

CCLEB SERMON

NOTES

SUNDAY JUNE 14, 2026
ROMANS 1:8-17

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THE GOSPEL THAT GATHERS US



Has anyone that loves you ever tried to persuade you to change your thinking and therefore change your behavior?

My dad loves me. I am sure of that. In 1997 Sheri and I bought a house up on N. 7th street. We loved it, but our mortgage interest was high. We struggled financially like most young couples and my dad more than once suggested a refinance to get a better interest rate. At first, I ignored him but when he told me again, and explained the process to me, I was then persuaded and refinanced.

In love my dad succeeded in persuading me to change my thinking about my loan and therefore change my behavior - meaning going from a high interest loan to a lower interest loan. I was receptive to my dad's persuasion because I knew he loved me.

In today's lesson in Romans the apostle Paul out of love is intending to persuade Roman Christians to change their thinking and therefore change their behavior.

Romans 1:8-17

Paul is writing to the Christian church in Rome. His letter is a deliberate argument intended to persuade the readers to change their behavior. Paul wants the Roman Christians to embrace one name, Jesus, and one unified gospel that brings Jews and Gentiles together in Christ.

To accomplish that, this letter uses an argument structure that looks like this:



If you are curious about what went into letter writing check out the sermon notes.

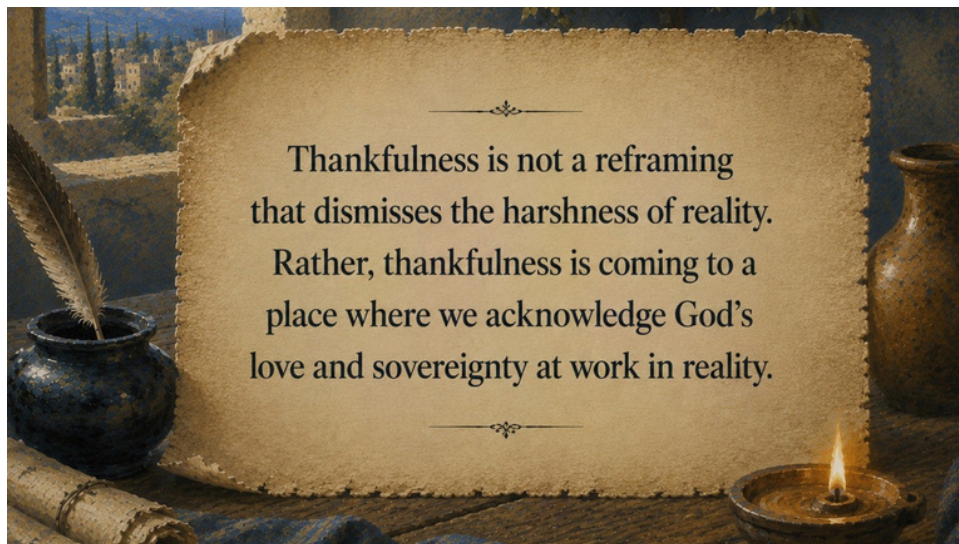
Now let’s go back to **Romans 1**. Last week in **Romans 1:1-7** Paul established his spiritual credibility and respect - this was his “Ethos”. Paul needed to give them a reason to hear him out.

Here’ a summary of what he said. That he Paul, is a bond-servant of Jesus, he is an “apostle” who was sent out by God, and he is “set apart for the gospel”. Meaning preaching and teaching the gospel is what drives his life, his purpose.

In the next part of the letter our passage today, Paul wants the recipients to know how much he loves them. For his persuasion to be received, he needs to connect with them emotionally and win their goodwill. Then, with spiritual credibility and expressed love in place, he delivers the thesis for the whole letter in **verses 16-17**.

Let’s look at Paul’s expressions of love for the Roman believers in **verses 8-15**. In these verses we are going to see five ways Paul expresses his love.

In **Verse 8** we see the first one. Paul is thankful for all of them. This reveals both Paul’s heart and thinking. To be thankful for someone or something means you hold them in a certain place of respect and honor. It means that you choose to be thankful for them rather than being critical or condemning.



For example - as we talked about in **Genesis 50** when Jacob died, loss and process of grief is hard. My mentor once told me that thankfulness is the resting place of grief. As hard as the grief journey is, the resting place of grief is thankfulness—the ability to see and acknowledge God’s love and sovereignty at work in reality.

So let's talk about thankfulness in a harsh reality. About ten years ago Sheri and I were hit head on in our lane, in front of Boscov's. We were not hurt, and we were thankful to God for his protection.



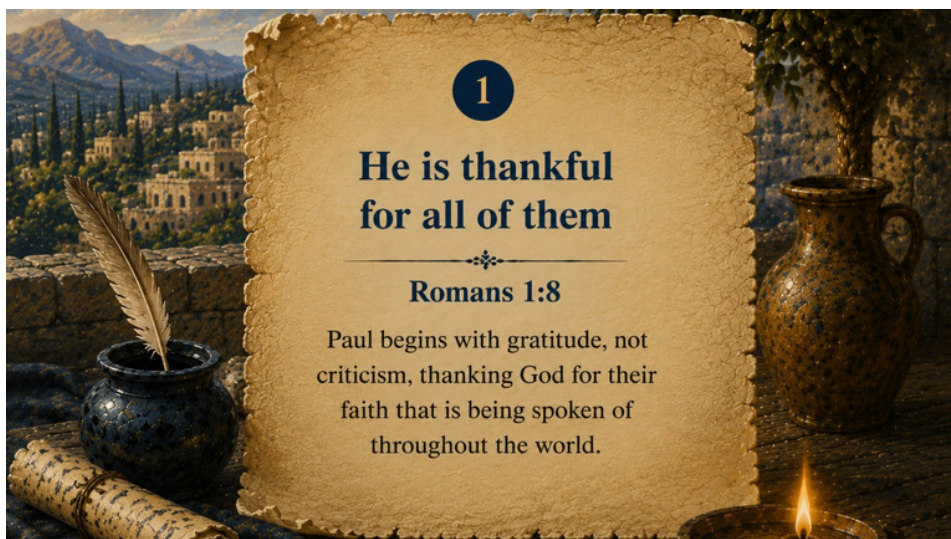
I don't remember in the moment having an attitude of thankfulness towards the driver. But overtime I saw God's love and sovereignty at work in that harsh situation. Today, I am thankful for him. I'm a more cautious driver, and just recounting this incident encouraged me to pray for him.

In the moment, it is hard to be thankful—like when your phone takes an unexpected dive to the bottom of the Juniata River. That may or may not have happened to me this week. But now, other opportunities have opened that I may not have had if my phone had not gone for a swim. I am thankful.

What Paul is thankful for about the Romans is that their faith was so strong meaning their testimonies of God's faithfulness through hard things were told and retold as encouragement "all over the world". Even though the divisions in the church were a black eye for Jesus, Paul is still thankful for them.

And don't miss in **verse 8** that Paul says he is thankful for all of them, both Jew and Gentile that are divided. Paul is intentional that he is thankful for all of them. One church, under one name.

The first way Paul expresses his love for them is that he is thankful.



The second way Paul expresses his love for them is by praying for them often. **Verse 9.** Paul saying that he prays for the Roman Christians often is not a one-off. Paul was effective in ministry because he was a man of prayer. There are more than 25 references in Paul's thirteen letters to him praying for the people he is writing to or has worked with.

Prayer is so important to Paul that he writes exhortations about praying like “pray without ceasing”. **1 Thessalonians 5:17 NASB**- Yes that’s hyperbole for emphasis- but it makes the point about the practice of praying regularly.

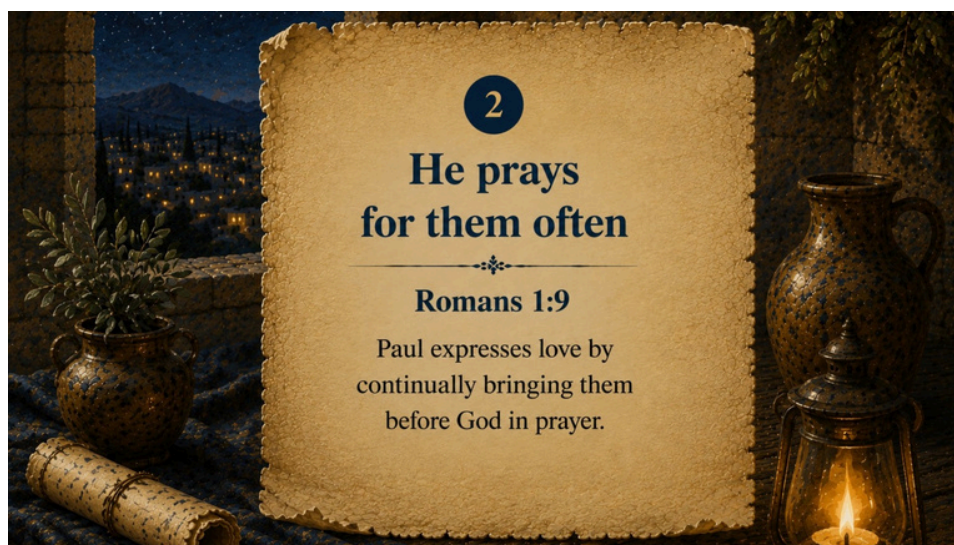
Paul, the bondservant of Jesus, would have learned praying from his master Jesus! Jesus’ prayer life was recorded in detail by the gospel writers and they described things like:



Other descriptions portray Jesus praying at his baptism, praying before and after feeding the 5000, before Peter’s confession, at the transfiguration, at Lazarus tomb.. etc.. The gospel writers record 15 distinct times Jesus prayed.

And what we learn from both Jesus and Paul is that prayer is a defining feature of the faithful life serving God. Is that true for you?

Paul expresses his love for the Roman believers by praying for them.



In verse 10 we see Paul expressing his love by “longing to be with them”. When I’m away from my wife – like when she is visiting our grandson in Ohio – I eventually get mopey... missing my wife and fill my time up with busyness.

Paul is expressing a genuine desire to be with the Roman Christians. He expresses similar sentiments to the Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, and Philemon. This shows he genuinely felt a deep connection with them. The churches were not just projects. They were people he loved, prayed for, and longed for.

So the third way Paul expresses his love for the Romans is he longs to be with them.



In **verses 11-12** we see another way Paul expresses his love for them. Paul longs to see the mutual spiritual benefit of the relationship. Let me explain - and this requires knowing how Paul understood the word "church".

The Greek word for "church"- ekklesia - that Paul so regularly uses has two parts. The first part means "called" and the second part means "to gather or assemble together".



Before Christians ever used the word "church," the Greeks used ecclesia to describe an assembly of citizens called to gather for the business of the city. In Athens, when the herald summoned the citizens, they came together as the ecclesia to deliberate, vote, and act on behalf of the people.

In Ephesus, the riotous gathering in the arena is described by the author of Acts - Luke as ecclesia/church for that rioting assembly of people.

So when Paul uses the word "church" for the people of God, he is not first describing a building or a social event on a calendar. He is describing a people called by God and gathered under the authority of Christ for His purposes.

And what are Christ's purposes for the church? One of the main benefits of a healthy church is mutual spiritual benefit. When a person confesses sin before a holy God and receives Jesus' payment on the cross as payment for sin, God, in His love, gives His own Spirit to indwell that person. That Spirit brings eternal life, and with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit come spiritual gifts, as **Romans 12** and **1 Corinthians 12** teach.

The purpose of those spiritual gifts is for the benefit of other believers, to bless them, encourage them, to build them up. **1 Corinthians 12:7**

So in Jesus' brilliant design of the church, when you and I are together and both in the Spirit, I am blessed, encouraged, built up by your spiritual gifts, and you are blessed, encouraged, built up by mine.

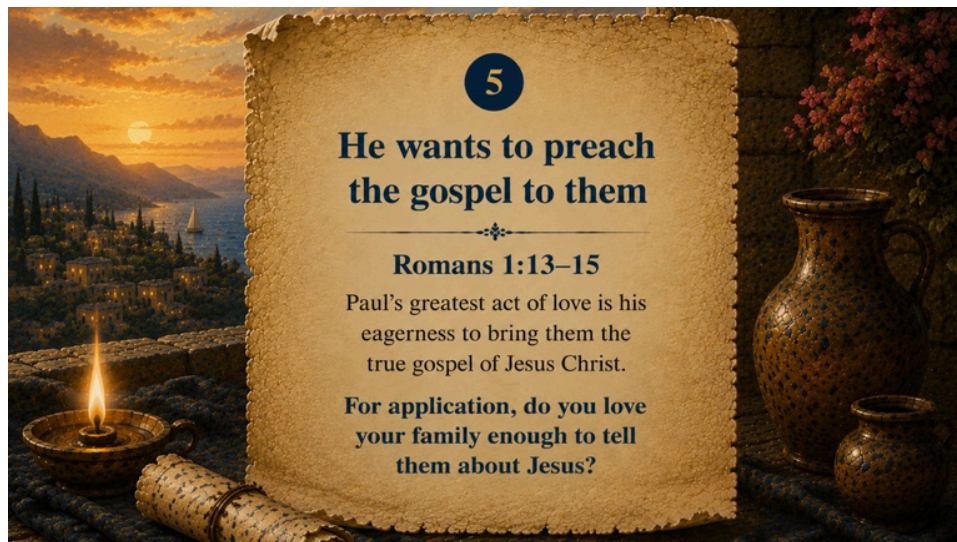
This is what Paul is talking about in **Romans 1:11-12**. And where there is a healthy church then God's Kingdom, the gospel can advance. Specifically, Paul wants the church in Rome to be healthy, not divided so they can support Christ's kingdom advancing to Spain.

So the fourth way Paul expresses his love for the gathered Christians in Rome is that he desires mutual spiritual benefit. They will be blessed by his spiritual gift, and he will be blessed by theirs.



In **verses 13-15**, there is one more way Paul expresses his love for them, and this is the most important one. Paul loves them enough that he wants to come to them and preach the gospel. By this point, about six years before he dies as a martyr, Paul has preached the gospel from Arabia and Judea all the way over to Asia Minor and Greece, but he has not yet ministered in Rome, even though he was a Roman citizen.

Paul wants the Romans to receive from him the most important expression of love he can give—the true gospel of Jesus Christ. The true gospel does not teach division. The true gospel gathers all believers under one name, Jesus, and into one gospel.



Before we look at the thesis—Paul's main point in verses 16-17, describing the true gospel—let's fill in some context.

Roman society often viewed Greek culture and thinking as refined and civilized. Those outside that cultural world were often dismissed as "barbarians." To many Romans, Jews were barbarians.

To the Jews, the Romans were Gentiles, and many believed Gentiles needed to take on Jewish practices like circumcision, feast days, and purifications. So how was Paul going to unify the Roman Christians under one name?

Paul starts his argument with this statement. This is his thesis of this book. **Verses 16-17.**

Note in **verse 16** the gospel about the Messiah is the power of God for everyone, both Jew and Gentile. One name.

Verse 17 follows that statement by telling us that everyone is made right in God's sight by this one way. There is only one way for all people to be made right with God: through faith in Jesus. Not by becoming more Hellenistic. Not by becoming more Jewish. Simply through faith in Jesus.

And to emphasize that it is by faith "from start to finish" - not works, Paul quotes **Habakkuk 2:4 NASB** "But the righteous one will live by faith".

One name—Jesus. One gospel from Jesus. One way to be made right in God's sight—faith in Jesus. All people of every nation, tribe, people, and tongue, from every level of society, unified under Jesus.

Revelation 7:9-10 provides a picture of what that beautiful scene looks like. I cannot wait to see that! My dear beautiful people of CCLeb you are that picture on a micro level.. thank you- your faith in Jesus Christ alone is a gift to me.

So let me summarize where we have been today in this passage for your meditation and application.

Paul is about to teach the Roman Christians the most important truth about the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he wants them to know how much he loves them so his argument will be received. So Paul expresses his love for the recipients of his letter in five ways.



My prayer is that you reflect on those five regarding the relationships God has put in your life.

And let me close with this story. In Wittenberg in the early 1500s, there was a monk named Martin Luther who desperately wanted to be right with God.



He was not casual about spiritual things. He was a monk, a scholar, and a teacher of Scripture. He prayed, fasted, confessed, and worked hard, but he still had no settled peace.

The phrase that troubled him most was Paul's phrase in **Romans 1:17**, "the righteousness of God." Luther later said he hated that phrase because he understood it as the righteousness by which a holy God condemns sinners.

So when Luther read **Romans 1:17**, he did not first hear good news. He heard a verdict. If righteousness is what God demands from sinners, then what sinner can stand?

But as he studied Paul's words, the light broke through. Luther came to see that Paul was not speaking only of a righteousness God demands, but of a righteousness God gives through faith in Christ.

Not "earn this and live," but "the righteous one will live by faith." Not works. Not religious achievement. Faith in Jesus.

Luther later described that discovery as feeling as if the gates of paradise had opened before him.

And church, that is exactly what Paul is teaching us in **Romans 1:16-17**. There is one gospel, one power of God for salvation, one way for Jew and Gentile to be made right with God: faith in Jesus Christ.

The gospel that opened Luther's eyes is the same gospel that gathers us today under one name—Jesus.

Because in the gospel, the righteousness we could never produce is the very righteousness God reveals and provides through His Son.

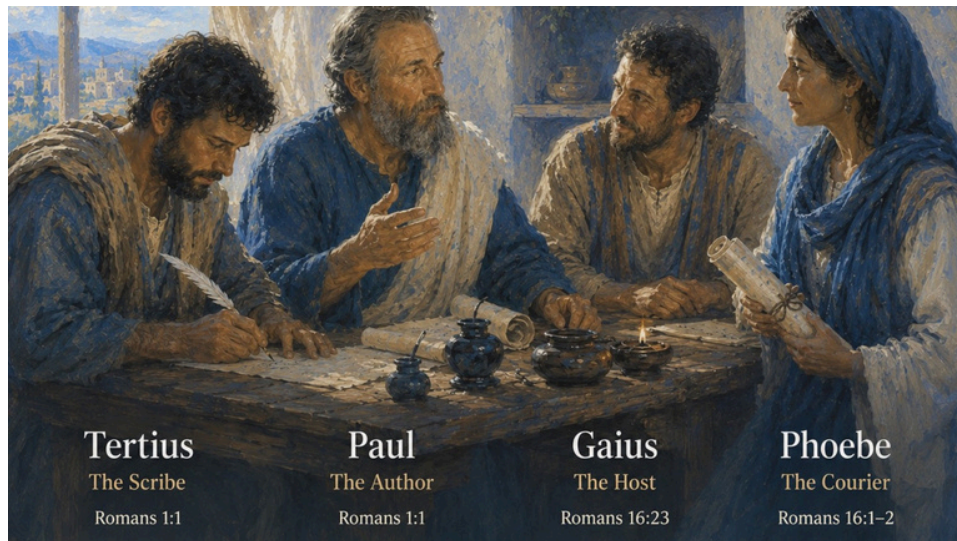
So, the great question is not, "Have I tried hard enough?" "Have I cleaned myself up enough?" "Am I religious enough?"

The great question is this: Have I believed the gospel? Have I trusted in Jesus Christ? Have I received by faith the righteousness that God gives?

BONUS

CONTENT:

1st Century Letters Letters were a big deal in Paul's day. They were often written by professional writers or scribes, called amanuenses, who took the author's thoughts or dictation and composed them carefully on papyrus. For Romans, we know from **Romans 16:22** that the scribe was Tertius



Of the 14,000 letters and fragments archaeologists have recovered from the Greco-Roman world, Randolph Richards says they averaged about 87 words each. Paul's letter to the Romans, at roughly 7,100 words, is among the longest. Historians estimate this letter took about 50 pages of papyrus in its final form. Paul would likely have kept at least one copy for himself.

For this letter, many believe, Phoebe, mentioned in **Romans 16:1-2** was the courier who carried the letter to Rome. We also know from **Romans 16:23** that Paul was staying with Gaius when he wrote it.

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5. Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection. E. Randolph Richards
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