

Sermon Outlines

Paul's Autobiography in Romans

Readings

Romans 1:13-15; 9:1-3

Introduction

I expect most of those who work for God face the inward questioning struggle of :

- a) What is the cause of the ineffectiveness of the ministry the Lord had committed to me?
- b) The yearning for victorious living getting beyond normal Christianity, laying hold on eternal life.
- c) To consider this more carefully, I began to re-read Romans.

Romans

Normally the book is considered in the gospel level, the need, way and results of the gospel in the life of an individual.

- a) In this consideration we will not muse on how the book is a presentation of the gospel, but as the autobiography of a man unveiling his own spiritual development and the practicality of the gospel in daily life.
- b) For instance, when I decide to bake a cake, I have my recipe and the methods etc., so cold and clinical. Then I begin to make the cake and understand why the ingredients must be at room temperature, and then added to the mixture. No longer mere data, now a reality.

The life of Paul can be categorized into three groupings

- 1) His pre-salvation days
- 2) His present personal struggles and spiritual burdens for others
- 3) His personal experiences

His pre-salvation days

I am not aware of anywhere Paul speaks about his father's family or his peers. It is an often disputed question if he was married. His family, when He said that for the sake of Christ he lost all things (Phil. 3:8), did that include his parental family? Being a Jew and then giving it up and becoming a Christian would have automatically meant excommunication from his family. Yet, in two places there are hints to those who were saved before he was, for instance, "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me" (Rom. 16:7); or, "Salute Herodion my kinsman" (Rom. 16:11). If I take it that these were part of his greater family, what tension there must have been in that home, and since they were in Christ before him, how they must have prayed for him but perhaps with a questioning spirit.

He was very much opposed to the gospel for he not only stood and watched over the clothes of those who stoned Stephen (Acts 7:58; 8:1), but also was intent on finding saints, even as far away as Damascus, to bring them bound unto Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2).

His post salvation personal struggles and spiritual burdens for others

When an individual accepts the Lord as Saviour, there is no way they are aware of the struggles which lie ahead. We were told to read a chapter a day from our Bibles and pray, but little did we know the conflicts within as the two natures sought supremacy. Perhaps for long enough we just expected to develop automatically and accepted

Sermon Outlines

Paul's Autobiography in Romans

the constant failings and sins as part of normal living. Thank God Paul was both an idealist and a realist and in Romans he opens up about his personal struggles and experiences.

I perceive the first struggle in pre-salvation days was after the death of Stephen as the Holy Spirit strove with him, pricking his conscience, and his suppression of the agitating thoughts. It was spiritual warfare with everything within him rebelling against the new understandings.

- i) How could he, a Pharisee, son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), view himself as a sinner? He was a good living clean living person but had to learn that he was a religious clean living sinner. Furthermore, even if he had never sinned he was still under condemnation like the Israelite lad (Ex. 11:5; 12:12) who was not under condemnation due to what he had done, but due to birth, and that is something he could not change. What was needed was a new birth, a new beginning. He had to realize not only did he live in a world under condemnation, but he personally was under condemnation because of activity (Rom. 2:1-3:19) and birth (Rom. 5:12-19).

His personal experiences

Upon salvation Saul, as he was then known, had to learn that spiritual development was not passive, he had a major part to fulfill. It was not a bed of roses but a lifelong struggle ever finding himself wanting to do the right but doing the wrong. Having a set of rules would not help but simply show him how often he was breaking the law, and no matter how hard he tried, he could not be what He knew he ought to be (Rom. 7:14-21).

- a) Furthermore, there was ever the danger of compromise as Israel did in the beginning of Judges (Jud. 1:21, 27, 29, 30, 31), or to be lax as the disciples in the garden (Matt. 26:45). It was not an easy pathway which would end in a short time, but would last as long as he lived.

He then had to learn in a very real way that the decisions we make in life, of which there are three, are interconnected decisions each with far reaching results:

- a) In the geographical decisions of life, a decision must be made about where the Lord wants us to serve. Paul had come to the end of the road, so to speak, and the question was, "Where do we go from here?" Ought we go to Rome, or Spain? Then God gave the answer in the vision of the man from Macedonia.
- b) There are decisions to be made due to the circumstances of life. As Paul considered what had happened in Jerusalem before, should he go there again? There were dangers there possibly awaiting him. Ought he go to the the major cities and pray God to let the gospel spread from them, and what if the people in the major cities reject the message, ought he then go to the hamlet, and villages? Should the people in the hamlets not also hear the gospel?
- c) Things changed so quickly, for he had wanted to go to Rome before but things did not work out for him (Rom. 1:13). What if, despite his earnest desire to go, the door did not open? What ought he to do?
 - i) These are decisions we all have to make.

He was a man who took the message very seriously believing its truths and warnings

- 1) To a greater or lesser degree every believer has an interest or a concern for the unsaved. To Paul, the reality of eternity, of a heaven to gain, and a Hell to shun was very real. These were not just words, they were verities. Due to his unswerving belief in the power of the Gospel and the responsibility God had placed on him to proclaim the gospel, he could say, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16).
- 2) I daresay there are few who had his passion for soul winning for as I listen to his words and what He would be willing to endure, it shames me. He writes, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing

Sermon Outlines
Paul's Autobiography in Romans

me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:1-3).

- 3) He was a man who kept deep fellowship with God and expected blessing, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Rom. 1:9-15).
- 4) He saw the wrath of God on various levels:
 - a) On people while still alive (Rom. 1:18-32)
 - b) As a future judgment (Rom. 2:5)
 - c) The dreadful reality is, when an individual lives under the wrath of God they will die under His wrath and eternally know the horrors of being the object of God's righteous fury.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia