

Champion

Hero, Paladin, Champion. These words evoke a sense of nobility, of high moral purpose. The hero or champion is the one to whom others turn “when the going gets tough,” perhaps even hopeless. Arthur had Lancelot; Charlemagne relied on Roland; Saul might have lost his kingdom had not David slain Goliath. And each of these champions from legend and history – Lancelot, Roland and David – served their kings from hearts first focused on the Lord.

The Christians in Rome had a champion of their own, one they had never met. We read in this week’s passage of Paul’s tireless prayers for his brothers and sisters in Rome. He knew they needed to grow in Christ, and that he could help them along the way. Since he could not yet be there in person, he decided to do his best to deliver a blessing through prayer and the written word.

Paul – like Lancelot, Roland and David – understood that a true champion is one who serves others in the name of the one true God. Sometimes Paul’s service was dangerous, sometimes tiring, and sometimes tedious, but the eternal God is worth it. Through this week’s study, we’ll look at what it means to hold on to what is eternal, and in consequence, we’ll start to see what the real measure of a person is, God’s measure.

Monday – Thanks for Faith

1. Please read Romans 1:8-11. What was Paul so excited about in verse 8 that he had to mention it before moving on to anything else? How well known was the faith of the Roman believers?
2. Now look at Ephesians 2:8-10. Who provides faith for believers?
3. Ephesians 2:10 suggests the reason for God’s gift of faith. How does this fit in with Paul’s recognition that the faith of the Romans was “being reported all over the world”?

Making it Personal: Do you have faith? Is it known to anyone else? Pray for God to use you, and his workmanship to show others who God is.

Tuesday – Witness and Champion

Definition - *Champion*: a person who fights for another; a warrior. (www.dictionary.com)

1. Romans 1:9-10a shows us Paul’s service to his fellow believers in Rome. What did he do for them? Who did Paul call on as a witness of his prayers?
2. Job 16:19-21 shows another instance of a person calling on God as his witness. Even more than a witness, what did Job expect in the heavenly courts?
3. What do you think of having a God, who not only has witnessed all you’ve done (good and bad), but acts as your advocate when it comes to God’s judgment?

Digging Deeper: Compare Job 16:20, the last part of Isaiah 53:12, and Hebrews 7:24-25. Who is the one who ultimately interceded for Job? How would you describe the faith of someone who, like Job, lived before the coming of the messiah yet confidently relied on that messiah for salvation?

Wednesday – Surrender

1. Please read Romans 1:10. Paul greatly desired visiting the Christians in Rome, but only if “the way may be opened.” Who needed to open the way for Paul?
2. Read John 6:38 and Luke 22:39-44 (particularly verse 42) for an even greater example of surrendering to our heavenly Father’s will. What were the circumstances Jesus faced in these two passages?

Making it Personal: Paul trusted God to know what was best. This was probably, at times, as difficult for Paul as it is for us; we often have our own ideas of how things should work out. Spend some time in prayer with your heavenly Father asking for the grace to follow his will no matter how it fits in with your own plans.

Thursday – Longing to Serve

1. Please read Romans 1:11. There you can see that Paul wanted to go to Rome for the Romans’ benefit, not his own (although he did recognize the reality of mutual encouragement in verse 12). What did Paul want to do for them? The particular gift is not mentioned; what do you think it might have been?
2. The Book of Ruth is a short and powerful story of a woman with a servant’s heart. Look at Ruth 1:3-5, 1:15-18 and 2:10-12. In Ruth 1:15-16, whom did she choose to follow at first? Now re-read the last lines of 2:12; where did Ruth eventually find her refuge? (God’s will for Ruth did not end in serving Naomi; read 4:13-22 to see how else God used Ruth.)

A Point to Ponder: How do you think having a servant’s heart and relying on God go together?

Friday – True Value

1. In Luke 16:9-15, Jesus identifies true value, the real measure of what things and people are worth. What measure does he use? (Read through the above introduction, *Champion*, for a hint.)

Text Insight: When Jesus encourages us to make “friends,” he refers to bringing people along into a relationship with our heavenly Father.

2. Luke 16:13 identifies competing interests – a relationship with God, or chasing after wealth. What else competes with your focus on God? What would you like to do about it?
3. This passage is all about God’s values as compared to worldly values. Now read Colossians 3:5-17. Which of these godly traits have you seen the Holy Spirit bring into your life? Which worldly characteristics still compete with your relationship with God?

For the Weekend: Read the Book of Ruth and Colossians 3:5-17. Which godly virtues do you see in Ruth? Pray for God to develop those and others in you as well.