



WITH DR. MICHAEL WRIGHT

## Lesson Brief | Season 2 | Episode 3 “Authentic Faith”

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### Introduction. Romans 1:8-15.

Living as a Christian in Rome in the first century was not easy. For example, emperor worship was mandatory. That was a real problem. God said, “There will be no other God’s before me.” (Exodus 20:3) Jesus taught, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30) Therefore, accommodating emperor worship was out of the question, and exercising a public faith in Christ was non-negotiable. Christian worship was punishable by prison and even death. Yet, the Christians in Rome were fastened to Christ. They possessed faith and became well known for it.

### Authentic Faith

Christians in Rome had an authentic faith in Christ, the kind that emboldened them to persevere in trials. This is what made them stand out. Their journey began in Jerusalem at Pentecost. The apostle Peter preached, and three thousand people were saved. (Acts 2:41) Luke reported that among the crowd were “visitors from Rome.” (Acts 2:10) It is reasonable to suggest that these visitors returned to Rome, started gathering regularly, and had been growing in the Lord for about 20 years when Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome in A.D. 56. Paul had heard about their authentic faith and wrote to the church and said, “Your faith is proclaimed in all the world.” (Romans 1:8)

### Perfected Faith

Not only did the Christians in Rome possess an authentic faith, but they were being perfected in faith. In *The Letter to the Hebrews*, Jesus is said to be “the founder and perfecter of our faith.” (Hebrews 12:2) As the founder of faith, Christ established his church at Pentecost. When the visitors from Rome returned home, they started a local gathering in the city. As perfecter of faith, Jesus increased the faith of the believers. This is what was so remarkable to Paul. The believers in Rome possessed an authentic faith and had been growing in faith for many years. The church faced persecution and held their holy ground. That is why Paul wrote, “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all.” (Romans 1:8)

Twenty-first century Christians can learn much from these first century believers. For example, living for Christ does not mean life becomes easier. In fact, committing to follow Jesus may translated to increased suffering. Take heart. God uses trials to perfect his church. Paul explained, “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to

shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Romans 5:3-5) An authentic and persevering faith is the work of the founder and perfecter of faith, Jesus Christ. When Christians face persecution and hold their ground, God is glorified, and the church grows in genuine faith.

## **Avoiding Faith**

Some contemporary churches avoid calling people to a rigorous faith. Perhaps there is a fear of offending listeners or losing members. Yet, calling people to a hearty faith is precisely what the church ought to do. Preaching the Gospel means instructing the lost to respond. When Peter preached at Pentecost, the listeners were "cut to the heart." (Acts 2:37) They asked Peter, "What shall we do?" The apostle responded, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (2:38) Peter's forthright call was used by God and thousands were saved. Among them were the visitors from Rome. They went home and launched a new church.

To Pastors: Remember two things. One, when Christ calls someone to be saved, he will not get a busy signal. The Holy Spirit will ring for and connect with even the hardest soul. It happened to Saul. He was as inflexible as they come. Christ called and Paul was compelled to answer. God used Paul to establish churches, train leadership, and write thirteen of twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Thus, preach the Gospel and let God work. Two, true believers will grow in sturdy faith and will persevere. True believers will not have to give up sins. Sins will give them up. The world will grow strangely dim in the grace of God. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28) Preach the Gospel. God will save people and never let them out of his grip.

## **Conclusion**

The believers in Rome possessed an authentic faith. It was given to them by Christ. Their faith became known to many across the land, and it stirred the heart of the greatest evangelist the world has ever known. This ought to be the reputation of every church today. This should be the result of a visible church in local community. Instead of possessing a reputation for budgets and buildings, relatable music and famous men, the church should be best known for its great faith in God through Jesus Christ. This is why preaching the true Gospel is so essential in the world today. There is no other power for salvation. There is no other message that will change lives and perfect hearts.

*The mission of Gospel in Real Life is to transform the global culture with the Truth of the Gospel primarily through biblical preaching and teaching via blog and podcast. Dr. Michael Wright is the Founder and President of Gospel in Real Life. GRL was officially launched on November 1, 2020 and is available on every major platform including Apple Podcasts and Spotify. Since the launch, GRL has been downloaded in 14 countries across the globe. For more info: [GospelInRealLife.org](http://GospelInRealLife.org)*