatural, but like going to a nursing home, bestowing gifts of music, helps, teaching or preaching, anything that brings some spiritual growth—edification.

Phases of Ministry

1. Blessings that edify

This is a phase of ministry that edifies; we will see other phases.

1.11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

12 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.

In the second dependent clause he desires that 'you may be established.' A result of this gift or blessing is that they be grounded in the Scriptures; it probably includes a lot of teaching, some preaching, some encouragement. This is another phase of ministry.

Phases of Ministry

1. Blessings that edify

2. Grounding in the Word

Not just an immediate result but he encourages them to be established which does not happen over night; it takes lots of input. Even if he didn't spend lots of time there it would mean encouraging others to begin exercise their spiritual gifts—such that the church of Rome would be *established*, or, what we call *grounded in the Word*.

That is another phase of ministry. Sunday after Sunday we seek to edify, but after some time you are *grounded, established*. Then you are ready for whatever the world can throw at you. That is an expression of Paul's love; he wants the greatest good for those to whom he bestows a gift. This is the thinking of a mature person.

It is not short-term; it is long-range. He wants them to be established so that nothing can rock them. In fact, shortly after this, Christians were suffering for their faith. He wants them to be established so that it doesn't move them. And that is our desire as well: to establish believers so that they are grounded in the Word.

So we have two phases of ministry illustrated in this passage: love for others and heart for ministry.

Spiritual Maturity

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| 2. Persistent in prayer | 9 |
| 3. Controlled by God's will | 10 |

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| a. The Productive Desire to Visit | 1.11-12 |
| 1) Powerful Longing | 1.11 |
| 2) Primary Purpose | |
| 3) Parallel Encouragement | 1.12 |

Then in verse twelve there is 'parallel encouragement': another purpose clause, 'that I may be encouraged together with you.'

1.11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

12 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.

So his desire is to encourage *them*, to establish *them*, to minister and to edify *them* but, in the process, that relationship is going to encourage Paul as well. It's not a self-centered thing; it's just a natural thing that occurs and Paul has that vision which is one of the phases of ministry. Paul has the idea that 'when I can edify them, when I can move them one step further in terms of being established and grounded in the Word, the natural by-product is that I am going to benefit.' When you do ministry, you will be edified.

"Every Christian has received spiritual blessing in order to impart it and if we cannot impart we may well question whether we have received."

-Griffith Thomas

Phases of Ministry

1. Blessings that edify

2. Grounding in the Word

3. Ministry returned

We have a desire to share what God has blessed us with and that same audience will minister in return.

1.11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

12 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.

‘While among you’ is another dependent clause. This is a humble attitude. He sees that he will be edified as well—each of us will—by the other’s faith. Seeing their faith in action will, in fact, encourage Paul, seeing that God is using him, that God is active and they are responsive. He will benefit from their spiritual gifts: ‘both yours and mine’. Ministry is not a one way street.

Spiritual Maturity

1. Thankful no matter what	8
2. Persistent in prayer	9
3. Controlled by God’s will	10
4. Love for others	11
5. Heart for ministry	11
6. Humble attitude	12

Maturity is not measured by age. It’s an attitude of love, of concern, of humility built by experience. This was Paul’s third missionary journey; he had seen over time that this is how God works. We can experience the same thing; over the time of ministry, people will minister to us as well.

Every day and every circumstance can be a step toward SPIRITUAL MATURITY!!!

[Romans 1.13-15 Paul’s Personal Introduction: Maturity 010]

I. The Introduction	1:1-17
A. The Formal Introduction	1:1-7
B. The Personal Introduction	1:8-15
1. The Praising Prayers	1:8-10
2. The Purposeful Plans	1.11-15
a. Productive Desire to Visit	1.11-12
b. Persistent Plans to Visit	1.13

Paul, when he wrote to the Romans that he wanted to visit them, was in Corinth—an important city which has been excavated and studied more than any other. Temples to gods were constructed on top of a mountain-rock and below it is the city. In Acts 18.12 the ‘beima’ is mentioned, *But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat.* The judgment seat is ‘beima’ in Greek. This word is used for a platform where believers will be judged in the future—like the one that can still be seen among the ruins of structures in Rome. This shows how the word was used in that culture—and in the Scriptures.

All theological terms are from the culture of that day. The Greek of the NT is called ‘koiné’ Greek. The koiné Greek of Paul’s time was the common, every day spoken Greek, so the writers are not using some spiritual language known only by those that know the ‘spiritual’ words.

Then, in Acts 19.21, Paul, still in Corinth, said he wanted to ‘see Rome’. Not being able go there at that time, he did the second best thing and wrote a letter to them. We benefit from that because this is probably the essence of the theology that Paul would have taught while he was there if he had made the journey. This was God’s plan so that he would write this letter under inspiration and we could have it.

We are looking at his mindset, his thoughts and his spirituality. We can recognize some examples in his life that teach us something about what *maturity* is. Obviously, Paul the apostle was someone looked up to and a leader that exhibits the characteristics of *spiritual maturity*. We are looking at nine evidences of spiritual maturity.

The Christian leaders, maybe even Peter, may have been wondering why he had not visited the great capital, Rome. But this letter explains.

1.13 I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

He writes to ‘brethren’, that is, brothers in Christ, part of a family of God in a spiritual sense. There are commentators that believe he is writing to a non-believing audience, or at least to a mixed one—because he deals with how to come into a saving relationship with Christ. But I think he is giving the doctrine of soteriology, the theology of salvation, in order to equip the believers so that they have a clear understanding of what it takes to come into a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, creator of the universe, so they will be able to deliver a clear gospel message to an unbelieving world.

Then he says, ‘often I have planned to come to you’. This is part of the persistence: over time he had planned to go to Rome, probably thinking of it at different times throughout his conversion (when he was told by God that his mission was to be to the gentiles) and then during all his ministry, wanting to go to the very heart of gentile territory and the Roman empire. But then when in Corinth he realized that there was not time at that point.

1.13 I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

He had other ministry, other direction; satanic forces (which God can use), God's will—many things could have prevented him from going to Rome.

Hindered

1. By Satan - 1Thessalonians 2.18 *For we wanted to come to you--I, Paul, more than once--and yet Satan hindered us.*
God can use whatever instrument He wants.
2. By Holy Spirit - Acts 16.6 *They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;*
7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;
3. By Ministry - Romans 15.19 *in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ....*
22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you;
23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you
God had given him so many areas of ministry that he could not take time to go to Rome. He had good ideas, but God had other plans.

1.13 I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

He has mentioned ministries—all types, including, most commonly, ministering to believers—but also had plans for fruit.

Fruit (καρπός) A few examples, good and bad.

- > General good or bad - 6.21 *Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.*
22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

> Financial support - 15.28 *Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.*
Philippians 4.17 *Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.*

Contributions that can support ministry.

> Character - Galatians 5.22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control;...*

The fruit of the Spirit is in the context of character development.

Ephesians 5.9 *(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),*

Philippians 1.11 *having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God....*

All of these are the word 'karpos'.

21 *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

22 *But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.*

To die would be better for him—to enter into the presence of the Lord, but it was better that he stay and minister to the Philippians because it would produce fruit.

Phases of Ministry

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| 1. Blessings that edify | 11, 12 |
| 2. Grounding in the Word | 13 |
| 3. Ministry returned | 12 |
| 4. Expanded fruitfulness | 13 |

Spiritual Maturity As you mature, you experience these things.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| 1. Thankful no matter what | 8 |
| 2. Persistent in prayer | 9 |
| 3. Controlled by God's will | 10 |
| 4. Love for others | 11 |
| 5. Heart for ministry | 11 |
| 6. Humble attitude | 12 |
| 7. Desire for fruitfulness | 13 |

Age is just a number. Maturity is a choice.

I. The Introduction	1:1-17
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a. Productive Desire to Visit	1.11-12
b. Persistent Plans to Visit	1.13
c. Preeminent Mission to Gentiles	1.14

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

His ministry is preeminent—to gentiles; that was his initial calling. Peter was the apostle to the Jewish audience, Paul to the gentile audience. That doesn't mean he didn't minister to the Jews. He went to the synagogue first; when they kicked him out, he went to the gentiles. He had a vision of God's priority; he knew the emphasis would be gentiles.

Under obligation, indebted. It comes out of thankfulness; it is not legalistic. It is because he is so gratified in what God has bestowed upon him by grace—a grace motivation. Because of what we have received we sense a compulsion, a need, we are restless and unsettled until we can reach out.

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

He was obligated to both Greeks and barbarians, wise and foolish. These are like merisms where two extremes are mentioned to give the idea of everything in between—everyone that he encounters—anyone in the Greek culture, knowing their history, their classics, refined and educated in the Roman empire culture; and barbarians, the other extreme, uneducated, somewhat crude, unmannered—anything outside the Greek culture as a foreigner that had no idea about Greek things. Paul would minister to the cultured Greeks but also to those on the opposite end of the spectrum.

If that wasn't clear enough: the wise (with the Greek wisdom, Athens the center, but permeating the empire), even Hellenistic Jews who had absorbed much of the culture. And the 'foolish', without the Greek wisdom. He was saying, 'I want to minister to the whole community. I am not restricting my ministry,' and he felt a compulsion.

Gentiles

1. Greeks - within Greek culture
2. Barbarians - outside Greek culture
3. Wise - Greeks with wisdom
4. Foolish - Barbarians without it

Spiritual Maturity

1. Thankful no matter what 8
2. Persistent in prayer 9
3. Controlled by God's will 10
4. Love for others 11
5. Heart for ministry 11
6. Humble attitude 12
7. Desire for fruitfulness 13
8. Servant's approach 14

So he has a servant's approach which is an attitude of spiritual maturity. A compulsion regardless of the community: in a prison, a poor community or a rich one, the university where they are so-called 'wise'. He is ready for whatever door God opens. He is writing about Rome because he had the spectrum in Rome: every conceivable mindset, every conceivable cultural-background person; it was a microcosm of the whole empire. We can encounter a wide spectrum on a university campus near us as well.

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b. Persistent Plans to Visit	1.13
c. Preeminent Mission to Gentiles	1.14
d. Passionate Preaching at Rome	1.15

1.15 So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

So these are Paul's purposeful plans. They start with a productive desire to have ministry among them (11-12), persistent plans throughout his ministry (13), the priority or pre-eminence was the gentiles (14) and he had a passion to preach in Rome (15).

1.15 So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome .

He was eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. He mentions the 'gospel'. This is the essence of what he is giving us: the doctrine of the gospel. Preaching the gospel to the Romans is not because he is dealing with unbelievers per se; rather he wants to establish and ground the believers with the understanding of the gospel message. That is the sense of the gospel in this verse. The ramifications would be an understanding on the part of the Romans of soteriology, of how to bring people into a saving relationship so they could spread that gospel message. That is his purposeful plan.

And this is the ninth sign of spiritual maturity: an eagerness to exercise his spiritual gift. Every one of you has a spiritual gift and as you mature you will have a sense of obligation or compulsion to exercise it, minister in teaching, evangelism, helping other believers, whatever your calling may be.

This list of characteristics of spiritual ministry is not exhaustive, but these are the salient ones from the passage we have studied.

Spiritual Maturity

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|-----------------------------|----|
| 1. Thankful no matter what | 8 |
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| 7. Desire for fruitfulness | 13 |
| 8. Servant's approach | 14 |
| 9. Eagerness to use gifts | 15 |

Every day and every circumstance can be a step toward SPIRITUAL MATURITY which includes a choice and an attitude!!!