

# DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME // WHERE IS YOUR GRATITUDE?  
MARCH 7, 2021

GRACE  
FELLOWSHIP

**Discussion Starter:** What is your understanding of God's grace, and how has His grace impacted your life?

**Key Passage:** "To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup> First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. <sup>9</sup> For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you <sup>10</sup> always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you." (Romans 1:7-10)

Let's note three important truths that grow out of this text:

**1. Paul reminds the Roman believers that they are loved by God, set apart by God for special purposes, and are recipients of God's grace and peace.**

- **"Love"** (v.7a) – The key to understanding God's love is to understand that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). This means that God does more than simply feel or express love; love permeates God's nature and essence—God is love! This means that God loves us not because of who we are, but because of who He is. It means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more or to make Him love us less—He loves us right now as much as He could possibly ever love us. This does not mean that God approves of everything we do, but it means that God's love is not conditioned upon our performance—He loves us on our good days and our bad days; He loves us when we feel it and when we don't.

**Discuss:** How does the reality that God loves you unconditionally affect you?

- **"Saints"** (v.7b) – A "saint" is not a perfect person; rather, a saint is someone who has been "set apart" by God for His special purposes.

**Discuss:** How does the fact that God has set you apart for His special purpose make you feel?

- **"Grace"** (v.7c) – Many people think of God as a tyrant, or an unjust judge, or a distant, impersonal force no one can relate to. But Paul reminds us that God is our *Father* (v.7) who wants the best for us and pours undeserved favor into our lives.
- **"Peace"** (v.7d) – Paul uses this "grace – peace" greeting in several of his letters. Interestingly he never switches the order to "peace – grace." In order for us to experience peace, we must first experience grace!

**Discuss:** Why must we experience grace in our lives before we can experience peace in our lives?

## 2. Paul thanks God for the faith of the Romans, which is proclaimed around the world.

Thankfulness permeated the heart of Paul. In nearly all of his letters, Paul followed his greeting with heartfelt words of gratitude for his fellow believers: “*I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you...*” (v.8a).

Paul mentions he is thankful particularly for their faith because their “*faith is proclaimed in all the world*” (v.8b). Apparently, everyone everywhere knew of God’s work in and through His people in Rome.

**Discuss:** Who are some fellow Christians you are thankful for—especially because of their influential faith?

**Discuss:** What do you think are some characteristics of an influential faith?

**Discuss:** Thankfulness is often mentioned in the Bible as a key element of prayer. For example, see Philippians 4:6-7. Why do you think gratitude should be a big part of our praying?

## 3. Paul prays constantly but submissively for the opportunity to go to Rome.

In v.9, Paul refers to praying without ceasing (also see 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Of course, this does not mean that Paul prayed every moment of every waking hour. It means that Paul stayed in a constantly “prayerful” state and also frequently spoke to God in actual, dedicated prayer.

**Discuss:** How would you teach a new Christian to pray without ceasing?

One of the things Paul prayed without ceasing for was the opportunity to go to Rome: “*asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you*” (v.10). However, he only wants this to happen if it is God’s will. Paul understood that God was in control, and that’s the way Paul wanted it.

**Discuss:** Why is the prayer to God “Not my will, but Your will be done” so important in a Christian’s prayer life?

**Discuss:** How would you help a new Christian understand that God’s will for our lives is always better than our own will for our lives?

### **For Further Study**

“If we cannot change God’s mind, why should we pray?” article at [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

*Praying God’s Will for Your Life* by Stormie Omartian

“The Power of a Thankful Heart” article at [www.crosswalk.com](http://www.crosswalk.com)

*Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* by Timothy Keller