



## World Christian Fellowship

[www.wcflondon.com](http://www.wcflondon.com)  
[wcflondon@gmail.com](mailto:wcflondon@gmail.com)

### Romans 18 Serving the Lord

**Romans 1:8-9**, *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole 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 make mention of you always in my prayers,*

People serve the Lord for many reasons.

#### 1. Legalism.

They serve the Lord because they think that God wants them to earn it if they want to get into the kingdom. There are some cults that even teach it.

Some cults even say that if you do not go to the mission field for a couple of years, you will never make it.

There are people in Christianity who serve the Lord strictly because they feel bound to do that or else God will make their life miserable.

## **2. Honour**

There are people who serve the Lord for prestige sake.

They want to make a reputation.

They want to be highly esteemed.

They want to lord it over men.

They want to seek a chief seat.

They loved to have the preeminence.

## **3. Self-Righteous**

They serve the Lord because they want to be thought righteous.

They want to be thought of as holy, as godly, as religious.

## **4. Family**

There are some people who serve the Lord because of peer pressure. Everybody else is doing it and they have got to do it. Otherwise, they will not be accepted in the family.

They serve the Lord because they have been forced to do it by their parents.

## **5. Money**

They serve the Lord because they want to make loads of money.

They think it is an opportunity like business they can make it big.

They make money out of every opportunity and use the name of God for it.

They use Jesus like commodity.

There are many other reasons, but I have listed top 5 reasons.

You can serve the Lord for any reasons, but none of those is true spiritual service because all of that is external.

All these show an external kind of service. We could call it serving in the flesh, for external reasons.

Romans 1:8-15, talks about the true spiritual service.

Many of you may be serving the Lord in some capacity, in worship, teaching the children, bible class or preaching etc.

Times you may do it because it was expected of you as a routine, as a function. But times Satan comes around tempts you to shifts your focus.

We all will have to keep focusing on the Lord and fight the temptations and wrong motive which comes through Satan.

Apostle Paul gives us a glimpse of the right motives. We are reading this passage almost around 2000 years which was originally written.

There is a tenderness and a strength that just breathes its way through the letters and the words. We could sense Paul's great heart beating with love for the church he had never seen in Rome.

Paul did not find the church. He had never met with that church. This was a very, very unusual passion that he had for this church.

We tend to see Paul as a strong, resolute, determined, hard, confrontive, bold, and dynamic individual. We primarily see him as an initiator. We also see him as a brilliant, logical, intelligent and genius theologian.

But Paul also an intimate.

There is something of Paul's nature of

- tender,
- sensitive,
- loving,
- soft,
- warm, and
- gentle.

He had the zeal of the prophet.

He had the mind of the teacher.

He had the determination of the apostle.

But he had the heart of a shepherd.

He was not a paid preacher with a fee in the place of a heart. He was not a preacher with a bag of old-hat sermons in place of a passion.

He was every way a kindhearted shepherd.

Paul has already introduced the gospel in the first seven verses of Romans in a summary of what he will unfold in the 16 chapters.

Before he moves into its full explanation, which begins in the middle of verse 16, before he gets into that unfolding explanation that runs the length of the book, he wants to open his heart.

This is very most important for Paul to do that because the people in Rome do not know him.

**Why is this man whom we have never met writing us this long letter?**

**This great apostle to the Gentiles, why has he never come to our city?**

**Doesn't he care about us?**

Paul wants to answer the question of why he is writing and why he has not come.

Paul is writing because he cares so deeply about their spiritual maturity. He has not come because, although he wanted to so desperately, God has never allowed him to come.

The Romans had never met him and the only way they could get an insight into his heart is if he opened his heart to them.

In verses 8 to 16, is the apostle opening his heart to reveal the character of his service to Christ.

**V 9, *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,***

- Paul had been raised in Judaism.
- He knew the Pharisees.
- He knew the Sadducees.
- He knew the scribes.
- He knew the chief priests.
- He knew the Sanhedrin.
- He knew the externalism.
- He knew that the service was so many mechanics, activity, formality, and routine.

They served with the flesh. They served in the physical, in the external, in the superficial.

Paul grew up in a Gentile world and he knew how the priests of the pagan gods served. They served externally out of fear that if they did not do it the god would step on them and crush them. Those gods will bring calamity on their city or their town or their country. All of it was so shallow and so superficial. He had seen so much religiosity. He had seen so much false functioning in the name of religion.

Paul sums up his whole approach in the statement: "*God whom I serve with my spirit.*"

Paul is saying that his service comes from deep within himself, not from the outside/ external.

Paul's service, in the gospel of His Son.  
Paul's inner man is what motivates him.  
His inner man is what drives him.

Paul wanted to say that the motives is not like others who serve God out of legalism, honour, self-righteousness and money but his spirit.

The best way to see that beautiful phrase is as an affirmation that his whole being, his whole heart, his whole mind, his whole soul, his whole spirit was in the service that he rendered.

Paul is writing to them saying that he is sincere and genuine.

We use the word "spirit" sometimes in that same way.  
We may watch a sports team participate to pull off an amazing display of sportsmanship.

Paul never served the Lord without a wholehearted commitment. So, he distinguishes himself from the hired man.

He distinguishes himself from those whose labor was formal and outward and pretense and insincerity.

He separates himself from the traditional heathen cultic priests and the scribes and the Pharisees.

The allusion to the Holy Spirit here is irresistible.

*"I serve with my spirit."*

But his spirit had been long energized by the Holy Spirit of God.  
His service then is the real service.

The word "to serve" comes from the Greek verb **latreuō**.  
It is used in the New Testament only for religious service.  
Always for service to God!

Frequently the word is translated "worship." In the New Testament this word is translated either to serve or worship.

People think of worship as external. But the Bible says the same word that means worship also means service. The greatest worship you ever render to God is to serve Him.

Paul says I serve Him with my spirit.

**Romans 12:1**, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

Paul says that I serve with my whole spirit.

**How do you do that, Paul?**

By presenting your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

- Your body is presented as a living sacrifice.
- Your soul is not conformed to the world.
- Your mind is transformed.
- Every part of you belongs to God.
- That is your spiritual service.
- That is the way Paul served, with everything he had.

**Philippians 3:3**, *For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,*

We are not external. We worship or serve God from deep within our hearts. It is spiritual service and spiritual worship.

**Acts 27:23-25**, *For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,<sup>24</sup> saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed*

*God has granted you all those who sail with you.’<sup>25</sup> Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.*

**2 Timothy 1:3**, *I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day,*

Paul's service is an act of worship. Paul's service was deep and genuine and honest.

There is no other way to serve but with total commitment.

**2 Timothy 2:22**, *Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

If we are to serve the Lord in the right way, what does it really involve?

What are the marks of true spiritual service?

## **1. Thankful Spirit**

**V8**, *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

Paul had a thankful heart.

In every single epistle that he wrote, he expresses thanks for the ones to whom he writes, except for the Galatians. Because they had defected from the gospel and were functioning in the flesh.

All the rest begin with thanksgiving. The reason he wrote those letters was because those churches need to be corrected. But even where he saw that need and where he saw the need for instruction, he also could find something to be thankful for.

Paul had a thankful spirit.

- He was always able to see God's purposes being accomplished.
- He was always able to see God's kingdom advancing.
- He was always able to see people being saved.
- He looked for people being saved and that was his only focus.

Paul lived out an attitude of gratitude.

- Some people go through the world and all they ever find is what is wrong with everything.
- Some could see a beautiful meadow and immediately they find the manure pile.
- There are some people who just go through life negative. They just cannot find the good things.

**Why?**

Because the only good things they care about are the good things that happen to them, and they know nothing of what it is to live a life of gratitude over what God's doing for somebody else.

If it is not happening to them, it is not happening.

- Paul does not say, "Thank you, Romans."
- No, thanking the Romans would have been flattery.
- Paul does not say, "I am so thankful for what God has done for me." That would have been selfishness.
- Paul says, "I thank God (not the Romans) for what He has done (not for me but) for you."

He got just as much joy out of somebody else's success as he did his own.

If you cannot celebrate someone else success you will never have one!

Paul wrote this letter when he was in Corinth.

### **Do you know what was going on?**

The Jews were plotting to kill him. But he never lost his perspective. That happened in about every town he went into.

**Acts 23:21**, *But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath*

*that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you.”*

**Acts 20:3**, *and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.*

**Acts 20:22-24**, *And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,<sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.<sup>24</sup> But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

### **What was Paul thankful about?**

God had given them a testimony of faith that was going throughout the whole world. Their testimony was strong.

The testimony of the church in Rome was so strong that in **49 A.D., Emperor Claudius** had expelled all the Jews. **Suetonius, the Roman historian**, records that the reason Emperor Claudius threw all the Jews out is because there was trouble brewing under the influence of one named "Christos," which seems to be poor Claudius' feeble attempt at identifying Christ.

They had had a tremendous testimony.

They had stirred up the Jewish community there.  
Their testimony had gone throughout the whole world.  
Of course, that is not comprehensively the whole world, but the whole world of their purview, and the world of their living.

Superficial servers are basically thankless.

- They never get satisfied.
- They never get enough.
- They focus only on their own insatiable appetites.

You show me a thankless heart and I will always show you a proud self-centered individual.

Because even when you cannot find things in your own life to be thankful for, if you are really living the kind of life you should, you can find myriads of things that God's doing in somebody else's life.

Paul had a thankful heart even though his life was being plotted against, even though he was heading to Jerusalem where he had been warned that he would become a prisoner and perhaps lose his life. His great concern was the kingdom of God, not his own hide. So, he was thankful.

Paul was thankful in the midst of his distress because the joy came in the advance of God's kingdom, not in his own success.

**V 8, "First I thank my God."**

Pagans did not say that. There was no intimacy.

Jews did not say that. There was no intimacy.

But Paul said that because God, for Paul, was not a theological abstraction. God, for Paul, was an intimate friend.

The God whose I am and whom I serve!

There was a tremendous intimacy between himself and God.

Paul often says that, "My God."

**Philippians 1:3, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,**

**Philemon 1:4, I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers,**

Entwined with his God that his God's purposes and his God's causes and his God's ends became the source of his thanksgiving.

Even when Paul became a prisoner and was in that stinking, wretched Mamertine prison—where the city sewage system ran by the door, and after 40 prisoners were in that hole in the ground they opened the sewage and drowned the prisoners and started with the next 40—even while he was a captive in his own house in Rome and when he was writing those prison

letters, he was always filled with joy, because his joy had nothing to do with what was happening to him.

Thankful language comes from one who serves the Lord with his deep inner man.

**V8**, *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

Always the Mediator the Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 Timothy 2:5**, *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,*

**John 14:6**, *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

Jesus is the one, says the writer of Hebrews, who has opened the way so that we can boldly come into the presence of the Father to seek mercy in times of need. Apart from Jesus Christ I warn you that God would be nothing but a consuming fire. The reason He is my God is because the intimacy has been made possible by Christ.

*"I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all."*

Paul's heart was toward all of them. The man had such a big heart.

- He did not look for what was wrong with people.
- He was not picky.
- He was just thankful.

**V8, First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.**

### **What does he mean by their faith?**

The genuineness of their salvation.

The true character of their redemption.

They were a really redeemed fellowship manifesting the life and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They were right in the middle of the mouth of the Roman persecution.

Paul was so thankful.

- They had credibility,
- They had integrity.
- They lived out their faith.

### **Wouldn't it be great to be famous throughout the whole world for our faith?**

Some churches are famous for their

- Pastor,
- Architecture,
- High Ceiling,

- Stain glasses,
- Music,
- Worship,
- Money,
- Theology et.,

Wouldn't it be great to be famous for your faith throughout the whole world?

No wonder he was thankful.

### **Could you please suggest a church in my city?**

This is the email or message we get every single day?

A thankful heart is essential to true spiritual service.

If you are trying to serve the Lord without gratitude in your heart for what He has done, then you are serving in the flesh for other than proper motives.

Thankfulness is an attitude that will always find a cause, always. One who serves externally, legalistically, ritualistically, out of duty can hardly find things to be thankful for in his own life, or anybody else's.

### **Do you have a thankful heart?**

#### **Are you overwhelmed with thanksgiving?**

If you are, that will take out any bitterness or any negative thinking.

There is so much to be thankful for.

## **2. Concerned Spirit.**

While there is deep gratitude, at the same time there is concern for what is not being done.

Sure, we are thankful, but we don't just sit back and accept just because we have few things to thankful and accept numerous things which is not right.

**V 9, *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,***

The first one is negative and the second one is positive.

He just wants to cover the ground. He says, I pray for you all the time. Now, we have no way of knowing that because they do not know him.

So, Paul says that God is my witness.

Since you do not have that knowledge, I call on God. God is my witness. God knows my heart.

The spirit of true spiritual service is one of concern that issues in prayer. A concerned heart that prays. If you see needs, go to your knees about those needs. True spiritual service prays.

How many of Paul's letters begin with an indication of his concerned prayers for the readers?

Paul does it repeatedly.

Rome people whom Paul never even visited, and a church he did not even found, he says, I never stop praying for you. He never took it for granted.

The church in Rome their faith is spoken throughout the whole world then why pray?

**Paul does not say I am thankful to God, for what You have done. Finished?**

No.

Continued to pray.

**Acts 6:4**, *but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*

**1 Thessalonians 5:17**, *pray without ceasing,*

They could never know his intensity.

They could never know his concern unless he told them.

Paul calls on omniscience for verification. God, who cannot lie, God who knows the secrets of the heart, God who knows the hidden motives, let God be my witness that I pray for you and I never stop praying for you.

## **What a testimony?**

He wants them to know that his failure to visit Rome is not due to some lack of desire on his part for them, some lack of concern, and some indifference. He never stops praying for them. That is characteristic of a true-hearted servant.

**Ephesians 6:18**, *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

**What do you think the content of his prayer was?**

**What did he pray for the Romans?**

**Did he pray for their physical need?**

See some of his prayers.

**Ephesians 3:14-21**, *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>15</sup> from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,<sup>16</sup> that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,<sup>17</sup> that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,<sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—<sup>19</sup> to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.<sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or*

*think, according to the power that works in us,<sup>21</sup> to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

It is all spiritual!

**Philippians 1:9-11**, *And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,<sup>10</sup> that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,<sup>11</sup> being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

**Colossians 1:9-12**, *For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;<sup>10</sup> that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;<sup>11</sup> strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;<sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*

**2 Thessalonians 1:11-12**, *Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with*

*power, <sup>12</sup> that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Look at the prayers of Paul and the contents are all spiritual.

He prayed for their heart to be knit with the heart of God.

He prayed for their knowledge.

He prayed that they might know God's will.

He prayed for their obedience that they might do it.

He prayed for them.

We emphasize praying for individuals but there is no reason why we should not be praying for groups as well.

Paul did.

Paul served out of a true heart because he had a thankful spirit and a concerned spirit. You show me a person in a ministry who does not exhibit a positive, affirming, joyous, thankful heart and who does not spend time in constant prayer for his people and I will show you someone who serves in the flesh.

On the other hand, you show me someone whose heart is filled with thanksgiving for what he perceives God is doing and yet whose heart is so filled with concern that he is ever and always praying on behalf of his people and I will show you someone who ministers in the Spirit.

## Conclusion:

You need to examine your own heart and your own life to see if they are part of your service. That is only the beginning.

Do not want you to get so intimidated?

Paul really served with a spirit.

Down deep in his heart he was committed to serving Christ.

You know what happens when you serve this way?

Suddenly when you serve out of your spirit and God is moving, amazing things begin to happen.

Story about **Isadore the patron saint of Madrid**. 10th of May the Roman Catholic Church still celebrates the festival related to Isadore.

The one who plows with God in his heart has God for his assistant. The story is fictitious!

The principle's true.

Serve out of a pure heart and have God doing the plowing than to do it in the flesh.