

Romans Chapter 15- John Karmelich

1. Romans Chapter 12 through Chapter 15 is a single topic: How to live the Christian life.
 - a) It is as if the first 11 Chapters are an explanation of what God has done for us, and Chapters 12-15 are a response to those blessings from God.
 - b) In this lesson, we come to the end of this section. The only chapter left is Chapter 16. Chapter 16 is a different topic and we'll get to that in the next lesson. (There are no chapter breaks in the original text. That was added centuries later.)
 - c) Paul has now gone on for chapter after chapter with methodologies, illustrations and examples on living the Christian life. We're now near the end. If you gave a long speech, what would be your "wrap-up" comment? Wouldn't it be very important?
 - i) The point is here in this lesson, is the last set of things Paul wanted us to know.
 - ii) It would be like me saying, "In summary, here is the most important thing."
2. If I had to summarize Chapter 15 in one theme, it would be "work toward unity". All of the themes of this chapter have to do with Christians working together to help "unify" the church.
 - a) Unity does not mean all Christians should do have the same role or position.
 - b) Unity does not mean all Christians should belong to the same denomination.
 - c) Unity does mean that Christians should work together for the common good of helping each other.
 - d) That means having to live our lives for God, which is a big topic in Chapter 12.
 - e) It means to have a peace about you in situations that are beyond our control. That is an underlying theme in Chapter 13.
 - f) It means not trying to "fix" Christians whose faith is on a different level of one's own. That is a big theme of Chapter 14.
 - g) The first part of Chapter 15 goes one step further: Be willing to give up one's rights in order to help one another. There may be an issue where we as a Christian are free to do or not do "something", but we have to be willing to give up that right if it is offensive to another Christian. In other words, the feelings of the other Christian are to be given priority over our own rights.
 - h) The middle part of the chapter gets back to the issue of Jewish-Christians and Gentile Christians. (A Gentile is anyone who is not-Jewish.)
 - i) That was the biggest dividing issue for Christians of that day. Again, the over-riding theme has to do with "Christians should do all they can to emphasize unity in the church". That means overcome differences in race, sex, age, values, status and cultural differences. Dealing with Jewish-Christians versus Gentile-Christians was a prime example of this issue.
 - i) The final verses of this chapter deals with Paul's future travel plans.
 - i) Paul is saying in effect, "Here is what I'm working on for the moment. If I get an opportunity after that, I'll come visit you in Rome."
 - ii) Remember that Paul has never been to this Roman church he is writing to.
 - iii) He is saying, "I've got other commitments right now. When I'm done, I'll see if I can pencil you into my schedule. ☺ I really do want to see you all some day."
 - iv) The question is, "Why did Paul include this text?" The obvious answer is Paul's wrapping up the letter and he wants to mention his desire to see them. The next question becomes, "What can we learn from this part of the letter? The answer comes back to working for unity within the Christian church."
 - a) Paul wants all Christian to do their part to help other Christians.
 - b) With Paul describing his itinerary, he is giving an example of how his life is also dedicated to serving other Christians all for the glory of God.

3. What I want you to get out of this lesson is not the historical or the cultural details of that day.
 - a) The main application for us is, "How can I live my life for God's glory?" The answer has all sorts of possibilities. It can mean a secular job. It can mean staying at home and raising God-fearing children. It can mean getting involved in some sort of small or large ministry. The point is all Christians are called to serve all other Christians. If you are not sure which one's to serve, start with those around you.
 - b) This chapter gives additional examples of how to live one's life for God. It is not so much the specifics of how Paul lives that are important. What is important is the methodology needed to live this life. Examples of this methodology are all through this lesson. For example, the first one covered in this chapter has to do with giving up one's rights in order to benefit other Christians. Speaking of Verse 1... ☺
4. Verse 1: We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. ² Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.
 - a) This verse is saying that Christians who are strong in "faith" need to support and help those who are weaker in the faith.
 - b) Let's start with a reminder of just what Paul meant by "strong in the faith".
 - i) In the last lesson, Paul never touched the issue of doubts about God. That is something all Christians go through. Paul assumes that all Christians believe Jesus died for their sins and that we all go through periods where one questions their faith. We'll get a little more into that issue in Verse 3.
 - ii) What Paul did mean is "weak in faith" refers to those who insist upon certain ritual behaviors on debatable issues within Christianity. One is weak in the faith where one takes a debatable issue and says in effect, "my way of doing it is right and I question the salvation of anyone who disagrees with me".
 - iii) There were specific examples given from the last chapter: One was about vegetarians versus meat eaters and the other was on what day of the week should one go to church. Paul says one who is "strong in the faith" understands that these are debatable issues and it doesn't matter what is one's position.
 - c) It would help at this point to describe one's "rights" as a Christian.
 - i) If we believe Jesus died for our sins, we are technically free to live how ever we want. There are no restrictions on our lifestyle. Here comes the "however": ☺
 - ii) However, if we believe Jesus died for our sins, then God desires a life of commitment to Him in gratitude for saving our life. We are free to live however we want, but if we have the love of God in us, then we should choose to express that love back to God and upon others. One would question your faith in God if that faith is never expressed outwardly.
 - iii) One's faith in God and one's behavior should be two sides of the same coin. If one does have faith, one's actions should follow. If I believe an elevator will hold my weight, my actions will follow that faith and I would get on that elevator.
 - d) There are places in the New Testament where the writers will say in effect, "If you believe, in Jesus, this is what you are commanded to do" or "Here is what you ought to do". Romans 15 Verse 1 has an "ought" in it. It's time to describe the "ought".
 - i) This verse is Paul saying in effect, "You as a Christian have all the freedom one could ever imagine. However, I am asking you-the-Christian to give up your rights in order to help out other Christians."
 - ii) This verse goes one step further than last week's lesson. In the last chapter, Paul says we should not judge people who are weaker in the faith. Paul was saying we shouldn't try to fix them. Paul even said in effect to accept their weakness and let God deal with their maturity as a believer.
 - iii) In the opening verses of Chapter 15, Paul is saying to go one step further and "bear with them". This is about ministering to those who are weaker in faith.

- e) Remember that the mission of Christians is to help mature one another and help prepare each other to spend eternity with God. Bringing in new members is a part of this mission statement. In order to help mature other Christians, sometimes we have to give up our rights and freedoms as a Christian in order to help those who are weak in faith.
 - i) Remember that Christian love is all about putting other's needs as a priority over one's own needs. Putting other's needs first is an example of such love.
 - f) So what do these two verses mean practically? It means when we go to church and get together with other Christians, we ought to look for ways to show love to other Christians as opposed to having others minister to us.
 - i) Obviously there are exceptions. If one is so sick or so injured that one can barely move, then let others minister to you.
 - ii) When we got to church, we should not think, "I hope the pastor has a good message today. He really put me to sleep on the last sermon." ☺ Paul is saying a purpose of gathering with other Christians is to spend time with them. Discern what other's needs are and offer to help. Sometimes just listening is a minister. Tying this verse to the last lesson, our job is not to fix people. Sometimes people just are worried about something and need to vent out the issue.
 - iii) One of the most important times for a Christian might be right before or right after a church service. It is a time for us to look for ways to minister to other believers.
 - iv) Remember the goal: The goal is to build up the faith of all Christians. We don't do that by "fixing" other Christians. That is God's job. Our job is just to love them. That simply means putting other's needs as a priority over our own.
5. Verse 3: For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."
- a) This is a quote of Psalm 69:9. This is a Psalm written by David roughly a thousand years before Jesus. Paul is claiming that this line of Psalm 69 is a reference to Jesus himself
 - i) This quote is actually the second half of Psalm 69, Verse 9.
 - ii) The interesting thing is the first half of Verse 9 ("for zeal for your house consumes me") was also quoted in the Gospel of John as being about Jesus when He made the whip of chords and "cleansed" the temple. (Reference: John 2:17).
 - iii) This verse in Psalm 69 is prophetic. It is meant to tie to Jesus. The idea behind this prediction is that people will reject Jesus and insult Him. They didn't realize those insults were also insulting to God the Father. Therefore those insults to God the Father "fell" on Jesus.
 - b) So how does this quote about Jesus relate to the first few verses of Romans?
 - i) The idea here is that Jesus put up with the insults in order to focus on his ministry. Jesus had the "right" to fight back and defend himself. Jesus gave up those rights in order to focus on helping other Christians.
 - ii) This prediction also ties to the cross itself. When we sin, it "insults" God. Jesus bared the price of those sins. Those insults then "fell on Jesus".
 - iii) Getting back to "rights" as a Christian, God's will is for us to give up our rights for the sake of helping out other Christians. There may be behavior issues where we as Christians have every right to act a certain way. However, that action may hurt the faith of others. For their benefit, we are to freely give up such rights.
6. Verse 4: For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
- a) Verse 4 is saying that every verse of the Old Testament is designed to teach us things about how to live the Christian life.
 - i) The word "Scripture" refers to the Old Testament. The New Testament wasn't put together when Romans was written.

- b) What's the purpose of reading the bible? In context of Verse 4, it is to have "hope".
 - i) Biblical hope is about eliminating doubts about Jesus. Hope is our trust that Jesus died for our sins, He will come back for us, and we will live forever with Him.
 - ii) Earlier I mentioned that all Christians go through periods of doubts. To have doubts is the opposite of "hope". How does one get over their doubts and have hope? That is what reading Scripture is all about. Paul is specifically saying in this verse that a (not the) purpose of Scripture is to help us have hope.
 - iii) This is a good verse as a reminder that one needs to read through the entire bible on a regular basis. A purpose of such reading is to help us with our "hope".
 - c) In context of Verse 3, Paul has a more specific purpose in mind regarding Scripture:
 - i) In Verse 3, Paul gives Jesus as an example of how to live one's life. Instead of quoting Jesus' direct sayings (where Paul does in other letters), Paul quotes a place in the Old Testament that is prophetically tied to Jesus.
 - ii) Paul is saying in effect, "If you love Jesus and want to honor Him, study the Old Testament. It is full of prophetic passages about Him. Then practice what is written about Him in the concept of modeling that behavior."
 - iii) The specific example at hand is about giving up one's rights in order to help other Christians. The bigger-concept is to the study one's bible with the question in mind, "How does God want me to live? What lessons can I learn from today's bible reading and how does that affect my behavior?"
7. Verse 5: May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- a) In Verse 4, it said that through bible study and "through endurance and the encouragement", we can have hope.
 - b) In Verse 5, Paul is praying that God give us "endurance and encouragement".
 - i) The idea here is that the ability to grow as a Christian comes from God. The ability to serve other Christians as a priority comes from God.
 - ii) We need God's power in order to do the "things" Paul asks us to do. Paul is asking us to give up our rights and freedoms as a Christian in order to benefit others. The ability to do that stems from God. We must prayerfully ask God to give us this ability.
 - c) Why does this ability have to come from God? Can't we just have the discipline to give up one's rights in order to help one another? If this ability "stems" from us, then we ultimately get the credit and not God.
 - d) Let me give a practical example. Before leaving for church, ask God, "Lord, help me to bless somebody today. Guide my heart and my mouth so that I can be used to help someone else out." Then watch God work. As this happens, you may say "Wow, did that just come out of me? How did that happen? ☺ Praise God, as that prayer worked!"
 - e) Verse 5 uses a term translated "Spirit of Unity".
 - i) This gets back to the idea that God desires Christians to work together for the mutual benefit of helping to mature one another. If we all desire to work to put other's needs as a priority over our own, this leads to unity.
 - ii) This term does not mean God desires only one denomination of Christians.
 - iii) This term does mean that in whatever setting Christians get together, we desire to work together to help each other out. We are each to use our God-given talents and abilities to benefit each other as a priority over trying to get some sort of personal benefit.
 - iv) People who play organized sports or are musicians can understand the concept of "spirit of unity". It is the idea of playing in a way that is best for the team as opposed to what is best for them.

8. Verse 7: Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.
- In the last lesson, I talked about the idea of having love for “the Christian you can’t stand”. It is the idea that if God choose to pick them for eternity, then we have to accept the idea that we are going to be with that person for eternity, whether we like it or not.
 - Let’s put it another way: God accepted you and me, faults and all. God didn’t say to us, “Clean up your act first and then we’ll talk about that salvation thing.” ☺ He called us into salvation, and we accepted. We then spend the rest of our lives in obedience to God and growing in maturity of our faith.
 - With that in mind, the point of this verse is to “accept one another”. Paul is saying in effect, “Look folks, God picked you as a sinner. He then started working on your life after you were saved. We need to have that same attitude with others. This is not about fixing others. It is about accepting the fact that God picked the person next to you as well as yourself. Accept the fact that God is working on their lives. Our job is just to love them.”
 - What’s the purpose in accepting one another? The last part of this verse says, it “bring(s) praise to God”.
 - We tend to think of “praising God” as prayer and singing to God.
 - This verse is an example that our actions can also bring praises to God. When we help and minister to other Christians, that also brings praises to God.
 - Living the Christian life is about gratitude to God for what He did for us. A method of showing gratitude is to praise Him. One “praise” method is when we help others.
9. Verse 8: For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs ⁹ so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." ¹⁰ Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." ¹¹ And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." ¹² And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."
- I put four verses together to show the context of Verse 8: The main point of these verses is that Jesus is not only the “God of the Jews”, but God of the Gentiles as well”.
 - There are four different Old Testament quotes in these 4 verses. Each is designed to show that God is also the God of the Gentiles (i.e., any and all non-Jews) as well as the Jewish people themselves.
 - With that in mind, let me explain why these verses are here: Remember that we are still on the issue of unity within the Christian church.
 - The most striking example of Paul’s day between different types of believers was that of Jewish converts to Christianity and Gentile converts to Christianity.
 - Jewish converts understood the God of the bible. Religious Jews understood what God required of them. They had a whole set of customs and traditions based on the Old Testament laws.
 - Gentile converts had little to no background in Judaism. They just accept that God exists and forgave them for their sins and lived in gratitude on that fact.
 - Here were two totally different groups that God says in effect, “Now you two go out and work together despite your different backgrounds”.
 - The point here is that if a Jew and Gentile can get along in Christ, there is hope for the rest of us. Differences in race, age, culture, sex, wealth, status, etc. should all be irrelevant when we get together as Christians.
 - With all of that in mind, I can now focus on some of the specifics of this verse. Let’s start with the statement in Verse 8 where Paul says, Jesus is a “servant of the Jews”.
 - The next 4 verses (Verses 9-12) focus on how Jesus is a God of the Gentiles. It couldn’t hurt to have one verse (Verse 8) focus on the fact Jesus is “also” sent to the Jewish people.

- ii) There was a moment in Jesus' ministry where a non-Jewish woman asked Jesus for help. Jesus said in effect that he was only sent to the Jewish people. After some begging, the woman got the miracle she wanted. To understand why Jesus would not help her initially, one has to understand that she initially approached Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. Once she acknowledged in effect that the God of Israel is also the "God of all", Jesus helped her. (Ref.: Matthew 15:21-28).
- iii) Getting back to Romans, Jesus is the "servant of the Jews" in that one of the reasons Jesus came was to fulfill Old Testament promises to Israel. One of the promises given to the Nation of Israel is that they were promised a king (i.e., a Messiah) who would rule the world from Israel. There are also promises that the Messiah would have to suffer for the sins of the world (e.g., Psalm 22, Isaiah 53). Some religious Jews speculate there will be two Messiah's because of those contradictory promises (i.e., a suffering Messiah, and a ruling Messiah). The Old Testament never states the Messiah is coming twice. The New Testament blatantly says Jesus will return for a second trip. (e.g., See Acts 1:11).
 - a) The point of all this? Jesus is a "servant of the Jews" in that He came, and will come again to fulfill God the Father's unconditional promises to the Jewish nation. In that aspect, He is the "servant of the Jews".
- e) Remember that Paul has a bigger purpose in mind by bringing this up: There was conflict in the early church between those of Jewish backgrounds and Christian backgrounds. Before Paul spends four verses on how Jesus is the God of the Gentiles, it is important to emphasize Jesus "Jewish ness" first.
 - i) The application to you and me is if the Christian church is big enough to handle the cultural differences between Jews and Gentiles, it can handle the cultural differences, race differences, financial and status differences that we have today.
- f) OK, time to talk about us Gentiles. Paul gives four verses from the Old Testament. Let's start by restating the verses and the sources::
 - i) 1) Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." (Psalm 18:49)
 - ii) 2) "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." (Deuteronomy 32:43)
 - iii) 3) "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." (Psalm 117:1)
 - iv) 4) "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." (Isaiah 11:10)
- g) Religious Jews sometimes split up the Old Testament into three different sections. The first five books are the most venerated and collectively are called "The Torah". The Psalms are also venerated as a special book for praise to God. The remainder of the Old Testament is collectively called "The Prophets" because all of them are written as messages from God. My point here is Paul quotes from "all three sections".
- h) The first one says, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." (Psalm 18:49)
 - i) This Psalm, written by David emphasizes the fact the David praises God among the Gentiles. Some argue that the verse means that David praises the God of Israel as a witness to those Gentiles around him.
 - ii) David often wrote prophetically about the Messiah. One can argue that this verse is about Jesus praising God the Father among Gentile believers.
- i) The second one is "'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." (Deuteronomy 32:43)
 - i) This verse is about the praise of Gentile converts to Judaism at the time of Moses. The point here is that there were non-Jewish Gentiles in their midst praising God.
- j) The third one, "'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles" (Psalm 117:1a) is also an appeal to the Gentiles to praise the God of the Universe.

- k) The fourth one is the unique one: "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." (Isaiah 11:10)
 - i) The "Root of Jesse" is a nickname for the Messiah. Jesse was the father of King David. God promises a descendant of David would be the Messiah. This was written centuries after David had died.
 - ii) The point is "when" this Messiah comes, "Gentiles will hope in him."
 - l) Let's quickly discuss the "Gentile church" after Jesus:
 - i) When Jesus started His ministry, he had twelve Jewish disciples and some others. All those who followed Him at that time were Jewish. Even the first few years of the church were all Jewish people converting to Christianity. It wasn't until Paul came around that Gentile people "in mass" became Christians.
 - ii) In the Book of Acts, Paul would commonly go to a Jewish synagogue and preach Jesus. For the most part, Paul got rejected. Then "all of a sudden" a bunch of Gentile people in each town would accept Jesus.
 - iii) My point here is that these verses about Gentile believers were prophetic. Over the next two thousand years, billions of Gentiles would come to worship Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus was an "obscure prophet from an obscure country". There is no logical explanation for the spread of Christianity unless the hand of God is behind it. The point is all four of these verses became literally true in ways the Old Testament writers could not have possibly comprehended.
 - m) OK, I've now been rambling on these four verses for two pages. ☺ Besides the history lessons, the most important thing to get out of these verses is the issue of "unity".
 - i) God worked for centuries primarily (but not exclusively) through the Jews.
 - ii) After Jesus, God works primarily (but not exclusively) through Gentiles.
 - iii) Paul's point is that despite cultural differences, we are to get along and work together with the common purpose of helping other Christians grow in faith.
 - iv) God works through both groups and brings them together. God can "handle" any differences one has with the Christian sitting next to you despite differences in background, culture or personality. If God could unite people from Jewish and non-Jewish cultures in one church, there is hope for the rest of us.
10. Verse 13: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- a) Paul ends this section with a one-line prayer. In a sense, this is the end of the "how the Christian should live" section of Romans that started with Verse 1 of Chapter 12.
 - i) The subject changes beginning in the next verse. Starting in Verse 14, Paul is going to state his desire to actually visit this Roman church. We'll get there in a moment.
 - b) Paul's point here can be summarized as follows: "I've asked you over the last several chapters to live a life pleasing to God. That includes bending over backwards to helping your fellow Christian, even if it means you to have suffer for it. Don't try to do this on your own power. Let God work through you, via the Holy Spirit, to give you the power to live the Christian life that God desires for you."
 - c) Here's a good prayer to try based on this verse. "Lord, fill me up with your peace and your joy. With that peace and joy, you "overload" me so that I just can't help sharing it with those around me. By Your power, fill me with your love, peace and joy so I can then share those same qualities with those around me, Amen."
 - i) If one desires to be filled with God's love, joy and peace, it will be contagious. We can't contain those positive qualities if we tried.
 - d) This is also a great little prayer to use when one is in a bad mood and something bad has happened. Add a line to this prayer like, "Lord, I know you have a purpose for whatever I'm going through right now. Help me to have peace and joy despite the circumstances around me so that I can share that peace and joy with others, Amen."

11. Verse 14: I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.
- a) Paul is now starting his “wrap up” section of Romans. From Verse 14 to the end of the chapter, Paul gives some final admonishments to the church at Rome. Paul then states some of his future travel plans. Chapter 16, which is the next lesson, is mostly personal greetings and some final commentary.
 - b) As a leader, in whatever position, it is always good to give somebody “a standard to live up to”. For example you may say to someone under you, “I know that you are a trustworthy person. (That person, then thinks, “of course I am”. ☺). The boss then continues, “Therefore, I know I can trust you to carry out this assignment.
 - i) What the boss did in this situation is give the employee a standard to live up to.
 - c) Now let’s talk about what this “standard” is that Paul was confident about:
 - i) 1) Full of goodness; (i.e., doing good things by God’s love.)
 - ii) 2) Complete in knowledge; (i.e., knowledge of the essential Christian facts) and
 - iii) 3) Competent to instruct each other (i.e., helping each other grow in unity).
 - iv) Think about this for a second: Has Paul ever been to Rome? No. Has Paul ever met the Christians there? No. How can Paul make these statements about the Roman church without knowing much about them?
 - v) The answer is Paul is trusting in the fact that they believe in God the Father, they believe Jesus is the Son of God. More importantly for the moment, Paul believes God can “handle” them.
 - d) In the last lesson, I emphasized the fact that it is “not our job to fix other Christians”. We have to have faith that if someone is putting their trust in Jesus, God then spends the rest of their life on earth maturing them. Here, Paul is putting that concept into action by saying in effect, “I just wrote a whole letter on instructions for the Christian life. I have confidence that you, the Roman church will mature, not because you memorized my letter, but because I know God is working on you the same way he worked on me.
 - i) The application is if Paul can “Let go and trust God” for the life of other Christians, so can we and so should we.
12. Verse 15: I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- a) Here we actually have Paul’s purpose for writing to the church in Rome.
 - i) The church in Rome never asked for this letter. It was strictly God-ordained by Paul to write it. It was on his heart to write a long, instructional letter to them. It was up to the Roman church to accept this letter.
 - b) There is good evidence that Paul’s letter was accepted. When Paul finally got to Rome, near the end of the Book of Acts, there were Christians from Rome who traveled about sixty miles out of town to greet Paul on his way to Rome. (Reference Acts 28:15). “Most likely” the Romans received the letter, and then openly received Paul.
 - c) Now let’s discuss the verses themselves. Paul starts by saying “I have written you...to remind you of them again...” It is as if Paul believes that the Christians in Rome already understood the concepts taught in Romans, but Paul wanted to write them out to help them grow in their faith. It is as if Paul is saying, “This letter to you is a big set of reminders of things you already know.” The level of truth of that statement is unknown.
 - d) Notice Paul believes it was his “priestly duty” to proclaim the Gospel of God, so that the “Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God”.

- i) In summary, Paul's "priestly duty" is what God called him to do: Preach to the Gentiles to help them believe in Jesus and grow in faith in Jesus. This is why Paul traveled from town to town. I'll argue Paul couldn't stand not being a missionary. He believed God called him to go preach to Gentiles about Jesus.
 - ii) This letter to Rome was part of that calling by Paul. He wrote this letter because he had a heart to see people grow in Jesus.
 - a) That is what a good teacher does. Good teaching is all about caring for your students. It is about making the effort so that one's students can learn and grow. Paul prayed regularly for this church in Rome. Paul wrote out a detailed letter because he wanted them to grow in their faith.
 - iii) I mentioned earlier in this lesson that Paul was primarily called to help Gentiles. When you study the Book of Acts, Paul would come to a new town, and first preach to the Jews of that town. Paul usually got a few Jewish converts at best. At the same time, a whole bunch of Gentiles would get converted. Paul then figured out, simply by trial and error that God called Paul primarily to witness to Gentiles as that was where Paul was getting good results.
 - a) I point this out as that is often the way we can tell where God wants us. Sometimes the answer to the question of "what does God want me to do?" is try different things and then watch the results. Paul had a heart to win over his fellow Jewish brethren, but Paul did not miss the fact that his best success was with Gentiles. Therefore, Paul understood that if that is where the success was, that is where God wanted him.
 - e) The application of these verses is about our "priestly duties".
 - i) First of, Jesus calls all Christians "priests". (Revelation 1:5, 5:10 and 20:6). That does not mean we all have to quit our jobs and wear black robes. ☺ It means that each Christian is called to minister to other Christians. To minister means to help each other out. To minister is to give up our time and resources for the benefit of other Christians.
 - ii) Paul's "priestly duty" was to visit places he has never been and tell them about Jesus. Paul's "priestly duty" was to do follow up visits to some of the same towns to see how the Christians are progressing. (Ref.: Acts 15:36). Paul's "priestly duty" is to write letters to churches and other pastors to encourage them and help them grow in their faith.
 - iii) Our "priestly duty" could be the same as Paul's or a thousand other choices. Our "priestly duty" can range from being called to be a missionary in a foreign country to helping out in the church around the corner. It is using whatever talents and gifts God has given us, combined with our interests to serve God.
13. Verse 17: Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.
- a) Through out history, I would argue that no one person has made a bigger single impact on civilization than Paul, other than Jesus himself.
 - i) It was Paul's efforts to start churches and the impact of Paul's letters that changed the course of Western Civilization. The influence of his work has affected the lives of billions of people over the last two thousand years.
 - ii) I believe if you got Paul up on a stage to thank him, his acceptance speech could be summarized by Verse 17: "Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God."
 - b) My point is whether or not we are called to sweep floors in our church or "just" raise our children in God or called to preach to millions, the goal of all Christians is to bring glory to God. The purpose of living is to glorify God in all we do. To see Jesus get gloried in all that we do in our lives is how God wants us to live.

14. Verse 18: I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— ¹⁹ by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. ²⁰ It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.
- a) Paul is giving his missionary resume in these three verses. In summary, Paul says that through signs, miracles and the power of the Holy Spirit, he has led thousands of Gentiles into believe in Jesus. He has traveled from Jerusalem to Illyricum (that is north-Greece and part of modern Yugoslavia). It is over a 1,000 mile span. Further, Paul says it was his ambition to preach in places where Jesus was not known, “as to not build on someone else’s foundation”. We’ll discuss that last phrase in a matter of moments.
 - b) Notice Paul “brags” a little here. He is not bragging about his great writing ability, or speaking ability or missionary ability. He is bragging that his life made a difference for Jesus. That should be our goal as well.
 - i) Paul is saying, “I am bragging here about what I accomplished. I am not doing it so you know my resume or are impressed by accomplishments. I am mentioning this so that you know the power of God is available to make a difference in other people’s lives. Just as God used me, God can use you. I only brag so that one can see how the power of God is working in me to spread the gospel.”
 - c) The concept of Christian humility applies here: Humility does not mean we think lowly of ourselves. Humility is to not focus on ourselves at all. Christian humility is all about our service with the goal of pleasing God in all we do, and not do it for our own glory.
 - d) The mistake Christians make is to think, “I can’t do what Paul did. I am a nobody. I can’t make the kind of impact he did.” First of all, God is not interested in ability. God is interested in availability. Never underestimate what God can do through you and me. God is well, God. That means He can do anything. All it takes is willingness on our part to desire to do His will. God may call us to a large scale missionary job like Paul. He may call us to serve in a nearby church or at home. The point is not how many Christians we impact; it is the point that we make an impact on whoever God calls us to serve.
 - e) Before I move on, I want to discuss the phrase, “Not (to) be building on someone else's foundation.” Paul is saying he doesn’t want, for example, to establish a church where another church is already established.
 - i) God wants us to minister to as many people as are willing to submit their lives to Him. Different people have different styles and different needs. My point is I don’t have a problem with starting a church next door to another church assuming the second church has a different purpose and different “niche”.
 - ii) Along the same lines, it is ok to have the exact same style of church in a different location. Just because someone else already has a church just like yours, is acceptable if one goes to a different location.
 - iii) Paul is not arguing against helping out in a church he already started. This verse can be misinterpreted to mean as such. Paul understood Christianity is a group effort and just because Paul started a church, Paul understood that others were needed to keep that church going and expand that work in that location.
15. Verse 21: Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."
- a) This is a quote of Isaiah 52:15. This is a prophecy that people who never saw or heard of Jesus will “get it”. The idea is that Jesus was sent to the Jewish people, and for the most part, rejected him. The prediction by Isaiah is that other people, i.e., Gentiles will accept the same Messiah that the Jewish people have rejected.

- b) Paul is saying in effect, "I have personally watched this prediction come true. God has used me to help this prediction come true. I don't understand why all of these non-Jewish people just accept Jesus on the spot. I just watch them get saved and give God the credit."
 - c) Paul's point to the Roman church and to us is that this prediction is still in effect. People don't accept Jesus because of our great speaking ability to present the Gospel. People don't accept Jesus because of the logic of our arguments. We just present the gospel, simply and plainly and let God deal with the results. We just help other Christians with their needs and let God deal with their maturity. We work for God and let God have the glory in whatever results happen. The point is God does work and chooses to work through us to get His goals accomplished.
16. Verse 22: This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, ²⁴ I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.
- a) Let me paraphrase Paul's thoughts: "I bet you in Rome have wondered why I haven't visited your church as of yet. The truth is God has called me to spread the Gospel in distance from Greece to Jerusalem. I have yet to travel further west than Greece (where Rome was) because God called me to work in that thousand mile stretch. Now, I have completed my mission of that territory and I plan to make another visit further west with the goal of going to Spain. Since Rome is on my way to Spain, I'll stop by."
 - b) If I was a Roman Christian reading this, I might be a little insulted. Paul is saying to them in effect, "I want to go to Spain, and since all Roman roads go through Rome, I'll stop by on my way there." I could just hear a Roman Christian thinking, "Spain? What's the big deal about Spain? We're in Rome! This is the center of the Roman Empire! Yet, Paul says we are "only" important enough to make a pit stop on the way to Spain? ☺
 - i) First of all, Paul wrote his greatest and most detailed letter to the Romans. That should be an honor as it is.
 - ii) The reason I'm expanding upon this made-up, "what-if" illustration is to understand that we have to accept God's will even if it not our expectation. The Roman Christian should say, "Well, if the "great Paul" desires to see Spain, and we happen to be on the way there, praise God, we'll get to see him."
 - c) Why did Paul want to visit Spain? Don't know. Maybe he was craving Spanish food. ☺ Spain is the western most edge of the Roman Empire and the known world. Maybe Paul just wanted to go to the outer most limits of the known world, and Spain was "it". Historically, it is not known whether or not Paul ever made it to Rome. It is not recorded in the bible. Some church historians argue that Paul did make it to Spain, others do not.
17. Verse 25: Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.
- a) These verses give us the best clue as to when Paul's letter to Rome was written.
 - i) The Book of Acts was written by Luke. Much of Acts chronicles the life and missionary journeys of Paul. It covers roughly a half-century in its time span.
 - ii) If you study the Book of Acts, there was a point when Paul was in Macedonia. Paul took up a collection from the churches in that region and was going to take that collection to the church in Jerusalem.
 - iii) Paul is saying in Verse 25 "I am on my way to Jerusalem". That is how we know the time frame of this letter. It ties to the events Acts Chapter 11.

- b) Now let's get to Paul's point of mentioning his money collection to take to Jerusalem.
 - i) It was not to brag about how he was taking a money collection to Jerusalem.
 - ii) In earlier verses in this Chapter, Paul talked about how God has called him to preach primarily to Gentile Christians. Paul quoted four Old Testament verses in a row that shows that the bible predicts that Gentiles would believe in God.
 - iii) Given all of that, here is Paul mentioning the fact that he is taking a money gift from Gentile churches all over Greece (Macedonia and Achaia are part of Greece) and bringing that money to a Jewish-Christian church in Jerusalem.
 - iv) The point? It is one thing to say that Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians are to work together. It is another thing to "put your money where your mouth is". Telling a Jewish Christian group that the Gentile churches love you is one thing. Bringing a financial offering to help their financially poor church is another thing.
 - v) The application? It is for us to "put our money (and our time) where our mouth is." It is one thing to say we have love for the fellow Christian. It is another to actually make the effort, give them financial support, spend time helping their needs and actually doing something to show love to the fellow Christian.
18. Verse 28: So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.
- a) Paul is saying in effect, "Right now, God has called me to do this specific task. I have a heart for my fellow Jewish-Christians and at the moment, they are in financial need. After I have accomplished this task, I will see you on my way to Spain." The Book of Acts state there was going to be a famine in Israel and that was the motivation for the collection for them. (Reference: Acts 11:28-30.)
 - b) The book of Acts never records that God gave Paul a "burning bush" telling him to go with this money collection to Jerusalem. It was simply a matter of Paul and his companions had a love for their fellow Jewish-Christians. Paul knew they were in need. Even though Paul knew he was called to be a missionary, sometimes "God's will" involves what's on one's heart for that moment.
19. Verse 30: I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. ³¹ Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, ³² so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.
- a) Paul "urges" the Roman church to pray to God for him.
 - i) Paul understood that many non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem wanted Paul dead because of his efforts in conversion of people to Christianity. With that in mind, Paul asks for two things in this prayer request: 1) protection from those who want to do him harm and 2) that his service in Jerusalem is "acceptable".
 - b) The important application here has to do with prayer for those in charge.
 - i) I am convinced one of the most important things the "average" Christian should do is pray daily for our church leaders. It should include all of those involved in our local church and can include those in charge of our denomination as well as the missionaries sent out, or sponsored by our church.
 - ii) There is a saying in Christianity that goes, "If you are not on the battle front fighting the war, you should at least be back in the supply line providing the ammunition." The "ammunition" is the prayer support of those in leadership.
 - iii) One of the greatest preachers of all time, Charles Spurgeon, used to credit his success to the boiler room. In the basement of his church was a boiler room. During each service, people would pray for him from the boiler room. Spurgeon gave the credit for his success to the "heat" provided from the boiler room.

- c) Getting back to Paul, the interesting irony is that God did grant Paul the privilege of going to Rome, but it wasn't how Paul suspected he would. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and eventually got to go to Rome through the appeal process. Church history (not the bible) records that Paul was eventually set free in Rome. He was later re-arrested during another Christian persecution period and killed in Rome. My point here is "be careful what you pray for. God answered Paul's request to visit Rome, but it was not in any way how Paul imagined it to happen.
20. Verse 33: The God of peace be with you all. Amen.
- a) Verse 33 reads like it was the end of this letter. In a sense, it is.
 - b) There is one more chapter in Romans, but that chapter is an epilogue of sorts. In Chapter 16, Paul mentions a bunch of names he knows that are associated with the Roman church. More on that in the next lesson.
 - c) After many chapters explaining what God has done for the Christian and many chapters explaining how the Christian should live, Paul's last "prayer request" to this section is simply "(May) the God of peace be with you all."
 - d) Remember that Paul believes it is up to God to mature Christians, not us. Our job is to pray for other believers. Other job is to minister to other's needs. The results are up to God. Our job is to strive for "unity" within the church (assuming that unity stands by the truth of basic Christian doctrines) to help mature each other.
 - e) The idea of the "God of peace" is the idea that God is the one who gives us comfort and joy through whatever is happening in our life. Whatever the problem of the moment, whatever the situation, we can have peace knowing that our life here on earth is only temporary compared to eternity. God is working on us, and God does give us peace through these situations. We work "for" God and we let God handle the results. The results are never disappointing!
21. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, Help us to put the needs of other Christians as priority over our own needs. Help us to let go of our own desires in order to benefit others. Help us collectively as a church grow in Your love, Your joy and Your peace so that we can share that with others around us. May we overflow with Your love so that the overflow can be shared with others. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.