

Week Eight

Conversations with God

ROMANS 15–16

READ

In these final chapters of Romans we get a glimpse not just into Paul's theology but into Paul's life. To get the full weight of these chapters, consider first a different glimpse of his life from another writing, his letter to the church in Corinth.

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? (2 Corinthians 11:23-29).

A natural question arises: Why? What drove this man? How did he persevere through all of his challenges? It's in this week's chapters we gain insight into his drive.

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known (Romans 15:20).

Paul had a mission, a calling, a great passion that propelled him to take enormous risks and persevere through grueling trials. This letter itself is a testament to his passion. He sent it ahead of what he hoped would be a personal visit. "I will go to Spain and visit you on the way," we read this week (Romans 15:28). Spain captured his attention because they'd yet to hear the good news. His visit to Rome would be on his way to continue the fulfillment of his calling, he hoped.

There is no evidence, however, that Paul ever made it to Spain. Most believe he was martyred before making it there. We do know, though, that he did make it to Rome. He was taken there by Roman guard to stand trial before Caesar. Our last view of Paul is of his work while under house arrest. Such conditions would diminish the passion of most and offer excuse enough to lay low. Not so for Paul. Scripture tells us that while under house arrest Paul's perseverance showed once again as he "boldly and without hindrance preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:31).

In your conversations with God this week, keep Paul's example in mind. Take note that in the final chapter of Romans, Paul greets no less than twenty-six people by name. This cause-driven, risk-taking, deep-thinking man was passionate about people, and it showed. What compels you? What drives you? Bring these thoughts before God and into your conversations with others.

MEMORIZE

This week's memory verses:

2 Corinthians 4:17-18, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Hebrews 12:1, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

MEDITATE

Meditating is simply talking and listening to God. Your conversation with God will be inspired and informed by reading and memorizing Scripture, but your conversation should also be personalized. Carefully consider the passages, but don't *just* consider the passage. Talk and listen. Pour out your thoughts, concerns, frustrations, and joys. Or just sit in silence before God. Some talk best with God in a quiet room. Others prefer to talk with God while running or walking. Most importantly, engage God in a way that is authentic and personal.

Use the space below to record memorable thoughts or highlights from your conversations with God to share with your Small Group or Running Partners.



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