

The Letter of Paul to the Romans

Chapters 15 – 16 Notes

The Example of Christ

15.1 The Strong have a responsibility to tolerate and support the weak instead of living selfishly to satisfy their own desires. The Christian life centers on strengthening others. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

15.4 Paul expresses confidence that all of the OT was written down for the instruction and encouragement of God's people ~ *ESV Study Bible*

39 Articles of Religion (1571): ARTICLE VII. OF THE OLD TESTAMENT – “The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man... Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and rites, do not bind Christian men... yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.”

The Christian fellowship should be marked by:

1. *Consideration*
2. *The study of Scripture* (It is always better to be right with God and to suffer, than to be wrong with men and to avoid trouble)
3. *Fortitude*
4. *Hope*
5. *Harmony*
6. *Praise*
7. *The imitation of Christ* ~ *William Barclay, pp. 195-197*

Christ the Hope of Jews and Gentiles

15.8 The circumcised refers to the Jews here. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

15.9 Paul cites verses from 2 Sam 22.50; Deut 32.43; Ps 117.1; and Isa 11.10, which emphasize the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God along with the Jews. Citations are provided from the historical books, the law, the writings, and the prophets. The one people of God, both Jews and Gentiles, will praise God forever for his great mercy extended to them in Christ Jesus, showing that the worship of God is his ultimate aim in salvation history. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

Paul the Minister to the Gentiles

Paul explains his unique ministry to the Gentiles and exhorts the Roman church to be a sending base for his mission to Spain. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

15.16 Paul functions, so to speak, as priest relative to the gospel, and the offering he presents to God is Gentile converts. This offering is pleasing to God since it is set apart into the realm of the holy (sanctified) by the Holy Spirit.
~ *ESV Study Bible*

15.18 Paul summarizes his entire ministry up to this point by saying that Christ accomplished his work through him by word and deed [*cf.* **1 Cor 2.5, 4.19**].
~ *ESV Study Bible*

Paul saw himself, in the scheme of things, as an instrument in the hands of Christ. He did not talk of what he had done; but of what Christ had done with him. He never said of anything: “I did it.” He always said: “Christ used me to do it.” It is told that the change in the life of D.L. Moody came when he went to a meeting and heard a preacher say: “If only one man would give himself entirely and without reserve to the Holy Spirit, what that Spirit might do with him!”

~ *William Barclay, p. 203*

Had the church been wiped off the face of the earth at the end of the first century, its disappearance would have caused no dislocation in the empire, just as its presence was hardly noticed at the time.... Three centuries later it had successfully displaced or suppressed the other religions of the empire’s population....

Christians themselves pointed, rather, to supernatural cures and the expulsion of supernatural beings from diseased persons or from their dwellings in altars and statues, dramatically performed before clouds of witnesses.... The unique force of Christian wonder-working that does indeed need emphasis lies in the fact that *it destroyed belief as well as creating it*—that is, if you credited it, you had then to credit the view that went with it, denying the character of god to all other divine powers whatsoever....

Prior to the Peace of the church in 313, the great mass of new members entered under the impetus of this message, won over both by its proofs and its content. It was a great mass indeed: on the order of half a million in each generation from the end of the first century up to the proclaiming of toleration.... No other new cult anywhere nearly approached the same success. It can only be called extraordinary—

Underlying these...was an evident readiness for battle. Nothing like that belonged to other cults. It found expression in St. Paul’s words, already quoted where he exhorts his readers to “take up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be

able to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One,” and so on. ~ *Christianizing the Roman Empire A.D. 100-400*, Ramsay McMullen, pp. viii, 108-110

15.20 Paul’s aim was to preach the gospel in areas where no churches existed. His calling was not to plant churches where they already existed. Thereby he was fulfilling the prophecy of Isa. 52.15. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

Paul’s ambition was to be a pioneer. It is told that when Livingstone volunteered as a missionary with the London Missionary Society they asked him where he would like to go. “Anywhere,” he said, “so long ass it is forward.” And when he reached Africa he was haunted by the smoke of a thousand villages which he saw in the distance. It was Paul’s one ambition to carry the good news of God to men who had never heard it. ~ *William Barclay, p. 203*

Paul’s Plan to Visit Rome

15.22 Paul had been prevented from coming to Rome because his work of planting churches in unreached areas in the eastern part of the Roman Empire (key cities from which the gospel radiated outward) had not been completed. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

15.24 By the first century A.D. Spain was firmly a part of the Roman Empire. No visit of Paul to Spain is recorded in the NT, but it is possible that he went there after his release from prison in Rome (after Acts 28.30-31). There is some historical evidence after the NT suggesting that Paul did preach in Spain. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

At this time Spain was experiencing a kind of blaze of genius. Many of the greatest men in the Empire were Spaniards. Lucan, the epic poet, Martial, the master of the epigram, Quintilian, the greatest teacher of oratory of his day, were all Spaniards. Above all, Seneca, the great Stoic philosopher, who was first the guardian and afterwards the prime minister of Nero, was a Spaniard. It may well be that Paul was saying to himself that if only he could touch Spain for Christ tremendous things might happen.

~ *William Barclay, p. 204*

15.26 Christians from the Roman provinces of Macedonia and Achaia had gladly contributed to the collection. These provinces are roughly equivalent to northern and southern Greece today. This collection would include gifts from such cities as Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

15.27 The gladness of the Gentiles in providing for the needs of Jewish Christians is fitting. They stand in debt to the Jews, for they enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Jewish people and hence should happily assist them

financially. Paul assumes that financial aid for needy Christians is a normal part of the Christian life. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

15.28 Paul's plan to come to Rome was realized (Acts 22-28), but not in the way he intended, since he arrived in Rome as a prisoner. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

15.31 Two prayer requests are found here: (1) that Paul would be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and (2) that his offering would be acceptable to the saints in Jerusalem. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

Personal Greetings

16.1 Paul warmly greets those he knows in Rome who are involved in ministry, showing the love that existed among Christians. These greetings also function to support the authenticity of the Pauline gospel, for they show that respected coworkers in Rome are co-laborers in the same gospel that Paul proclaims. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

16.3 Prisca and Aquila are well-known from elsewhere in the NT (*cf.* 1 Cor 16.19; 2 Tim 4.19). ~ *ESV Study Bible*

16.7 Andronicus and Junia were probably a husband-and-wife ministry team.... "apostle" would probably then mean "messengers" of churches (as it does in 2 Cor 8.23; Phil 2.25; also John 13.16) rather than "apostles" in the technical sense of Peter and Paul. In this case, the term would refer to Andronicus and Junia as itinerant missionaries, and (given both biblical patterns of leadership and ancient cultural expectations) Junio probably labored especially among women. This passage also reveals that the couple was Jewish, had been imprisoned, and had become Christians before Paul. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

16.10 The family of Aristobulus probably refers to the slaves in Aristobulus' household. Some think Aristobulus is the grandson of Herod the Great and the brother of Herod Agrippa, though this remains uncertain. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

16.11 The family of Narcissus refers to the slaves in Narcissus's household, Some scholars think Narcissus was the wealthy freedman who served the emperor Claudius and who was compelled by Nero's mother, Agrippina, to kill himself when Nero became emperor. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

In this chapter there are twenty-four individual names and there are two interesting things to note.

- (i) Of the twenty-four, six are women. That is worth remembering, for often Paul is accused of belittling the status of women in the Church. If we really wish to see Paul's attitude, it is a passage like this that we should read, where his appreciation of the work that women were doing in the Church shines through his words.
- (ii) Of the twenty-four names, thirteen occur in inscriptions or documents which have to do with the Emperor's palace in Rome. Although many are very common names, this fact is nonetheless suggestive. In Philippians 4.22 Paul speaks of the saints of Caesar's household. It may be that they were for the most part slaves, but it is still important that Christianity seems to have penetrated even thus early into the imperial palace. ~ *William Barclay, pp. 211-212*

16.13 It is not certain that this is the same Rufus as is mentioned in Mark 15.21, but it is possible that he is the son of Simon of Cyrene. Apparently Rufus's mother ministered significantly to Paul. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

16.16 Christians greeted one another with a holy kiss to signify their warm affection for one another. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

Final Instructions and Greetings

16.17 On the theme of false teaching *cf. e.g.,* Jer 14.14; Matt 7.15. Christians must be alert, for these false teachers and divisive people are attractive in speech but are motivated by selfish desires.

16.21 Timothy is Paul's most famous coworker (see 1 Timothy) and was probably his most beloved colleague in ministry [*cf. Luke*]. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

16.23 Gaius here is...the Gaius of 1 Cor 1.14, supporting the idea that the letter was written from Corinth. He was a man of some wealth, for he provided a place for the entire church to meet. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

Doxology

16.25 The gospel is a mystery that has been kept secret but is now revealed. The gospel centers on Jesus Christ. ~ *ESV Study Bible*

16.26 The prophetic writings are the OT Scriptures.