

Romans – Bible Study – Chapter 15:14-33

As Paul concludes his entire letter, the words that he chooses show that it is indeed a letter and not just a treatise for the Roman believers. He reminds them of the things they already know and have learnt on their own and also showing how he is fulfilling his mandate as a minister to the Gentiles.

Paul the Minister to the Gentiles

(Verses 14-15a) Reread Romans 1:1-17. How does that passage relate to the passage you just read? What are some of the similarities (focusing on 1:8)? What is Paul's purpose in writing these two verses? What is Paul reminding his readers?

- **Romans 1:8** – Paul has stated he has heard of their faith as it is proclaimed over all the world
- **Romans 15:14** – Morally, they were 'full of goodness', intellectually they were 'complete in knowledge', and functionally they were 'competent to instruct one another'
- Paul's intent in verse 14 was to encourage the Roman church and to bring it back to what he mentions earlier, that he thought quite highly of them
- This is in light of 1:16 – 15:13, that it may seem like he is disapproving of them, but in fact, it is quite the opposite
- He writes his letter boldly, to remind them of the things they were taught in the last few chapters
 - One area might be God's grace given to them
 - Another maybe the way they are to live
- As Paul stated earlier, they did have the knowledge, but to remind them again of what that meant, especially in a culture/world that is sometimes contrary to the things God has taught through His prophets
- It can be easy to forget what you are taught, especially if it is not put into practice

(Verses 15b-22) Why is Paul reiterating his calling to the Roman church (Romans 1:5, 13-14)? Who did Paul give credit for the 'success' of his ministry? Why is this important? What is the significance of the phrase 'by the power of signs and wonders'? What was the Paul's reason for not visiting Rome sooner (Romans 1:13)?

- **Romans 1:5** – He was called to bring about 'obedience of faith' for the sake of the name of Christ to all nations
- His primary focus was on the Gentiles, but it also meant everyone who had not heard the Gospel
- He is reaffirming what he wrote earlier, stating that he had the authority to teach such things and that his authority was from God and not himself
- Paul also regarded the Gentiles as an 'offering' to be presented to God, that they would be acceptable to Him as the Holy Spirit set them apart (i.e. sanctified) to God as His possession (1 Corinthians 6:11)
- He had the right to boast, in human terms, of what was happening with the Gentiles
- Instead, he gives all the credit to Christ as the one who is the source of his success
- He recognizes that it is through Christ, and the Holy Spirit, that brings people back to God
- The 'power of the Holy Spirit' enabled people to see the connection between the miracle and the message, and, therefore, to believe the gospel and experience salvation
- This shows that Paul is fully dependent on God for the work he is doing for Him
- He understands that in order to fulfill it well, it must be God that works through him and not by his own strength
- 'Signs and wonders' can otherwise be stated as miracles, which accredited (i.e. gave credibility) the messenger of God and validated the message the he proclaimed (Acts 2:22, 5:12)
- These were the marks of the apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12, Acts 13:6-12)
- He had a desire to do pioneer missionary work grew out of his zeal to reach as many unsaved people as possible

- He did not wait for them to come and inquire about the Gospel
- Paul also found encouragement to pursue this goal in the prophecy from Isaiah 52:15 (in verse 21)
 - This passage foretells the coming of God's suffering servant who will deal with His people's sin
 - This passage also foretells how God's servant will bring salvation to nations other than Israel

(Verse 23-29) What important lesson is Paul showing the Romans in verses 25-29? Why is this significant? What are some practical ways for you to show your love and appreciation to other believers?

- The purpose of Paul's collection of money from the Macedonian and Achaean churches was to relieve the poverty that existed among the Jewish Christians
- The secondary purpose was to cement relations between Gentile and Jewish believers (1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 8-9)
- He wanted to encourage the Roman church that what they have been given is a great gift (i.e. the message of salvation) and they are to be indebted to the messengers of that news, namely the Jewish Christians
- However, he also wants to make it clear that this gift he is bringing is not out of obligation, but out of a willingness and love for their fellow believers
- He wants to instill in them that despite their past differences, those should no longer exist as they have a common bond, which is their salvation within Christ Jesus
- Helping out other churches, whether it be through the use of money or time

(Verse 30-33) Paul asks for prayers from the Roman church for both his safety and for the Jerusalem church. Why is he asking them for this (Ephesians 6:18-20; 2 Corinthians 1:10-11)? Who are the unbelievers in Judea that Paul refers to (Acts 9:29-30; 21:27-36; 23:12-15)? Why is Paul concerned about having his service 'acceptable' to those in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-26)? Why is this important to Paul?

- He exhorts/asks them on the basis of their relationship with 'the Lord Jesus Christ' and the 'love' that the Holy Spirit inspires
- Paul realized that in view of spiritual forces antagonistic to his ministry, energetic prayer is necessary
- This was also an opportunity for the Roman church to partner with him in his ministry
- Acts 9:29-30 – The unbelievers are the Greek speaking/unbelieving Jews who opposed Paul initially
- Acts 21:27-36; 23:12-15 – There were Jews who wanted to kill Paul because of his teachings
- In regards to the 'saints' in Jerusalem, he is concerned that the Jewish Christians accept their Gentile brethren, both in the acts of worship and the gift that is given to them
- If they do not, then unity would be in jeopardy
- Paul is stressing his commitment to the Jewish Christians and so discouraging the division between Jew and Gentile that seems to be occurring in the church
- Instead, he promotes unity and mutual devotion within the body of the church
- Having fulfilled these two things, he will be able to make his way to the Roman church so that he can visit and be a blessing to them, while he makes his way to Spain

Far from being an afterthought that included only a few personal remarks, Romans 15:14-33 is key for understanding the Book of Romans and Paul's theology of missions. As such, it offers significant insights for a contemporary biblical theology of missions. The passage is a reminder, first, that all missionary efforts must be dependent on God and all results must be recognized as the work of God's grace.

Also, Paul continues to promote the idea of unity amongst the believers within the Roman church by giving an example of what the other churches have done for the Jerusalem church. The love gift by the Macedonian and Achaean church was an act of gratefulness to those who brought the good news to them, as well as to help out those who were in need.

As we see how the early church started from Acts 2:42-48, this same unity and fellowship of believers is what Paul wants for the entire church, not just the Roman church.

Points to Ponder:

- Do share the good news with others when the opportunity presents itself, whether at work, at home, or at play?