

Romans #7

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is proclaimed through the whole world" (Rm. 1:8).

Often, but not always, Paul expressed to the recipients of his epistles those things for which he was thankful to God for them. He thanked God for that the Corinthians had been richly endowed with all utterance and knowledge (1 Cor. 1:4f). He thanked God for the Philippians and for *"their fellowship in the furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now"* (Phil. 1:3-5). He thanked God for the Colossians for the faith he had heard they had and for the love which they had for all the saints (Col. 1:3). He thanked God for the Thessalonians because from them had *"sounded out the word of the Lord ..."* (1 Thess. 1:2, 8). He thanked God for Timothy and for the unfeigned faith that he was certain dwelt in him (2 Tim. 1:3-5). And he was thankful for the Romans and that their faith was proclaimed throughout the whole world.

It is great when brethren like Thessalonians and Philippi have the fervent desire to spread the gospel far and near! That was the spirit of Christ and he sought to enter every village of Galilee and Judaea to speak of His kingdom. That ought to be the spirit of Christians today. There are far too few whose vision of souls extend beyond the confines of the local congregation. Many (most?) either want to "sit" on their resources or spend it all on themselves. And the Lord's command, *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,"* falls largely on deaf ears. What will be our response in the judgment when He asks us why we did not do what we could?

However, it was not the Romans' evangelistic fervor in spreading the Faith (although we are certain they were zealous in that) for which Paul was thankful. It was their own deep conviction -- their own faith. Just precisely what is was that commended the Romans' faith to the whole world is not specified. Still, if two of Paul's dear friends who were from Rome was examples of what he had in mind, we can have a good idea! Those two friends were Aquilla and Priscilla. Paul met this couple in Corinth on his second missionary journey. *"And after these things he departed from Athens and came to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquilla, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome ..."* (Acts 18:1f.) What the exact reason was which moved Claudius to expel all Jews from his capitol is uncertain but many believe the

controversy was between Jews and the raging point was as to whether Jesus of Nazareth was Messiah or not. The Acts account does not indicate that this couple had been converted by Paul, implication is that they already were Christians when they met in Corinth. One thing is certain, the faith of Priscilla and Aquilla was an undaunted one. They were Paul's loyal supporters through the years who had "*for my (Paul) life laid down their own neck*" although the particular incident in which they had hazarded their lives for Paul's is not known -- it could have been on more than one occasion given the many crises which haunted the apostle (Rm. 16:3). They went with Paul to Ephesus where they were vanguards for the fruitful three years Paul would later spend in that city. They met eloquent Apollos there and carefully imparted to him the knowledge he lacked concerning Jesus (Acts 18:28). When the way opened for them to return to Rome, they did and were very active in the work there. When for some unknown reason they left Rome and returned to Ephesus, in Paul's second letter to Timothy they are greeted (2 Tim. 4:19). Without doubt they lent encouragement to Timothy in his work just as they had jeopardized their lives to protect Paul years before. If other Roman brethren manifested the same faith and diligence as did these two members of that church (which obviously they did), is it any wonder that Paul should thank God that "*their faith was proclaimed through the whole world*"?!

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