

## ROMANS CH.15

### MAJOR THEME: THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNES OF GOD REVEALED IN TRANSFORMED LIVING

#### Hymn: #8 Faith of Our Fathers (BGCS) #10 A Mighty Fortress (BGCS)

*(Modified Outline of John A. Witmer- Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; SP Publications; 1983; p.438)*

- 1) INTRODUCTION AND THEME (1:1-17)
  - A) Apostolic Greeting (1:1-7)
  - B) Apostolic Travel Plans (1:8-15)
  - C) Apostolic Attitude (1:16-17)
- 2) RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN CONDEMNATION (1:18-3:20)
  - A) Against Pagan Humanity (1:18-32)
    - i) Reasons (1:18-23)
      - (1) For Suppressing God's Truth v. 18
      - (2) For Ignoring God's Revelation v. 19-20
      - (3) For Perverting God's Glory v.21-23
    - ii) Results (1:24-32)
      - (1) Abandoned to Fornication v.24-25
      - (2) Abandoned to Sexual Perversion v. 26-27
      - (3) Abandoned to a Depraved Lifestyle v.28-32
  - B) According to Divine Standards (2:1-16)
    - i) Truthfulness (2:1-4)
    - ii) Impartiality (2:5-11)
    - iii) Jesus Christ (2:12-16)
  - C) Against Unfaithful Jews (2:17-3:8)
    - i) Condemnation because of their hypocrisy (2:17-24)
    - ii) Condemnation because of their trust in "rites" rather than God (2:25-29)
    - iii) Condemnation because of their unbelief (3:1-8)
  - D) Against All Humanity (3:9-20)
    - i) All Under Sin (3:9-18)
    - ii) All Conscious of Sin (3:19-20)
- 3) RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN JUSTIFICATION (3:21-5:21)
  - A) Provided Righteousness Explained (3:21-31)
  - B) Provided Righteousness Illustrated (Ch. 4)
    - i) By Faith Not Works (4:1-8)
    - ii) By Faith Not Rites (4:9-12)
    - iii) By Faith Not Law (4:13-17)
    - iv) By Faith in God's Promise (4: 18-25)
  - C) Provided Righteousness Enjoyed (5:1-11)
    - i) Rejoice in The Hope of Glory (5:1-2)
    - ii) Rejoice in Our Sufferings (5:3-8)
    - iii) Rejoice in God (5:9-11)
  - D) Provided Righteousness Contrasted (5:12-21)
- 4) RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN SANTIFICATION (Ch. 6-8).
  - A) Ground of Sanctification (6:1-4)
  - B) Attitudes for Sanctification (6:5-23)
    - i) Know (6:5-10)
    - ii) Reckon (6:11-12)
    - iii) Offer (6:13-17)
    - iv) Serve (6:18-23)
  - C) Conflict in Sanctification (Ch.7)
    - i) The Believer and the Law (7:1-6)
    - ii) The Law and Sin (7:7-13)
    - iii) The Believer and Sin (7:14-25)
  - D) Power for Sanctification (8:1-17) "Life Through The Holy Spirit"
  - E) Goal of Sanctification (8:18-27) "Future Glory"
  - F) Certainty of Sanctification (8: 28-39) "More than conquerors"
- 5) RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN SOVEREIGN CHOICE (Ch. 9-11)
  - A) God's Sovereign Choice Enunciated (9:1-29)
    - i) Israel's Privileges (9:1-5)
    - ii) The Choice Illustrated (9:6-18)
    - iii) The Choice Explained (9:19-29)
  - B) God's Sovereign Choice Applied (9:30-10:21)
    - i) Israel's Stumbling (9:30-33)
    - ii) God's Gracious Offer (10:1-15)
    - iii) Israel's Rejection (10:16-21)
  - C) God's Sovereign Choice Fulfilled (Ch. 11)
    - i) In Election of Grace (Ch. 11:1-10)
    - ii) In Gentiles (Ch.11:11-24)
    - iii) In Israel's Salvation (Ch. 11:25-32)
    - iv) To God's Glory and Praise (Ch. 11:33-36)
- 6) RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN TRANSFORMED LIVING (Ch. 12:1-15:13)
  - A) The Basic Consecration (Ch. 12:1-2)
  - B) Service Through Gifts of the Spirit (Ch. 12:3-8)
  - C) Relating Within The Body of Christ (Ch. 12:9-16)
  - D) Relating Outside The Body of Christ (Ch. 12:17-21)
  - E) Relating to Governmental Authority (Ch. 13:1-7)
  - F) Relating to Financial Arrangements (Ch. 13:8-10)
  - G) Relating to The Future (Ch. 13:11-14)
  - H) Dealing with Other Believers (Ch.14:1-15:13)
    - i) Without Judging (Ch. 14:1-13)
    - ii) Without Hindering (Ch. 14:14-23)

## ROMANS CH.15

iii) **As Imitators of Christ (Ch. 15:1-16)** In Chapter 14 Paul has discussed two principles for Christians to implement in dealing with one another. First, the strong in faith are not to despise the weak in faith nor are the weak in faith to condemn the strong in faith. Secondly, we are not to hinder one another with scandalous obstacles that stumble the weak conscience of another. We saw all this summed up in the three words, Conviction, Conscience and Consideration. Here in Ch. 15 Paul give us the third principle of The Righteousness of God Revealed through Transformed Living in dealing with other believers: namely to be imitators of Christ.

- (1) V. 1-3 the primary responsibility lies with those strong in the faith to bear with the “failings”, lit. ἀσθενήματα- meaning the weakness, infirmity, doubt, hesitation of the weak, and to do so with their needs in mind not our own, just as Christ Jesus modelled for us.
- (a) Christ bore the pain of those insulting his Father, as Paul quotes here from Ps. 69:9. The context of this quote gives us grater insight to the responsibility Paul has in mind for the strong in faith.
- (i) Ps. 69:7-9 “For I endure scorn for your sake, and shame covers my face. I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons; for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.
1. I believe one of the most painful things a person can bear is the scornful alienation from other believers as a result of the Spirit inspired zeal and consuming passion one has for God’s house; that is to see the true followers of Jesus, “living stones”, built together into a spiritual house; a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (1 Pet. 2:4-5; Eph.2:22).
  2. Sadly, this divine purpose and the zeal which the imitators of Christ will have, is often scornfully rejected by those weak in faith who simply don’t get it.
    - a. This calls for wisdom and discernment as well as a bearing with. Bearing with the truly believing but weak, but also understanding that “wheat and tares” are not easily distinguished, and there are many “tares” both in the world and the professing church. (Matt. 13: 24-30; 36-43; 1 John 2: 18-19; 2 John 7)
- (b) Bearing with does not mean ignoring the failings of the weak however, but rather wisely seeking to edify without causing them to violate their conscience. It means setting a mature example, even if it means having to curtail your own liberty.
- (2) V. 4-6 God himself is the source of the endurance the strong need in “bearing with” and He is also the source of encouragement that weak need to “grow up”. And the Bible is the means through which God gives both.
- (a) As we read of the lives and examples of OT saints and learn from the *past*, we can find the endurance we need for the *present*, even as we look forward to the *future*.
- (b) Keeping in step with one another through a shared daily bible reading plan or Lectionary is one practical way to do this, and our own experience here has shown how in doing so we have often been inspired and thus “with one heart and mouth we have glorified the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

## ROMANS CH.15

- (c) But Paul has more in mind; his desire is that we might have “a **spirit** of unity among ourselves”. There is a big difference between being united and having unity of spirit. We made the observation at the close of Chapter 14 that two chickens tied at the feet and thrown over a clothes line may be united, but they don’t have unity.
  - (d) A. W. Tozer, in his book *The Pursuit of God* wrote “Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers [meeting] together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be, were they to become “unity conscious” and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship.
  - (e) But being “unity conscious” is rarely the primary problem behind a lack of spiritual unity. The usual culprit is the “Lone Ranger” spirit as illustrated when
    - (i) Tonto and the Lone Ranger were riding through a canyon together when all of a sudden both sides were filled with Indian warriors on horses, dressed for battle. Tonto turned to The Lone Ranger and asked, "What are we going to do Lone Ranger?" The Lone Ranger replied, "What you mean ‘**WE**’?”
    - (ii) The ‘we’ of the unity of the spirit is often abandoned for the ‘I’ of the Lone Ranger spirit. Paul knew of this phenomenon personally, having been abandoned in the fight by those close to him, and thus he prayed for a unity of spirit amongst the Romans and us.
- (3) V. 7 “Accept one another” This is the other book end of “acceptance” which Paul first mentioned back in 14:1.
- (a) How did Christ accept you? What shape were you in when He accepted you?
    - (i) 1 Cor. 1: 26-29 “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”
    - (ii) Rom. 5: 6, 8, 10 you and I were powerless, sinners and enemies of God, but God accepted us in Christ, even in this state.
- (4) V. 8-12 As apostle to the gentiles, Paul highlights what a significant role the Gentiles play in God’s eternal purpose **and** how Christ is the confirmation of the promises made to the patriarchs. In doing so, he quotes from all divisions of the OT, the Law in Moses, the Psalms in David, and the Prophets in Isaiah so that the Gentiles might understand and glorify God for the mercy He has shown them.
- (a) V.9-12 show a beautiful progression in the promises made:
    - (i) V. 9 The Jews are to glorify God *among* the Gentiles (Ps. 18:49)
    - (ii) V. 10 the Gentiles rejoice *with* the Jews (Deut. 32:43)
    - (iii) V. 11 All the Jews and Gentiles *together* praise God (Ps. 117:1)
    - (iv) V. 12 Finally, Christ Jesus will reign over Jews and Gentiles (Is. 11:10)

## ROMANS CH.15

- (5) V. 13 is Paul's benediction to his teaching and doctrinal framework in this letter to the Romans. It is a benediction of hope based on the promises made to the patriarchs and confirmed by Christ.
- (a) Joy is anticipating the fulfilment of our hopes
  - (b) Peace is the assurance that God WILL fulfil our hopes
  - (c) As we Trust in Him, we experience both joy and peace
  - (d) One of the goals of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is that we might have hope...not just a little hope, but "little league" kind of hope...overflowing with hope.
    - (i) A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon. He asked a boy in the dugout what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing; we're behind." "Boy," said the spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged." "Why should I be discouraged?" replied the little boy. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet!" That's the kind of hope the God of all hope inspires in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.
    - (ii) 1 Pet 1:13 Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you (*when you get up to bat*) when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- (6) V. 14 being competent to instruct one another is a competency to live out of and speak from our regenerated human spirit which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- (7) V. 15 Part of our competency to instruct one another involves reminding each other of what we already know...because we leak. Paul reminded the Romans of some things they already knew. Peter did the same thing:
- (a) 2 Pet 1:12 "So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have"
  - (b) 2 Pet. 3:1 "Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking."
  - (c) Don't ever be afraid to offer or receive that which you already know...remember we hold the treasure of the knowledge of the glory of God in sinful "earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7) In other words, we're all a bunch of "crack pots" and as such we all leak!
- (8) V. 16 Think of what a privilege it is to share the gospel; to hand out a tract; to give someone a Bible...in fact Paul calls it a "priestly duty" lit. ἱερουργέω- this is the only time this word is used in the NT. It's a special and unique service to God. Next time you are about give someone a bible, a tract or share the Gospel remind yourself that, though you are a "crack pot", you are also a member of a royal priesthood ( 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:5-6) and are about to engage in a "priestly duty". Carry yourself (your vessel) and your elements of worship with dignity and holiness as an offering to God.

### **I) Concluding Remarks (Ch. 15:17-16:27)**

#### **i) Personal Plans (Ch. 15: 17-33)**

- (1) V. 17-22 Here we see four marks of Pauls "modus operandi" in his ministry:
- (a) He glories and revels in his ministry for Christ
  - (b) He speaks only of Christ's accomplishments (not his own) done through him
  - (c) Proclaims the Gospel as his ministry

## ROMANS CH.15

- (d) Preaches Christ where He was not known as his ministry
- (2) V. 19 When Paul speaks of the “power of signs and miracles” let’s remind ourselves of what God did through this man:
- (a) Blinded the sorcerer Elymus on Cyprus (Acts 13:11)
  - (b) Did “miraculous sign and wonders” at Iconium ( Acts 14:3; 15:12)
  - (c) Healed a lame man at Lystra ( Acts 14:8)
  - (d) Miraculously survived stoning at Lystra (Acts 14:19-20)
  - (e) God did extraordinary miracles through Paul at Ephesus, where even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him cured the sick and exorcised demons out of people. (Acts 19:11)
  - (f) Raised the dead Eutychus at Troas (Acts 20:9-12)
  - (g) Survived snake bite on Malta (Acts 28:5)
- (3) V. 23-24 After 9 years of missions from Jerusalem, through Asia Minor, Macedonia and all the way to Illyricum, which is Dalmatia (modern day Yugoslavia) there were now no more places where Christ was not known. Therefore he was now ready to go to Spain and planned to stop in Rome on his way.
- (a) Interestingly, though the Bible concludes in Acts 28:30 with Paul under house arrest in Rome, the early Church fathers and historians tell us he was eventually released and did in fact make it to Spain. In fact he made it as far as Britain.
    - (i) John Chrysostom and Jerome speak of Paul making it to Spain.
    - (ii) Eusebius, Theodoret, Clement and others positively assert he preached in Britain. (R.W. Morgan “St. Paul in Britain”)
    - (iii) “He travelled to Spain, Britain and then came back through Gaul (France). Britain and Rome were still at war, and Christianity was taking hold very well in Britain. For this reason, while in Gaul, Paul was arrested once again and taken back to Rome on charges of conspiracy and preaching a non-official religion...he was in prison for just a matter of weeks” in the infamous Mamertine prison from where he wrote his last letter of 2 Timothy. Paul being a Roman citizen was beheaded on June 27<sup>th</sup> 67 AD. (Ken Johnson; “Ancient Church Fathers- What the Disciples of the Apostles Taught; p.9)
- (4) V. 25-28 Before setting off for Spain, Paul first had to make a trip back to Jerusalem and deliver a financial gift that had been collected amongst the largely Gentile Macedonian and Asian churches for the Jewish believers who were undergoing a severe material shortage at the time. Details about this collection can be read in 2 Cor. Ch 8 and 9.
- (a) V. 27 is a key principle that is true even today for us. We owe Israel our support in her time of “hardening in part”, knowing that she is elect of God and loved on account of the Patriarchs (11:28). Equally, Gen. 12:3 is still in effect today: “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”
    - (i) Bless Israel and pray for the peace of Jerusalem “shాలు שאלום yerushalayim” (Ps. 127:6)

## ROMANS CH.15

- (5) V. 29-33 Finally we see four specific requests for prayer that Paul sought and which serve as good prayer requests for us all.
- (a) Share in his struggles.
    - (i) Gal. 6: 2 "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ"
  - (b) For protection from the enemy
  - (c) Others would benefit from his ministry to them
  - (d) That he might come to Rome with joy and be mutually refreshed.

Well, in mixing the metaphors that have been used earlier, we can see the finish line now in this marathon run through Romans. One more chapter to go. A cursory look at Ch. 16 may leave you thinking there's not much there but some greetings of people with names that are hard to pronounce. But don't be deceived, Paul is not pulling up and jogging, but he runs hard all the way through the tape. The Holy Spirit has also hidden some gems there for us. Let us stay with Paul and run all the way to the end of Romans and particularly the race marked out for each one of us (Heb. 12:1)