

Sermon Notes

Romans 15:14-33

“Ordinary Things”

A Sermon Series on Romans

May 12, 2019

Introduction

- 1) Romans 15:14-33 is the beginning of the conclusion of Paul’s magisterial epistle to the Roman church, which he wrote as a way of introduction (he hasn’t visited this church) and as a blessing.
- 2) It is surprisingly very ordinary. No grand call to do extraordinary things to find your purpose, but a return to one of Paul’s concerns: division between Jewish and Gentile Christians.
 - a) Though there is a clear racial component, the main division is about theology (the role of Jewish civil and ceremonial laws for sanctification in the New Testament church). Rom 15:1-14
 - b) The answer to this problem, as to all problems, is simply the Gospel, which is the main reason Paul wrote this famous magisterial epistle to the church of Rome.
- 3) As Paul writes, “*I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.*” – Rom 1:15b
 - a) The Gospel is: “*of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord . . . For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’*” – Rom 1:1b-4, 16-17
 - b) To give a simple outline: Introduction (Rom 1:1-15); Thesis Statement – The Gospel (1:16-17); The Problem – Sin (1:18-3:20); The Solution – Justification by Faith Alone (3:21-4:4:25); The Outcome – A Life of Sanctification (Rom 5:1ff).
- 4) In one sense, for us moderns the division between Jews & Gentiles isn’t a big issue.
 - a) The Christian West is one of the least racist places in the world and in history.
 - b) Yes, racism is a sin (Gal 3:28), and over the last thirteen years there has been increased racial tension in the USA and in the West.
 - c) However, race is not Paul’s major focus. His concern is the Gospel, the church and theology.
 - i) Technically, in the narrow sense, the Bible isn’t against the evils of slavery.
 - ii) Why? So the church can fit into any culture and focus on the Gospel; Rom 13:1-8
Which is vastly more important than ANY social issue. Matt 16:26
 - iii) The ordinary working out of the Gospel will produce justice and mercy.
 - iv) Ex: Slavery was common in all cultures, yet it’s the Christian West that ended it.
 - v) Go read Paul’s letter to Philemon to see this balance.
- 5) You see this in Rom 15:14-33 where Paul focuses on Gentiles & Jews, and asks for the church to do rather ordinary things, which are always grounded in the Gospel.

Romans 15:14-29 – Paul's Concern for the Gentiles

- 1) Paul admits that he has “written very boldly” “on some points” to the church in Rome. Rom 15:15
 - a) Of course the radical thing, that which is the power of God, is the Gospel. Rom 1:16-17
 - b) Working out the Gospel leads to wrestling with some profound themes: Sin, justification by faith alone, predestination, the relationship between Law & Gospel, etc.
 - c) Yet this is all by grace (God’s unmerited favor).
 - i) This is an easy thing for Christians to say that all things are by God’s grace, but few actually believe it.
 - ii) We like to think we add to God’s salvation or His Kingdom by our own merit.
 - iii) This contradicts all of Romans. As Paul wrote, “*But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.*” – Rom 11:6

- 2) Paul's calling, by the grace of God, is "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles." Rom 15:16
- a) Like an OT priest who sacrifices the offerings to God, Paul, through the proclamation of the Gospel, is bringing in the Gentiles as an offering unto God that they might be made holy unto the Lord. Rom 15:16-21
- b) Praise the Lord that He did this!
- i) Remember there was a huge debate in the early church whether the Gospel was for only the Jews or everyone. It took supernatural revelation by God to settle the issue. Acts 10:44-48; Acts 15:1ff
- ii) It is Paul, more than anyone else, who is sent out to preach to the Gentiles. Rom 15:18-20
- iii) This was all according to prophecy. Rom 15:21; Is 52:15
- c) Though Paul speaks of "signs, wonders & powers" his focus is "preaching the Gospel," the proclamation of Christ's finished redeeming work with the call to repent, believe and follow. Rom 15:19-20
- 3) Paul's other concern is the church: wanting fellowship, desiring it to expand and serve all the saints (i.e. all Christians). This Paul calls "the fullness of the blessing of Christ." Rom 15:22-29

Romans 15:30-33 - Paul's Concluding for Israel

- 1) Though Paul's calling is to the Gentiles, he always has a heart for his people, the Jews. Rom 9:1-5
- 2) You see this throughout Acts, where Paul states his calling to the Gentiles and seems to always end up in a synagogue. Acts 13:45-14:1; 17:1-2,10,16-17; 18:4-8, 23-26; 19:8-10
- 3) Paul gives a passionate plea, by the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit themselves. Rom 13:30
- a) His request of the church of Rome is simple: For them to prayer for him.
- b) The prayers he desires are: Rom 13:31
- i) To be rescued from those who persecute him in Judea.
- ii) That his labors in Jerusalem be "acceptable to the saints."
- iii) This will allow him to go to Rome, and their company will be refreshment.
- 4) Paul himself ends the main body of this great letter with a prayer for them: "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." - Rom 15:33

Conclusion

- 1) Many modern Evangelicals might be surprised how simple and boring Paul ends this epistle.
- a) There is no motivational speech for them to do great and epic things to advance the Kingdom, such as ending slavery or even winning the world for Christ.
- b) Instead we get a rather bland list of simple things:
- i) Know the Scriptures and think theologically. Rom 15:15,21
- ii) Desire and support preaching. Rom 15:16
- iii) Desire fellowship with one another. Rom 15:18,20,23
- Especially worship-centered around the ministry of the Word.
 - Which has no division based on race or secondary points of doctrine.
- iv) Support the church and Christians in need. Rom 15:26-28, 31
- v) Pray. Rom 15:30
- vi) Always with the foundation being the proclamation of the Gospel. Rom 15:16,19,20
- c) These simple steady habits give "refreshing rest."
- i) So many modern Evangelicals have been programmed by bad theology to focusing on doing, succeeding, advancing, and having purpose. (A theology of glory.)
- ii) We find a detailed thinking out of the Gospel (as found in Romans) too "academic," not "relevant or practical," and certainly "boring."
- iii) We want a "to do list" and are frustrated by such ordinary things as: Going to Sunday worship, having fellowship in Bible study, pray, loving your neighbor, etc.
- 2) Yet these ordinary things based on the Gospel changed the world.