

# CLASS 14: ROMANS, THE CHURCH, AND YOU (Romans 15:14 – Ch. 16)

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## VII. Paul's missionary plans, 15:14-33

Paul not speaks of his own place in the plans and purposes of God. He is an instrument of the Lord, doing his part to accomplish the awesome task of winning the Gentiles to Christ and incorporating them into the church as one body. Getting more specific, he describes his overall strategy of ministry and the particular plans he has to finish the next stage of his work. The Roman Christians themselves are to have a hand in these efforts.

### Paul's priestly ministry (15:14-22)

*15:14 I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. <sup>15</sup> But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God <sup>16</sup> to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. <sup>17</sup> In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. <sup>18</sup> For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience- by word and deed, <sup>19</sup> by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God- so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; <sup>20</sup> and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, <sup>21</sup> but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand." <sup>22</sup> This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.*

Paul compares his missionary work to that of a priest, bringing God's salvation to the people. He desires to bring God's salvation to the Gentiles, as God has commissioned him. He especially desires to take the gospel to areas not before evangelized, all around the Mediterranean (15:19-20).

Since Paul cannot personally be with the Romans yet, he writes to them this personal testimony (vv. 15, 22).

Paul writes to remind them (vv. 14-15)

Paul's present favorable opinion of their knowledge (v. 14)

- Full of goodness

- Complete in knowledge
- Competent to instruct each other

“Instruct” (*noutheto*); this verse was the inspiration for the title of Jay Adam’s significant work, *Competent to Counsel*, which began the nouthetic counseling movement

Paul’s boldness to remind them again (v. 15)

He does this to fulfill his position in God’s program, as explained in v. 16a and following

Paul writes to prepare them (vv. 16-19a)

Paul’s priestly service (v. 16)

“Minister” (*leitourgos*)—Paul’s work is that of a religious minister, performing a religious service (cf. “liturgy”)

“Priestly service” (*hierourgeo*, “serve as a priest”)—his missionary work actually is a form of a worship service

Proclaiming the gospel of God (Rom 1:1)

Preparing the Gentiles as an acceptable offering (*prosphora*, as in Eph 5:2; Heb 10:5)

An offering acceptable to God, because it is sanctified by the Holy Spirit

This work of Paul’s glorifies Christ (vv. 17-19a)

All the good Paul does is Christ working through him

- Christ prepares their hearts
- Christ gives Paul the words
- Christ gives Paul his deeds, his miracles (2 Cor 12:11-12; Heb 2:3-4)

Paul writes to reach them (vv. 19b-22)

The coverage to date (v. 19b)

“From Jerusalem all around through Illyricum”

“All around” (*kuklo*, “by a circle”); to encircle the Mediterranean Sea, the major cities of the Roman Empire—a great and ambitious program!

The strategy (vv. 20-21)

Paul was called to be a pioneer missionary, to fulfill Isa 52:15

Because of this ambitious plan, his visit to Rome has been delayed until now (v. 22)

Immediate reason – take offering to Jerusalem, to incorporate Gentile churches so far (vv. 25-28)

### Paul, the complete missionary (15:23-33)

*<sup>23</sup> But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, <sup>24</sup> I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. <sup>25</sup> At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. <sup>26</sup> For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. <sup>28</sup> When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. <sup>29</sup> I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. <sup>30</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, <sup>31</sup> that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, <sup>32</sup> so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. <sup>33</sup> May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

An important part of Paul's plan is his planned trip to Rome. He tells them to prepare for his arrival, and to aid his planned trip to Spain (vv. 23-29). In the meantime, he asks their prayers for a successful trip to Jerusalem and a good reception of his offering there (vv. 30-32).

A missionary for the world (vv. 23-24; cf. vv. 19-21)

Compassion for the lost

Desire to cover the area methodically

Use of effective methods

- Strategy—choice of cities
- Tactics—synagogues, adjust approach

Thus shows he has knowledge and allows for the people and their world

A missionary for the church (vv. 25-28)

Understood the church universal as well as the particular churches (Eph 3:6, 9-10)

Helped the church

Paul's offering

Similar to the regular offerings for the temple from the Jewish Diaspora

Resulted in generosity (2 Cor 8:1-5), prayer (2 Cor 9:1), and spiritual teaching

Paul's goal, to unite the church (Eph 4:1-6, 13)

Jewish offerings described by Alfred Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2:77

Paul's offerings similar to Jewish offerings, in uniting the people to their roots

Earlier offering from Syrian and Cilician churches to Jerusalem (Acts 11)

Present offering from Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, Achaia

Cf. 1 Cor 16:1; men named in Acts 20:4 (and Luke too ["us"])

A missionary for the Lord (vv. 29-33)

Follows the will of God (v. 32)

Rests in prayer to God (vv. 30-31)

Trusts in the blessing of God (v. 29; 2 Tim 1:11-12)

Seeks his reward from God (2 Tim 4:7-8)

## **VIII. Greetings and conclusion, ch. 16**

Paul concludes this long letter in a very personal way, sending greetings to and from many of his Christian friends. It is surprising how many Paul knew by name, even though he had never visited that church before. This list demonstrates the relative ease of travel during this stage of the Roman Empire.

## The blessed fellowship (16:1-16)

<sup>16:1</sup> I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, <sup>2</sup> that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. <sup>3</sup> Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup> who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. <sup>5</sup> Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. <sup>6</sup> Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. <sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. <sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. <sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. <sup>11</sup> Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. <sup>12</sup> Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. <sup>14</sup> Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. <sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. <sup>16</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

After introducing Phoebe (vv. 1-2) Paul sends his greetings to many of the Christians in Rome known to him (vv. 3-16; there are 26 names plus 2 others—mother and sister). This long list proves the substantial size of the church and the ease of travel in the Roman Empire at the time.

### Fellowship in life:

Some of these Christians were either related to Paul by family or clan or bound closely to him as “substitute family” (*sungeneis*; family in Acts 10:24; same country in Rom 9:3; 16:21):

- Andronicus and Junia (v. 7)
- Herodian (v. 11)
- Mother of Rufus (v. 13)

### Many women in list:

- Phoebe (v. 1)
- Priscilla (v. 3)
- Mary (v. 6)
- Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis (v. 12)
- Mother of Rufus (13)

- Rufus may well be the younger son of Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross (only mentioned in Mark, who was living in Rome when he wrote his Gospel, Mark 15:21)
- Julia, the unnamed sister of Nereus (v. 15)

#### Fellowship in work:

Phoebe, a deaconess or helper, a patron to Paul and others (vv. 1-2)

Priscilla and Aquila, "risked their necks" (implies Roman citizenship; vv. 3-4)

- "Prisca," a spelling variation for Priscilla
- Jews who had been expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius (Acts 18:2)

"He [Claudius] expelled from Rome the Jews who were constantly stirring up a tumult under the leadership of Chrestus." (Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 25:4)

- Helped Paul during 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey in Corinth (Acts 18:2)
- Sailed with Paul to Ephesus at end of 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey (Acts 18:8)
- Helped Apollos in Ephesus before Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey (Acts 18:26)
- Now back in Rome, having a church in their house (Rom 16:5)

Mary, "worked hard" (v. 6)

Urbanus, "fellow-worker" (v. 9)

Tryphaena and Tryphosa, "workers" (v. 12)

Persis, "worked hard" (v. 12)

#### Fellowship in Christ (note the "in Christ" or "in the Lord"):

Priscilla and Aquila, "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (v. 3)

Epaenetus, "the first convert to Christ in Asia" (v. 5)

Andronicus and Junia, "my fellow prisoners . . . well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me" (v. 7)

Ampliatius, "my beloved in the Lord" (v. 8)

Urbanus, "fellow worker in Christ" (v. 9)

Apelles, "approved in Christ" (v. 10)

Household of Narcissus, "those in the Lord" (v. 11)

Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, “worked hard in the Lord” (v. 12)

Rufus, “chosen in the Lord” (v. 13)

## Heretical threats to the fellowship (16:17-20)

<sup>17</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. <sup>18</sup> For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. <sup>19</sup> For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. <sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Paul does not conclude the letter before warning the Roman Christians about heretics who will seek to divide the church and lead it astray; they must be avoided (vv. 17-19).

“Heretic” comes from the Greek word *hairesikos*, “one who divides the church by false teaching”

Discerning heretics (vv. 17-18)

Heretics cause

- Divisions (*dichostasias*)
- Scandals (*skandala*)

Heretics teach contrary to sound doctrine (*para*, “more than, contrary to”)

Heretics serve

- Not our Lord Christ
- But their own belly (cf. Phil 3:18-19)

Heretics deceive

- The “naive” (*akakos*, “simple, innocent”)
- Using “kind, good, smooth (*chresto*) words” and “flattery” (*eulogias*, “good, pleasant words”)

Dealing with heretics (vv. 17, 19)

“Watch out” for them (*skopeo*)

Word used in “overseers” (*episkopos*) in Acts 20:28

Example in 1 Tim 1:18-20

“Avoid” them (*ekklineo*)

Examples in Eph 5:11; Titus 3:10; 2 John 9-11

A major problem in the New Evangelical movement (keeping membership and fellowship in liberal denominations)

Obey God

The way to become wise in doing good

Maintaining a good “innocence” (*akeraios*, “guiltless, pure to evil”)

Defeating heretics (v. 20)

Crushing Satan

Under your feet

Time:

- Presently
  - As evangelism and church discipline are carried out
- In the coming age
  - Cf. 1 Cor 6:2-3, Christians “will judge the world . . . will judge angels”

This is God’s work, using us

“The God of peace will crush”

Note the oxymoron, “The God of peace will crush Satan”

Peace comes through Satan’s defeat

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”

## **The mystery made known (16:21-27)**

<sup>21</sup> Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. <sup>22</sup> I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you. [<sup>24</sup>KJV The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.] <sup>25</sup> Now to him who is able to strengthen

*you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages<sup>26</sup> but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith-<sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.*

As Paul began this letter by describing his gospel, so he ends the letter in the same way. Paul concludes the epistle with greetings from Timothy and others. The amanuensis Tertius adds his own greeting (v. 22). The fulsome doxology at the end repeats many of the main themes of the epistle.

Paul's gospel makes known the mystery (vv. 25b-26a)

The "mystery" about Jesus Christ (v. 25b)

Kept secret before—not known by Abraham, Moses, the exiles, the early Jerusalem church

Now revealed (v. 26)

Revealed and made known to the Gentiles

- Acts 17:29-31
- By the prophetic scriptures (as in Paul's later Prison Epistles, Eph 3:1-7; Col 1:25-27)
- By the authority of God (as in the "keys" given to Peter and the other apostles)

Paul's gospel fulfills the mystery (vv. 21-25a, 25-27)

Examples of Jews and Gentiles won to Christ and the united church through Paul's ministry (mostly Gentiles in this list)

- Timothy (v. 21; half Jew and half Gentile)
- Lucius (v. 21)
- Jason (v. 21; Acts 17:5, 9, sheltered Paul in Thessalonica)
- Sosipater (v. 21; Acts 20:4, went to Jerusalem with Paul)
- Tertius (v. 22; the amanuensis, more than a "professional")
- Gaius (v. 23; 1 Cor 1:14, baptized by Paul; the host of Paul and the church in Corinth)
- Erastus (v. 23)
  - Acts 19:22, traveled with Timothy from Corinth as an ambassador for Paul to churches in Macedonia
  - 2 Tim 4:20, later with Paul, stayed in Corinth
  - Erastus a "the city treasurer" (*oikonomos tes poleos*) of Corinth

- **“Aedile, sometimes US, edile, a magistrate of ancient Rome in charge of public works, games, buildings, and roads [from Latin *aedilis* concerned with buildings, from *aedēs* a building]”** (thefreedictionary.com)
- Very responsible and important position
- First century inscription in a pavement found in Corinth in 1929: "Erastus, Procurator and Aedile, laid this pavement at his own expense."



“ERASTVS. PRO. AED. S. P. STRAVIT” (abbreviation of “ERASTUS PRO AEDILITATE SUA PECUNIA STRAVIT”)

- Quartus (v. 23; “brother”—symbolizes the unity of believers under this mystery)

Closing doxology (vv. 25-27)

God will use Paul’s gospel to establish the Roman Christians (Gentile and Jewish),  
v. 25

Their lives will represent “the obedience of faith” (genitive of source, “the obedience that comes from faith”), v. 26, as in Rom 1:5

Therefore, God receives all the glory for this salvation (v. 27)