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**Paul and the Romans**

**Romans 1.5-15**

**Series: The Pure Gospel**

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**The Village Church**

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I. **Introduction**

A. **Romans 16**

1. Lists more than 28 people by name
  - a. And by character
  - b. And a bunch more are included in the greetings
2. Phoebe
  - a. Deaconness at church in Cenchreae
  - b. On her way to Rome
3. Priscilla and Aquila
  - a. Fellow workers
  - b. Risked their necks for Paul
  - c. Church in their house
4. Epaenetus
  - a. First convert in Asia
5. Mary
  - a. Hard worker
6. Andronicus and Junia
  - a. Kinsmen (Jewish) and fellow prisoners
7. Ampliatus
  - a. Paul's beloved in the Lord
8. Urbanus
  - a. Fellow worker
9. Stachys
  - a. Beloved
10. Apelles
  - a. Approved in Christ
11. Aristobulus
  - a. And his family
12. Herodion
  - a. Kinsman (Jewish)
13. Narcissus
  - a. His family
14. Tryphaena and Tryphosa
  - a. Women
  - b. Workers in the Lord

15. Persis
  - a. Hard worker
16. Rufus and his mother
  - a. Chosen in the Lord
  - b. Likely son of Simon of Cyrene (carried the cross of Christ)
17. Asyncritus
18. Phlegon
19. Hermes
20. Patrobas
21. Hermas and brothers
22. Philologus
23. Julia
24. Nereus and sister
25. Olympas
26. All the saints with them
- B. These are greetings to people in the church in Rome
  1. People that Paul knows
  2. In a city in which Paul has never even set foot
- C. Impression of Book of Romans
  1. As Paul's Magnum Opus
    - a. His greatest theological work
  2. Tend to put it into the category of an academic work
  3. Matt – Acquisitions Editor at Lifeway
    - a. Involved with developing author relationships and seeing books through to their publication
    - b. Editor of a specific category of books – trade publications
    - c. Stuff that most of us in this congregation would read
    - d. Not the editor in another category of books – academic publications
    - e. Books that I might read, or Pastor Don might read
    - f. Or some of our other church members who taught in seminaries might read or may have written for other scholars
  4. If Paul sent his manuscript for Romans to Lifeway, they wouldn't send it to Matt
    - a. They would send it to the academic department
    - b. That's the way we tend to think of Romans
    - c. This heavy, theologically rich, technical work
- D. But that's wrong!
  1. Lifeway should have sent it to Matt
    - a. Because in spite of our impressions of the book, this book is for people
    - b. All kinds of people
    - c. Not the scholars, particularly
    - d. But real people
    - e. People with names

- f. People with histories; with stories
    - g. Men are included
    - h. But lots of women are also included
    - i. And families
  - 2. They are all the target audience for this book that Paul writes
    - a. And just as he's written it for those people, he's written it for us!
- E. **Paul**
  - 1. **His servant-hood** (bondslave of Christ Jesus)
    - a. In spite of all his accomplishments, that's the way he looks at himself
  - 2. **His apostleship**
    - a. Set apart for the Gospel of God
    - b. His teaching comes with apostolic authority
- F. **Gospel of God**
  - 1. **Promised in the Scriptures**
    - a. Their Scriptures – our OT
  - 2. **Concerning Christ** (God-man)
    - a. Deity – Son of God
    - b. Humanity – descendant of David
- G. **Gospel for...**
  - 1. Gospel is *for* someone
  - 2. **Gospel of God**
    - a. God is the source, the origin of the Gospel
  - 3. **Gospel concerning His Son**
  - 4. **Gospel for people**
    - a. The people to whom he's writing
    - b. Church people
    - c. Ordinary people
    - d. Not just the scholars
    - e. Not even primarily the scholars
- H. **Gospel communicated by...**
  - 1. Gospel is communicated *by* someone
  - 2. Paul – set apart for the Gospel
    - a. Meaning – set apart to preach
  - 3. **Romans 1:9** (ESV) —
    - a. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son...
  - 4. **Romans 1:15** (ESV) —
    - a. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.
- I. In our text this morning, we'll see the nature of the relationship between the recipients of this message and its deliverer
  - 1. Paul and the Romans
- J. **Romans 1:5–15** (ESV) —

1. 5 through whom [Jesus Christ] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,
2. 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,
3. 7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:
4. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.
6. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers,
7. asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.
8. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—
9. 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.
10. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.
11. 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.
12. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

## II. The Roman Church

### A. Its Origin

1. Paul was writing in 58-59
  - a. Less than 30 years after Christ's death and resurrection
  - b. Roman church's faith is said to be proclaimed in all the world (v. 8)
  - c. Already becoming a significant center of Christianity
  - d. Remarkable considering how slowly information moved in those days
2. Roman church would become even more significant later
  - a. Eventually would become corrupt in the Middle Ages
3. Roman Catholic Church identifies Peter as its founder
  - a. Peter – first Pope
  - b. No real evidence of that
  - c. Evidenced to the contrary
  - d. Romans 16 lists the names of a bunch of people Paul knew in Rome
  - e. Inconceivable that Paul would not mention Peter, or bring greetings from Peter, if Peter was in fact its founder
4. Don't really know how the church was founded
  - a. Not by Paul – he'd never even been there to this point
5. Best guess – Acts 2, Day of Pentecost

- a. **Acts 2:8–11** (ESV) — 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”
  - b. Jews and proselytes (Gentile converts to Judaism) from Rome
  - c. If these visitors returned after Pentecost, they likely established the first church there
  - d. Church in Rome, then, existed from the earliest days
  - e. And was established more by the Spirit of God than by human evangelists and missionaries
- 6. Church likely grew from there
  - a. Paul’s missionary journeys yielded converts
  - b. Many traveled
  - c. Rome was the center of commerce for the world; would have been the destination of many
  - d. When they got there, they probably did what we would do when we moved to a new city – shopped for churches!
  - e. But in those days – there was only one church!
- 7. Why supposed this?
  - a. Explains why Paul knew so many of these people (Romans 16)
  - b. More than 28 mentioned individually; plus households
  - c. Epaenetus – first convert in Asia; now he’s in Rome, in Europe!
  - d. Andronicus and Junia – in Christ before Paul
- 8. Significance – God planted a fledgling church in the midst of the most powerful capital in the world, the center of commerce; also the center of sin and decadence
  - a. Boice: ... in this city of gross sin there was a fellowship of people who rejected Rome’s sin and instead lived an entirely different kind of life. It was a life marked by holiness, a mutual sharing of burdens, love, and compassion for those who were abused or downtrodden. It was nothing less than a new humanity planted by God atop the deteriorating carcass of the old.
  - b. Do you think that assessment has any bearing on us and our culture?
- 9. How did they get this way?
- B. **Its Call**
  - 1. Called of Jesus Christ
    - a. **Romans 1:6** (ESV) — 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ...
    - b. God the Father calls people
    - c. Ephesians 2 – we were made alive with Christ
    - d. Belonging to Christ is what bound these people together

C. **Its Lovedness**

1. **Romans 1:7** (ESV) — 7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God ...
2. Not a general love that God has for everyone
  - a. Much more specific love
  - b. Electing love that brought these Romans into relationship with christ
3. **Romans 8:29–30** (ESV) — 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
  - a. Foreknew = foreloved
  - b. Relational term – to know before
  - c. Greek idiom is used for sexual intercourse – “Adam knew his wife Eve”
  - d. Applied metaphorically
  - e. But God’s call of His people was rooted in an intimacy of love
4. **Deuteronomy 7:7–8** (ESV) — 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
  - a. God chose you – out of all the people of the world – because He loves you
5. The church in Rome is characterized by its “lovedness” – loved by God
6. Called as saints
  - a. Saints – separated for God
  - b. Why they were becoming known through the whole world – they were different
7. Regardless of the natural means by which they became the church at Rom, the supernatural means was most important to Paul
  - a. Robert Haldane: They were saints because they were called, and they were called because they were beloved of God.

D. **Its Character**

1. Their faith was proclaimed in all the world (v. 8)
  - a. Faith is the most significant dimension of the character of this church
  - b. It’s what they were known for!

E. **Its Faith**

1. **Its Nature**
  - a. Notitia – content
  - b. Assensus – assent
  - c. Fiducia – trust
  - d. All three are necessary for saving faith

- e. Content – Jesus Christ
- f. Unmistakable from the context – made much of Jesus Christ in the last message
- g. Contrast in the way faith is used today – faith in faith
- h. World wants people to have faith; they don't much care in what
- i. Christian faith is faith in Christ
- j. Example of all three – chair
  - (1) Content – chair as furniture with back and legs
  - (2) Assent – agree that this is chair
  - (3) Trust – don't trust until you sit in it
- k. You can know who Jesus is; content
- l. You can agree that the biblical Jesus was a real person; even agree that He rose from the dead; all the facts
- m. But unless you sit in Jesus; let Him carry you
- n. Unless you trust in Jesus – your faith is useless

2. **Its Origin**

- a. Origin of faith – God
- b. Not something conjured up by human beings
- c. **Romans 1:8** (ESV) — 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.
- d. Paul doesn't thank the Romans for the faith! He thanks God for their faith!
- e. Haldane: Paul... thus acknowledges God as the author of the Gospel, not only on account of his causing it to be preached to them, but because he had actually given them grace to believe
- f. **Ephesians 2:8–9** (ESV) — 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

3. **Its Character**

- a. Obedient
- b. **Romans 1:5–6** (ESV) — 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about **the obedience of faith** for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ...
- c. Concepts of faith and obedience are often contrast; they belong together
- d. Boice: If the “faith” one has does not lead to obedience, it is not the faith the Bible is talking about when it calls us to faith in Jesus Christ. It may be intellectual assent of a very high order. But it is not a living faith. It does not join us to Jesus Christ, and it will save no one.
- e. The gospel obligates us; God presents the good news, then demands that we believe it
- f. That's why we can talk in terms of obeying the Gospel of God

- g. Calvin: We deduce from this that those who irreverently and contemptuously reject the preaching of the gospel, the design of which is to bring us into obedience to God, are stubbornly resisting the power of God and perverting the whole of his order.
  - 4. Weakness of the contemporary church – gospel is not preached as a command
  - 5. **Acts 17:30–31** (ESV) —
    - a. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,
    - b. 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”
  - 6. **Romans 6:17** (ESV) —
    - a. 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed...
  - 7. **Romans 10:3** (ESV) —
    - a. 3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.
    - b. **Romans 10:16** (ESV) — 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”
  - 8. **Romans 16:25–27** (ESV) —
    - a. 25 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages
    - b. 26 but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—
    - c. 27 to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.
  - 9. **Contagious faith**
    - a. **Romans 1.8** – proclaimed in all the world
  - 10. **Encouraging faith**
    - a. **Romans 1:12** (ESV) — 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.
- F. Oh, that we would be known for our faith!
- 1. Most churches are known for something else
    - a. Programs
    - b. Preaching
    - c. Music
    - d. Worship style
    - e. Doctrine
    - f. Building



2. If you can't be known for faith, what's the use in being known for those others things?
  - a. Faith is the most essential dimension of the Christian life
  - b. How we began the Christian life
  - c. How we continue to grow in the Christian life

### III. Paul and the Roman Church

#### A. Service

1. **Romans 1:8–9** (ESV) —
  - a. 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.
  - b. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son...
2. **Object of Paul's service is God**
  - a. Because Paul's service is first to God, he is enabled by God to serve with genuine wisdom
  - b. Never tossed to and fro, subject to the influence of others
  - c. Pastors start to get into trouble when they lose sight of this issue – start to serve others before God
  - d. Seek to please people
  - e. Same is true for everyone else
  - f. If our service is first to anyone else before God, we are susceptible to all kinds of idolatrous substitutions – people, politics, power
3. **Genuine, sincere, wholehearted**
  - a. For God is my witness, whom I serve **with my spirit**
  - b. NIV – “with my whole heart”
  - c. Many people who profess Christ do so without this kind of wholehearted sincerity
  - d. Serve people rather than God
  - e. Become lazy in service; serve only when it suits them
  - f. Paul has harsh words for those who claim to be Christians but whose faith doesn't stand up to the test of sincerity
  - g. **Titus 1:16** (ESV) — 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.
  - h. Oh, that our service would be wholehearted!
4. **Gospel centered**
  - a. **Romans 1:9** (ESV) — 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son...
  - b. Paul's priority is the preaching of the gospel
  - c. Everything else revolves around it
  - d. Difficult to do in practice
  - e. Many other legitimate issues for the church to engage in
  - f. Many other demands press upon pastors for our attention

- g. But those other agendas have a tendency to supplant the primary issue in Christianity – the Gospel
  - h. Boice: Other agendas are usually seen as ways to get the gospel out or to make it known, at least at first. But they take on a character and schedule of their own, and they become ends in themselves
  - i. Need to make sure our service is really essentially gospel oriented
5. **For others**
- a. **Romans 1:9–10** (ESV) — 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.
  - b. Prays first of all that he may see them
  - c. **Romans 1:11** (ESV) — 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—
  - d. Prays to impart some spiritual gift to them
  - e. **Romans 1:12** (ESV) — 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.
  - f. Prayed to impart spiritual blessing on them to strengthen them and encourage them

B. **Prayer**

- 1. Prayer and service are thus central to Paul’s relationship with these people, this church
- 2. Prayer is not inconsistent with service, or the work of the Lord
  - a. Tendency is to separate them
  - b. Some people are pray-ers; others are do-ers
- 3. Strong prayer life is not only not inconsistent with a strong life of service – it is the fundamental means by which that service accomplishes anything
  - a. **1 Corinthians 3:6** (ESV) — 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.
  - b. Two people engaged in labor, serving the Lord
  - c. But God caused their labor to be fruitful
  - d. Shouldn’t we be talking, then, to God as much about our ministry as we actually spend doing it?
- 4. We separate service and prayer because service has the tendency to take up all our time
  - a. We’re busy
  - b. Something’s got to go
  - c. Prayer usually goes
- 5. No one was busier than Paul
  - a. Considering how much he traveled
  - b. Bi-vocational – tent-maker who usually supported his own ministry with secular occupation
  - c. Then he had the actual work of ministry in teaching and preaching
  - d. Yet he was able to continue a vibrant prayer life that would put most of ours to shame

- e. Shameless plug for the evening teaching series – Near to the Heart of God – study the prayers of the NT
- f. Most of the prayers are prayers of Paul
- 6. Luther: (paraphrased) ... had to do so much in a day that he could not get through it without spending at least 3 or 4 hours in prayer!
- 7. Robert Haldane: Prayer and labor ought to go together. To pray without laboring is to mock God; to labor without prayer is to rob God of His glory. Until these are conjoined, the gospel will not be extensively successful.
- 8. **Prayer directs service properly**
  - a. Prayer is two-way communication with the commanding officer of the army of God
  - b. We use prayer to radio for more resources that only headquarters can provide
  - c. Critically important in war time
  - d. We use prayer to hear the commander direct our movements, strategy, and tactics
  - e. Without service-directing prayer, service loses focus; becomes less gospel-centered
  - f. Motivation diminishes
  - g. Resources dry up
  - h. Become less concerned about the people that our service is intended to benefit
  - i. Susceptible to criticism or fatigue
  - j. Susceptible to sin in our lives and in ministry
- 9. **Prayer multiplies effectiveness in service**
  - a. We all want our service to be effective; willing to work hard in service
  - b. But most of us are frustrated at times because we desire to do more than we're able
  - c. If you understand the nature of prayer you realize that you can affect the people you are praying for without ever being present
  - d. Management is getting other people to do what you don't have the time to accomplish by yourself
  - e. Prayer is a way of managing service
  - f. Or of allowing God to manage our service
  - g. Even Paul was frustrated to a degree
  - h. **Romans 1:11–13** (ESV) — 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.
  - i. Wanted to come to Rome; couldn't get there

- j. How could he affect these Romans?
  - k. He could write a letter
  - l. He could pray
- 10. **Prayer multiplies our own ability to serve**
  - a. Does prayer change things?
  - b. Yes!
  - c. But more importantly, prayer changes the pray-er
  - d. Boice: Prayer also changes the one praying so that he or she increasingly becomes the kind of person through whom God can accomplish his purpose.
  - e. God also reveals our own blind spots that hinder ministry
  - f. God gives spiritual insight into the circumstances of the people to whom we ministry
  - g. God gives us a spiritual perspective on what is taking place in the lives of the people to whom we're ministering
- 11. **Prayer expands the scope of our ministry**
  - a. **Romans 1:13–15** (ESV) — 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.
  - b. Paul's obligation was not only to a small group in Rome
  - c. He had an obligation to take the gospel to the whole world
  - d. Not only to the Jews, but to Gentiles
  - e. Not only to Greeks but to barbarians
  - f. Not only to the wise but also to the foolish
  - g. Where did Paul get this vision?
  - h. He got it from prayer!
  - i. If we're going to be a great commission church, we need to have a vision-driven, scope-expanding prayer life
  - j. If we're going to build a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ, we need to have community prayer focus centered on our core values
- 12. Are you engaged in your own personal prayer life?
  - a. Are you engaged in communal prayer with others?
  - b. Like Wednesday night, or with one of the other prayer groups that meet with regularity?

IV. **What will we be known for?**

- A. We will all be known for something
  - 1. The Village Church at Shell Point will be known for something
  - 2. What will it be?
- B. Faith?

- C. Wholehearted service?
- D. Prayer?
- E. Building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ?