ROMANS

Romans 1:17
For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Make no mistake about it - that verse changed world history! For a thousand years, world civilization went through “the dark ages.” Few, if any, breakthroughs in science, medicine, sociology, etc. Then in 1505 a German monk, Martin Luther, made an astounding discovery:

At last meditating day and night, by the mercy of God, I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that through which the righteous live by a gift of God, namely by faith. Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through gates that had been flung open.

Organized religion, a radical departure from the Scriptures, had clamped down on thinking men and women, subjecting them to “what had always been.” Theologically, one had to earn his or her personal salvation by works, by purchasing indulgences, and by staying virtually totally ignorant of Scripture. Luther’s study of Romans shattered that entire concept and the Renaissance was born.

There is no question that the Book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul - written somewhere in Greece near the end of his third missionary journey. Paul did not establish the church in Rome and we are not sure who did.

Here is a simple outline of Romans: Chapters 1-8 deal with the subject of righteousness; chapters 9-11 concern the problem of God’s chosen people, the Jews; chapters 12-15 deal with the practical of living and chapter 16 contains a letter of introduction for Phoebe and personal greetings. Paul begins: Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God... The word he used for servant was doulos, which really meant slave. To Paul, Jesus was absolute Master and Lord. Paul considered Jesus as his own owner and he loved Him completely. This entire book of Romans reveals the Apostle’s mind-set (which should be ours as well.)
Chapter One

Verse 16 holds Paul’s classic declaration: Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. [17] For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

By the time Paul wrote this, he had already suffered terribly for the Gospel. One might think he would be reluctant to express such faith in Jesus. But those tribulations had made Paul even stronger in his faith.

Vernon C. Grounds has compacted the entire book with these words: What is man? Man is God’s creature, yes, but he is God’s image and through the misuse of his God-bestowed freedom, man is God’s shame and His problem. But by that incredible strategy of the cross, God makes it possible for man to become the Creator’s child. And man may become the Creator’s co-laborer. And man may become the friend of an infinite and all-holy God; and ultimately man may be – if he will have it so – God’s glory.

Then Paul writes that famous doctrine - repeating what the Old Testament Jewish prophet Habakkuk had written centuries earlier, “The Just shall live by FAITH!” Not emotion, not tradition, not even knowledge. We live by faith - all-trusting belief in the ultimate goodness and justice of God.

Verses 18-32 deal with the fall and guilt of mankind: Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.... Today’s world has not heard much about the wrath of God, quite unaware of the basic tenet that God hates sin and will invariably react strongly to it. And what little mankind does know about God’s wrath only causes the unregenerate heart to rebel against Him. Romans 1:24-25 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: [25] Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Paul teaches that man’s idolatry (anything placed before God in our lives), which is basic rejection of God, consumes him with lustful passion. Today society accepts homosexuality as a “norm,” with even major church denominations giving their blessing to it. But here is what God says: Romans 1:26-27 For this cause God gave them up
unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: [27] And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And Paul adds: Romans 1:28-32  And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; [29] Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, [30] Backbiters, haters of God, despiseful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, [31] Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: [32] Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Chapter Two

What is God’s response to all this rebellion? God will judge all people, regardless of race or culture, according to HIS STANDARD, not theirs. All sin will be punished.

Romans 2:17-24  If you're brought up Jewish, don't assume that you can lean back in the arms of your religion and take it easy, feeling smug because you're an insider to God's revelation, [18] a connoisseur of the best things of God, informed on the latest doctrines! [19] I have a special word of caution for you who are sure that you have it all together yourselves and, because you know God's revealed Word inside and out, feel qualified to guide others through their blind alleys and dark nights and confused emotions to God. [20] [21] While you are guiding others, who is going to guide you? I'm quite serious. While preaching "Don't steal!" are you going to rob people blind? Who would suspect you? [22] The same with adultery. The same with idolatry. [23] You can get by with almost anything if you front it with eloquent talk about God and his law. [24] The line from Scripture, "It's because of you Jews that the outsiders are down on God," shows it's an old problem that isn't going to go away.

What was Paul saying in a nutshell? “You teach others....why don’t you teach yourselves?” Or as Brother Dave Gardner (comedian) used to say, “Kick thine own self.”

Paul closes chapter 2 by saying that despite all our outward ordinances and teachings, if we are not obedient to the Word of God, then all those trappings are a waste of time. God does not look on the “outside,” but the “inside of our heart.”
Chapter Three

In the Old Testament, Isaiah wrote that “all we like sheep have gone astray.” (Ch 53) In chapter 3 of Romans Paul contends for the same truth: Romans 3:9-17 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; [10] As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: [11] There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. [12] They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. [13] Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: [14] Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: [15] Their feet are swift to shed blood: [16] Destruction and misery are in their ways: [17] And the way of peace have they not known: [18] There is no fear of God before their eyes.

This chapter is a sharp rebuke to anyone who feels so self-righteous that he or she does not need the power of Christ’s cross and His blood to cleanse their sin. We may think we’re really something; but this chapter is God’s mirror to show us the way we truly are without redemption.

Chapter Four

In the preceding chapters Paul made the case that salvation was not achieved by keeping the Torah, the Law, but by having an unshakeable faith in God. This was preposterous to Jews who had long ceremonial methods of keeping the most minute laws. No, writes Paul, a Jew himself and a Pharisee, it is a RELATIONSHIP with God, not a REGIMEN of law, that saves a person. Paul cited Abraham as a case in point. He contended that Abraham had put his complete trust in God and was willing to abandon his life to Him. FAITH!

What is this “law” of which he writes here? The law was given by Moses - the great moral and civil expression revealed by God. Romans 4:13-16 [The Message] That famous promise God gave Abraham—that he and his children would possess the earth—was not given because of something Abraham did or would do. It was based on God’s decision to put everything together for him, which Abraham then entered when he believed. [14] If those who get what God gives them only get it by doing everything they are told to do and filling out all the right forms properly signed, that eliminates personal trust completely and turns the promise into an ironclad contract! That’s not a holy promise; that’s a business deal. [15] A contract drawn up by a hard-nosed lawyer and with plenty of fine print only makes sure that you will never be able to collect. But if there is no contract in the first place, simply a
promise—and God’s promise at that—you can’t break it.

[16] This is why the fulfillment of God’s promise depends entirely on trusting God and his way, and then simply embracing him and what he does. God’s promise arrives as pure gift. That’s the only way everyone can be sure to get in on it, those who keep the religious traditions and those who have never heard of them. For Abraham is father of us all. He is not our racial father—that’s reading the story backwards. He is our faith father.

Again and again in my rather long life I have realized that many of the exploits to which God calls us are simply IMPOSSIBLE. That is - impossible by our standards and by our efforts. But in our believing that the God who called us to them will place within us the divine power to achieve those goals, we as Abraham, put ourselves in line for God’s promises.

Chapter 5

Paul here lists some of the marvelous benefits of having - and exercising - real faith in God: Romans 5:1-5 KJV Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: [2] By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. [3] And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; [4] And patience, experience; and experience, hope: [5] And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

1. Peace with God  At first, God and man (Adam) stood face to face with each other. But in sinning, Adam turned his back on God. Then God turned His back on Adam for He cannot look upon sin. Christ’s death on the cross has satisfied the demands of God and now God has turned His face toward man. It remains for man to turn around and face God. Since God has been reconciled by the death of His Son, man is now entreated to be reconciled to God.

2. Ente into God’s very presence. (Verse 2)

3. We can not only face our tribulations, we can “glory in them.” Why? (Vss 3, 4, 5) Because we know that those tribulations are building character in us - perseverance and hope. Today we hear a lot about CHARISMA (a personality trait, not the magazine); but what about CHARACTER?

In verses 6-11 we learn that Christ died for us - not because we were “special.” We were
still sinners. And because of that exquisite love of Christ, our status with God is abruptly changed. It is **CHRIST IN US** that makes us good – NOT OUR TRYING TO IMITATE CHRIST.

Verse 20 contains a miraculous statement: Romans 5:20  **But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:** Someone might complain, “Oh, there’s more sin than ever.” If so, **THERE IS ALSO MORE GRACE!**

Chapter 6

Now a liberal might jump on that last verse and declare, “Well, if that’s the case, let’s just go on sinning.” But note how Paul puts the kibosh to that: Romans 6:1-2  **What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? [2] God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?** It’s as if the apostle recoiled at such a repugnant thought. He maintained that when we were baptized in water, buried into death with our Lord, we came out of the water to walk in newness of life. Romans 6:6  **Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.** And Paul continued: Romans 6:12-13  **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. [13] Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.**

There should be a clear difference in the way Christ’s followers live their lives from that of non-believers!

Romans 6:15-18  **What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. [16] Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? [17] But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. [18] Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.**

Paul refers to you and me as servants of Jesus Christ and servants of righteousness. More and more we hear of believers talking about their “rights.” They claim to have a “right” to do this or that. That is not a scriptural premise. **My rights are valid only as long as they are exercised in my role as a servant of Jesus Christ. I have “no right” to be proud, selfish, contentious or hurt. I am dead to sin...and dead people have long since lost all rights.**
Chapter 7

Romans 7:1-6  [The Message]  You shouldn't have any trouble understanding this, friends, for you know all the ins and outs of the law—how it works and how its power touches only the living. [2] For instance, a wife is legally tied to her husband while he lives, but if he dies, she's free. [3] If she lives with another man while her husband is living, she's obviously an adulteress. But if he dies, she is quite free to marry another man in good conscience, with no one's disapproval. [4] So, my friends, this is something like what has taken place with you. When Christ died he took that entire rule-dominated way of life down with him and left it in the tomb, leaving you free to "marry" a resurrection life and bear "offspring" of faith for God. [5] For as long as we lived that old way of life, doing whatever we felt we could get away with, sin was calling most of the shots as the old law code hemmed us in. And this made us all the more rebellious. In the end, all we had to show for it was miscarriages and stillbirths. [6] But now that we're no longer shackled to that domineering mate of sin, and out from under all those oppressive regulations and fine print, we're free to live a new life in the freedom of God.

Let's make this very practical: There are things in this life that I just do not do. Doing them might not keep me from Heaven, but I still do not do them. Why? Because I think they would be offensive to Christ. I do not want to offend Jesus because I love Him. IT IS MY LOVE FOR HIM THAT CAUSES ME TO LIVE A HOLY LIFE – NOT A LONG LIST OF DO’S AND DON’TS THAT HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED BY SOME ONE OR SOME ORGANIZATION. Sanctification comes about through my love relationship to Jesus. Because I love Him, there are some things I do not WANT to do.

Chapter 8

Now we come to the last chapter in this segment dealing with righteousness. It opens with an incredible divine promise:

Romans 8:1-2 KJV  There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. [2] For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

There is no way one could ever appeal to a Christian on the basis of guilt. He has none. I am talking about a believer who actively pursues the things of God, who does not walk according to the flesh but after the Spirit of God. You and I must spend some time every day getting ourselves in spiritual condition. There is so much to distract us from Him -
the media, the hubbub of life, the cares of keeping our bodies well and strong. But if that’s all we ever consider, we can be distracted from pleasing God. Romans 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. We become dead to the world and its lure. For example: if someone takes a verbal shot at you, you don’t even react to it. You are alive to God. You hear His voice. Other voices don’t mean much, if anything.

PAUL’S INCREDIBLE STATEMENT OF SINGLE PURPOSE

Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

That was no small statement for few persons have ever suffered as much as Paul. In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul rehearsed some of his turmoil: 2 Cor. 11:23-28 ....in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. [24] Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. [25] Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; [26] In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; [27] In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. [28] Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

To Paul, nothing compared to eternity. To him, the real world was still coming, eternity, all the glories of that life that would make earth’s difficulties seem insignificant.

Romans 8:19 [The Message] The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.

How blessed is the 28th verse that we quote so often: Romans 8:28 KJV And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Sometimes that verse is hard to grasp, especially when everything seems to be going wrong. A very wise pastor taught me early in my ministry: “Always give God the luxury of time to work things out in your life.” I have never forgotten that. Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Paul must have often felt alone, such as in the final dungeon prior to his execution. Yet he could write: Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall
tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
And the answer: Romans 8:38-39 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
[39] Nor height, nor depth, nor anything else, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thank God! Nothing can ever sever us from the love and protection of our faithful Heavenly Father.

Chapter 9

Chapters 9 - 11 Deal With Problems Facing God’s Chosen People, The Jews

In these chapters, Paul injects a parenthetical thought regarding Jews and their relationship to Christ. One of my dearest Jewish friends in Jerusalem said to me, “I have not rejected Jesus. He was a great man - and the Messiah for Gentiles.” These chapters in Romans were written by Paul, not from an angry heart, but from a broken one. Let us not forget that he was a Jew. He points out that not all Jews turned away from Jesus. The very earliest followers of our Lord were the disciples who were Jews.

Romans 9:1-5 [The Message] At the same time, you need to know that I carry with me at all times a huge sorrow. It's an enormous pain deep within me, and I'm never free of it. I'm not exaggerating—Christ and the Holy Spirit are my witnesses. [2]
[3] It's the Israelites . . . If there were any way I could be cursed by the Messiah so they could be blessed by him, I'd do it in a minute. They're my family. I grew up with them. They had everything going for them—family, glory, covenants, revelation, worship, promises, [4] [5] to say nothing of being the race that produced the Messiah, the Christ, who is God over everything, always. Oh, yes!

Has God turned His back on Israel because most do not accept Jesus as Messiah? No, I don't believe He has. I submit that anyone who portends to make a judgment about Jews need first of all to spend a great deal of time with them. They need to take a few days to go through Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. The name comes from Isaiah 56:5: Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. The words Yad Vashem mean “a name.” There are the records - and often pictures - of several million Jews killed by the Nazis. No, God is dealing strongly and directly with that nation and with Jews everywhere. God is still directing them to their place in the sun - like their forefathers who were led by Moses from Egypt to the Promised Land of Israel. That journey can be hiked in a month; yet it took the Israelites 40 years to make it because of unbelief and hardness of heart. So it is today, in my opinion. Paul was heartbroken as he wrote the content of this segment of Romans. He would have given his life for Israel. Never mean, never vindictive, he reached out to his own people with the Gospel. And so must we — lovingly and carefully.
Chapter 10

This chapter is added emphasis to the previous one (remember chapter headings are not in the original writing). Romans 10:1  

*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* And he adds: Romans 10:12-13  

*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.* [13] For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

What is the main issue here in reaching Jews with the Gospel? It’s a matter of opinion, perhaps, but I feel the issue is this: Original sin. In Judaism there is no such thing. Jews do not believe mankind is born with an evil nature.  

*The reason for the picture above:*

Some of my closest friends, Jews, decided to go with our group as we visited Hitler’s Eagles Nest. I advised them not to as the horror of the Nazis would hit them like the proverbial ton of bricks. They still decided to go. One of them told me at dinner that
night that she had cried all day since visiting the place. I asked her and her husband, as well as many of my Jewish friends, “In the light of the holocaust, how can you not believe in original sin?” But they still do not accept that basic of our theology. Here is the problem: If you are not born in sin, then why would you need a Savior? We believe that the reason people sin is that they are already sinners - born in that condition. David himself wrote that “in sin did my mother conceive me.” He was not speaking of the sex act that gave him life; he was speaking of his spiritual state. God told Adam that the day he sinned (ate the forbidden fruit) he would die. Physically he lived a long time after; but spiritually, the Spirit of God died in instantly! That’s why Jesus told Nicodemus that we MUST BE BORN AGAIN.

Chapter 11

Here Paul wrote the good news that there was hope - not only for Gentiles but also for the Jews. He gave this allegory: Throughout the Old Testament, the prophets pictured the nation of Israel as the “olive tree of God.” Paul conjectures that Israel is the wild olives that have been grafted into the tree of God. So no matter how bleak the present spiritual condition appeared, an awakening would come. Romans 11:33-36 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! [34] For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? [35] Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? [36] For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Chapter 12

To what extent is our responsibility to God? Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

How practical! Paul realized that the Christian faith is new in Rome and Christians were being watched carefully.

We Pentecostals sometimes limit our knowledge of gifts of the Holy Spirit to the nine listed in I Corinthians. But there are quite a few more. Here are some of them: Romans 12:3-8 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. [4] For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: [5] So we,
being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. [6] Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; [7] Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; [8] Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

None of these ministry gifts have much value without a sound Christian life. Romans 12:18-19 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. [19] Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Chapter 13

More teaching on sound Christian practical living is given in this chapter. Romans 13:1-7 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. [2] Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. [3] For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: [4] For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. [5] Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. [6] For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. [7] Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

This brings the subject of political leaders to my mind. Not all of them are of the same political persuasion as we, but God still expects us to treat them with respect - in the way we react and speak. Nowhere in Paul’s writings does he speak badly of Nero, who was demonic.

SIX SINS WHICH CANNOT BE A PART OF A CHRISTIAN’S LIFE

In verses 8 - 14 we have this list:
- Revelry - a loutish, selfish, riotous kind of behavior that is a nuisance to others
- Drunkenness - the scourge of America
- Immorality - which simply means the forbidden bed
- Shamelessness - a person who has gone past all feelings of shame

12
• Contention - un Christ-like competition
• Envy - always wanting what others have

Chapter 14

The basic theme here is this: Doing a certain thing may not be wrong or sinful; however, if it causes someone to lose out with God, we should not insist upon our “right” or liberty. Romans 14:3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

The Jews were almost tyrannical in their concept of Sabbath. Not every follower of Christ took their concept to such an extent. Paul reminded us that we cannot just live to ourselves. If we are affecting people negatively, we need to reconsider our actions: Romans 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

There is a balance here. We could be so inhibited by restrictions of others that we never get anything done.

Chapter 15

Paul continues with this segment on the practices of Christian living.

Romans 15:14-21 Personally, I've been completely satisfied with who you are and what you are doing. You seem to me to be well-motivated and well-instructed, quite capable of guiding and advising one another. [15] So, my dear friends, don't take my rather bold and blunt language as criticism. It's not criticism. I'm simply underlining how very much I need your help in carrying out this highly focused assignment God gave me, [16] this priestly and gospel work of serving the spiritual needs of the non-Jewish outsiders so they can be presented as an acceptable offering to God, made whole and holy by God's Holy Spirit.

What an insight into the life of this great man! He was a very complicated man, yet strangely enough a common one. He let the Romans know what kind of man he was, what his aspirations were, his goals and background. But above all, Paul reminded them that he was a servant of Jesus Christ. It is possible sometimes to become negligent in our work when we grow weary or get distracted. But we should never allow ourselves that attitude when we remember we are working for Christ.

Chapter 16
Paul wrapped up his letter to the Christians in Rome with closing farewells and kudos to people who had been such a help to him.

These verses somewhat summarize the entire book: Romans 16:25-27

   Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, [26] But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: [27] To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

What was Paul’s constant message? Christ, the hope of glory. Jesus is our completely capable and sufficient source for all aspects of our living. Because Christ lives, I live. Because He is victorious, I am victorious.

Amen.

Next time: Corinthians