

FRIENDS WHO GO THE DISTANCE

Making and Maintaining Gospel Friendships

Romans Series
PBC 2025

Text: Romans 1:8-15

This morning's text reveals the beauty of an unlikely friendship that Paul desires and God cultivates between him and the Roman Christians, most of whom he has not yet met in person. By the end of the story, Paul and his companions have inflicted immense damage on the kingdom of darkness, and many have joined them as true, transformed followers of Jesus Christ!

What establishes and sustains a friendship like this? How do such friendships develop? How are they maintained over time? How are they nurtured and upheld despite the rough edges and personal imperfections we all share, even as Christians?

Friendships that go the distance are:

I. Built on the _____ (1:8)

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

A. Look for people who have _____ the Gospel

B. Look for people whose lives are being _____ by the gospel.

C. Look for people who _____ for the Gospel.

II. Established through _____ (1:9-10)

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

- **Pray** _____ – “God is my witness” (1:9)
- **Pray** _____ – “whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son” (1:9)
- **Pray** _____ – “that without ceasing I mention you” (1:9)
- **Pray** _____ – “always in my prayers” (1:10)
- **Pray** _____ – “asking that somehow by God's will” (1:10)
- **Pray** _____ – “I may now at last succeed in coming to you.” (1:10).

Which brings us to the important questions we must ask and answer:
“Why do I really want such friendships? What is my true heart motive?”

III. Motivated by Spiritual _____ (1:11-12)

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

A. To Establish a _____ in Them (v. 11)

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you

B. To be Encouraged by a _____ between Them (v. 12)

that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

IV. Directed to a _____ Purpose (1:13-15)

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

A. Gospel _____ in Believers (v. 13)

B. Gospel _____ to Unbelievers (vv. 14-15)

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Conclusion: Life Lessons

- Paul sought after friendships that were built on the gospel.
- He prayed fervently and faithfully for such friendships and for his friends.
- He worked hard to build and establish his friends' faith in their understanding, conformity, and commitment to the gospel.
- He oriented and developed his friendships around a gospel purpose.
- And God granted Paul what he desired and prayed for among the Roman Christians! God will do the same for you if you strive to cultivate the kind of gospel friendships that Paul describes in Romans 1:8-15.

But this will require an honest answer to three questions:

1. Do I really want these kinds of gospel-centered friendships?
2. Do my current friends meet the description of the kind of gospel friendships I say I want? If not, what has to change?
3. Am I the kind of friend Paul was to his friends at Rome?