

## Study 16 – The epistle of Paul to the Romans by Neville Clark, 2017

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Reading: Romans 15

### Conclusion

This evening we are to conclude our series on the epistle of the Romans. Tonight, as our chairman has said, we will consider Ch 15. Ch 15 is the last chapter in our series, because we considered Ch 16 in our introductory study, so for us, at least, Ch 15 is the conclusion of the matter. It is not only the conclusion of our series, of course, it is also the conclusion, if you look at the screen there, of the last major section of the epistle. That is, the last major section, prior to the concluding remarks the apostle makes. Chs 12 through 15v13 we've entitled "The righteousness of God in practice," because this is the practical section of the epistle, that section that addresses itself to those practical issues that would devolve from an understanding of the doctrine of the Atonement as the Apostle has outlined it, at least in the first 11 chapters. And this is how things look in this last section.

Ch 12, "Our social responsibilities," both inside and outside of the ecclesia.

Ch 13, "Our obligation to the authorities," our obligation to pay taxes, our obligation to be indebted, as it were, in love to one another.

Ch 14, "Our ecclesial responsibilities," in which of course, the Apostle addresses the matter of division that had arisen in the ecclesia in Rome in the 1st Century.

And I am going to spend a little moment to just recap some of the things that we found from Ch 14, because Ch 15 continues the argument that was begun in Ch 14. In fact the chapter break, you might say, is in a very poor place. So in order to appreciate the context of the opening words of Ch 15, we do have to appreciate those words that lead up to it.

### The weak and the strong

So what was happening? Well the ecclesia was divided between two groups, and those two groups, very briefly, are called in Ch 14v1 and Ch 15v1, the "weak" and the "strong." And you will see both words recorded there. What was the difference? Well the weak was a group who, in the ecclesia, because of the scruples of their conscience, would abstain from certain activities. And in the context of Rom 14, those activities were certain foods, and certain days. I.e., they would not eat certain foods and they would keep certain religious days as more special than other days. I say they did that as a matter of conscience because it tells us in Rom 14v6, "He that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord. And this little phrase "unto the Lord," occurs 6 times between Rom 14v6-8 and it is a phrase denoting religious devotion.

So for example, Eph 5v22 "Wives submit to your husbands as unto the Lord," it is not a matter of preference, it is a biblical obligation. Eph 6v5, "Servants be obedient to your masters, as unto Christ." So on an issue of non-fundamentals these weak brethren, so called, abstained, or participated in this or that activity, as unto the Lord, as a matter of religious devotion. It was not a matter of preference for them, that's how they felt the truth should be lived. But of course, the observance of certain days, or the abstinence from certain foods was not a doctrinal matter, so it was not necessary to place those limitations upon yourself if you didn't want to.

That that of, course, was the position of the strong. The strong couldn't see any need to do those sorts of things or to place restrictions, or at least, those restrictions upon themselves. The problem in Ch 14 is that they simply went ahead and insisted on their rights and did whatever they pleased in the ecclesia. And that caused enormous friction, of course, in the ecclesia here in Rome. That was the basis of the division which we read of in Ch 14, and to make matters worse, those two groups weren't just divided practically, they were divided ethnically. The abstinence from certain foods, or the keeping of certain religious days was a peculiar Jewish trait. It was the Jews in the ecclesia that had the weak conscience on the issues that are the subject of Rom 14.

The strong brethren in this discussion were the Gentiles. They had no allegiance to Jewish customs or modes of thought and they couldn't see any point in it whatsoever. The consequence of that was that there was division and both groups sinned. And the sins are quite stark, they are mentioned in v3 for example that the strong would despise the weak for not eating, and the weak would judge the strong for eating. And as we described in our last class they both were extremely strong words with extremely strong implications.

## **Two groups within the one ecclesia**

So here you had two groups of people, both come to the truth, both loved the truth, both with genuine convictions, both had made enormous sacrifices, actually, to be in the ecclesia, I mean, think about what the Jews left behind to come to the ecclesia, and think about what the Gentiles must have left behind to come to the ecclesia, and they are threatening to divide over issues that are less than fundamental. And the Apostle, you know, he captures it beautifully in Rom 14v7, "Brethren he says, the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness peace and joy in, well it says in the Holy Spirit, it ought to be "in a spirit of holiness." The relationship that ought to have been "righteousness, peace and joy," had degenerated to an issue of meat and drink.

## **Was there a solution**

What was to be done? Well, if you look at the screen, just from the breakup of Ch 14, you can see the chapter splits into two halves. The first 13 verses talk all about the division in the ecclesia, and in this section, the Apostle explains the nature of that division, and he concludes in v13 by speaking to both groups. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more," spoken to the weak, "but judge this rather that no man put a stumbling, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way," spoken to the strong, and that concludes the 1st section. He explains the nature of the division speaking to both groups in the ecclesia and concludes in v13. And then from v14 through to the end of the chapter, he talks all about unity in the ecclesia, that is, the solution to the problem of division that had arisen. And whereas in verses 1-13 in this chapter the Apostle spoke to both groups, when he comes to v14, right to the end of the chapter, he speaks only to one group, he only speaks to the strong. And he begins in v14, to the strong, "I know," he says, "and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself." I mean, that was exactly the position of the strong, They couldn't see any need to abstain, let's say, from pork, no need whatsoever. He said, I agree, I agree with you philosophically, he says, but you still can't do it, because there are sensitivities in your meeting. If you grieve your brother he says in v15, you don't walk in love, you don't walk in love. The kingdom of God is bigger than meat and drink, v17, for meat he says in v20, destroy not the work of God. Don't insist on your rights and undo the greater work that God is doing. "Hast thou faith," v22, "have it to yourself." Do you think you are convinced about the point, have you got knowledge on this issue? You may well be right, well have it between you and your God. Don't flaunt it. There is no need to do that, because v23, if the weak brother copies your conduct without the same belief as you, he sins. He sins, and you have caused it.

## **The solution lies with the strong**

So there is the answer, you see, to the situation. The solution to the problem lay with the strong. Why? Because he had room to move. If these things were a matter of indifference to him he could eat or he could not eat, he could keep this day or he could not keep this day, it really didn't matter to him, he could come or go, whereas the weak brother couldn't. He had painted himself into a corner. Yes, he had created the problem himself, but nevertheless, it was an issue of conscience for him. So in matters like this the strong would have to give way because the strong can give way, and that would preserve the unity of the ecclesia. So there is a simple recapitulation of Ch 14 but, as I say, it is important that we bear that in mind because that becomes the platform from which Ch 15 begins. Because in Ch 15v1, Paul continues to speak to the strong as he has been doing in the last half of v14. And look what he says, Ch 15v1, "We then that strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves." We then, he says. I'm included with you, he says. In principle he says to the strong, I agree with you, your argument is good, there are no prohibitions on meat or on drink, but there are sensitivities in the ecclesia.

Do you know, often in ecclesial life something like this might arise and there is a division between two groups, on whatever the subject might be. I am speaking about a non-fundamental subject. If it is doctrine, it is completely different. But there is a division between two groups, perhaps, on a non-fundamental subject. And somebody will say Well, there's got to be give and take, why can't we meet in the middle? Look, if we are talking about an issue of preference like the colour of the walls, we can have a vote and perhaps in some way, if you want blue and I want red, we can have orange walls, and maybe there is a way to meet in the middle.

If it is an issue of conscience there is no way you can meet in the middle. Because if I were to void my conscience and meet you in the middle and do the things or allow the things that you are indifferent about. It becomes an issue of doctrine for me, in the sense that it is doctrinally wrong for me to void my conscience. The issue itself might not be a doctrinal problem, but I sin if I do it or participate in it or countenance it, or whatever it might be. So it is not an issue of give or take in that sense. In that situation if we came to be the strong, which we might, we've got the responsibility to give way, because we can, because it is a matter of indifference to us, we could eat, we could not eat, it makes no difference. "Instead," he says in v2, "let every

one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” That is a bit of a reference back to Ch 14v19, the last line of which says, “do whatever we need to do wherewith one may edify or build up another.” Here he says in v2, “Please your neighbour for his good to edification, to his up building” which is what the word means.

You want to see a classic example of that? Come with me to 1 Cor 9. Now we turned up Corinthians last week, but 1 Cor, of course has this whole argument from a slightly different point of view. And I didn't nearly cover everything he says in Corinthians so I will just show you one more point from Corinthians. “Build people up,” says the Apostle, “prosper the work of God,” and here is a classic example of that. 1 Cor 9v19, “For though I be free from all,” says Paul, “yet have I made myself servant unto all that I may gain the more.” He says, I've got an enormous freedom in Christ, and I use that freedom to serve God that I might gain lives. “And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the Law as under the Law, that I might gain them that are under the Law. To them that are without Law,” this is the Gentiles, “as without Law,” not being completely lawless I might add, “that I might gain them that are without Law. To the weak I became as the weak that I might gain the weak, in fact I made all things to all men that I might by all means save some.” I won't be completely successful, but I will completely try, he says. “And this I do for the gospel's sake that I might be partakers thereof with you.” And that is interesting, “For the Jews I became as a Jew, for the Gentiles, that is, those without Law, I became as a Gentile, to the weak I became as the weak, I'm all things to all men,” but did you notice the group that is missing. There is one group missing, deliberately missing. He never says “to the strong, I became as the strong,” yet they were the group, you know from Rom 15v1, they were the very group that he intellectually agreed with, but for all their knowledge, they had become unrighteous in this ecclesia, they created offence, they created hurt, yet the kingdom of God was “righteousness, peace and joy.”

### **Liberty is not license**

His point here is, our liberty is not a licence to do whatever we want, it is a freedom to serve, and that service has got to be in the course of saving lives and not simply in the words of Rom 15, “pleasing ourselves.” So Paul says, here's another one for you, in Gal 2v20, “I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me,” and because of that, Paul loved the brothers and sisters and gave himself for them. And, you see, that is the essential doctrine of the atonement. We are talking all about the practical application of the atonement, that is it in a nutshell. The doctrine of the atonement says, that Jesus Christ was saved in the process of saving others. Now think about that for a moment for yourself. Jesus Christ was saved in the process of saving other people. Well it is no different today than what it was then. If you want to guarantee your place in the kingdom of God, brothers and sisters and young people, then do your level best to get everybody else there. That's the atonement practically illustrated in daily life. You can see from 1 Cor 9, that is exactly the Apostle's approach.

### **Even Christ pleased not himself**

Okay, back to Rom 15, because when you get to v3 he plays the trump card. The trump card I say, because in Rom 15v2 he says, “Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good for edification, because even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” And was there ever anyone stronger than him? And when you want to meet somebody who is strong, look at the big name in v 3, there was no-one stronger than Jesus Christ, and he pleased not himself. I mean, it is hard to underline the significance of that verse, But it is a strange verse. I mean, well we understand the first couple of lines, “Christ pleased not himself,” and that those first couple of lines of v3 connect with the point that he has been making in v1 and 2, you will know this, by the way, because the word “please” appears in v1, 2 and 3, but what do you make of the second half of v3. “Even as Christ pleased not himself, but instead,” he says, “as it is written the reproaches of them that reproached God fell on Christ.”

Now, I don't know about you, brothers and sisters, but if I was going to write that verse, and I had to say ‘even Christ pleased not himself,’ and then I wanted to buttress it with an example, I suppose I would have given you an example out of his life, an example of him not pleasing himself, and perhaps a good example would be Mark Ch 6. Mark Ch 6v31, after the death of John the Baptist, you remember, Jesus said to the disciples, Let's come apart to a desert place and rest. But the people followed them around the lakeside and when he got to the other side they were there waiting for him and he “had compassion upon them because they were sheep without a shepherd,” and he had not time for himself. That would be a perfect application of the Lord “Pleasing not himself.”

But Paul doesn't do that. Instead he quotes a passage of scripture here at the end of v3, Psa 69v9 which says “The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me.” Well what does it mean? Well it means

simply this, in the case of the strongest brother that ever lived in the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, he wasn't just maligned by reproaches against himself, he endured reproaches against God, and from the top of the cross, despite the reproaches that he endured against his Father he still said, "Forgive them for they know not what they do." The reproaches of God fell upon him, they weren't just the reproaches against him, they were the reproaches against his Father. It is an incredible comment that he makes, really. And when we have our pride hurt by mortal men, our pride, not God's pride, our pride hurt by mortal men, we go to pieces. And look what he put up with. But the story doesn't end there, because the verse goes on and talks about that scripture in v3, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime," such as Psa 69v9, "were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." Now there is a twist here, because you see, v3, no doubt quotes Psa 69v9, but Psa 69v9 is twice the length of what you read in v3. Psa 69v9 actually says, "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up and the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me." And you will see only the last half of Psa 69v9 is actually quoted in Rom 15 here. As it happens the first half of that verse appears in John 2v17 so the whole verse is quoted, but in two halves. John 2 only quotes the first half of the verse, Rom 15 only quotes the second half of the verse.

### **The zeal of thine house has eaten me up**

Now what would you make of that? Well it is interesting you know because what was the story of John Ch 2, well it was the story of Christ cleansing the temple, it had become like an emporium, hadn't it, with buyers and sellers everywhere, in the outer court of the temple. And the disciples remembered when he took that whip of cords and flung those people out of the gate. They remembered that the Psalmist said, "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," and they made the immediate application. Well, of course, it suited them to remember that, didn't it? What they didn't remember was the other half of the verse which exhorted them to take insults on the chin, they didn't think of that, but they did think of the first half? And of course, we are exactly the same aren't we, painfully, exactly the same. We could have an attitude that said, in the midst of conflict. Oh poor brother, he doesn't really understand me. Don't worry, we will be patient with him because he is really opposing himself. And when he understands he will probably apologise. But we don't say that. I don't say that. And I expect, if you are anything like me, you don't say that. We say, Well be bothered, if that's what he thinks, I couldn't give a hoot n toot. And we remember the first half of the verse, "the zeal of thine house," and we forget the other half of the very same verse.

And he says here, "Whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning." The whole verse, the whole story, both sides of the character and the same man, you see, that drove them out of the temple said a little later on, "Father forgive them." It is a difficult lesson isn't it, because we like to be selective about the verses we read. But this is the Lord whom we follow. "Now the God of patience," he says in v5, "and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Jesus Christ. That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And you perhaps make the link between the "patience and consolation" of v5 and the "patience and comfort" of v4. The word 'comfort' in v4, is same as the word 'consolation' in v5. So Scripture is for our patience and comfort, because God, as the author of Scripture, is the God of patience and comfort. And the point, you see, is you are only to be like-minded with God if you understand patience and comfort.

### **Receive ye one another**

Now how did that apply to the situation in Rome? Well think of the Jews. God had, frankly, exhibited an enormous amount of patience toward the Jews. For 1500 years he had watched them and they were disobedient. And "all day long he had stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gain-saying people," Isaiah says. Couldn't the Jew respond to that? And what about the Gentiles? God had exhibited enormous comfort to the Gentiles because they were grafted into a Jewish hope, rescued from the gutter and given a hope. Couldn't he, the Gentile, respond to that? And the Jew, in the ecclesia had his scruples on non-essentials and that would require patience from the Gentiles. And the Gentiles in the ecclesia who would have to put up with things that they really didn't see as necessary, would require comfort from the Jews. And v6 says, "That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God." Patience would come through the mind, comfort would come through the mouth, you see? And why was it to the glory of God? Well, because those were God's precise characteristics in v5, he was "the God of patience and comfort." "Wherefore," v7, "receive ye one another," Jew, Gentile, weak, strong, "receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Who is he talking to? Weak and strong, as I say, Jew and Gentile, but the point is, he is no longer in v7, just talking to the strong, is he? In v1, he was just talking to the strong. He has changed, in fact by the time you get to v5, he is talking to both groups in the ecclesia that they might live together in harmony. He has given them the solution, they have just got to implement the solution.

And now from v8-13, he describes how God has selected both groups, both Jew and Gentile, with the

intention of uniting them. And so in v8 he says this, "I say that Jesus Christ is a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers." The word "minister" here in v8 is the Greek word δῆρακονος from which we get 'deacon.' It just means 'a servant' or a 'steward' or a 'waiter.' So Jesus Christ was "a servant of the Jewish people that he might confirm the promises made to the fathers." So the Gentile, of course, reading this would have to understand that he simply shared a Jewish hope. But the interesting thing about the promises to the fathers, is that those promises included Gentiles, because Gen 17v4 says, "Abraham, I am going to make thee a father of many nations." Now how could Abraham possibly be a father of many nations if all his children were Jews? That is the father of one nation, he is going to be a father of many nations. Clearly, there would be more children to Abraham than just Jewish children, right from the very outset. So that implicit in the promises to the fathers is the notion that the Gentiles would one day be called to the Truth, so that the Jew had to understand, that Abraham was not just father of the Jews, he is also a father of the Gentiles, and that the inclusion of the Gentiles into the Jewish hope is not just a recent fascination. God intended it from the beginning, right from the outset of those promises, God had a plan with the Gentiles, that is an eternal plan with the Gentiles.

### **Gentiles were always to be included**

And from v9-12 he now gives 4 quotations that prove that God would one day have a purpose with the Gentiles, in fact they are all in your margin I think, Psa 18v49; Deut 32v43; Psa 117v1, and perhaps, over the page, Isa 11v10. Because, you see, whilst the Gentiles had been selfish in this issue and insisted on exercising their liberties, the Jews also had something to learn. The Jews weren't blameless, they did judge the Gentiles, they were part of the conflict in the ecclesia and what they had to learn was that they didn't own the ecclesia. V9 "That the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy, as it is written, "For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles and sing unto thy name." And again, he says, "Rejoice ye Gentiles with his people," and again, "Praise the Lord all ye Gentiles and laud him all ye people." And again, Isa said, "There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust." Bang, bang, bang, bang, 4 quotes from the Old Testament, demonstrating that the Gentiles would one day share the hope of Israel, in fulfilment, if you like, of the promises to the Fathers.

And he concludes this section, because v13 is the conclusion of this section, he concludes it by saying this, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy," that is, you, both groups, "with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit." Now, he addresses God as "the God of hope," most likely it appears because of the fact that the word 'trust,' the last word in v12 is the same word 'hope' in v13, in fact, it appears twice in v13. So he calls God, the God of hope, based on the recent quotation of Isa 11 in v12 of Rom 15. But that is interesting because he addresses now both groups as belonging to the God of hope. Back in v5, God was called "the God of patience and comfort." So the Gentiles would have to exercise patience toward the Jews, the Jews would have to exercise comfort toward the Gentiles, and if they could do that, then both groups would have a hope. They would become the children of the God of hope, and what is hope? Well hope is faith made real, isn't it. I mean, faith would be the substance that says the kingdom is coming, Christ is going to return and establish the kingdom upon earth. Hope is the substance that decides whether or not you are in it. Faith believes the kingdom is coming but doesn't tell you whether you are there or not. Hope sees you in the kingdom. That is the hope he speaks of in v13. Hope is the substance that makes faith personal.

Well v13 here ends that section on "The righteousness of God in practice." From v 14 onwards now we have the concluding remarks of the entire epistle so if you would, we are finished the doctrinal and practical section of Romans by the time we end v13 of Ch 15. When we come to v14, we now commence the conclusion of the book, the closing comments. The major theme of the epistle is now finished so he is going to explain the reason, now, that he wrote the epistle of the Romans and in the last portion of the chapter speak about his future travel plans, God willing. Paul never founded the ecclesia at Rome and he had never ever visited the ecclesia at Rome. So what he writes now is extremely tactful, I mean he has got to be very careful how he writes what he is going to write. He has got to tell them something extremely important about himself, and he wants them to receive what he says in the spirit of the Truth. He knew many of them personally, but they were not in ecclesia and he had never been there. So he did run the risk that when they received this epistle from him they say Well who does he think he is? He hasn't even come here and he is pretending to write to us but he had to write to them and I will show you why, and therefore he is going to be careful precisely how he speaks.

V14 "And I myself," he says, "also am persuaded of you my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." I am well aware, brethren and sisters, he says, that you are full of goodness, you are equipped with all manner of knowledge, you are perfectly able to instruct

each other. 'Goodness,' the word simply means 'uprightness of character,' you see the same word across the page, in Ch 16v19, at the end of v19. "I would have you wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil." So it is the opposite of evil, 'uprightness of character.' And the 'knowledge' that he speak of in v14 is clearly their understanding of the truth, so he says I am not writing to admonish you because I think you have got all the qualities you need to admonish one another. Well in that's the case, Why did he write? V15, "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort as putting you in mind because of the grace that is given to me of God." In some sort, he says, I have written to you in some sort, the phrase means 'on some points.' Well, quite a lot of points, actually, in the previous 15 chapters, but that is what he is referring to, and he gives two reasons in this verse that he has written to them.

Firstly, as it says here, "to put you in mind," that is, RSV "By way of a reminder." To put you in remembrance of the doctrinal implications of the Atonement. I have written to remind you of the implications of the doctrine we together believe, and it was a reminder, by the way, and it was really nothing new that Paul has written here in these first 15 chapters of Romans. He wrote as much to the Galatians, a few years earlier, albeit in a far more summarised form. But there is another reason and it is at the end of v15. "I am also writing to you because of the grace that is given to me of God." I have written to you because I am the Apostle to the Gentiles, and as such, you should accept what I have written as though it was from Christ himself. I want you to understand, if you would, the authority upon which I am writing to you. Even though we have never met, in many cases, I didn't begin your ecclesia and I have never yet visited it. So you can see, this is a tricky letter to write at this point. V16, "The grace that is given to me that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

### **Paul is the Apostle to to the Gentiles**

Now that is very, very important, that verse. He calls himself here, "the minister of Jesus Christ." Now we read back in v8 that Christ was the minister of the circumcision, and I made the point that the Greek word there is δῆκονος or deacon or waiter, so he was the servant of the Jews to confirm the promises of God made to the fathers. The word 'minister' here in v16 is a different word, it is the Greek word λειτουργός it means a 'public servant.' Well how does that differ to a waiter? Well the word "minister of Jesus Christ" here is explained by the next word 'ministering' and this word 'ministering' in the third line, ministering the gospel means 'to minister as a priest,' and now that changes everything. So Jesus Christ was a servant of the Jewish people to confirm the promises made to the fathers. Paul, in contrast, in this verse here, verse 16, is a public servant of Jesus Christ, a priest of the gospel of God to ensure that the offering up of the Gentiles was acceptable to God. He is a priest, to ensure that the offering up of the Gentiles was acceptable to God. Now what does that actually mean? Well he used similar language, you might recall, in Ch 12v1, where he said that we have to personally be living sacrifices that we might be acceptable to God. So that's how he described our personal obligations, to be living sacrifices, acceptable to God. He is talking about an ecclesial context here, not just a personal sacrifice, but the sacrifice of all the Gentiles. He uses this sort of language at Philippi you know. He says in Phil 2v17, "Yea and if I be offered up on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. And this word 'offered' is the Greek word σπένδω in Phil 2v17, and means 'to pour out as a drink offering,' or 'make a libation,' which is just a liquid offering. Rotherham's says "I am even to be poured out as a drink offering on your sacrifice," So what he is saying is this, that the ecclesia, if you like, the life in the truth of the Ecclesia ascends as a sacrifice to God, Paul says, and I am poured out as a drink offering atop that major sacrifice.

Now when was he poured out? Now what he is really saying in Phil 2 is, 'If it costs me my life to foster the spiritual development of your ecclesia, then I would gladly spend my life and be poured out upon your sacrifice. The only other occurrence of that word 'offered' there is in 2 Tim 4v6 where he says, "I am now ready to be offered" and he is talking about his imminent death. "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." So he really did pour out his offering at the hand of a Roman executioner shortly after the words were written in 2 Tim 4. But the point is he talks about himself complementing the sacrifice of the Philippian ecclesia. He talks about us having to be living sacrifices ourselves. He says here, in fact, I'm the priest, I am the priest that is going to make sure that that sacrifice is acceptable to God. Well what does that mean in real terms. Well what did the priest do? Well it was the priest's job to inspect every offering that came to him to see whether it was perfect, to see whether that sacrifice was a physically perfect specimen. Ecclesially, what that meant to the Apostle Paul is that he had to ensure that every ecclesia in the world, that is the ecclesias of the Gentiles, were doctrinally and practically sound. That was his job, that's why he had to write to Rome. It was his responsibility not just to offer personal sacrifice acceptable to God, not just in the case of Philippi to make sure one ecclesia was acceptable, he was in charge of the entire ecclesial world. He had to make sure that the Gentiles as a race

were acceptable to God, doctrinally and in conduct.

And there is a problem in Rome. It wasn't a big doctrinal problem. They had the tools, he says, to solve the problem. I will just call to your minds brethren, how things ought to be done. And I would like you to accept that from me because I am the Apostle to the Gentiles, and more than that, I am the priest of the Gentiles. It is my job to certify the sacrifice of the Gentiles and to ensure that it is acceptable to God. And that's going to happen, at the end of v16, by it being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, that is the spirit word. I am going to teach out error and teach right conduct. That is how I certify or sanctify the offering of the Gentiles. That's what it means when I say I am the priest. V17, "I have therefore, whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. The word here "glory" means 'boast.' I am going to boast, he says, in things pertaining to God. Where have you read that phrase before? Heb 5v1, "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God that he might offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin." You see v17 uses the very language of the old High Priest of Israel.

But he says, whilst I might boast about my priesthood, I am not going to boast in anything I've done, I only want to talk about things pertaining to God. I only want to talk about what God has done through me, he says. V18, "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed," he says. He is going to claim wonderful things about what he has done, but it will only be what Christ has done in him. Christ has used him to win the obedience of the Gentiles, but it is really Christ's work, not mine, Paul says, I am just the minister, I am just the minister. And look how he describes it in v19 "Through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." It wasn't my power, he says, it is God's power. I have done signs and wonders, and there is no shortage of them, as you read the Acts record. Elimus on Cyprus, the impotent man at Lystra, the mad woman at Philippi, Euticus at Troas, Publius at Melita. And he says, I have preached from Jerusalem to Illyricum, now you've just got to see this on a map. Here is the map of the 3rd missionary journey. He is writing the epistle to the Romans from Corinth which is near that 6 on the screen. Well you know where Jerusalem is, the very beginning of the journey, Illyricum is in the top left-hand corner of that map, NW of Macedonia.

### **Paul has fully preached the Gospel**

So he says, I have preached from Jerusalem to Illyricum, that is to say, I have preached from Jerusalem to the western border of Greece. So what he is saying in v19 is , Up till now that has been the extent or the compass of my preaching effort, Jerusalem to Illyricum. That is where things have got to, but I haven't yet got to you. Not only have I preached, he says in v19, but I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Literally, when he says here at the end of v19, "I have fully preached the gospel," the word 'fully' means 'fulfilled.' Literally I have fulfilled the gospel of Christ. There is a story here you see, how has he fulfilled the gospel of Christ? What does he mean when he says 'I have fully preached,' either you have preached it or you haven't. You've told them all the first principle of the truth? Or a certain part of them? What does he mean I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Well I will show you what I mean. Come with me to Col 1. This is quite a story. In Col 1 he explains what he means by saying he has fully preached, or fulfilled the gospel. Col 1v23, "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I Paul am made a minister, who now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake which is the ecclesia." Now what does it mean in v 24 where he says "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ?" Well the word 'behind' means 'lacking.' I fill up that which is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. And he goes on in v25 and says, "Whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, and here is the phrase, to fulfil the word of God." And your margin says, 'To fully preach the word of God.' And you will notice in your margin that Rom 15v19 is quoted right there. So when he says in Rom 15v19 "I am going to fully preach the word of God," it means 'to fulfil the word of God,' Col 1v25.

Well what does that mean, how does that help us? How did Paul fulfil the word of God? Well, in v24 by "filling up what was lacking in the afflictions of Christ." Well, how did he do that? By his sufferings in v24. Well just exactly was lacking in the afflictions of Christ? Didn't Christ suffer enough? What does he mean? Well, there was one thing lacking, one major thing lacking and one thing only, that the afflictions of Christ were only witnessed by the Jews, the Gentiles never saw them. And so when he says in Romans that he has fully preached the gospel of Christ, he didn't do that just by speaking and writing letters, he did it by demonstrating the crucifixion in daily life. The Jews all saw the crucifixion in the Lord's daily life, the Gentiles had never seen it at all. And that, you see, was the very purpose of the Apostle's calling. That's what he means when he says, "I have fully preached the gospel." Remember when he was first called in Acts Ch 9,

when the Lord said to Ananias, "Ananias go thy way for Paul is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings and the children of Israel. For I showed him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. That was the very basis of his calling that he would be a participant in the sufferings of Christ and display a crucified Messiah to the Gentiles. That's how he would fully preach the gospel, not just in word but also in deed.

Now come back to Romans because he is leading to a crescendo as he says this. Rom 15v20, he has fully preached the gospel in v19 and in v20 he says "Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel not where Christ was named lest I should build upon another man's foundation, but as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand." Now what do you make of that. Well in v22, "For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you." So what is he saying? "I could not preach the gospel in v20, where anybody else had previously preached." The consequence of that brethren in Rome he says, v22, is that I can't come to you because I didn't found your ecclesia, and I can only preach in new territory. Now why? Why was that necessary? I mean, it sounds a bit egotistical don't you think? That he could only preach where someone else hadn't been lest he builds upon a foundation that had been begun by somebody else. Well goodness, if it is for the truth why would you care? He says, Ah ha, I'm forbidden, v21. There is a prophecy which says, To whom he was not spoken of, that is to whom Christ was not spoken of, they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand." So I can only go to people who have not heard. I have got to go to new territory. V21 is a quotation from Isa 52v15.

Come back to Isa 52. This is the big point, and this is the bombshell that he is dropping upon this ecclesia. This why he is so tactful as he begins this conclusion, and this is why he is so serious about his role as a Priest. I could only go to places where Christ had not been spoken of, because prophecy required it on the subject of the prophecy of Isa 52. Now look at Isa 52v13. "Behold my servant shall deal prudently." Now who is this servant of Isa 52? Well, of course, it is the Lord Jesus Christ, it is the Messiah. "My servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. As many were astonished at thee. His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. So shall he sprinkle" or as it means 'startle' "many nations." So this is the Messiah, the Messiah is going to startle many nations. "King shall shut their mouths at him. That which had not been told them shall they sing, and that which they had not heard, shall they consider." So they will hear a message for the very first time. Kings that have never heard it before will hear it for the very first time. And v15 is what he quotes in Rom 15v21, and it happened, of course. It happened. Paul did these very things. But hang on, these verses are talking about the Messiah, why are we applying them to Paul? Well there is one very simple reason. Certainly the Lord Jesus Christ did the same things as this, but he never left Israel. He never ever did it outside of Israel. And Paul becomes the runner up behind the Lord Jesus Christ as the Apostle to the Gentiles to represent the work of Christ outside of Israel. So Paul, as a representative of the Lord would now have to go and startle many nations. Kings would shut their mouths at him, and what nobody had ever heard, he would tell them, in territories which hadn't yet been converted.

And look, it happened, he stood in front of Felix for example in Acts 24v25 and he spoke of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come for Felix. Felix trembled. The word literally means 'to become terrified.' "Go away he said, I will call thee at a convenient season." And he shut the mouths of kings. But he could only go to areas where the gospel hadn't been preached because he had to preach it to people who had not already heard it. And all this would be done v13 says, by "my servant." By Christ in the first instance, but outside of the land of Israel, by Christ's deputy, the Apostle Paul. Christ appeared to kings in Israel, but there were other kings out in the world who had never seen him, never heard anything about him. And the verse is interesting, because look at what it says in v15, "That which had not been told them shall they see." Why doesn't it say "that which had not been told them shall they hear," wouldn't you think? That which had not been told them they shall hear? He says, No, no, they will see it, they will see it, because of what Jesus said to Ananias, "I am going to show him," Paul, "how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." And the Apostle Paul understood exactly what that meant, and as a consequence, he punctuated his epistles with references to Isa 53. I mean these last three verses of Isa 52, are the prelude to Isa Ch 53. "His visage was so marred more than any man," well to the Galatians in Ch 6v17 he wrote, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." So he as got the scars of the whip across his back, more marred than any man. "There was no beauty that we should desire him," it said of the Messiah, and they said of him in the Corinthian ecclesia that "his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible." "With his stripes we are healed," Isa 53v5, "Of the Jews received I 40 stripes save one, 2 Cor 11. "He was taken from prison and judgment," it says in v 8 of Isa 53. Paul went to prison at least twice in Acts, I can show you, and judgment, at least twice in Acts. He was cut off out of the land of the living. "I die daily," 1 Cor 15v31. "His soul may be made an offering for sin," Isa 53v10, "I am ready to be offered," 2 Tim 4v6, "He shall see his seed," of the Messiah in Isa 53. "I



have begotten you through the gospel," the apostle says to the Corinthians. "He shall see the travail of his soul," Isa 53v11, "My little children," says the Apostle in Gal 4v19, "of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

And finally, "He was numbered with the transgressors," v12 of Isa 53, "And I am crucified with Christ," he says, Gal 2v20. I mean there is no question. What that meant you see brothers and sisters and young people, is that by the time Paul had finished, Christ had been seen, not just heard, but seen from one end of the world to the other. That was his job, that's what he was called for, that's what the Lord said to Ananias, way back in Acts Ch 9, that's what it would become. But see that second to last quote on the right-hand side there, Gal 4v19, have you ever thought about what that means? "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." When a mother has a child, she travails in birth that some combination of she and her husband has been formed in her. That's what happens isn't it? What does Paul say? I am travailing in birth, but I have no desire whatsoever, that I be formed in you but that you become the product of another man. I mean, think about that for a woman. You would hardly get a more beautiful expression of selflessness in all of the New Testament, would you. You are going to be my children and you are going to be nothing like me, you are going to look like another man. Unbelievable.

### **Paul to finally visit Rome**

Well back to Romans, let's finish, because from v22 to the end of the chapter, you have his forthcoming travel plans. V22 says that he couldn't yet come to Rome because, well that wasn't part of the brief of the copy of the Messiah that he had to be. He could only preach in uncharted territory. "But now having no more place in these parts," he says in v23, that is in that area from Jerusalem to Illyricum, "having no more place or work in these parts and having a great desire these many years to come to you. Whensoever I take my journey to Spain, I will come to you." So I am going to go to Spain, I am running out of work here, I am going to go to Spain, and on my way to Spain, I am going to drop by Rome and I will see you. "For I trust to see you in my journey," that is, during my journey, "and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company," he says. Now he says I am going to see you on the way to Spain because there is not much work left here. You might read that to suggest in v23 that everywhere had been preached, between Jerusalem and Illyricum there was nothing left to do. Well, perhaps that's the answer but perhaps there is more here than meets the eye because you remember 1 Cor 16v9 he said "A great door is opened unto me in Asia," well then in the next 10 years, by the time he writes 2 Tim 1v15, he says, "All they that be in Asia are turned away from me." So it may be that there is no more work to do, it may also be that the door is closing in Asia, and the work of this great man is becoming less and less credible in the eyes of all the ecclesias, so that he cannot any longer work. Perhaps he could see the writing on the wall.

Nevertheless he is going to come to them on the way to Spain, but before that v25, I've got to go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. This is the Jerusalem poor fund collection. Well what was all that about? Well it says in v26, "because it has pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." So what he is saying here is that there had been a famine in Jerusalem and the ecclesia had come under hard times, and so he has taken up this international collection to alleviate the financial hardship of the times that had come upon the brethren and sisters in the Jerusalem ecclesia. But the significance of this collection was, that it was a collection taken up amongst the Gentiles to help the Jews. V27, "It pleased them verily," that is, it pleased Macedonia and Achaia, verily, "and the Jews' debtors they are, for if the Gentiles had been partakers of the Jews' spiritual things well, their duty is also to minister to the Jews in carnal things." So if the Gentiles have inherited the truth from the Jews by being grafted into that olive tree, it is the least they can do to contribute financially when the Jews suffer stress.

Now what do you think of that for the icing on the cake in terms of the argument of Rom Ch 14. Because in Rom 14, you see, we had certain Gentiles who didn't want to bear the burden of the Jews in their ecclesia, but rather wanted to please themselves on issues of non-fundamentals that they couldn't see the sense in, and here were other Gentiles in the world bearing the burdens of Jews that they had never met. And he just slips this in here to show the enormous duty there ought to be between Jew and Gentile against the background of the division of Rom 14 and says, And by the way, there has been no shortage of relief from the Gentiles for the sake of the Jews who are desperately in need of assistance. And therefore, v28, "when therefore I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit," that is, given them the money, I will come by you into Spain. I will come to Spain via Rome. But he is very unsure as he writes this, you know, extremely unsure of what the times might hold. You see, he is unsure v29, "that when I do come to you I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." It will be a wonderful time, "but I beseech you brethren for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, but pray for me," he says. Why? Why? "That I may be delivered from them that

do not believe,” now that was no idle request, you see, Acts 20v2, there is a little number 6 I’ve got in a little table at the bottom, Acts 20v2, he is sitting in Corinth writing the epistle to the Romans in 57AD in Acts 20v2. I mean, we can pinpoint precisely the verse in Acts where he was writing the epistle to the Romans.

### **The Jews laid wait for him**

In Acts 20v3, it says this, right after this letter was written that “the Jews laid wait for him” as he was about to sail into Syria. So in Corinth as he boarded his ship, there was a plot by unbelieving Jews, to kill him. And so he prays here, this is like a week after his letter was in the mail, he jumps on a ship to Syria, and just by the skin of his teeth he makes it on. He prays that he might be delivered from those that don’t believe. That’s the first prayer. And the second prayer in v31 is this, “and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted by the saints. And pray that the Jews in Jerusalem accept this gift in the spirit that it is given.” He’s going to go to Jerusalem with a big bag of cash, and he is going to distribute that to the ecclesia as a gift from the Gentiles in recognition of the fact that the Jews have a need and that the Gentiles have been blessed enormously by a Jewish hope. There is a chance that the Jews could say, we don’t want your charity, this is just the price of compromise. There was a chance that that could happen and that the Jerusalem Ecclesia could reject the money from the Gentiles. What do you think that would have done to the division in the ecclesia in Rom 14, that would have blown the Roman ecclesia a mile apart. It would have blown every Gentile ecclesia where there were Jews a mile apart if that had happened at Jerusalem. And Jew and Gentile wouldn’t have talked to each other for the next 1000 years. Pray that the collection is successful, he says, and that the Jews accept it in the spirit that it was given. Well, it appears as though they did, and he concludes in v33, “Now the God of peace be with you all, Amen.” It was the God of patience and comfort in v5, it was the God of hope in v13, it is the God of peace in v33, and what more appropriate title of deity could you conclude on, but the God of peace, when the whole section began with division.

### **In Summary**

How do we end it? In view of everything that God has done for us in Christ, our lives should be lived in his service. Since we are members of the body of Christ we must live for the benefit of the body and not our selves. In our relations with others our general conduct must be that of sincere love, avoiding evil, and overcoming evil with good. That was the lesson of Ch 12, which is where this section began. In daily life we should render due obedience to the civil authorities for they are appointed by God for our good. Our only continuing debt to others should be that of love. In the days that come, by the way, he says, we must keep alert and avoid all worldly activities, this is consistent with being a living sacrifice, there’s the story of Ch 13. Ecclesially, we must have consideration for one another. There are some non-fundamental matters upon which there may not be agreement. Liberty is well and good, but it should not be exercised at the expense of love. Christ always considered others ahead of himself and did not take the liberties he could have. There’s the story of Chs 14 and 15. To understand and observe these things is of course the supreme expression of our reasonable service.

Transcription by Fay Berry 2017 - This is final study in the series.