

1. **Introduction**: Paul has completed his plea for unity between strong-in-faith believers and weak-in-faith believers. He shifts to a plea for unity between Jewish and Gentile believers. The following two principles developed by Paul apply to all churches at all times.

- (1.) The principle of faith by which everything done must be done from faith (14:23). Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind (14:5).
- The implication of this principle is that believers should strive to educate and train their own conscience by the Word of God to become strong-in-faith.
- (2.) Everything must be done according to love (14:15).
- Believers are to remember that Christ died for our brothers and sisters. We should honor them, serve them, and respect their position in the Lord. We should never be the cause of them violating their conscience.
- In essentials unity; In non-essentials liberty; In all things charity.

2. **Romans 15:8-13**: *“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. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.” ¹⁰ And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” ¹¹ And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.” ¹² And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.” ¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”*

- Paul is deeply concerned that all believers interact in a unity maintained by faith and love. Diverse backgrounds should become united in Christ.
- In this section, Paul quotes several OT verses of prophecies that, together with the root of Jesse, the Gentiles will praise God as their hope.
- By becoming a servant to the Jews, Christ confirmed promises given to the patriarchs. In grace and mercy, He enabled the Gentiles to come into His messianic family.

- God made explicit covenants with the patriarchs on behalf of the Jews and confirmed them through Christ.
- In OT times, God made no covenants with Gentiles, but as prophesied, He bestowed His mercy on them. God is the hope of Jews and Gentiles.
- There were no covenants with Gentiles in OT times, but when Jesus made a New Covenant in His blood, it was with all believers, Jews and Gentiles. The long-prophesied ingrafting of Gentiles into God’s family was all of grace.
- “In Christ” there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Everyone in Christ partakes of the benefits of the New Covenant.
- Paul prays that the God of hope will fill each believer with all joy and peace through faith, enabling the power of the Holy Spirit to work in each person that they might abound in hope.
- Christ died to save Jews and Gentiles, rose to be their Lord, and will come again to be their judge.
- This section of the letter ends with verse 15:13.
- The first section of the letter (chapters 1-11) was Paul’s great exposition of doctrine. In the second section (12:1-15:13) Paul begins with the importance for believers to give themselves to God as a living sacrifice and to be transformed by a renewing of their mind. He exhorts all believers to work for unity among the diversity of believers.
- Sub-section (14:1 – 15:13) we just finished focused on keeping non-essential differences from causing divisions among believers.
- What a believer eats and the days considered holy are between the believer and God. Believers should always follow what their conscience tells them is required by Scripture.
- Non-essential matters should never cause divisions between believers.
- Whether a believer was in their past a Gentile or Jew does not matter.
- Summarizing Paul’s arguments, faith and love are to guide every believer. In fundamental or essential things, faith is to rule,. Love must not be permitted to cause a believer to violate a fundamental principle of faith. First things first.

- In non-fundamental or non-essential things, love is to rule. Believers must not allow faith to cause them to trample on another believers' conscience.
- As John Stott says, *“Faith instructs our own conscience; love respects the conscience of others, Faith gives liberty; love limits its exercise.”*

3. **Romans 15:14-22**: *“I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. ¹⁵ But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 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, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.” ²² This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.”*

- Verse 15:14 begins the final section of Paul's letter dealing with the providence of God in his ministry.
- Paul expresses confidence in the faith of his Roman readers.
- Though he did not plant the churches in Rome, Paul's God-given authority as apostle to the Gentiles authorizes him to teach them.
- From verse 17 through 22 Paul provides details concerning the nature of his ministry. It is a priestly ministry – in analogy to the Jewish priesthood and in reference to Jesus our great High Priest.
- Through his witness Paul brings people to Christ, offering them to God.
- The new believers join in worship and ultimately go out to witness. Worship leads to witness, and witness to worship.

- Paul describes all his ministry as being that which Christ has accomplished through him. He has been ***“bringing the Gentiles to obedience – by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.”***
- Christ works through Paul. Paul is His agent or instrument. In 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul writes, **“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.”**
- Paul implores on behalf of Christ, that believers be reconciled to God.
- The work to be done is the work of Christ. His is the glory. What Paul has accomplished has been through ***“word and deed.”***
- Paul working through “word and deed” follows Jesus’ example. Tell the truth and illustrate it with works, thereby combining the verbal and the visual.
- Furthermore, Christ’s ministry through Paul was by the ***“power of signs and wonders.”*** This expression combines the 3 most common biblical terms for the supernatural – power, signs, and wonders.
- “Signs” indicate significance. “Power” indicates God’s power active in Paul (God is in control). “Wonders” indicate the effect of God’s supernatural powers on people (evoking people’s amazement).
- Paul’s ministry was to be a pioneer. He led the way, ministering where no other had yet come with the gospel.
- When he wrote this letter, Paul had spent about 10 years in apostolic labor including 3 long missionary journeys covering the eastern Mediterranean area.
- Paul was called to evangelize those who had never heard the gospel. Since the church in Rome was founded by someone else, Paul had so far had no occasion to visit them. But for their mutual benefit, he yearned to visit them.

4. **Paul’s Plans:** Having explained his approach to accomplishing his God-assigned apostolic ministry, Paul considers the status of his current ministry which is nearing completion and what should come next. His travel plans include Rome.

- He mentions three destinations – Jerusalem, Rome, and Spain. He plans to go to Jerusalem first. That requires a significant detour since he is in Corinth and could reach Rome by a much shorter route. Going first to Jerusalem adds almost 2000 miles to Paul’s journey.

- The visit to Jerusalem is very important to Paul because he is carrying aid from Macedonia and Achaia for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.
- He is concerned about his safety among Jewish unbelievers in Judea and asks for prayer for deliverance. He is concerned but will do what needs to be done.
- Paul expects to be refreshed by the company of believers in Rome. As must always be true, his plan is subject to God's will. In fact God has a few unexpected detours for Paul.
- Here is Paul's discussion of his plan in his own words.

5. **Romans 15:23-33**: *“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. 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. 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. 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. ³³ May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”*

- Paul is on his way to Spain. On his way he will go to Jerusalem and then to Rome. Visiting the churches in Rome is something he has yearned for.
- Paul reaches Rome but not on his schedule. He was arrested in Jerusalem and, after a long process of questioning in different places by different authorities, he used his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar. He was then escorted under arrest to Rome.

6. **Romans 16:1-16**: *“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 and of myself as well. 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. ⁵ Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, 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, 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.”*

- As he closes this letter, Paul, in the first 16 verses of chapter 16, sends personal greetings to a surprising number of people given that he had never been to Rome.
- There is specific mention of 26 persons, some former Gentiles and some Jews, but at that point, all were Christians.
- Of the 26 persons, 9 are women. The only person specifically commended by Paul is Phoebe. Paul commends her to the Roman churches and asks that they help her in whatever way she may need.
- Phoebe likely carried Paul’s letter to Rome. As mentioned, it is somewhat surprising Paul knows so many individuals in a place he has never visited.

- Maybe not so surprising given that travel in the empire was relatively easy and frequent. Christians sought out other Christians where ever they went. Most likely, Paul’s reference to kinsmen is to fellow Jews.
- Perusing Paul’s list we cannot help but notice the diversity of people who have become united in the cause of Christ.
- At the end of his personal greetings, Paul shifts abruptly in the last few verses of the letter first to warnings (16-20), then to specific messages (21-24), and closes with doxology (25-27).

7. **Romans 16:17-20**: *“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. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”*

- Paul’s warnings come as a personal appeal from him. There are three aspects he is particularly concerned about.
- First, that they be on guard against people who deliberately strive to cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the right doctrine.
- Secondly, that they avoid people who work to deceive the hearts of the naïve.
- Thirdly, work to grow in discernment so that they become increasingly wise about what is good, what is innocent, and what is evil.
- Avoiding people who cause divisions and create obstacles does not mean ignoring them. Paul is warning against being seduced into being like them.
- Being wise about the “good” will enable believers to recognize the good (or its absence) in the world around them. That will enable them to properly love and follow the good.
- Whenever believers encounter a new teaching, there are three vital questions to be answered: (1) Does it agree with Scripture? (2) Does it glorify the Lord Jesus Christ? (3) Does it promote the good and righteous?

8. **Romans 16:21-24**: *“Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. ²² I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. ²³ Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.”*

- Having sent his own personal greetings to 26 individuals in (3-16), Paul now sends messages from 8 named individuals who are with him in Corinth.
- Timothy is well-known. The next three are relatively unknown fellow Jews.
- Tertius, Paul’s scribe, extends in his own hand his greeting to those in Rome.
- Then, a greeting from Gaius, Paul’s host in Corinth, and the whole church.
- The final two greetings are from Erastus, the city treasurer, and Quartus.

9. **Romans 16:25-27**: *“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 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.”*

- Paul closes his letter with a beautiful doxology offering encouragement to his Roman readers. Strength is available through Christ Jesus.
- The mystery of the ingrafting of the Gentiles is being fulfilled before their eyes in response to the command of the eternal God.
- The purpose of God’s command and of Paul’s preaching is to bring about the obedience of faith.
- Paul commends his work and the people of the Roman house churches to the only wise God. May He receive glory forevermore through Jesus Christ.

10. **Closing Comments from Your Teacher**: In this study I have used several different commentaries. All are listed below from the most used to the least used. I am responsible for the words used and the way ideas are presented. The approach I follow is to formulate notes from Scripture followed by checking my interpretation against one or more commentaries. Any errors are mine.

I pray God will bless this study of Romans and use it to benefit each one of us.

Commentaries Studied

- The Message of Romans by John R. W. Stott, Inter-varsity Press, 1994.
- The Epistle to the Romans by John Murray, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprinted 1987.
- Romans by F. F. Bruce, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprinted 1993.
- A Commentary on Romans by Charles Hodge, The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprinted 1989.
- Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, volume 2, by Charles Wesley, Baker Book House, Reprinted 1983.