

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

ROMANS LESSON 8 (Chapters 15-16)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we, through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). Welcome to our study of the Book of Romans. In these closing chapters (Romans 15 and 16) the apostle Paul is going to encourage Christians to bear with one another, to work together to glorify God, and to remember those who are faithful workers in God’s kingdom. These are chapters of encouragement that teach all of us that we need to work together and serve God. In Romans 15:1-3 we are taught to bear with those who are weak.

“We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.’”

Here we learn that we need to bear with those who may be weak. Does that mean that we should put up with sin and ungodliness? No. If someone is weak we need to get on their level in order to edify them and build them up. Let’s say that there is someone who does not know the Bible like they ought to. They need edifying. We need to teach them the basic principles. Those who are strong and who know the will of God must be able to teach such people about God’s plan of salvation, optional matters, and so on. We need to teach them, edify them, and build them up so they can come to a stronger point of faith in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 8:11 we are reminded that knowledge can puff us up. If we think that we are stronger than everyone else because we are really great Christians, and that the weak need to look up to us, then we have the wrong attitude. We are to bear with the weak, to teach them, and to edify them. We are not to look at ourselves as some sort of “spiritual supergiants” (which we are not). We must realize that all men have the right to come to a knowledge of God, and that we need to be willing to teach them. In 2 Timothy 2:15 we are told that we are to “study to show ourselves approved unto God.” We need to be willing to study with others so they can learn the Gospel, improve their knowledge, and become better servants of God.

In doing this, we are reminded of the Old Testament. Romans 15:4 is a very important passage about bearing with the weaknesses of the weak. Paul wrote, “Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Remember that the context of Romans 14 is about bearing with the weaknesses of the weak. What does the Old Testament have to do with that? There is such a powerful point found here. Over and over again in the Old Testament God exhibited forbearance with the weaknesses of His people. Paul’s statement refers to those things that were written before—when God exhibited forbearance with the people of Israel and was longsuffering with them. This, then, teaches us that we must do the same thing today. “Whatever things were written before were written for our learning” so that we can see God’s example, see how He dealt with people, and see how we today should

do the same thing. This passage also teaches us in a generic manner about the purpose of the Old Law. For the Christian, the Old Testament is a learning tool. It has been said that we cannot really understand the New Testament without a good background of the Old. How true that is. Galatians 3:24 is an important passage about the Old Law, which was the schoolmaster and tutor that was intended to bring us up to Christ so we could learn about Him. How can we learn about God's dealings with Abraham, Moses, and David, or the promises and prophecies that God made (such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53) regarding Jesus and how He would come into the world, without the Old Law? It is true that we do not live by the Old Law today, and that it does not teach us what to do to be saved. We do not look to the Old Testament to learn about worship or about how to live a good Christian life. But the Old Testament does teach us great lessons about God and the history of His dealings with people. There are lessons in the Old Testament about God's true nature, which does not change. We can learn about God from the Old Testament, and we can see His nature in the New Law as well. The Old Testament, then, does have value. But it is not the law under which we live today. Hebrews 8:13 tells us that the Old Law, even in the first century, was "obsolete, growing old, and ready to vanish away." Jesus nailed the Old Law to the cross (Eph. 2:14-15). Thus, today we as Christians should strive together to glorify God with one mind and one mouth, centered on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Notice now Romans 15:6, and what Paul says about our working together to glorify God when he wrote, "that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Verses 6-13 teach us that we need to work together in the cause of Christ in order to glorify God. There needs to be unity among God's people so that they are of one mind. In 1 Corinthians 1:10 we are told to "speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." We are to have "the mind of Christ" (Phil. 2:5). The Bible makes a very strong point about how God's people ought to be unified. The psalmist said in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." In Jesus' prayer in John 17 He stressed the need for unity. He said, "I pray that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (vs. 21). We are to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). There is a great need for unity so that God's people can come together to glorify Him. As Christians, what is our purpose in this life? If you are a child of God, what is your purpose in life? In Isaiah 43:7 God spoke of "everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." God created us to glorify Him—which is what every Christian should do in this lifetime. I am reminded of 1 Corinthians 10:31 which says, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Solomon tried so many things. He built things. He drank wine. He engaged in lusts of the flesh. He tried money. But he came to one conclusion. In Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 he wrote, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." As Christians, we need to be reminded that we must be a united force that is trying, with one mind and with one mouth, to glorify God.

In Romans 15:14-23 Paul comments on his travels from Jerusalem all the way to Rome. It had been promised in the Book of Acts that he would go before kings (Acts 9). At the end of the Book of Acts Paul was setting sail for Rome, and in Romans 15 we learn that he made that journey to accomplish God's divine purpose. This is what Paul discusses in the latter part of Romans 15.

In Romans 16 Paul mentions some people who were essential to his work. In verses 1 and 2 he writes, "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also." The first worker mentioned here is Phoebe, who is viewed as a great servant in the church in Cenchrea. She assisted Paul and numerous others. Oh, how we need more workers in the church like Phoebe! Do we realize how that we need to be diligent workers in the kingdom of God? We have not been called into the kingdom to merely fill a pew. We have been called into the kingdom **to work!** In 1 Corinthians 15:58 we are told, "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." The work we do for God in this life is what matters. And now is the time for us to do such work for the kingdom. In John 9 we learn about some of Jesus' works. In verse 4 Jesus said, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work." We have to work while we can because a time will come when we no longer will be able to work. Today is the day when we need to be busily working for God. In Colossians 3:23-24 we are taught that we work "unto the Lord." He is the One Whom we must please. Whatever we find to do with our hands, we must do it to the glory of God (Eccl. 9:10). We must realize that the labors we perform in this life will work for us and will be for our benefit as we strive to get to Heaven. In Revelation 14:13 we are told, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." This is speaking of people who were active in the kingdom of God. We need to be working in evangelism. We need to be more evangelistic. Jesus told us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. We need to be working at edifying others and doing good works. We are to do good unto all men, and especially those who are of the household of faith. We need to work to glorify God by helping saints who are in need as well as those who are hurting in this life. Are we really workers for the cause of Christ?

In Romans 16:3-4 Paul mentions two other workers who had helped spread the Gospel. He wrote, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." This couple found Apollos, who was not teaching the baptism of Jesus as he should have been, so they gently took him aside to teach him more perfectly the way of the Lord. As a result, Apollos learned the truth about what he should have been teaching, and those whom he taught in the future learned it as well. Priscilla and Aquila should remind us of the need to be evangelistic minded. We need to get out and do the work of God in saving people's souls. No work could be any more important than that. In Luke 19:10 the Bible says that Jesus came "to seek and to save the lost." Look at Christ's command for us. What does He want us to do today? Look at the command of Jesus in Mark 16:15, where He said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." That is what Jesus wanted His disciples to do. And we know that they did that because in Acts 5:42 we are told that "daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." In Acts 8:4 we learn that those who were scattered "went everywhere preaching the word." We today need workers in the kingdom of God who can take the Gospel to the lost. In Romans 10:14 we find the question, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" We also find in that same chapter, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace and who bring glad tidings of good things" (vs. 15). What a blessed work it is to spread the message of Jesus and salvation.

But the Lord not only needs people like Phoebe (who was a great servant) and Priscilla and Aquila (who were great evangelists), but also faithful converts like Epaenetus, who was "the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ." This man was among the first converts in the re-

gion of Achaia, and was a faithful convert to the cause of Christ. We need servants and evangelists. But we also need people who are faithfully committed to the cause of Christ. These people are the backbone and core of the church. They attend faithfully, give generously, love to study the Bible, want hear God's Word preached, and sing hymns of praise to His name. We need people who wouldn't hear of doing anything else except attending the assembly of the saints every time the doors of the building are open. In fact, these types of people often are the greatest types of workers in the kingdom of God. We, too, need to be like that in everything we do.

In Romans 16:16 we find a very important name by which the church was called in the first century, and by which it should be called today because it is acceptable to God. Names are important to God, and they must be important to us. God changed Saul's name to Paul. There was an importance to His doing that. Names are important to God, and they are important to us. How would you like to name your daughter Jezebel, or your son Judas or Hitler? We realize that names are important. They have significance because they often show ownership or the importance of something. In Romans 16:16 we are told, "Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you." Kissing was the customary greeting of that day. It would be similar to a handshake in our culture today. Paul said in essence, "If you are going to kiss, as is your custom, keep it holy." The emphasis is not on the kiss itself, but rather on the holy nature of the greeting. Then he commented, "The churches of Christ greet you." What does the Bible say about the name of the church for which Jesus died? Jesus said that He would build His church. Romans 16:16 says that it is "the church of Christ." Acts 20:27-28 says that it is "the church of the Lord." In 1 Corinthians 1:1-3 we read that it is "the church of God." In 1 Timothy 3:15 the church is referred to as "the church of the living God." Hebrews 12:28-29 refers to the church as "the assembly of the firstborn." All of these are names and designations that are found in the New Testament. But what you will **not** find in the Bible is the Lord's church being named after men. It is never called the Lutheran Church, the Baptist Church, the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, or the Methodist Church. The church about which you read in the Bible is called by Bible names. Some might say, "You're just splitting hairs. Is it really **that** important?" I want you to see from Scriptures how important it is that we do exactly what the Bible says.

In 1 Corinthians 4:6 we are told "not to go beyond what is written." If we are not to go beyond what is written, then unless it is written in the Bible, we better not call the Lord's church by any other name. Revelation 22:18-19 tells us that we are not to add to or take away from the Word of God. If something is not in the Bible, then we better not put it in. If something is in the Word of God, then we better go by what God said. We learn from Scripture that we are to do everything by Christ's authority. We must have Jesus' stamp of approval in order to do something (Col. 3:17). It is a serious thing to make any changes. We learn from Leviticus 10:1-2 that Nadab and Abihu authorized a strange (unauthorized) fire before God, and that they were both struck down on the spot because they did not obey the voice of God. To some, it may seem like a small matter. But God is concerned with us doing what He said in exactly the way He said to do it. We must not add to or take away from His Word.

Romans 16 also teaches us that we are not to honor those who are false teachers, but that instead we are to mark them as divisive and contrary to the Gospel. Romans 16:17 says, "I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them." What should be our relationship to false teachers? We are to know who they are and to mark them. We are not to have any fellowship with them, and we are to stay away from them. That is how serious this matter is to God. The

Bible teaches that false teachers can do a great deal of harm to the cause of Christ. We need to be careful to teach only that which is acceptable to God. In 1 Corinthians 5:6 we are told that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. If we bring in a false teacher who begins teaching things that are incorrect, and if the elders do not do their job (Tit. 1:9-11) to stop the mouth of anyone who contradicts God's Word, then a little bit of false teaching can affect the entire church. Just like one bad apple can ruin a whole bushel of apples, so false teaching can have a wide-ranging effect on people. We must be careful to test the teachers. In 1 John 4:1-4 we are told that many false teachers have gone out, and that we are to test the teachers to see if they are of God. We do that by comparing their teachings with the Bible's teachings. In Acts 17:11 we read of the Bereans, "These were more fair minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." When we hear something, we need to check it by the Bible. If it is true, then we must accept it. If it is not true, then we need to mark those who teach false doctrines and have nothing to do with their false teachings. We also must let others know that these teachers are not teaching what God said, and that they are leading people down a path of destruction.

Toward the close of Romans 16, in verse 20, Paul mentions that "the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly." This reminds us quite vividly of an Old Testament passage and its fulfillment. Genesis 3:15-16 said that the seed of woman was going to deal a death blow to Satan. God said to Christians in the Book of Romans that Satan was going to be crushed shortly. Not only does this show God's power over Satan, but it also shows the fulfillment of God's ultimate plan. Jesus' death on the cross (Heb. 2:14) dealt Satan a death blow. When Christians live faithfully, Satan is crushed under their feet. How we today need to do damage to the devil by living true to God's will!

Now let's come full circle in the Book of Romans. Romans is all about the Gospel being God's power to save, and that obedience to the Gospel is what true faith is all about. This we learn from Romans 16:25-26.

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith."

The mystery hidden from all ages (Eph. 2:16-20) is the fact that both Jew and Gentiles could be reconciled to God as a family of Christians that composes a single body. It is "the obedience of faith" (the obedience to the Gospel system of faith) that brings people to Jesus. I want to bring to your attention one last time how this ties in directly to the overall theme of the Book of Romans. Notice again Romans 1:16-17, where Paul wrote,

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

The Book of Romans valiantly proclaims that the power of God to save today is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If people are going to be saved from sin, and if they are going to be in a right relationship with God, it will not be through Judaism or any other means. Rather, it will be only through the Gospel—the good news about Jesus Christ. The Bible contains that good news. God, from the beginning of time, had planned a way for people to be saved. The Old Testament was intended to bring us up to the time of Christ. He is the completion of the Old Law. He fulfilled every prophecy, and came to Earth to die for humankind. He is the only way by which people can be saved. In Acts 4:12 we read, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which

we must be saved.” Since Jesus came and died for our sins, He stands as the final sacrifice. Hebrews 10:12 says, “This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” As our King, Ruler, and Savior, Jesus told us exactly what we must do to be saved.

If you are going to be obedient to the Gospel, here is what you must do. You first must hear God’s Word (Rom. 10:17). Once you have heard the Word of God, you must believe with your heart (Rom. 10:9-10). You must be willing to repent (Lk. 13:3). You must make the good confession (Rom. 10:10). And you must be baptized in water so that you can die to sin, be buried with Jesus, and arise as a new creature (Rom. 6:1-4). Then, having done these things, you must be a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1), and you must walk in a new life (Rom. 6:4). I hope that today’s lesson, and our entire series from the Book of Romans, will encourage each of us to live faithfully before Christ. How important it is for us to live our lives, and pattern our lives, after the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS LESSON 8 (CHAPTERS 15-16)

1. According to Romans 15:1-3, what is the main thrust of chapter 15 in the Book of Romans?
2. What does 2 Timothy 2:15 instruct us to do in order to become better Christians?
3. Of what use, according to Paul's statement in Romans 15:4, is the Old Testament to us today?
4. According to Galatians 3:24, what was one purpose of the Old Testament?
5. What important point about the Old Law is found in Hebrews 8:13?
6. What, according to Ephesians 2:14-15, did Jesus do to the Old Law?
7. Why, according to Isaiah 43:7, were we created?
8. In Romans 15:6, what did Paul admonish Christians to do?
9. What important point did the psalmist make in Psalm 133:1?
10. For what did Jesus pray in John 17:21?
11. According to Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, what is "man's all" (i.e., his whole duty)?
12. In Romans 16, Paul discussed some Christians whom he commended for their work for the Lord. What point along this same line did Paul make in 1 Corinthians 15:58?
13. What does Colossians 3:23-24 tell us to do in regard to our work for the Lord?
14. According to Romans 16:16, what is one scriptural name for Christ's church?
15. What, according to 1 Corinthians 4:6, are we **not** to do?
16. What, according to Revelation 22:18-19, are we **not** to do?
17. What, according to Romans 16:17, **are** we to do?
18. What important spiritual principle is found in 1 Corinthians 5:6?
19. What important phrase is found at the end of Leviticus 10:1 that explains why God struck down Nadab and Abihu?
20. According to Colossians 3:17, when we act as Christians, what is to be our source of authority for what we do?
21. What phrase is found in both Romans 1:5 and Romans 16:26 that should be of importance to everyone who wants to be a child of God?