

## Introduction

When my daughter, Kathleen, was going through leukemia treatments in North Carolina, I was the primary caretaker of her. Consequently, we spent a lot of time together. One day she commented, “You have never met a stranger.” The truth is that we meet new people all the time, but I have worked hard at learning to connect with people. There are lots of ways to connect with people so I am not advocating a certain way of connecting, but I do encourage everyone to find a way of connecting with people.

One way that I try to connect with people is talking about their name. Most people do not know the meaning of their names. Because I have studied many names in the Old and New Testament, I know the meaning of a lot of names. So, I have found that people really like learning about the meaning of their name. A second way that I have found effective is to ask them questions about their lives. I ask about their job, their marital status, their children, and similar things. These questions show an interest in the person, and engage them in conversation. These things have helped me to quickly connect with people, which is why Kathleen commented that I have never met a stranger.

In our text today Paul connects with the beloved saints in Rome. This is really a continuation of the introduction to Romans. Last week Paul identified himself as the author, and that he is a bond-slave of the Lord and an apostle. When you introduce yourself to people and are open with them, people usually open up with you. Paul began connecting with the Romans by identifying himself to them. Then, Paul identified the recipients of the letter, the beloved saints of Rome. His comments about who they are were encouraging to them. He did not call them sinners who needed to be judged, but saints who are dearly loved by God. Finally, Paul gave them a greeting of grace and peace. Paul has already begun connecting with the people in Rome.

In our passage today, Paul continues to connect with them, and he does it in three ways. First, he tells them about his prayers for them. People appreciate knowing that you are praying for them. Paul does not just tell them that he is praying for them, but he tells them specifically what he has been praying. That gives supporting evidence to what he is telling them. Paul also connects with the Romans by telling them his purpose of writing. He wants to visit them, and he gave them several reasons for wanting to visit them. Last, Paul told them that he was eager to preach the gospel to them in Rome, and how it is the power of God for salvation to both Jews and Greeks. These were primarily Greek believers, and this is a reassurance to them that God’s plan of salvation is not just for the Jews, but it also included them. Through Paul’s prayers, purpose and preaching, he is connecting with his audience.

### Paul Connects with the Romans

1. Prayers (for them)
2. Purpose (for Writing to them)
3. Preaching (to them)

(Rom 1:8-17) “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. {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. {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. {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. {14} I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. {15} So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. {16} 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. {17} 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."

## 1. Prayers

The first way that Paul connect with the Romans is by telling them that he prays for them unceasingly. There are two parts of his prayers. In verse 8, Paul thanks God for them. This would make them feel special and honored that Paul would be giving thanks for them. Paul gets very specific about how he gives thanks. He gave thanks because their faith was being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

(Rom 1:8-9) "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. {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,"

The other day Karen and I were in our 5<sup>th</sup> wheel and I began praying for Corey, my son-in-law. He has the COVID-19 Delta variant and has been very sick, so I felt led to pray for him. Karen said, "Let's call Corey and pray for him." I told her that I just prayed for him, and she responded, "Yes, but it would mean a lot to him to know that you are praying for him." It means a lot to people to know that you are praying for them. I am sure that the saints in Rome were honored and felt special because Paul was praying for them, and giving thanks for them.

The Romans are not the only ones that Paul tried to connect by telling them that he was praying for them, and was giving thanks for them. In Philippians 1, Paul began by saying, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all. That is one of my favorite verses, and I pray that all the time for Karen and others. I tell Karen that I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, and I can say this because in my private prayers, I give thanks to God in my every remembrance of her. I could say this about all of you because I give thanks to God for each of you that God has put in my life.

(Phil 1:3-5) "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, {4} always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, {5} in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now."

Paul connected with many churches the same way. He told the Corinthians that he thanked God always concerning them. He wrote the Colossians and said, "we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints. We see that praying and giving thanks to God for people was a habit and a pattern for Paul. I believe it was a way that he connected with people.

(1 Cor 1:4) "I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,"

(Col 1:3-4) “We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, {4} since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;”

I also believe that Paul understood that giving thanks in our prayers is vitally important. I have had such a difficult time trying to get this across to believers. They see prayer as a way to take all of their needs and desires before the Lord, and it is a way to do that. But, when we pray, we are going before the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the God of all creation, and we do not just barge in His throne room and tell Him what we want Him to do. The Scriptures tell us to enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise, to give thanks to Him and bless His name. When we go before the Lord, we are to hallow and bless His name. When Jesus taught His disciples about praying, He told them, “Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.” When you and I pray, we should be like Paul, and start by giving thanks and blessing the Lord. Paul began his prayers for the Romans by giving thanks. I think Paul understood and operated by this principle.

(Ps 100:4) “Enter His gates with thanksgiving *And* His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.”

(Matt 6:9) "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"

Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, commanded us to “rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Paul did not just preach this; he practiced it. He was always giving thanks to God.

(1 Thess 5:16-18) “Rejoice always; {17} pray without ceasing; {18} in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

I believe that the saints in Rome were honored by Paul’s prayers and his thanksgivings for them. I also believe that God was honored. In Psalm 50:23, God tells us that “he who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me.” When we go into God’s gates with thanksgivings and His courts with praise, we honor Him.

(Ps 50:23) “He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders *his way aright* I shall show the salvation of God.”

It is one thing if someone tells me that they are praying for me; it is quite another thing for someone to tell me that they are praying for me, and then to share the details of what they are praying for me. It adds a lot of believability and credibility to the person stating they are praying for me. I have found that when I ask people about certain things that I have been praying about for them, that also assures them that I have been praying for them and are genuinely interested in them. I am bearing with them and wanting to know the outcome of those prayers.

Paul not only told them that he was praying for them, he shared with them the specifics of those prayers. Paul shared what he was thankful for, that their faith was being shared throughout the whole world. Second, he shared his petition with them. Paul was praying that at last he might succeed in coming to them by the will of God. The saints in Rome had to feel more connected by these details. He told them that he did not want them to be unaware that he had often planned to go to them, but had been prevented from going. Paul’s prayer was going to be accomplished several years later, but it would be as a prisoner.

## 2. Purpose (1:11-13)

Paul transitions from telling the Romans that he is praying for them into his purposes for wanting to come to them. The first purpose that he mentions is that he wanted to impart a spiritual gift to them. He did not just want to impart a spiritual gift, he longed to see them so that he could impart a spiritual gift. Paul's motivation was not selfish. He was not trying to get an honorarium from them. He was not trying to help them be established in their faith. That is the heart of a father. A spiritual father wants to see his children grow and mature in their faith. He wants to see them established in their faith. So, Paul longs to see them to impart a spiritual gift to help them get established.

(Rom 1:11) "For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;"

Paul does not mention what gift that he wanted to impart to them, but he does give some indication of what it might possibly be. All the gifts are given for the mutual edification, but not all gifts establish us in the faith. While praying in the spirit may edify the individual, it does not edify the body, so in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul exhorted the church to seek for the edification of the whole body, not the individual. In that passage, Paul is comparing the gift of tongues with the gift of prophecy. Paul concluded that they were to seek for the edification or building up of the church. The two primary gifts that establish the church are prophecy and teaching. Paul was not a prophet, but a teacher, so I believe that he wanted to impart a teaching gift to the saints in Rome.

(1 Cor 14:4-5) "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. {5} Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but *even* more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.)

(1 Cor 14:12) "So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek to abound for the edification of the church."

Teachers and prophets work very well together. In Acts 11:25-26, when Barnabas saw what was happening at Antioch, he went off to look for Paul, a teacher, so that these new believers could be established in their faith. Paul's partner at first was Barnabas, who was a prophet (Acts 13:2-3). On his second trip, his partner was Silas, who was also a prophet (Acts 15:32, 15:40). My personal belief is that we impart from what we have, and Paul was a teacher. I am a teacher and I have been imparting my teaching gift to men for the past thirty plus years.

In verse twelve, Paul gives his second purpose for longing to come to them. He wanted mutual encouragement. He said, "that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine." One of the purposes of fellowship is to encourage one another.

(Rom 1:12) "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 Hebrews 10:24-25, we are exhorted to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking the assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near. We clearly see that one of the purposes of our assembling together is to encourage one another. It was not to hear three points

and a poem and go home. It was not to sing three hymns, and listen to a nice homily, and go home. When saints assemble together, they should be seeking to encourage one another. I believe that as we get closer to the return of Christ, this will become even more important, which is why the author said, “and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” We need to get believers back into churches, and to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, and to seek to encourage one another.

(Heb 10:24-25) “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, {25} not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

Paul’s third purpose for wanting to come to Rome was to obtain some fruit among them. In verse thirteen, he tells them that he had often planned to come to them, but had been prevented. Solomon wrote that man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. Paul had planned his ways, but the Lord had redirected his steps up until this point and prevented him from going to Rome. This is why he said that he was praying that he could come to them by the will of God.

(Rom 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.”

(Pr 16:9) “The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.”

There are different kinds of fruit mentioned in the Scriptures. Paul uses the word gospel four times in Romans 1. In verse one, Paul said that he had been set apart for the gospel of God. In verse nine, Paul said that he served God by the preaching of the gospel. In verse fifteen, Paul said he was eager to preach the gospel to those in Rome. In verse sixteen, Paul said he was not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Therefore, in the context of the passage, I believe that Paul wanted to come to Rome to preach the gospel and see people saved. I believe that is the primary fruit he was looking for.

(Rom 1:1b) “...called *as* an apostle, set apart for the **gospel** of God,”

(Rom 1:9a) “For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the *preaching of the* **gospel** of His Son....”

(Rom 1:15) “So, for my part, I am eager to preach the **gospel** to you also who are in Rome.”

(Rom 1:16) “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.”

But, there is another type of fruit, and that is the fruit of people maturing and being established in their faith. The word established is used five times in the book of Romans. In verse 1:11, Paul said he wanted to impart a spiritual gift to them so that they would be established. This is not salvation, but maturity and growing in their faith. In Paul’s benediction at the end of the book, in Romans 16:25, he said, “Not to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ...” In this case, people get established by the gospel and preaching of Jesus. I believe that Paul wants to see souls won, and people maturing in their faith. If you recall Colossians 1:28, Paul proclaimed Christ, admonished and taught people so that he could present every man complete in Christ. Paul wanted both kinds of fruit.

(Rom 1:11) “For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be **established**.”

(Rom 16:25) “Now to Him who is able to **establish** you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,”

(Col 1:28) “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”

Paul longed to visit the saints in Rome. He wanted to impart a spiritual gift to establish them. He wanted to encourage them and be encouraged. Third, he wanted to preach the gospel and obtain some fruit among them. Paul does not mention it, but I believe there was a fourth reason. In his parting words in Romans 16:13, he mentions his mother. He said, “Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.” It appears that Paul’s mother is now living in Rome, and she is part of a home church being led by a man named Rufus. It may be that Rufus’ mother and Paul’s mother are two widows living together there. In any event, I believe that Paul would have wanted to go visit his mother. If it had been me, I certainly would have wanted to go see my mother.

(Rom 16:13) “Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.”

### 3. Preaching

Paul has connected to the saints in Rome with his prayers. He has connected to them by sharing his purpose for writing and desiring to come to Rome. Finally, he connects with them through his desire to preach the gospel to those in Rome. He was eager to come to preach the gospel to them. Paul said it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Since most of the people in Rome were Gentiles, this was good news for them. God had a plan for them to be saved. Salvation was not just for the Jews. This was the mystery that Paul spoke about in other letters, and this would be much appreciated by those in Rome.

(Rom 1:14-16) “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. {15} So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. {16} 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.”

Many times, we think of the gospel message in simple terms of: 1) God’s Plan, 2) Man’s Problem, 3) God’s Solution, 4) Man’s Response. Many of us use the Roman’s Road to Salvation when sharing the gospel with people. We tell them in Romans 3:23 that all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. We tell them from Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death, and that the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Rom 3:23) “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

(Rom 6:23) “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We share with people that in order to be saved we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for our sins and was raised from the dead, and we must confess Him as our Lord. This simple gospel presentation all comes from Romans.

(Rom 10:9-10) “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; {10} for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

In Chuck Swindoll’s overview of Paul’s letter to the Romans, he said, “*The primary theme running through Paul’s letter to the Romans is the revelation of God’s righteousness in His plan for salvation, what the Bible calls the gospel.*”<sup>1</sup>

(Rom 1:16–17) “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.”

*“Paul showed how human beings lack God’s righteousness because of our sin (1–3), receive God’s righteousness when God justifies us by faith (4–5), demonstrate God’s righteousness by being transformed from rebels to followers (6–8), confirm His righteousness when God saves the Jews (9–11), and apply His righteousness in practical ways throughout our lives (12–16).”*

Chuck’s understanding of the gospel message is much broader than our common understanding. Many scholars agree with Chuck Swindoll, and believe the key verse of the entire book is verse 17, “where the righteous man shall live by faith.” In this light, salvation is not just a one-time prayer where you enter the kingdom, but it is the beginning of a journey of faith where our lives are transformed and we live by faith.

(Rom 1:17) “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.”

Over the next few months we will be looking at Paul’s gospel presentation, and how we, the saints in Rome, who are beloved and righteous, are to live our lives by faith.

## Conclusion and Applications

There are many applications in this introduction to Paul’s letter to the Romans. First, we should be constantly trying to connect with people. Find ways of taking an interest in them, and how you can impart to them. It may not be a spiritual gift, it may just be a gift of service, or a gift of kindness, or some other gift. It may be to pray for people and to let them know that you are praying for them. It may be telling people that you long to spend time with them. That makes people feel special, that someone else values them and wants to spend time with them. As a church, we want to find ways to connect with those around us.

Paul was always looking to bear fruit. We know that God is glorified when we bear much fruit. How is your fruitfulness? Are you bearing fruit? Are you planning and praying for opportunities to obtain fruit? Paul planned and prayed about obtaining fruit.

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Swindoll, <https://insight.org/resources/bible/the-pauline-epistles/romans>

Paul wanted to have some mutual encouragement by fellowshiping with these saints in Rome. Are you part of a local church where people are encouraging one another. I believe the Connection Church is to be a place where people connect with God and with one another. One of the things that connects people to one another is mutual encouragement. If you are not part of a church body, pray about connecting with the Connection Church of Rome. If you are already part of the Connection Church, are you encouraging others. Are you considering how to stimulate others to love and good deeds?

Finally, are you eager to preach the gospel? That does not mean that you have to do it on Sunday morning to a large group. Preaching or sharing the gospel may be with your neighbor next door. It may be with the grocery clerk where you shop. It may be with another person at a soccer or baseball game. It may be with a co-worker. It may be with the plumber that you had to call this week. How is your attitude about sharing the gospel? Are you eager to share the gospel with people? If not, ask God to give you an eagerness to share with others. Ask Him for boldness, and for opportunities.

Let's pray.

“Father God, thank You for Paul's letter to the Romans and to us. Father, help us be doers of the word, not merely hearers who delude themselves. Help us learn to be great connectors of people. Help us connect others with you. Help us to connect with others. Help us learn to pray for people and impart to them whatever gifts we have. Help us to learn to live righteous lives of faith as we study the book of Romans. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Introduction** (Rom 1:8-17)

1. **Prayer** (Rom 1:8-10, Phil 1:3-5, 1 Cor 1:4, Col 1:3-4, Ps 100:4, Matt 6:9, 1 Thess 5:16-18, Ps 50:23)
  
2. **Purpose** (Rom 1:11-13, 1 Cor 14:4-5, 1 Cor 14:12, Rom 1:12, Heb 10:24-25, Rom 1:13, Pr 16:9, Rom 1:1, 1:9, 1:15-16, 16:25, Col 1:28, Rom 16:13)
  
3. **Preaching** (Rom 1:14-17, Rom 3:23, 6:23, 10:9-10)

**Conclusion and Applications**