

**Welcome - (~2 min)****Opening prayer – (~1 min)****Opening Comments – (~2 min)**

- We come to the closing chapters of Paul's great letter to the Romans.
- In it Paul has unfolded the Biblical doctrine of the Christian's justification by faith all its many and varied ramifications.
- He has explained its necessity, its nature, and shown how its outworking in individual lives gives permanent and sure salvation.
- He has anticipated objections to his treatise and answered them as he progressed through the letter.
- He has also given directives for practical applications of the teachings, such as yielding our minds to Jesus Christ, holding a correct opinion of ourselves and others.
- He has discussed the relationship the Christian is to have with the state and governing authorities.
- He has expressed the need for believers to live in light of the imminent return of Christ.
- He has demonstrated the need for Christians to accept and value one another.
- Now he begins to conclude his letter including some reasons for writing the letter, suggesting what his future plans might be, if the Lord wills, and encouraging the church in Rome to greet people he knew.
- How does this last section of his letter fit in with the rest?
- If we understand his letter correctly, we should think of it as a doctrinal treatise wrapped up in a letter written by a missionary theologian to Jewish and Gentile Christians in the same church in Rome.
- You will recall the letter began with 1:1-17. His opening and greeting to the church.
- The majority of the letter has been the treatise.
- Then beginning with 15:14, Paul resumes the letter format and returns to some of the subjects found in Chapter 1.
- So with that bit of intro, let's begin our final discussion of Romans, Chapters 15 and 16.

Discussion of the Study Lesson – (~50 min)

Start time: _____

Week's Aim: *To God be the Glory***Topic for Day 1: Overview of Romans chapters 15 and 16****1. As you read through these passages, list some of the things you see that God gives us.**

- Some things He gives us: **1)** writings given to us for teaching (4); **2)** gives us hope through Scripture (4); **3)** gives endurance and encouragement (5); **4)** gives spirit of unity to follow Jesus Christ (5); **5)** Christ accepted us (7); **6)** His mercy (9); **7)** fills with hope, joy, peace (13); **8)** overflowing hope (13); **9)** grace God gives (15); **10)** power signs/miracles through power of Holy Spirit (19); **11)** blessings of Christ (29); **12)** love of the Spirit (30); **13)** He establishes us (16:25); **14)** He revealed *the mystery* (16:25).
- A thought for the day, "We have because He gives!"
- You might ask who has experienced one or more of these things and share a bit?

2. (+1 min) **What attributes of God do you find in these chapters?**

- There are many attributes of God in these two chapters.
- Some: Encourager; worthy of praise; God is true; keeps promises; merciful; God of hope; gracious; God is a giver - gave His Son and the Holy Spirit; God guides our steps by His will (15:32); and many more!
- This is a good time to reflect on how their views of God have changed as a result of looking for God's attributes.

3. (+1 min) **Who scribed this letter?**

- Tertius – 16:22

(+1 min) **Application 1: What will you apply to your life this week from the sermon?**

- Hopefully everyone has given serious thought to applying some of what they have learned in the sermon.

Topic for Day 2: God's Mercy and Hope. – 15:1-13

1. (+2 min) **What does Paul say the stronger in faith are to do regarding: 1) The weak in faith; 2) Their neighbors?**

- 15:1 – “bear with the failing of the weak and not please ourselves”
- 15:7 – “accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”
- Paul says we are to please and accept all believers.
- “Abide” means: to wait for; to endure without yielding; to bear patiently; to accept without objection
- It seems this word applies to what Paul is saying in these first few verses
- Paul is saying we are to *abide* with other believers whether they are weaker, stronger, have failed or been very successful
- Paul is not speaking of sins here, he is referring to failures and/or shortcomings just as Jesus' disciples had.
- Some of their failures were: failure to understand Jesus, failure of unbelief at times; failure of false confidences (Peter in particular); even failure of jealousy (example of disciples discussing who will sit on the right hand of Christ).
- Jesus was patient, He *abided* with His disciples and it seems Paul is saying we are to do the same.
- Paul is not saying to be patient with sin, we are to call sin, sin, but Paul says to bear by being patient with the person.
- It's not easy to be patient with other people some times – what's the problem? To be patient requires our time!
- We are busy people and we need to get on with whatever and we don't have patience – what is that?
- **Lacking patience is pleasing ourselves!**
- In 15:2 Paul says we are to also *please* them before ourselves!
- Is he talking about being a *people pleaser*?
- Paul is talking about *pleasing* a person for his/her own good!
- **God wants us to please people for their own good!**
- A good reference here is **14:13** by “*making up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in his way*”

2. (+2 min) **What are some purposes Paul states for Scripture (vs. 4)?**

- Possible responses: 1) for teaching us; 2) give endurance and encouragement; 3) that we might have hope through the Scriptures.
- Paul has said our desire should be to glorify God in all we do, to know and serve Him.
- How can we know Him and what He's like if we don't read and study Scripture?
- And don't leave out the Old Testament, consider how much Paul quotes from it and that gives us a clue as to how important it is to study both the Old and New Testaments.
- Paul says Scriptures help us endure; they help us in every part of our lives.
- He also says they give us hope!
- We need to read and study them every day!
- When you get into a daily discipline of study, you will cherish the time and see God being revealed continually.
- God knows we need a daily shot of **hope**!
- Studying Scripture is like taking *spiritual vitamins* and it gives you a **hope** that is eternal!

3. (+2 min) **What are the ingredients for the church to glorify God and our Lord Jesus Christ (vss. 5-6)?**

- 15:5 – we need a spirit of unity among ourselves
- 15:6 – that the church is one heart and mouth for glorifying God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Paul says we are to have *spiritual unity* within the church
- One way to encourage *spiritual unity* is by having patience and bearing up with one another.
- In other words, *abiding* with one another just as Christ *abided* with His disciples.
- He does say that we (the church family and individuals) are to be of *one heart and mouth*.
- One heart = loving Christ; one mouth = confessing Christ together

4. (+2 min) **For what will the Gentiles glorify God?**

- 15:9 – “so that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy!”
- Paul gives four Old Testaments quotations in verses 9-12.
- It is interesting to note the progression of the Gentile status in these verses:
- 1st – Psalm 18:49 – **read 15:9b** – David rejoicing in God for triumph and now the Gentiles are his subjects.
- 2nd – Deu. 32:43 – **read 15:10** – Gentile position seems elevated to participate with Israel in praising the Lord.
- 3rd – Psalm 117:1 – **read 15:11** – here the Gentiles in their own right are praising the Lord.
- 4th – Isa 11:10 – **read 15:12** – finally, the Gentile's **hope** is in Him, Jesus Christ whom God has raised up to rule over all nations – that means both Gentiles and Jews which equals all people!
- Paul has demonstrated through these Old Testament references two very important points:
- 1) It was God's plan from the beginning of time
- 2) There is and will continue to be a unity of believers

5. (+2 min) **How does Paul speak of hope in verse 13?**

- 15:13a – God is hope!
- 15:13b – He will fill us with all joy and peace – our responsibility is to trust in Him.
- 15:13c – If we trust in Him we will overflow with hope.
- What enables us to overflow with this hope?

- 15:13d – It is by the power of the Holy Spirit!
- Paul gives his first benediction in verse 13 – this is the first of three.
- Let's look at hope for just a second.
- People usually think of one of the following when talking about hope:
- 1) hope of eternal life; 2) hope in the return of Jesus Christ; 3) hope in their present situation
- Paul was writing to believers so he probably wasn't speaking of hope of eternal life – they had that!
- It should be said here that you don't have hope for eternal life – you either have it or you don't.
- No one is waiting for it – as a believer, you are living your eternal life today – its already begun!
- It seems Paul was referring here to hope in their present situation.
- We know Christians and churches were having problems, of which Paul has addressed some.
- He mentioned disputable matters, there were prejudices between Jews and Gentile believers
- Paul is speaking to them of the God of hope!
- He says God can fill us with joy, peace if we but trust in Him!
- In fact, it's better than that, if we trust in Him He will cause us to **overflow with hope** by the **power of the Holy Spirit!**
- Now that's good news!
- You see, our hope is not to be placed in human beings or the world – people are just a mist in time!
- But God! He's eternal, He's sovereign, He's all powerful, He's able to sustain us in all things!
- **To God be the glory!**
- Placing our trust in Him has the rewards of joy, peace, and a hope that is eternal! That's assurance!

(+3 min) **Application 2: Should someone ask you, "Where do you place your hope and why?" what would be your answer?**

- Take time on this question – it should cause some very interesting discussion.

Topic for Day 3: God's Grace and Power. – 15:14-22

1. (+2 min) **What are three things Paul commends his readers for?**

- 1) Full of goodness; 2) Complete in knowledge; 3) Competent to instruct one another (v. 14)
- There has been a change in Paul's writing at this point.
- He has transitioned from explaining doctrine and practical Christianity to being much more personal
- He will share his purpose for this letter and his plans for future ministry and he asks for prayers
- If you have time, take them back to Romans 1:5-18 and read those verses – interesting!
- We often do that, say we don't have time to tell someone the whole story and then we do!
- Paul began his letter with personal words to those in Rome and now he returns to that format
- 15:14 is a great verse – note three things: 1) He call them *brothers* which is a more personal form
- 2) He encourages them by stating his perspective of their condition as a body of believers (see above)
- They are *full of goodness* – have you ever told someone they were *full of goodness* – try it
- He says they have *complete knowledge* – Paul knew many of the believers in the church at Rome were educated
- He was also aware that many knew the gospel message very well.
- His 3rd compliment was their *competency* to instruct one another!
- This really makes sense if you think about what he said in chapter 14.
- He instructed the *strong* believers to not *pass judgment* and to *bear* with the failings of the *weaker*

- Obviously Paul knew there were those in the church who were *competent* to instruct the others.
2. (+3 min) **What were Paul's priestly duties in verse 16 and what has God given you to do?**
- **15:15** – "...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."
 - Paul's priestly duties consisted of two parts:
 - First, "*I have written... to remind you*" – we all need to be reminded over and over sometimes.
 - Second, "*the grace God gave me as a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles*"
 - These two duties produce these two results (and many others):
 - 1) The Gentiles would *become an acceptable offering to God;*"
 - 2) They would be *sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*
 - An important note here is that Paul said the Gentiles are *acceptable* – apart from Law or any religion
 - The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit begins with the Jews and Gentiles at the moment of regeneration
 - That's when the Holy Spirit of God takes up residence within the believer – the same is true for us!
 - Paul could give the gospel but only God can give the Holy Spirit!
3. (+3 min) **What grace does Paul speak of in these verses?**
- Again, 15:15 – "*grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles...*"
 - Notice that Paul demonstrates his appreciation for God's grace in 15:17!
 - "Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God"
 - We should be like Paul and give credit to who credit is due when we help someone come to Christ.
 - We don't do it just as Paul knew he didn't do it!
 - It was and is the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - The grace is that God allows us, as He did Paul, to be His hands, eyes, ears, feet, and mouth!
 - What a gracious God we have and how often we don't appreciate the grace He has shown us.
 - Something that **should never** characterize a servant of Christ is **pride** – Paul gives Christ the glory!
4. (+2 min) **What power does he speak of in these verses?**
- 15:19 – "*by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Holy Spirit.*"
 - Two powers are mentioned here – one for outward expression and the other by inward enabling
 - The first is how apostles were identified
 - You could say they were the credentials of apostles and ministers in Paul's day.
 - Apostles laid the foundations and believers had to be careful to discern who was or was not an apostle!
 - Paul had the credentials God gave apostles – **Acts 14:3** – "*So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of His grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.*"
 - You see, the apostles didn't come with a New Testament under their arm – it hadn't been written yet.
 - So instead, they came with these credentials from God – *mighty signs and miracles* – and wonders.
 - God doesn't need to work in this manner through His servants as much today because we have the Bible as our reference – all we need is in it.
 - However, in less fortunate areas of the world, who knows how God enables His servants for bringing the gospel message to the people!

(+3 min) **Application 3: What grace have you experienced from God recently? In what ways do you think you have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit recently?**

- This is a good discussion question – spend some time getting people's experiences – this type of sharing can be a great encourager as long as the people understand we aren't all in the same place spiritually.

Topic for Day 4: God's Will and Peace. – 15:23-33

1. (+2 min) **How would you see Paul's words in verse 27 relating to believers in our church today?**

- 15:27 – *"They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jew's spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings."*
- Paul has some business to finish regarding the poor in Jerusalem before he goes on to Spain.
- Wasn't it great that the believers in Macedonia and Achaia were **"pleased to make a contribution?"**
- It is great to see churches help one another.
- We have seen this many times when disaster strikes that churches go to communities and work side by side, regardless of denomination, to encourage and comfort those in distress.
- That's the body of Christ in action!
- Were these mostly Gentile believers in these areas? A good question.
- One could get a sense they might have been by Paul's comments in **15:27**.
- It's also interesting to see the emphasis Paul places on the contributions of people – the Jews contributed spiritually and the Gentiles materially.
- Remember Paul's words in **1:16**, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile"*

2. (+2 min) **What were some dangers Paul faced by going to Jerusalem (See also Acts 20:22-23)?**

- **15:31a** – *"Pray that I might be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea"*
- **15:31b** – *"that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there"*
- **Acts 20:22-23** – *"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."*
- Paul had two primary requests: **1)** Safety from unbelievers;
- **2)** His concern was that the church in Jerusalem might be hesitant in accepting gifts from Gentiles!
- If you read Acts 21, you will see that both his prayer requests were answered.
- He was arrested in Jerusalem but that saved him from the unbelievers!
- **Read 15:32** – this is the conclusion to Paul's request
- The prayer was answered: his life was spared; the church did accept the gifts; and he did go to Rome!

3. (+2 min) **Paul had plans to visit Rome (vs. 24), but what was his guiding authority (vs. 32)?**

- **15:32** – *"so that by God's will I may come to you..."*
- Paul's guiding authority was always God's will first!
- That is a good lesson for us, when we pray, pray God's will, and not our agenda, as Malcolm put it a few weeks ago.

4. (+1 min) **Paul recognized God as a God of peace. How have you experienced His peace recently?**

- “*The God of peace*” – Paul experienced peace in: prison, chains, storms, even shipwrecks!
- The church at Rome prayed for Paul and it seems as though he was given *God's peace* as a result.
- Praying for one another is practical Christianity!

(+2 min) **Application 4: How will you depend on God as your guiding authority today? What can you do to help you honor that?**

- A good discussion question to see how people do this!

Topic for Day 5: To God be the Glory. – 16:1-27

1. (+2 min) **How many women are listed in verses 3-15? What does that tell you about the early church?**

- There are 8 directly named: Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Junias (or Junia), Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, and Julia.
- Two were named indirectly: “*Greet Rufus... and his mother... a mother to me*” and “*Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus, and his sister*”
- All in all, there are 10 women referred to!
- Paul names many people some of whom were in Corinth and the others in Rome.
- There are thirty-three names in all. Twenty-four were in Rome and nine were in Corinth.
- Much is revealed about Paul in this final chapter.
- One thing this chapter demonstrates is that Christians are to be interested in more than theology!
- Paul certainly was, he was interested in people and gives this list to demonstrate his love for them.
- Looking at this chapter, Paul can be said to show more interest in people than anyone else in the Bible except Jesus!
- What does this tell us about the early church?
- It was a church of men and women, Jew and Gentile, wealthy and poor, slaves and free.
- It was a church that appears to have been open to all people.
- These people were close to Paul, he was close to them.
- He calls them *beloved* and praises them for their *faithful service* to him and one another.
- He recognizes their *labor* in the Lord!
- Sounds like a really wonderful group of believers who loved Paul a great deal.

2. (+2 min) **What are some warnings Paul gives in verses 17-18?**

- **16:17-18** – “*I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. ¹⁸ For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.”*
- We don't know if Paul is speaking of specific people he knows in the church at Rome or not.
- Maybe he *just knows* that sooner or later people like this will come into their church.
- They do eventually come! Those who divide churches because of their own self-serving, not God-serving attitudes and motives.
- Some may ask “Why do people like this come into a church?”
- We know that answer to that from the early chapters of Romans – **human depravity** among other things.
- Paul gives **six** insights in these verses:

- 1) They are people who cause divisions, they are divisive in their actions – they cause problems - (17)
- 2) Paul says they put obstacles in the way of progress – maybe in your way – maybe others – (17)
- 3) Paul says what they do and the way they go about it is contrary to Bible teachings – (17)
- 4) They are self-serving, but they try to make it appear as though they are serving the Lord – (17)
- 5) They use smooth talk and flattery to get what they want – (18)
- 6) They go after the **minds of** naïve people – (18)
- What are we to do with such people?
- Paul gives good and simple instructions – “*keep away from them*” – (17b)
- Note that Paul doesn't say that we are supposed to try and “fix” them.
- Paul reassures those in Rome in vs. 19 saying, “*so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*”
- That's a message for us today, “be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil!”

3. (+3 min) **What was the mystery Paul mentions in verse 25 (See also Ephesians 3:2-6; Colossians 1:27)?**

- The gospel is neither human in its origin nor its power – it is divinely inspired.
- It is something that has its origins in God, it has been accomplished by God, and has God's glory as its ultimate goal.
- It is as Paul has said, “a mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey Him.”
- The mystery Paul mentions is the gospel message!
- **The gospel is greater than anything else in all the world!**

4. (+2 min) **What is Paul's acclamation in closing his letter? How often do you make such an acclamation? What might you do to improve in that area?**

- Paul's final acclamation is “*to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.*”
- A principle here would be “**Life's daily goal is to give God glory through Jesus Christ in all that we do!**”
- Remember, you and I have been commanded to spread the good news to those in our sphere of influence at every opportunity the Holy Spirit opens for us to do so.
- Jesus gave this command in **Matthew 28:19-20**, “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” “
- The way this is to be done is with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- The way we are to have confidence to do this is by **knowing** that Jesus is always with us!

(+3 min) **Application 5: How has God blessed you through this study of Romans? How will you serve Jesus Christ in a new and different way as a result of studying Romans?**

- This is the final question for our study of Romans and it is designed to encourage people to put into action, in some way, something new they have learned or been convicted of during the study.
- This is meant for everyone doing this study to pray about what service, or new service, the Lord may be calling them to.

Closing Comments – (~3 min)

- This has been a wonderful study of Romans and it has been very fast.

- Maybe someday in the future our church family can take it a bit slower and delve a little deeper into the rich nourishment this letter has to offer.
- You are encouraged to not put this material away but to refer to it often when various situations arise or you just feel the need to dig a little deeper.
- These last five chapters have been all about living a life that gives off the light of Christ in ourselves, to our families, our church, our community, and our world.
- The reason for this letter is stated very well by Warren Wiersbe in his closing words on Romans, "Christians are established by the truth, which explains why Paul wrote this letter: to explain God's plan of salvation to Christians so they would be established, and so they would share the truth with the lost. After all, we cannot really share with others something we do not really have ourselves."
- He goes on, "This means that our own study of Romans should make us more stable in the faith, and more excited to share Christ with others. And the result: "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ."¹ Amen and Amen!
- As one last challenge, you might ask who is willing to recite Romans 1:16-17.

Closing Prayers – (~1 min)

Questions: The development team and pastors would like you to share your thoughts on the following questions.

Individual study: If you have done the Romans study by yourself or with one or two other people, our team would like you to share your answers to the following questions by emailing them to jscook@columbus.rr.com and they will be added to the thoughts from the adult groups.

Leaders of adult groups: Be prepared to give yours and/or your group's answers to the questions below. You will be contacted by phone.

1. What would you like to study next as a all-church study?
2. How might we improve this method of study?
3. How did you and your group grow spiritually as a result of this study?

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, "The Bible Exposition Commentary, New Testament Volume 1," published by Cook Communications Ministries, p.566