

The Way

Growth of the Church

Lesson 31: Paul Concludes His Letter to the Romans

We are indebted to [Ethnos360](#) for providing the basis of these lessons

Review (Where We've Been)

Today we're wrapping up the book of Romans!

Review of Paul's Epistle to the Romans

- Romans 1-3 - Condemnation
- Romans 4-5 - Justification
- Romans 6-8 - Sanctification
- Romans 9-11 - Restoration
- Romans 12-16 - Transformation

Because of all God has done FOR US, what does He expect FROM US?

- **To behave in ways that mark genuine believers (Romans 12)**
 - Living Sacrifice
 - Spiritual Gifts
 - Show genuine love for one another
- **To live submissively under government authority (Romans 13)**
 - No authority except from God
- **To live peaceably with other believers (Romans 14)**
 - Tom - 2 weeks ago - Christian Liberties/matters of conscience

BIG Idea

Paul's Conclusion to his Letter to the Romans (Romans 15-16)

If you follow the letter from start to finish, and put it into practice within the church,

you should see evidence in 3 tangible ways within the Church...

- 1. Radical Unity***
- 2. Unwavering Consistency***
- 3. Unending Glory to the Father***

Information (What You Need to Know)

A. God Desires Radical Unity for His Church

Marked by 3 particular traits - Harmony, Inclusivity, and Single-mindedness

1st - Harmony

Romans 15:5-6 (ESV)

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such *harmony* with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with *one voice* glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Harmony

- In art, these concepts are similar, yet different
 - Harmony - many distinct and unique voices joining together to produce something beautiful and cohesive - like the worship band ... Harmony enhances...
 - Unity - One voice, consistent and whole, a sense of telling one story -
 - Exodus 24:3 - Moses came down from mt. Siani and instructed the people what God has said and with *one voice* they said "we will do it" (Paraphrase)
 - and At the crucifixion - Luke 23:28 (NLT) - "Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with *one voice* they shouted, "Kill him, and release Barabbas to us!"
 - **God desires that we live and work together in such harmony that we "may with *one voice* (in unity) glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"**

2nd - (politically loaded word) *Inclusivity*

Romans 15:7-9 (ESV)

"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

"For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order that the *Gentiles* might glorify God for his mercy..."

Inclusivity

- What once was *exclusive* (only for the Israelites) has become radically *inclusive* (open to all people)
- God desires that *all people* would “abound in hope” (v. 13) through Jesus’ finished work on the cross
 - Because of this, we are called to preach the Gospel locally and globally, sharing that Hope - No more fear of condemnation because of our sin

3rd - Single-mindedness

Romans 15:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ 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, ²¹ but as it is written,

“Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand.”

Single-mindedness

- God desires that we develop relationships built on a shared purpose in Christ
 - Notice the focal point of Paul’s relationships in **chapter 16**

(Paul’s Relationships Graphic)

- Phoebe - “welcome her in the Lord” (v. 2)
- Prisca and Aquila - “my coworkers in Christ Jesus” (v. 3)
- Epaphroditus - “the first convert to Christ in Asia” (v. 5)
- Mary, Andronicus, Junia - “in Christ before me” (v. 6-7)
- Ampliatus - “my beloved in the Lord” (v. 8)
- Urbanus and Stachys - “fellow worker in Christ” (v. 9)
- Apelles - “approved in Christ” (v. 10)
- Family of Aristobulus, Herodion, Family of Narcissus - “those in the Lord” (v. 10-11)

- Tryphaena and Tryphosa - “workers in the Lord” (v. 12)
 - Persis - “worked hard in the Lord” (v. 12)
 - Rufus and his Mother - “chosen in the Lord” (v. 13)
 - *Brothers and sisters... all the saints...* (v. 14-15)
 - “All the churches of Christ” (v. 16)
- C.S. Lewis - *Four Loves* says “Friendship... is born at the moment that one man says to another ‘What! You too? I thought that no one but myself...’”
 - Biblical relationships are **built** on a shared purpose in Christ
 - A shared realization of our own brokenness
 - A shared dependency on God’s Grace
 - A shared celebration of our victory in Christ
 - A shared devotion to His work and His Kingdom

***Greet one another with a holy kiss (v. 16) - German Baptist Church service*

B. God Desires Unwavering Consistency for His Church

**Marked by - you guessed it - 3 actions - Watching, Avoiding, Obeying*

Romans 16:17-19 (ESV)

“¹⁷ 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*.¹⁸ 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. 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.”

Watch

- What are we Watching for Exactly...

- **Those Who Cause Divisions**
 - Jesus says it like this...

Matt 7:15 (ESV)

“¹⁵ Beware of *false prophets*, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Implies *pretending* or *playing a part* with **malicious intent** towards the flock

Matt 7:21 (ESV)

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who **does the will of my Father** who is in heaven.”

**Jesus echoes this thought in Matthew chapters 12 and 24*

Why would someone do such a thing?

Romans 16:17 (ESV)

¹⁸ **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.”**

- **Those Who Create Doctrinal Obstacles**

Doctrine - Christian teaching based on the Bible.

- Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary For Kids

It is important to note that there are different levels of doctrine;

(Levels of Doctrine Graphic)

- **Primary doctrines** - Core Biblical teachings that are clearly explained and repeated in Scripture, and are essential to the Christian faith
- **Secondary doctrines** - Biblical teachings that are important, but leave room for interpretive differences. (are not “salvation” issues). Baptism
- **Christian liberties** - Issues which are not clearly discussed in Scripture and are therefore matters of conscience. (Tom’s message on 4/21)

What Paul is talking about here are people who are teaching things that contradict the core teachings, or **primary doctrines**! Things that are absolutely made clear in Scripture.

How do we spot **False Teachers** with malicious intent when the evil intent is concealed?

Thankfully, Jesus tells us how!

Matt 7:16-17 (ESV)

16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.**"

Avoid

- How do we Avoid a False Teacher...

• Study and Meditate on the Truth of God's Word

- Romans 16:19 (ESV) - "...But I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil."
 - God defines what is good and what is evil - therefore we must use His compass to determine if we or someone else is off course
- It is much easier to spot the counterfeit when you know the genuine
 - Bank Teller

• Listen Carefully - one ear on them, the other on the Holy Spirit

- Are their teachings consistent with Scripture? (2 Peter 1:20-21)
- Do their words "grieve the Holy Spirit" within you?

• Prayerfully Examine Their Fruit

- Who benefits, and who is **glorified** by their ministry?
 - 1 Peter 4:11 (ESV)
*"11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything **God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.**"*
- Do you see evidence of *bad* or unhealthy fruit in their personal life and ministry?
 - 1 Tim 6:3 (ESV)
"3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with **conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy **craving for controversy** and for **quarrels** about words, which produce **envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions,** 5 and **constant friction** among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that **godliness is a means of gain**"**
 - Jude 11 (ESV)

(speaking of false teachers) "Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion."

- "In other words, a false teacher can be known by his **pride** (Cain's rejection of God's plan), **greed** (Balaam's prophesying for money), and **rebellion** (Korah's promotion of himself over Moses)." Got Questions.org

- Do you see evidence of the Fruit of the Spirit in their personal life and ministry?

- Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23)

- "When the word of God, faithfully taught by the people of God, and empowered by the Spirit of God falls down, people become different. Lusting people become pure. Fearful people become courageous. Thieves become givers. Demanding people become servants. Angry people become peacemakers. Complainers become thankful. And idolaters come to joyfully worship the one true God.

The ultimate purpose of the Word of God is not theological information, but heart and life transformation."

- Paul David Tripp - Dangerous Calling

Sometimes This process requires time and relationship to reveal the truth

- How are you able to *truly* examine the fruit of those whom you **do not know**?
- We should be **careful** with who we give the position of Pastor to in our life
- Proceed with caution
- Start reading books and listening to podcasts recommended by people you know and can examine their fruit

Obey

• Prioritizing Truth in Love, and Awarding Grace Where Needed...

- Prioritize the Truth by first ensuring that **you are obeying** The Word in your own life! - **This will help you know when to award Grace**
 - Then refuse to listen to the teaching of those who contradict, manipulate, neglect, or abuse the Word of God
- Prioritize the Truth and award Grace - If someone **disagrees with you**

- Acts 15:36-41 - Paul and Barnabas disagree and separate
 - Neither were wrong - no malicious intent
 - **Obedience here looked like parting ways and continuing to serve the Lord separately so they did not disrupt the unity of the Gospel with their disagreement**
- Prioritize the Truth but award Grace - If someone is **growing and still learning** the core doctrine
 - Acts 18:24-27 - Priscilla and Aquila correct Apollos
 - We are human and make mistakes. There is grace. Again, No malicious intent.
 - **Obedience here looked like course correcting and continuing to serve the Lord**

quickly

- **Prioritize Truth in Love, and Accept Correction**

- **If we make a mistake in our understanding and teaching of the Word we need to...**
 - **Recognize** our error, **Accept** correction, **Repent**, **Continue** serving
(Like Apollos mentioned above did)

C. God Desires Unending Glory Through Christ's Finished Work

What is our purpose now? To bring Him glory!

- Doxology - an ascription of glory
- *3 parts - Gospel for **you**, Gospel for **them**, and **Glory to God***

Romans 16:25-27 (NLT)

²⁵ Now all glory to God, who is able to make you strong, just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has revealed his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. ²⁶ But now as the prophets foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and obey him. ²⁷ All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen."

Over the last 16 weeks we have walked with you down the “Romans road”.

Question which I first asked myself, and now I am asking you.

Where have you allowed this walk to lead you?

Where have you allowed the Book of Romans to lead you?

Have you been **awakened** to the harsh reality that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God? **(Condemnation - Rom. 3:23)**

Have you been **humbled** by the exchange of wages offered to you through Christ - Death in exchange for the free gift of eternal life? **(Justification - Rom 6:23)**

Have you **fully realized** that you have been set free in Christ from the law of sin and death? **(Sanctification - Romans 8:2)**

Have you found yourself **overwhelmed with gratitude** that nothing - absolutely nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ? **(Restoration - Rom. 8:39)**

Have you then allowed yourself to be **transformed** by the renewal of your mind? **(Transformation - Rom. 12:2)**

...Those who are **new** to the faith

...Those who are **growing** in their faith

...And ***ESPECIALLY*** those of us who are **seasoned** in the faith

Who have heard these kinds of messages a thousand times, have read these familiar passages over and over, who have long been nestled safely in the arms of the Savior

We cannot allow ourselves to become **numb** to these realities...

We will never reach a point in our Spiritual Maturity at which we outgrow The Gospel.