

Romans

Romans Chapter Fifteen & Sixteen

Romans 15:14-16:27

July 24, 2011

This is lesson number 98 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God is revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: The Will of God for Paul

Paul was perhaps the greatest intellect the world has ever seen. Of course, the letters that Paul wrote to the churches and to the pastors was fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, nevertheless God uses the gifts that He gives to men for His glory. Paul, like David, and all of the other writers of the Scriptures, wrote out of his own life experiences.

God chose to use Saul of Tarsus who had been trained as a Pharisee. No, rather God prepared a man to be trained as a Pharisee in order that the Gospel could be presented from the OT Scriptures.

Before he was saved Saul of Tarsus [Paul] knew the **letter** of the OT Scriptures as well as any mere human could ever know them. God revealed the Gospel of Christ to Paul then God used Paul to explain the Gospel from the OT Scriptures in the **Spirit** and not the letter.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Go back to Chapter One.

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Romans 1:1-7

**Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

But as great a man as Paul was he knew people on a personal level and he remembers many of them as he concludes this great letter.

Paul also warns the church against imposters, while encouraging the church and telling the church how to deal with such people.

Paul seems reluctant to end this letter. I have a similar sense as I come to the end of this series in Romans. I have learned so much and I have been strengthened and affirmed in the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We will look at how this great apostle makes this great epistle a personal letter as he talks about his future plans. We will see him as a person who loves his friends. At the same time he does not avoid warning them about those in their number who will only cause trouble.

We come to the end of our expositional studies of the Book of Romans today but I intend to do a final lesson from Romans to review what I consider to be certain crucial truths from this great Book.

Chapter 15:14-33.

Verse 14 relates to verses 1-13.

Paul is confident that the church at Rome will accept the fact of the Gentiles and Jews are together in one body. They will be able to admonish or correct one another if someone should lapse into their old prejudices.

14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

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Paul has used the OT Scriptures to show to anyone who is not blinded to the truth that the church is made up of all nations [1:5] and tribes and tongues,

“For there is no partiality with God.” [2:11]

And the church is all there is. When the end of this present age comes, Christ will come for His bride, the church.

In vs. 15-16 Paul tells them that he has written to them, not because he thought they could not teach each other, but because he wanted to remind them of basic Gospel truths.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, 16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Paul is a **minister** of the Gospel. There is no separate human priesthood in the Christian church. All believers are priests and we all have access to God through Jesus Christ who is our High Priest.

A recent heresy among Southern Baptists is the twisting of the doctrine of the “priesthood of believers.” The error is plainly stated by Howard B. Foshee, **“Broadman Church Manual”** 1973, “the Baptist viewpoint concerning the priesthood of the believer, freedom in religious thought and practice, and soul competency before God *allows each Baptist to formulate his own doctrinal interpretation.*”

The NT says, “... **No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**” 2 Peter 1:20-21

The **error in the “Broadman Church Manual”** 1973, is that you and I may make the Scripture mean anything we want it to mean. The **truth** is that the Holy Spirit moved holy men to write exactly what God intended. Our job is to learn what the Scriptures teach not to make up our own inventions that deny the Word of God.

Compare the 1963 and the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

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Section I, The Scriptures, "... The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." [1963]

Section I, The Scriptures, "... All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation." [2000]

In the 1963 statement this heretical twisting of the "priesthood of the believer" allowed anyone to make the Bible say whatever they wanted it to say because of their private opinion of what Jesus would say or think.

But all we know about Jesus that is the truth is found in the Bible.

The offering [prayers] of the Gentiles, Paul says, are not unclean because they have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit and not by some human priest.

In 17-21 Paul thinks back over the twenty years that he has served God as an apostle. He can glory in the things that Christ has done through him. He was sent to places where the gospel had not been preached before.

Verses 17-18.

17 Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. 18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient —

Paul has much that he can glory in through Christ Jesus. He called for obedience based on justification. He opposed **legalism** and yet made no concessions to **antinomianism**. Neither did he preach 'easy believism' because Christ is not the Savior of those who refuse to obey Him as Lord.

Verse 19

19 in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

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Paul and the other apostles were given ‘signs of the apostles’ in order to authenticate their apostleship. I will not expand on “mighty signs and wonders” except to say that we have a complete Bible and the signs and wonders have served their purpose and are no longer needed. That is not to say that God does not still act in miraculous ways.

To ‘fully preach’ the Gospel is to bring it to its conclusion. That which the OT Scriptures promised has been completed in Christ Jesus and that was Paul’s message.

The “Full Gospel” is not some ecstatic experience or excitement that carries you beyond Christ crucified. The full Gospel is to take all of the sacrifices and prophecies in the OT and find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Verse 20-21

**20 And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation,
21 but as it is written:
"To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand."**

Paul was sent to the Gentiles and to places where the promise of the Christ was not known. Paul did not build on another man’s foundation because he went where no one else had gone before.

This is a strong argument that Peter was not in Rome. There is no evidence that Peter was ever in Rome contrary to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

“Paul quotes Isaiah 52:15 which predicts, among other things, that the kingdom of Messiah must be extended to the whole world. The knowledge of Christ must be brought to the Gentiles who had never before heard of His name. This is further proof of Paul’s apostleship in that this prophecy is fulfilled in him.” [Calvin]

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In 22-24 Paul says that he plans to evangelize Spain and hopes that he will be able to visit the believers at Rome.

22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, 24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.

In 25-29 he says that he must first go to Jerusalem and hand over the collection that the Gentiles have made for the saints there. He knows that it will be a blessing when he finally comes to Rome.

25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. 27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. 29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Then in 30-33 he closes this section with a request for prayer and gives them a benediction.

30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, 31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Paul asks for believers to pray for him as he goes ahead with his plans. He is aware of the danger from the Jews who are hardened in their rejection of Messiah and commits his plans to the will of God.

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Chapter 16

Verses 1-2

Paul sends his greetings to various Christians in Rome who were known to him personally. These greetings give us a glimpse of what the early church was like.

Sister Phoebe is known to Paul but not to the church in Rome and so Paul commends her to them. It is likely that she is the bearer of this letter. She is traveling to Rome and he asks that her needs be taken care of.

Phoebe was from Cenchrea, which is east of Corinth. She, no doubt, had been a pagan because she is named for a pagan goddess.

But now she is a ‘sister,’ an adopted child of God.

She is a ‘servant’ and the word is **deaconess**.

This cannot mean that she was ordained as a deacon, because that office is restricted to men [1 Timothy 3:12].

What it does mean is that she was a servant to the church in the same way that many of you dear sisters serve in this local church. Her gift was as a ‘helper.’ The spiritual gift of ‘helps’ is used to show mercy to the poor and the sick. Paul says that Sister Phoebe had helped many and him also.

Remember what we said about the exercise of gifts in Chapter 12. The church needs all of the gifts and no gift is of greater or lesser importance.

The fact that God’s word limits certain offices to men does not mean that women are less important to the church.

Paul asks that she be received by the church as a member of the family and to assist her as she has helped others.

Verses 3-16

There were others that Paul knew who were now in Rome. Rather than going name by name we will look at their characteristics.

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There were men and women like Priscilla and Aquila [3] who worked hard and had a church meet in their home [5].

They risked their necks [lives] for Paul. Some were in prison with Paul [7].

There was genuine affection. They loved Paul more than their own lives. He calls them 'beloved'.

They greeted one another with a 'holy kiss' [16].

I recommend that you spend a little time meditating on these names and what Paul says about each one.

Paul started in Chapter 12 instructing the church how to love one another. As he closes this letter he mentions several people who are examples of Christian love.

Verses 17-27

Now that Paul is at the end of the letter what does he consider as being the important things to close with?

Verses 17-20

A warning!

Cf. 15:15

Everything that he has written to them can be undone if they fail to heed this warning. This is not a future danger it is a present danger.

It occurs to me how easy it is to miss something very important in the Bible. Sometimes when we come to genealogies and lists of names we tend to go into a "speed-reading" mode.

Do not miss the importance of verse 17.
This may be the key to the entire letter.

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There are some people in the church who will divide it by teaching doctrine that is contrary to the apostolic doctrine. True doctrine establishes a Christian church and false doctrine destroys one.

These men are not ignorant and immature believers who simply need to be taught. They do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ but indulge their own appetites [18].

These men are pleasant to listen to and can be convincing in their arguments. They can easily deceive ordinary people.

Let me ask you now if you think that we spend too much time on doctrine?

Test whatever a man preaches and teaches against the Book of Romans.

What are we to do with anyone who teaches falsehood? The postmodern church says to tolerate error; that even those who deny that faith in Christ is the only way to be saved are to be 'tolerated'.

The Bible says to 'avoid them' [17].

We must have patience with people in nearly all situations. Reason with them from the Scriptures. But a person who denies the truth is to be shunned.

Verse 19 "be wise in what is good, and simple [innocent] concerning evil."

Verse 22 Tertius is Paul's secretary, Cf. 1:1.

After this warning and some greetings Paul closes with one last reminder that the **mystery** of the ages [25] is now an open 'secret'. Gentiles and Jews together in one body as promised in the Holy Scriptures.

**TO GOD ALONE GLORY, BE GLORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST
FOREVER. AMEN!**