

ADDRESSES ON ROMANS

by

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CHAPTER TWELVE

CONCLUSION

Romans 15:8—16:27

I. PRAISE TO THE GOD OF JEW AND GENTILE, 15:8-13

AS PAUL exhorts his fellow-Christians to “**glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**” in brotherly love, remembering that “**Christ also received us to the glory of God**” (15:6, 7); as he contemplates the wonders of the love of God in redeeming us and empowering us to bear witness to Him in love toward another, he bursts forth in another paean of praise. He has been thinking of the Jewish Christian and his relationship to the Law of Moses in the eating of certain foods and in the observance of days. He has been thinking also of the Gentile Christian, but recently led out of paganism into “**the kingdom of God’s dear Son.**” And he sings praise to the God of Jew and Gentile, the God of the whole universe.

Let us read 15:8-13, joining Paul in thanksgiving to the God of Israel, who is the God of the Gentile nations as well. These words are all the more significant in view of the fact that they are quotations from the Jewish Scriptures. “**As it is written**” in the Old Testament, Jew and Gentile alike were remembered by the God of all grace when He “**drew salvation’s plan.**” Turn to a marginal reference Bible and read the Old Testament passages, from which these four quotations are taken. Moses, David, and Isaiah; law-giver, psalmist, and prophet, declared hundreds of years before Christ came to earth that He was the God of Jew and Gentile alike.

Accordingly, Paul but reiterates the word of the prophets, which is the Word of God, saying that “**Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers**” (v. 8). To the Jews He fulfilled the covenants made with Israel, “**the circumcision.**” Moreover, “**the root of Jesse**” (v. 12) was none other than the Lord Jesus, a Jew “**according to the flesh**”; for Jesse was the father of David, the king, from whose family Christ was born in Bethlehem.

And Christ is the God of the Gentiles, for in Him there is neither Jew nor Greek. This is the message of Paul to all the world. Little wonder he echoes the voice of the prophets, bidding us “**glorify God for his mercy**”!

The keynote here is one of praise:

- **“Glorify God for his mercy.”**
- **“Sing unto thy name.”**
- **“Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.”**
- **“Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles.”**
- **“Laud him, all ye people.”**

All praise and honor are due unto Him who not only justified us by His grace and gave us His Holy Spirit to empower us for His service, but who **“shall rise to reign”** in righteousness and peace. We were brought into the court room of the righteous Judge of heaven and earth. He found us guilty and **“without excuse,”** Jew as well as Gentile. But because He loved us **“while we were yet sinners,”** He paid the penalty for our sins and justified us by His grace. Not only so, but He gave us His Spirit to lead us and to enable us to do His will. How can we help but love Him and praise Him for the gift of His righteousness?

He is **“the God of patience”**; He is **“the God of . . . consolation”**; and He is **“the God of hope”** (15:5, 13). He fills our hearts with **“all joy and peace in believing,”** that we **“may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost”** (15:13).

With these words Paul seems about to close his letter to the Romans with the benediction of hope, joy and peace. But he adds, in the verses which follow, a personal message that warms our hearts.

II. PAUL—A MINISTER OF CHRIST TO THE GENTILES, 15:14-21

First he speaks of his apostleship, reminding the Roman Christians also that he is persuaded that they do seek to know and obey God’s will for them. Note his words:

“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost” (15:14-16).

It is as though Paul had told his fellow-Christians at Rome that, while he knew they were not ignorant of these things he had written, yet he had spoken **“the more boldly,”** with the voice of authority, because he had been called of God to do this very thing, as the apostle to the Gentiles.

And he is careful to give God all the glory, even as he vindicates his high calling and declares that he has sought to fulfill his ministry **“from Jerusalem, and round about Illyricum,”** striving **“to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named.”** Paul was a foreign missionary in very truth, ever reaching out to **“the regions beyond”** him, lest he **“should build upon another man’s foundation.”**

And as he speaks of his calling to be the apostle to the Gentiles, he remembers once more that his own Jewish Scriptures had said, through Isaiah, the prophet, that Christ should be made known to the Gentile world.

“As it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand” (verse 21).

III. PAUL’S DESIRE TO VISIT THE CHRISTIANS AT ROME, 15:22-33

His far-reaching ministry to the Gentiles, Paul continues, had hindered him from visiting the Church at Rome (v. 22). We recall that in the opening words of the epistle he said he was praying that he might visit the Roman Christians **“by the will of God.”** He wanted to teach them in the things of Christ, and be **“comforted”** by fellowship with them. And now at the close of his letter he speaks further of his **“great desire these many years”** to visit them (15:23).

It was his purpose to go to Rome as he journeyed to Spain (15:24, 28). Whether he ever went as far as Spain, we are not told; but we know from the book of Acts that he did get to Rome, was a prisoner there, and finally was a martyr of Jesus at the hands of the cruel Nero.

But before he was to go toward Rome, he expected to **“go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints,”** taking **“a certain contribution for the poor saints . . . at Jerusalem,”** a gift from the Christians of Macedonia and Achaia (15:25, 26). How beautifully he puts before the Roman Christians the **“duty”** of one saint to another in the exchange of **“spiritual”** gifts and **“things for the body”**! (See 15:27).

Then having bidden them to pray for his safe journey to Rome **“in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ,”** for his deliverance from the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, and for his service to the saints there, he then, as it were, pronounces another benediction, saying, **“Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen”** (v. 33).

But once again he adds yet another very personal message, and how expressive it is of Christian love!

IV. GREETINGS TO THE SAINTS AT ROME, 16:1-16, 21-23

Let us read this salutation to the Roman Christians, remembering that it came at the close of a personal letter from friend to friend. And how beautifully the apostle commends his fellow-Christians, many of them unknown to us, except as we read of them here! Often the quiet ministry of God’s saints, unheralded and unsung on earth, is most acceptable to Him. Let us not forget this as we are called to labor in the little things which men seem not to notice. Our God knows our hearts, and He will not forget our **“work and labour of love.”**

It seems that Phebe was the messenger who delivered this letter to the Roman Christians. Note how Paul speaks of her:

“I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church . . . a succourer [helper] of many, and of myself also.”

Whatever her business was, she had need of assistance and encouragement from the Christians at Rome.

Priscilla and Aquila, Paul calls his **“helpers in Christ Jesus.”**

They had risked their lives for his safety. And they had a **“church . . . in their house.”** Their reward for service at **“the judgment seat of Christ”** will be one to be desired. We turn to the eighteenth chapter of Acts to read more about these devoted saints of God and Paul’s fellowship with them.

Epaenetus, **“my well-beloved . . . who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ”**—thus Paul salutes this saint, an early convert of Achaia.

Mary **“bestowed much labour”** upon Paul and his companions. Perhaps she entertained them in her home.

Andronicus and Junia, **“kinsmen”** of Paul and **“fellowprisoners”** for the testimony of Jesus, were saved before Paul knew the Lord, even as he says, **“They were in Christ before me.”** They were also **“of note among the apostles.”** Just what their service was, other than this, we shall know when we meet them in heaven.

Amplias, Paul calls his **“beloved in the Lord.”**

Urbane—**“our helper in Christ.”**

Stachys—**“my beloved.”**

Apelles—**“approved in Christ.”**

What a statement! Can that be said of you, my friend? No higher commendation can we desire than to be **“approved in Christ.”**

After naming others who **“are in the Lord,” “who labour in the Lord,” “who laboured much in the Lord,”** Paul then salutes **“Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.”** Some unnamed mother had been as a mother to the great apostle. What a ministry!

Not from himself alone, but from Timothy, his **“workfellow”**; from Tertius **“who wrote this epistle”** as the apostle dictated it; from Gaius, his **“host”**; from **“the whole church”**; from Erastus, **“the chamberlain of the city”** (Corinth); and from Quartus, **“a brother”**—from these also Paul sent greetings to the Church at Rome. What fellowship these early saints have had in their earthly ministry and for all the years since they departed **“to be with Christ”**! There is no bond so binding, no love so pure as that which is ours in Christ Jesus and, through Him, in fellowship with His saints.

(1) Warning Against Seducers, 16:17, 18

Paul would not have been true to his God-given trust had he failed to warn his fellow-Christians against seducers.

Note his words:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (vv. 17, 18).

“The doctrine” which the Roman Christians had **“learned”** was none other than that set forth in the epistle Paul was sending unto them. And we, too, should **“avoid”** all false teachers, except as we may be able to point them to Christ. They are self-seeking, blind leaders of the blind; and **“by good words and fair speeches”** they **“deceive the hearts of the simple.”** God warns us against them and their doctrine through His servant, Paul.

(2) Commendation and Comfort, 16:19, 20

Commenting further upon the Roman Christians’ **“faith,”** which was **“spoken of throughout the whole world”** (1:8), Paul rejoices yet again in their **“obedience,”** which was **“come abroad unto all men”** (v. 19).

Admonishing them to be **“wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil,”** he comforts them in the reminder that God’s promise is sure, and that He will **“bruise Satan,”** rob him of his power, and that **“shortly.”**

Not always will Satan be **“the accuser of our brethren,”** **“the god of this world,”** and man’s bitter foe. One day he will be **“cast into the lake of fire,”** no longer to exercise power over the souls of men. The Seed of woman, the Lord Jesus Christ, will **“bruise”** the serpent’s **“head.”** Therefore Paul offers comfort and encouragement. The God of righteousness shall triumph over Satan and sin and all the powers of darkness.

V. THE BENEDICTION, 16:20, 24-27

Throughout the epistle the apostle has paused again and again to render praise unto God, and now in adoration and prayer he commends his brethren to the Lord Jesus.

These are wonderful words—words of **“grace”** and **“power”** from the God of wisdom and glory.

Still praying that his fellow-believers may be established in the faith, in the doctrine of justification by the grace of God, Paul reminds them for the last time of the gospel message. He tells them that the **“mystery”** concerning the church, not revealed in other ages, but known to God from the beginning, was now proclaimed **“to all nations for the obedience of faith.”**

We cannot add to these words.

They speak to us of the love of God for a guilty world. And with Paul we would utter them in prayer and thanksgiving **“to God only wise,”** our Redeemer and our Lord.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.”

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