

Summary

In Romans 1:8-17, we encounter a powerful introduction to what many consider the most theologically rich letter in the New Testament. This passage invites us into Paul's heart as he expresses gratitude, reveals his prayer life, and unveils the essence of the gospel itself. What stands out immediately is Paul's emphasis on gratitude as a foundational spiritual practice—not just a polite nicety, but an antidote to the spiritual poisons we ingest daily from our culture, media, and circumstances. When we begin with thanksgiving, we position ourselves to receive God's truth with open hearts. The passage also challenges our modern understanding of faith as something we possess, like an object in our pocket, and reframes it as an active, living verb—something we do, walk in, and continually practice. Perhaps most compelling is Paul's declaration that he is 'not ashamed of the gospel,' which carries profound weight when we consider the social cost of faith in his context and ours. The gospel Paul preaches isn't merely a ticket from hell to heaven; it's the power of God for complete salvation—healing our relationships with God, transforming our daily walk, and covering us with divine righteousness. This passage reminds us that faith isn't static but dynamic, that the gospel connects the entire biblical story from the Old Testament to Christ, and that walking by faith is a lifelong journey of discovery, growth, and transformation.

Scripture References from the Sermon

Explicitly Mentioned References:

1. Romans 1:8-17 - Main passage of the sermon
2. 1 Corinthians 12 - Spiritual gifts
3. 1 Corinthians 14 - Spiritual gifts
4. 1 Corinthians 13 - The "love chapter" (sandwiched between chapters 12 and 14)
5. Colossians 3:11 - "Here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all"
6. Luke 12:8-9 - "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before God's angels. But the one who denies me before men will be denied before God's angels"
7. Luke 22 - The Last Supper narrative (read during communion)

Alluded to or Referenced:

8. Matthew 22:37 / Mark 12:30 / Luke 10:27 - "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength"
9. Romans 1:1 - Paul as a "doulos" (slave/bondservant) of Christ
10. Jeremiah 20:9 - God's word like fire in the bones (referenced regarding the prophet, though the sermon says "Elijah" - likely meant Jeremiah)
11. Acts (general reference) - Paul's journey to Rome as a prisoner
12. Isaiah 53:5 - "By his stripes we are healed" (alluded to during communion prayer)

Discussion Questions

- Paul describes gratitude as an antidote to the mental poisons we ingest daily from our culture, media, and relationships. What specific 'poisons' do you struggle with most, and how might practicing gratitude counteract them in your life?
- The sermon emphasizes that faith is a verb, not a noun—something we actively live rather than passively possess. In what areas of your life are you treating faith like something you 'have in your pocket' rather than something you actively do?
- Paul says he serves God 'in his spirit' by preaching, acknowledging it's possible to preach without the Spirit. How can we discern whether our service to God—whether in teaching, helping, or leading—is truly Spirit-led or merely done in our own strength?
- The pastor mentions that even the Apostle Paul wasn't always certain about God's will, which can be comforting when we struggle with decision-making. How does this reality change your approach to seeking God's guidance in uncertain situations?
- Paul speaks of mutual benefit in the teacher-student relationship, where both parties receive and give. Who in your life challenges you spiritually in ways that make you grow, and how are you intentionally positioning yourself for such mutual exchanges?

- The sermon highlights that salvation costs us everything even though it's a free gift. What does it practically mean for you to surrender 'all that you are, all that you own, all that you want' to Christ?
- Paul declares he is 'not ashamed of the gospel' in a culture where shame is used as a weapon. In what contexts or relationships do you find yourself most tempted to hide or minimize your faith, and what would it look like to boldly acknowledge Christ there?
- The righteousness of God is described as being revealed 'from faith to faith,' suggesting an ongoing, dynamic process. How have you seen your understanding of God's righteousness deepen as you've continued to walk by faith over time?
- Paul had a robust, multi-faceted prayer life that included prayers for opportunities, people, and God's will. How would you characterize your own prayer life, and what aspects of Paul's approach might you need to incorporate?
- The sermon mentions that we can preach the gospel using only the Old Testament, as Paul did, because it builds the foundation for Christ. How well do you understand the Old Testament's connection to the gospel, and what steps could you take to grow in this area?