

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 10TH-11TH, 2021 // BOOK OF ROMANS

A MINISTER OF CHRIST JESUS (ROMANS 15:14-16)

Paul has spent much of Romans diving deep into the theology and doctrine of the Christian gospel (ch.1-8)

- He's also discussed how the gospel speaks to God's plan for Israel (ch.9-11), and he's exhorted the church in Rome to live in unity while they follow Jesus in their everyday lives (ch.12-15).
- Paul has confidence that these believers have been taught what they need to know to live lives "full of goodness", as they have been "filled with knowledge" (vs. 14).

Notice that one of Paul's intentions for writing this letter is so that this church can be, "able to instruct one another" (vs. 14b).

- Part of why we learn scripture is so that we can be, "full of goodness"-we can put into practice what God has shown us to live lives of goodness, holiness and righteousness.
- But if that's our only reason for learning scripture, we're missing half of our purpose as disciples.

We study the scriptures in order to be able to teach, encourage, and instruct others (vs. 14).

- This is a significant component of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).
- We're to take what God shows us in our study of scripture and use it to encourage others within the body and share it with those who don't know Jesus.
- Spiritual obesity is a real problem in the Church.

Paul has been bold in his letter in many places in order to remind this group of believers what their focus is to be as a church (vs. 15-16).

- Paul's ministry to the gentiles is mentioned most likely to serve as an example to this church of how they're to continue to serve the Lord.
- The Roman church would've been set in the most cosmopolitan, cultured, affluent, pagan, and godless city on the face of the earth.

It would've been very easy for them to become inwardly focused and NOT to minister to the pagan world-much of Rome would've been hostile to the gospel.

- Paul says that truly serving God is taking this gospel to those far from Him ("gentiles") as a priestly act and offering to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (vs. 16).
- We are to have a heart for those far from God.
- A church that becomes inwardly focused is a church on a downward spiral towards spiritual anemia, community irrelevance, and inevitable death.
- We must fight the battle against our natural tendency as Christians to become inwardly focused isolationists-this is simply blatant disobedience to the final commands of Jesus.

AMBITION TO PREACH THE GOSPEL (ROMANS 15:17-21)

Having encouraged the church to be outwardly focused and committed to being a minister of Christ to those far from God, Paul again points to his own ministry as an example.

- Paul has a healthy, godly sense of confidence of purpose in the work God had called him to do (vs. 17).
- Anything that Paul had done had only been because of what Christ has accomplished through Him (vs. 18).

As Paul surrendered his life to the purpose of preaching the gospel, signs, wonders, and the power of the Spirit of God became a normative part of his Christian experience (vs. 19).

- One of the reasons we fail to experience the power of God in our lives is because we aren't committed to the purposes of God in our lives.
- Our Christianity can become so academic (or superstitious), lukewarm, inwardly focused, and purely theoretical...

In Paul's ministry, God's power showed up mightily to fulfill the ministry of the gospel of Christ in Jerusalem (to religious people) all the way to Illyricum (to pagans) (vs. 19).

- Paul's ambition was to take this message, "not where Christ has already been named", but to those who had never heard the name of Jesus (vs. 20-21).
- This is what Paul lived for and what drove him!

In 2021 there are 7,400 distinct people groups comprising of 3,230,000,000 souls who have NEVER heard the gospel.

- Christianity is growing at 1.18% per year worldwide, but Islam is growing at 1.9%.
- As Americans, we have the most access to Christian resources, training, theology, and by and large we have the most financially affluent Christians in the world.

And yet, American Christians (who receive 53% of the world's annual income) spend around 98% of it on themselves.

- The ambitions that we often chase after look NOTHING like those of the New Testament church, and we wonder why our faith seems so boring, stale, and irrelevant to the culture at large.
- We need a godly, Kingdom ambition that's greater than our pursuit of comfort, convenience, and the American dream.

TRAVEL PLANS (ROMANS 15:22-29)

Paul hasn't been able to visit the church in Rome because he's been pretty busy (vs. 22).

- But now since he had established churches in the regions where God had called him, he planned on visiting Rome on his way to Spain so they could aid him in his missionary work (vs. 23).
- Financial support amongst churches in the NT was a normative practice, and Paul describes how churches gave financial support to help the poor in Jerusalem (vs. 25-27).

Paul's plan was to deliver a collection for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem (vs. 26-27).

- He encouraged the Roman Christians to be generous financially to the Jewish believers because there were great spiritual benefits from the Jews.
- Paul would indeed head for Rome after his time in Jerusalem, but not in the way he planned (Acts 27).

Those who are strong financially have a responsibility within the Body of Christ (vs. 1-2).

- We've been blessed by God not so we can use our financial affluence to "please ourselves", but to be a blessing and instrument of God's work in the world.
- Why does God invite us to be generous with our money? (Luke 21:1-4, 1 John 3:16-18, 2 Cor. 8:12-15, 1 Tim. 6:17-19).

"Where your treasure is, your heart will be also"-Matt. 6:21

- What our treasure (our money) is committed to-be it entertainment, toys, sports, vanity, fashion, or lifestyle-our hearts will be committed to also.
- But if our treasure is committed to the work of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, our hearts will be attached to His work and Kingdom.
- What is your heart attached to?

God doesn't need your money! He wants your heart.

- How you spend your money is simply an indication of your priorities and values.
- If God has your heart, He will also have your willingness to be generous towards His work.
- God loves a **cheerful** giver (2 Cor. 9:6-7)-it's not a "have to", it's a "get to" because we've been given so much by God!

STRIVING TOGETHER (ROMANS 15:30-33)

Paul's appeal to this church is not just for their financial support, but also for their prayers (vs. 30).

- When we "strive together" in prayer with other believers by the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Spirit, there is great spiritual power.
- Paul's specific request was for protection as he delivered the financial support to the church in Jerusalem (vs. 31a).

He also prayed for favor with the Jewish believers in Jerusalem that his service would be "acceptable" to the saints there (vs. 31b).

- Are our prayers more self-focused or others focused? Do we pray for others who are serving the Lord in ways that we're unable?
- We might not always be able to give or to go, but we can always pray.

Paul was an incredible human being with a heart for God and a love for people, but he was a human being nonetheless.

- He had a desire to come to Rome to be "refreshed by the company" of the believers there (vs. 32).
- None of us ever graduate from our need for friendship and true, spiritual community.
- Our spiritual health is directly related to our involvement in the lives of others who know us, love us, and are praying for us.

SYMMETRY.

- The scriptures call us to be people of balance and symmetry - spirit & truth, faith & works, justice & mercy.

OUTWARDLY FOCUSED (VS.14-16)

- Our study of Scripture isn't just so we can be "full of goodness"- it's also so we can instruct and encourage others.
- Do you have a heart to share what God has shown you to others-both in the church and those far from God?
- When's the last time you shared your faith?

OUR MISSION (VS.17-21)

- What are your ambitions? What (or who) are you living for?
- Do you have a sense of purpose and mission in your life? Does it match God's?
- How has the Great Commission shaped the trajectory and priorities of your life?
- Do you regularly experience the power and presence of God in your life? Or is it just theoretical and intellectual?

RADICAL GENEROSITY (VS.22-29)

- Every follower of Jesus is called to be financially generous towards the work of the gospel in the world.
- If your spending habits were to be audited, what conclusion would your auditor come to about your priorities?
- If you have financial margin-are you using it to "please yourself" or to bless others?

COMMUNITY & PRAYER (VS.30-33)

- We're called to pray for each other and relationally support each other as we work together to build Christ's Kingdom. How's that going?
- Pick a ministry, missionary, or another follower of Jesus and regularly pray for them.
- Encourage someone this week who is serving the Lord-we all need each other!