

Reason for Living

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Romans 1:1-17

Howard Gossage was a successful advertising agent who had achieved most of what he wanted from his career but for years before he died he agonized about some of what he'd given his life to. He said, "I'd hate to go to my grave remembered as the man who invented Beethoven sweatshirts or competitions for paper airplanes."

Many people struggle with the "why?" of living? "Where is all this activity and effort taking me?" Some achieve their goals but still end up very dissatisfied. Others struggle and never achieve their goals and end up frustrated and angry at life. Is it possible for life to be truly satisfying and worth it?

Romans 1:1-17 caught my attention because of the singular focus of Paul's life. Education, relationships, career, recreation, and even persecution and sickness were understood, guided and made valuable by his one passion in life.

What was that single focus, that life-purpose for the Apostle? While proclaiming the gospel was clearly an outcome of his purpose, his single focus is reflected in the first six English-translation words of the letter: "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus." Paul understood and never forgot who he was. He had the most humble and at the same time the most privileged position – a mere servant but a servant of God the Son. Jesus was, for Paul, both the source and the sum of his life. Paul's identity was never in doubt. Too many of us spend a lot of time trying to find out who we are or trying to be something. I think Paul would say, "I'll tell you who you are; you are a servant of God. Can you even think of a higher calling?"

But didn't Paul say he was set apart for the gospel and he was under obligation to preach the gospel? Yes, but ultimately it was to honor Jesus. "We should be troubled when Jesus' name remains unknown. We should be hurt when it is ignored, indignant when it is blasphemed, and all the time anxious and determined that it shall be given the honor and glory which are due to it... The highest of all missionary motives is NEITHER obedience to the great commission (important as that is) NOR love for sinners who are alienated and perishing (strong as that incentive is...) BUT RATHER zeal - burning passionate zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ." (Stott, Romans, 53)

In the text we see:

Paul's **purpose** is Jesus – to serve Jesus

Paul's **motivation** is Jesus – for Jesus to receive the glory

Paul's **confidence** is Jesus – because Jesus (the good news) is the power of God for salvation.

For a more thorough treatment of this text, link here: (Soundliving.org audio and pdf versions of sermon on Romans 1:1-17)