

Romans 15 (Pt 2): Romans 16 (Pt 1): 1-25 - Final Words and Warnings

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

Romans chapter 15 verse 17.

“In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. ¹⁸ For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; 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, (and he quotes from Isaiah here) “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”” (ESV) Stop there.

Paul knew that God had called him to get the word out to people who had not heard the Gospel before, and it wasn't his desire to go and build on another man's foundation as he called it. He wanted to go into the world in such a way as to bring Christ to those places where folks had never heard. And that's what he was constantly finding areas where people had never heard the Gospel anymore. It's interesting. There are people who continue to have a passion for this today.

Some groups like Wycliffe Bible Society and others have a passion to reach the Gospel into areas where it has never been preached before or where they don't have the written Word of God before. But it also kept Paul from ever getting to visit the people in Rome.

And that's what he goes on to say in verse 22. He says, *“This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, ²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵ At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.”*

You might remember in the Book of Acts, it's recorded in chapter 11 that there was a man named Agabus who had a prophetic gift. And he stood up in one of the meetings and he spoke through the Spirit that there would come a famine upon the Roman Empire. And it apparently hit the people quite hard there in Jerusalem and so Paul would go around and take up support offerings for the Jews in Jerusalem from the Gentile churches that he would plant, and then he would bring those gifts himself back to Jerusalem.

And he says, in this case, the saints in Macedonia and Achaia had made offerings. And that would have been the churches Philip in the Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth. And so, they would come back and with these gifts, refresh the saints. Those who'd been hit hardest by those famines. Of course, famines always hit the poor very hard, don't they? And Paul said that they were going to go to Jerusalem first and then we'll make our way out.

He goes on to say about this gift. He said, *“²⁷ For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.”*

What Paul means by that is that the Gospel originated from the Jews. Jesus was a Jew. The Gospel went first to the Jews. The first Christians were Jews. And Paul is saying that now from the Jews who came to the Gentiles, there's a succession of that extension of hope, and since the Jews have extended blessings to the Gentiles, it should be no big thing for the Gentiles to share in the material blessings with the Jews.

And he says, *“²⁸ When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.”*

And by the way, this is a side note, but we have no record of Paul ever making it to Spain. He may have. We don't know. But he certainly desired to go.

And so, he says in verse 30, *“I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.”*

I love how Paul ends this section with a humble request for prayer. Sometimes we think of the apostle Paul as being this bastion of faith and strength. And oh,

if I could just be like the apostle Paul. He was a man. He was a man who needed prayer, and he asked for prayer, pray for me.

He said, pray first of all, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Jerusalem and that all that I do there would be acceptable and so forth and the words that he, where he says, strive together with me in your prayers may not exactly express the force of what Paul is actually saying here.

The NIV, if you have one of those in your lap, it says, “*join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.*” And that's what Paul is asking. He's not just asking for them to pray; he's asking for them to join him in his struggle in the work of the Gospel. He's basically saying, join me on the front lines.

They were in Rome; they weren't going to go with him to Jerusalem. But he said, you can be there with me by praying with me. And Paul wasn't saying these things just to appear spiritual or contrite or something for effect. These are the words of a man who was convinced that prayer is what causes spiritual effectiveness to be birthed in the first place.

We forget this. We want there to be effectiveness in our lives, spiritually speaking, but we forget this element of prayer. And so, Paul is looking here for people who are equally convinced and have the faith to invest themselves in that spiritual exercise that's going to pay eternal dividends.

It's hard to find people like that. It's hard to find people who will invest themselves. People would rather, frankly, give their money. It's easier. Just put a little bit of money in there and that's good.

We're good. But how many are willing to come and say, why don't you meet us here this night of the week or whatever, we're going to spend an hour in prayer. How many people would come? Well, I can't make it, but here's a five. Are you willing to invest your time in the kingdom of God, in that which pays those eternal dividends?

Verse 33. “*May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*” Sounds like the end of the book, doesn't it? But Romans is like Lord of the Rings, it has lots of endings.

Now Romans 16, the chapter, is largely a lot of, it's a collection of a lot of personal greetings, but there's some gems tucked in there too. It's also a great exercise in pronouncing names. “

*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae,
2 that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and help
her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many
notice that word, patron) and of myself as well. ”*

Phoebe was the woman who carried the letter to Rome that we call the Book of Romans. Can you imagine? Phoebe's the gal who took the letter from wherever. We believe Paul was in Corinth, but Phoebe was there with her, probably, with him, rather, and then went and was sent on to Rome with the letter. Oh, Phoebe, you're going to Rome. Hey, I got something I want you to take. See, where did I put this? It's in my bag somewhere. I wrote a letter to these guys. This is Romans, you guys. We're at the end of Romans.

This is like, this is considered to be the greatest of all of Paul's epistles, and how would you like to have been the one who carried it to Rome? By the way, I got a letter for you guys. Paul wrote you just a little something. That's crazy. But he noticed that Paul calls her, *“a patron of many.”* I don't necessarily use that word. It basically means a helper.

Whatever God had given Phoebe in life, she used it to help others and including Paul, and Paul tells the church there in Rome to welcome and help her in whatever way she may have needed.

Verse 3, *“Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.”*

You remember Paul first met Priscilla and Aquila, the Jewish couple, on his second missionary journey when he came to Corinth. And they were there because they'd been forcibly ejected from the emperor who told all the Jews to get out of Rome. But now, apparently, they're back in Rome. They were tent makers like Paul.

“Greet also (he says in verse 5) the church in their house. (Now they were not only back in Rome, but they, the church was actually meeting in their home) Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.

6 Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. 10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. 11 Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family

of Narcissus. ¹² Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³ Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. ¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them.

¹⁵ Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, (I forget her name. It's what you kind, well, you want to put it in there, right? I'm sure he did but) and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. ¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. (And then Paul ends with this. Important comment) 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."

Stop there for a moment. Paul felt the need here to lay out this final warning to the Church about those who do two things. Let me put these on the screen for you so that you can see them. These are the final warnings.

Warnings from the Apostle Paul

- Those who cause divisions

The number one is those who cause divisions. We're going to define these two things and then talk about what Paul said to do about them. Those who cause divisions. The Greek word means to stand apart. And that's what people who cause divisions do to get brothers and sisters in Christ who should be one with one another, but instead to stand apart.

It's actually a ploy of the enemy, and it's an old ploy. You see it on nature shows where predators find the flock, or the herd and they know instinctively that there's a method to get what they want, and it's called divide and conquer. To divide the flock, to get some of the flock separated.

And that's why the enemy likes to do the same thing to the Church, to the body of Christ because he knows that when people are standing apart, they can't possibly be standing together in prayer. Of course, as members of the body of Christ, they can't be functioning as a true body as well. And the methods that they use to do this are many. But I'd be here all day reciting the ways that people have found ways to divide others in the body of Christ.

But we, as the Church, we need to walk in discernment so that we understand what's behind the effort of these folks. Often, they will express them couched in words of concern.

With phrases like, we just really care about what's going on around here. But, and there's always a big but that comes after it. And they sound very concerned about it. But the one consistency though, is that you will find that their concerns are never brought to the ones that they are concerned about. They're always brought to others. They talk to others. Those who they're just attempting to spread their discontent to by using gossip and innuendo. And it's a very destructive thing in the body of Christ, and it is very much used by the enemy.

The second thing Paul warns us again against here is those who create obstacles that are contrary to the things that have been taught.

Warnings from the Apostle Paul

- Those who cause divisions
- Those who create obstacles

These are people who are introducing teachings and ideas that run contrary to the Word of God. The Greek word for obstacles here is where we get our word scandal. They introduce scandalous teachings that are unbiblical and dangerous. So, what should we do?

Look at the end of verse 17. Paul makes it short and sweet. He says, “*avoid them.*” Avoid them. And then he explains why. “*For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites.*” And this is actually a play on words, interestingly enough here.

What Paul is saying here, literally in the Greek, is these men are not slaves of Christ, they're slaves to their own desires. They're slaves to their own appetites, their own wants and wishes. That's all they serve. They're not serving the Lord. Their motives are not to support, even though they may express concern for the body. We really care about what's going on here, at this church, but that's not there, that's not their motive to care.

Their motive is themselves, and Paul says at the end of verse 18, look with me there. He says, “*by smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the hearts of the naive.*” Smooth talk and flattery.

I know that you're one of the more spiritual people in this church. And I know that you understand what's really going on. And so, I'm confident to share some

of my concerns with you, because people like you are going to understand, and you're going to know best what to do.

That's just, they're just buttering their bread on both sides. Smooth talk and flattery just to suck you in when you ought to be saying, brother, your issue is not with me it's with someone else, and you should be going to that person. You should not be coming to me with this concern of yours as if you're trying to gather some support. Go to the brother, go to the sister, go to the leadership, go to the people who can do something about it. You shouldn't be talking to me. That's the discernment we ought to have.

Do you remember when Paul spoke to the elders of the church of Ephesus? He warned them about the same thing. Essentially, this is what he told them. Let me put this passage up for you from Acts chapter 20. He says,

Acts 20:29-30 (ESV)

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking (Look at this) twisted things, (and what's their goal? Look at the end there. What's the goal?) to draw away the disciples after them.

You see, that's what they want. That's their motive. They couch it in all kinds of, we just really care about what's going on here. But what they really want is they want followers. They want people to come to them. And they want to draw people off to themselves, and this is what Paul warned the church in Ephesus about. He's warning now the church in Rome about the same thing.

And it's been going on for 2,000 years in the body of Christ. People drawing other people off, siphoning them off from the body of Christ, just so they can have their own little group,

Even Paul told the Corinthians, the Galatians, he said those who are trying to get you to buy in on the idea that you have to be circumcised, they care nothing about you, they simply want another notch in their belt. They want to know that they've influenced someone else. They don't really care about you. They don't care about your eternal future. It's a very self-centered and self-gratifying sort of a thing that is actually going on in the body of Christ and we need to really walk in discernment.

Can I just really challenge you that if somebody ever comes up to you and says, I'm just, we're just really concerned, and they might even invite you over and serve you dinner and stuff. And then you're sitting down in the living room and afterwards, they just start talking about all the concerns they have. Can I just encourage you just to say, you need to take those concerns where they need to go. Have you gone to the leadership about these things?

Why are you telling me, why are you talking to me about this thing? That's not the right thing to do. That's not Biblical. Go to the person who you have trouble with, who you have a problem with. Take it right to them. Deal with it. What you're doing is you're spreading division. You're spreading dissension, and that's wrong. It's just something that is given in the Word of God, and something that the body of Christ needs to be aware of.

Verse 19, Paul ends by saying, *“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.”*

And that's why he's telling them these things. I don't want you to be a part of that, which is evil. I don't want you to get sucked in by people who have an agenda. I want you to be innocent about these things, but I also want you to be wise.

The body of Christ needs to be wise. He says, *“The God of peace (verse 20) will soon crush Satan under your feet...”* And that speaks of who's behind all of these sorts of things. When divisions and obstacles are put in people's way, it's the enemy who's behind it. And sometimes, and I say this with much sadness and sorrow, sometimes the enemy uses born again Christians to perpetuate these sorts of things. And they're unwitting. They don't know it, but they get sucked into these things.

They take up offenses for other people, and pretty soon, they're angry. And they're doing the work of the enemy to bring division and dissension and they're not even aware of it. And it's all under the cause, or the guise, I should say, of we just really care.

There are ways to deal with it. Paul says, listen, the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet, and that's his way of saying there is coming a day, and it's not long off when all this garbage and all this junk that we have to deal with here on this side of glory is going to be over, and that's going to happen, of course when Jesus returns for His Church.

He says there at the end of verse 20, “...the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ²¹ Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.” And look at verse 22. It says, “I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.” And that would be the person who actually penned the letter at Paul's dictation. Paul spoke it, Tertius wrote it down.

By the way, can I just call your attention to his name? I don't know if you've ever noticed that some of the names of people in the New Testament have some really interesting meanings. Like this name here, Tertius.

Do you know what it means? It means third. Third. It's, we say primary, secondary, tertiary. Have you ever heard that term? And it basically just means a third. What's interesting is that's what his name is. Three. And there were other people who had similar names. Let me show you this one from Acts chapter 20. I highlighted it there. Paul is writing at the end of Acts, or excuse me, Luke is writing,

Acts 20:4 (ESV)

*Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and **Secundus**; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.*

*Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and (look at this name) **Secundus**;... Goes on to mention a few others, but I wanted to call your attention to Secundus.*

Guess what his name means? Second. Do you know why they had names like that? They were slaves. They were slaves who had no other name but two and three, and they were in the body of Christ, and not only were they in the body of Christ, they were beloved, and the Bible writes about them.

Nobody had time to name them beyond two and three, or second and third. But God took the time to put their names in the Word that you and I might remember that the early church started off reaching all people. And you know that was one interesting thing about the early Church.

People got saved and it didn't matter what position of life they were in. Some were slaves and had a name like second or third and some of them were masters. And that's why Paul wrote in some of his epistles for now that you're a believer, slaves, here's how you should respond to your masters and masters here's how you should respond to your slaves because your brothers now. Get this. Can you imagine a church where you come to church and the slave is an

elder and the master is just one of the members of the body? Wouldn't that be a strange sight?

But the Church often takes the stations of life that the world gives and sets them on their ear. But you know I think we need to remember something about the body of Christ. We've gotten so, over the years we've gotten so high and mighty sometimes about the people we will minister to and the people who we consider to be Christians or whatever.

The Bible talks about these people who had no more of a name than 2nd or 3rd and they were important members of the body, traveled with Paul, wrote down, can you imagine being a guy whose name is 3rd, and you get to write down the book of Romans?

I mean, Paul, the apostle, calls you and says, Listen, brother, come and sit with me, I'm going to dictate a letter to the church in Rome and I'd like you just to write everything that I'm about to tell you. What an honor for a man who once served as a slave. You might think to yourself, what can I possibly do in the body of Christ? How can I possibly serve? The sky's the limit. I don't have a fancy education. I'm not fluent in this, or I'm not this, I'm not that. Look at this a slave wrote down the book of Romans. It's crazy. It's just absolutely crazy.

Verse 23, *“Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greets you.”*

These were friends of Paul in Corinth, obviously people who were very key. Now, some of you, if you have a New King James or a New American Standard Bible you have a verse 24 in your Bible, although you have it with a footnote. Those of us with an ESV or an NIV, verse 24 isn't there because it's not in the manuscripts that were used to translate those particular Bible versions.

But verse 24 basically says, *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”* But he's still not done.

But, anyway, this is a verse that just did not find its way into some of the manuscripts. Obviously, it's not a key, it's nothing key doctrinally or whatever, and that's why it's given with a footnote in some or not included in others at all.

Now, what I love about Romans though, is that Paul is going to end this letter with what we call a doxology. He wasn't trying to do this. We call these doxologies, but this is kind of a summary of praise, if you will. And a doxology is a beautiful thing.

There's a doxology at the end of Jude and some other letters as well, but there it's a way of just declaring the wonders of God and in Paul's case here, creating almost a summary of what he has said up to, here in the Book of Romans. And I want to read this whole doxology to you. It's, I may just come back next week and just talk about this doxology. I don't know.

But here's what it says, verse 25 and following. *“Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.”*

You can almost hear Paul's excitement there, can't you? And again, if you really look into this doxology, and you know what, I think I might just do this next week. I think I might just focus on these verses here, because it's nice to do something fun between books sometimes.

Sue was asking me this morning what I'm going to start next after Romans, and we're going to go right into First and Second Corinthians, but because I looked online and it's been since like I think 03 or 04 since we did Corinthians it's time, but uh, these doxologies are just so beautiful.

And they usually have some, they're just laden with meaning. And that's why I think it would be a good idea to do it. But again, it's almost an expression of excitement and praise to and now to him who, da, da da, da, and so forth.

I want to share a quick story with you about a doxology that erupted in a very unlikely place. Charles Coulson, Chuck Coulson, you might remember him as a former White House counsel to President Richard Nixon. Some of you may not know your history very well. Let me just fill you in here quick.

Chuck Coulson was considered to be one of the hatchet men. One of Nixon's hatchet men when the Watergate scandal broke out, which was the break in of the Watergate Hotel during the conventions and so forth that were going on during the Democratic convention. Anyway, you can read about it. Google it, okay?

Anyway, Chuck Colson was one of the men who was convicted of crimes during the Watergate scandal under the Nixon presidency and went to prison because of his participation. And you know how we just on our tree here at

Christmas, put all those angels on the tree. And you guys bought presents for kids whose parents are incarcerated?

That was started by Chuck Colson because Chuck Colson came to Jesus Christ in prison and actually read the book, Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis. Came to know Christ as His Savior and dedicated his life to ministering to people behind bars. Wonderful story. If you ever get a chance to read his autobiography, I think, is called Born Again. And anyway, great read. If you ever get a chance to pick up that book, read it.

But anyway, he then went on to found a prison fellowship. He tells a remarkable story about a doxology in a very unusual place and for an unusual reason. I'm going to just read this to you as it came through.

It seems that a young man named Fred, a convicted thief and heroin addict, had been led to Christ in prison. by the family of one of his robbery victims. They visited him in prison and showed the love of Christ so consistently to him that he was eventually won to the Lord. The impact of his conversion on his conscience was so dramatic that at a parole hearing, Fred confessed to other robberies for which he had not been caught or convicted. That's usually, you're told not to do that.

As a Christian he felt that it was his obligation to be completely honest about his sins. Because Fred's original conviction was overturned based on a legality, he was released from prison. He joined a church, got involved in an ex-prisoner's fellowship group and continued to grow. At his retrial for the crimes he was originally accused of, he again confessed, this time to the trial judge, to the additional wrongs that he had committed. He told the judge he was willing to accept whatever punishment was appropriate.

An awkward silence ensued while the judge considered what to do with Fred and his previously known and now newly confessed crimes. When the judge announced the sentence, it reflected a wisdom that gave Fred back his life. 10 years for each robbery, suspended. No jail time. And restitution to his victims for their losses with 50 percent interest.

For a moment, no one in the courtroom moved. Then Fred's pastor jumped to his feet and shouted, Let's sing it! And proceeded to lead the entire packed courtroom in the singing of the doxology.

Now some of you don't know what the doxology is. I'll fill you in here in just a minute, but The Seattle Times newspaper actually captured the scene. Yes, this

really happened. Everyone stood up. Little old ladies in spring dresses, ex-cons, girls in jeans, men in business suits, a biker with his motorcycle jacket and helmet, prison guards, and they all began to sing, Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Now, does that sound strange? Doesn't sound strange for church. Sounds pretty strange for a courtroom in Seattle. Officials later said that it was the first time a Seattle Superior Court case had ever closed with the singing of the doxology. True story. Isn't that amazing?

But see, that's what a doxology is. It is just that, it is that overflow of just joy. It's just that, oh, praise God from whom all blessings flow. Have you ever felt like doing that? Have you ever, some of you might have been raised, I was raised in a church, we sang it every week.

And for us it was it was like, praise God from whom all blessings flow. It was nothing. It was, we did it every week. You know, you knew it, you could be just thinking about the football game or picking your nose or whatever, but, you're just singing this thing for, praise him all creature, here below.

Whatever. When it comes from the heart, when it just bubbles forth from the heart, it's just this, it's this thing you just can't keep, it's like this pastor who stands up at the court and goes, let's sing it!

And normally you think people would say, sit down!, or bang the gavel on the thing and say, you're out of order! He says, let's sing it, praise God from whom... And everybody stands up and sings! It's just amazing.

Have you ever had that overflow of joy? And that's what Paul is doing here at the end of the book of Romans. And that's why I love it. And I want to read it one more time with you.

Paul says, *"²⁵ Now to him who is able (who is able) to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen."*