

Romans Part 38 (15:20-33)

Tuesday Night Bible Study, April 15, 2008

--15:20-21: "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, 21 but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand."

--in the first two chapters of Romans we read how God has revealed limited revelation about Himself to everyone's heart who ever lived... but until the time of Christ, Scripture ("special revelation") had been limited to only a select few (Israel and the forefathers of Israel).

--Romans 1:19-21: "...what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God..."

--Romans 2:15 speaks of a general sense of right and wrong being written on everyone's heart.

--the great commission marked a dramatic change in the economy of revelation and the doors were opened wide to send the gospel (the final "special revelation") around the entire globe...

--to bring the gospel "to whom He was not announced" and "those who have not heard..." (Romans 15:21)

--Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:15, a prophetic passage about the preaching of the gospel...

--in Romans 10:15 Paul quoted Isaiah 52:7: "How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation..."

--Isaiah 52:13-15: "Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. 14 Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men; ... For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider."

--wording of Paul's quote from Isaiah 52:15... "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand." (English translation of Greek translation of the original Hebrew... our English Old Testament is translated directly from Hebrew)

--Matthew 28:18-19: "[*Jesus told His disciples*] Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..."

--Luke 24:47: "[*Jesus told His disciples*] repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

--thus fulfilling the original promise to Abraham over 2000 years earlier...

--Galatians 3:7-9: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham."

--the essence of the gospel... the temple in Jerusalem was replaced by the temple of our hearts... so that anyone, anywhere can worship God "in spirit and truth", dependent on their sins being covered by the blood of Christ that transcends time and space opposed to the fragile sacrificial system of the Old Testament that was limited to a small geographic area.

--the next section (15:22-33) gives an overview of Paul's missionary journeys as he worked at the forefront of taking the gospel where it had never been before... he speaks of where he had been, where he was while writing this epistle, where he was headed, and where he eventually hoped to go... and for the journey before him he asked the Christians in Rome pray for him and in effect accompany him on his missionary journeys...

--15:22-33: "For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, 24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may

enjoy your company for a while. 25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. 27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. 29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. 30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, 31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

--this section is a good opportunity to review part 1 and take a quick aerial tour of Paul's missionary journeys where Paul exemplifies what it means to be a "bondservant of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:1) and where we see his prayer requests in Romans 15:30-32 answered.

--Paul wrote the book of Romans around 56 AD; he was approximately 60 years old, had been a Christian for approximately 23 years, and was near the end of his 3rd missionary journey...

--during 10 years prior to his 3 missionary journeys he preached in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 9:30, Galatians 1:21); Paul was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia

--first missionary journey: traveled through Galatia and established many churches to whom he later wrote Galatians (Acts 13-14)

--second: started from Jerusalem, passed through Galatia, and expanded his ministry into Macedonia and Achaia, present day Greece. (Acts 15:39-18:22)

--third: started again from Jerusalem, passed through Galatia, settled in Ephesus for two years, then travelled to Macedonia and Achaia for a three month stay during which he wrote his epistle to the church of Rome 1000 miles north-west where he had never been. Acts (18:23-21:16)

--by the end of his third missionary journey Paul was planning on expanding his ministry to Spain and looked forward to visiting the church of Rome on his way there; but he first had to return to Jerusalem. Acts 19:21–28:31 covers this chapter of Paul's ministry...

--Acts 19:21: "When these things were accomplished [*completed 2 years of ministry in Ephesus*], Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

--Acts 20:2: "...he [*Paul*] came to Greece [*the region of Achaia*] and stayed three months."

--during this time he ministered in Corinth and wrote his epistle to the Romans.

--Paul's letter to the Corinthians that he wrote earlier that year from Ephesus gives us further insights into his third missionary journey and his reference in Romans 15:26-27 about collecting donations for the church in Jerusalem, which was financially poor... "Now concerning the collection for the saints [*in Jerusalem*], as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. 3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. 4 But if it is fitting that I go also [*by the time Paul was writing Romans in Corinth he was compelled to go to Jerusalem*], they will go with me. 5 Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). 6 And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you [*Paul wrote Romans while spending three months in the winter in Corinth*], that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits. 8 But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. 9 For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." (1 Corinthians 16:1-8)

--Acts 20:22-24: on his way back to Jerusalem, Paul passed by Ephesus again and met with the elders there... "now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25

And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more."

--"now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem..." (Acts 20:22)

--a continual theme throughout Paul's missionary journeys is that he is a "bondservant of Jesus Christ..." (Romans 1:1), putting God's will above his own no matter what the cost.

--Acts 21:7-14: Paul's journey back to Jerusalem continues... "And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. 8 On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. 10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" 12 Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

--another example of Paul expressing his commitment to putting God's will above his own.

--Paul arrived in Jerusalem and the first prayer request he shared in Romans was answered:

--**prayer request:** "that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints" (Romans 15:31)

--**answer:** "And when we had come to Jerusalem, **the brethren received us gladly.** 18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, **they glorified the Lord.** And they said to him, 'You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law...' (Acts 21:20-21) *The leaders in Jerusalem then addressed the ongoing problem of Christian Jews clinging to the law of Moses even though it had become obsolete (Paul repeatedly addressed this problem throughout Romans)*

--Acts 21:27-30: shortly after Paul's arrival in Jerusalem, a Jewish mob, condemning Paul for teaching that the law of Moses was obsolete, drug him out of the temple and tried to kill him; then Paul's second prayer request in Romans was answered:

--**prayer request:** " that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe" (Romans 15:31)

--**answer:** the Roman government arrested Paul and in prison he was protected from the mob... "Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. 34 And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!" (Acts 21:31-36) *Paul was truly taking up his cross and following Jesus, suffering in his footsteps... angry mob of Jews yelled to the authorities about Jesus, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"*

--Acts 23:12-18: the effort to kill Paul intensified... "And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. 14 They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. 15 Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near." 16 So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. 17 Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him. 18 So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to

him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you." 19 Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" 20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. 21 But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you." 22 So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me."
The providence of Paul's nephew being in the right place at the right time...

--the incredible level of security that resulted from Paul's imprisonment – including a 470 soldier escort to Caesarea - was a dramatic answer to prayer for deliverance from unbelieving Jews!
--Acts 23:18-22: "And he [*the Roman commander*] called for two centurions, saying, 'Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; 24 and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor.'"

--Acts 18:23-28:14: Paul spent 2 years in prison and through the legal proceedings appealed his case to Caesar, which resulted in him being transferred to the prison in Rome! Paul's desire to minister at Rome was fulfilled but in the least expected way!

--Pauls third prayer request in Romans was finally answered...

--**prayer request:** "that I may come to you with joy by the will of God" (Romans 15:32)

--**answer:** "...And so we went toward Rome. 15 And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage." (Acts 28:14-15)

--Paul found joy in the midst of his trials as he focused on the spiritual purpose of his trials!

--Philippians 1:12-21: "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me [Paul's imprisonment] have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, 13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; 14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ... 19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

--over and over again, Paul exemplified what it means to be a bondservant of Christ.

--the book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome, and then the next verse in the Bible is Romans 1:1: "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ..."

--Paul was released a year later and resumed his missionary travels until he was rearrested and imprisoned in Rome again and finally executed in AD 67 around 70 years of age. Most scholars have concluded that he never did visit Spain, but his epistle to the Romans is still travelling the globe 2000 years later!

--One scholar describes what Paul's execution was probably like: *The trial ended, Paul was condemned and delivered over to the executioner. He was led out of the city with a crowd of the lowest rabble at his heels. The fatal spot was reached; he knelt beside the block; the headsman's axe gleamed in the sun and fell; and the head of the apostle of the world rolled down in the dust. So sin did its uttermost and its worst. Yet how poor and empty was its triumph! ... ten thousand times ten thousand welcomed him in the same hour at the gates of the city which is eternal. Even on earth Paul could not die... in ten thousand churches every Sabbath and on a thousand thousand hearths every day his eloquent lips still teach that gospel of which he was never ashamed. (Jensen's New Testament Survey, pg. 238)*