

Romans 15:14-33

“Nothing I asked for; but everything I hoped for” (part a)

I. Intro

II. Vs. 14-16 The Church at Rome

I. Intro

In most of the New Testament letters you want to look for the purpose that the author had in writing the letter, you will find this in Romans 1:11 where Paul wrote that he, *“long to see them, that he may impart to them some spiritual gift, so that they may be established.”* He further clarified that in 16-17 as being *“the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”* Here in the last ½ of the 15th chapter Paul again brings this up having just written about the practical implications of this spiritual truth. **He wasn’t writing because he felt the Roman Christians didn’t know what was right; he wrote to them because they needed to be reminded to do what they knew was right.** In the 2nd part of this text that we will look at next week Paul will use himself as the example to follow as he refers to his own ministry. A confederate soldier wrote in his diary these words:

- *I asked God for strength, that I might achieve, and I was made weak, that I may learn to obey.*
- *I asked God for health, that I may do great things, I was given infirmity that I might do better things.*
- *I asked God for riches, that I may be happy; I was given poverty, that I might be wise.*
- *I asked God for power, that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness, that I might feel the need for God.*
- *I asked for all things that I might enjoy life; I was given life that I might enjoy all things.*
- *I got nothing I asked for; but everything I hoped for. And despite myself, all my unspoken prayers were answered. I am among all men, most richly blessed.*

Looking at that ministry Paul could have said, *“I got nothing I asked for but everything I wanted!”*

II. Vs. 14-16 The Church at Rome

Vs. 14-16 Paul didn't just preach the gospel he instructed believers how to live before God. Notice how Paul refers to the Godhead in verse 16, as he is a *minister of Jesus Christ*, *ministering the gospel of God*, that the offering of the gentiles would be acceptable, *sanctified by the Holy Spirit*. In verses 26-27 Paul is going to bring up to the Roman believers the financial commitment that the Church provided so that he could bring an offering to Jerusalem to help the famine plagued believers living there. But before he does that he wants to mention that the greatest offering we can give is our life's that always seeks to in every way glorify God. That is done by the continual work of the Holy Spirit who sets us apart for a holy purpose. The final verses of the 15th chapter of Romans have two themes:

- **Vs. 14-16 The Church at Rome**
- **Vs. 17-33 Paul's ministry**

Concerning the Church Paul started this letter by saying in Romans 1:8 “*that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world.*” Now in the 14th verse Paul elaborates on **three reasons that this was true.**

1. **Full of goodness:** Paul says that this Church was affective throughout the whole world because they had **the right motives.** They were motivated by goodness; it acted the way it did because they were acting the way their Master had acted towards them. There was **no ulterior motive behind their actions just pure goodness!**
2. **Filled with all knowledge:** This is a remarkable statement when we consider that the book of Romans is the most complete theological and doctrinal books in the New Testament. What he is saying here is that **the Roman believers didn't lack any spiritual understanding doctrinally;** they had “*all knowledge*” in this regard. Now immediately

we ought to begin to question why Paul wrote so much on “*justification, sanctification, salvation etc.*” if these believers already knew all this. I’ll leave you with that question to answer in a minute as we look at three things this church needed.

3. **Able to admonish each other**: Finally **they were competent to council** each other with regards to spiritual truth. I believe that one of the characteristics of a healthy Church is that the pastoral’s staff of weekly counseling will be at a minimal amount! The reason for this is that the body of Christ will be acting as its own counselors and will be encouraging and coming alongside their brothers and sisters as they exercise their spiritual gifts. There are far too many Churches that have adopted an over dependence upon a select view folks instead of finding their place to serve.

Vs. 15-16 Yet with Paul’s observation as to the reason why this church’s faith was being spoken of throughout the world he also has **three things they lack** hence the letter in the first place. Now you would think that a Church that was characterized by “*all goodness, full knowledge, and as a body complete counseling*” would not have anything it lacked but they did.

1. Vs. 15 **Reminded of the truth**: Now we can answer that question I first posed as to “*why Paul felt obligated to write about what he proclaimed they already knew?*” The answer is that **they leaked!** Their problem wasn’t that they had never learned these great doctrinal truths but that having learned them they had forgotten what applying them would produce in their lives! In 2 Cor. 4 Paul writes of the fact we Christian’s are designed by God to be containers and as such we are to contain the “*Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor 4:6). Having declared this truth he goes on to speak of a remarkable fact that such a priceless treasure of the Glory of God as seen in Jesus has been placed in “*clay pots*”! Ordinary every day, fragile hardened dirt. Paul goes on to inform us “***Terracotta Pot’s***”

that **this was designed so that all other clay pots in the world will see that the value of mankind isn't in the pot but rather in Who it contains.** Finally in this same section Paul goes on to say that not only do we hardened dirt pots contain the greatest treasure there has ever been, but that God then allows our pot's to be "*hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted and struck down.*" Hey, wait a minute, if we are "*hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted and struck down*" **we will crack and break and what's in us will spill out and as a containers we will be in constant need to be refilled.** You got it! **We were by design of the Master called to contain Jesus and leak!** That is why in Romans 12:2 Paul tells his readers that being a living sacrifice involves the constant need to have our mind renewed. It never ceases to amaze me how I have no problem remembering worthless information but can't remember people's names. God knows this about our condition and repeats Himself to keep calling us back to reality. In 2 Peter 1:12 Peter wrote something similar saying, "*I plan to keep on reminding you of these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth.*"

2. Vs. 16a **A leader to follow:** The 2nd thing this Church need was someone they could look up to and follow as a pattern. Notice that Paul puts himself in that position as a servant that they could follow in being an offering that was acceptable. They could follow Paul's example of how to behave in certain situations. I'm so thankful that when you put things together that you can look at the box not just read the instructions, aren't you? **Paul was the picture on the box that they could look to in order to see how things ought to look like when assembled correctly.** It may sound a bit egotistical to suggest that to folks; "*Hey follow me if you want a pattern!*" But when you consider Paul's words in 1 Cor. 11:1 where he admonished them saying, "*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ*", then it

makes perfect sense. We all need someone to point us up to Jesus when we are kicking at the dirt as we tend to forget that Jesus is still the undefeated Champ and nothing or no one will ever be able to dislodge Him from the throne!

3. Vs. 16b **Sanctified by the Spirit**: The final thing this church lacked is the completed sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. This isn't a putdown we all lack this and will until we are seeing Jesus face to face. We can be busy with the Holy Spirit working THROUGH us, but the greater work is always the Holy Spirit's work IN us. Furthermore we can fall into the trap in our thinking that what the Holy Spirit is able to accomplish "through" us equals what He is accomplishing "in" us, but this isn't always the case. Because of the greatness and power of God, He is able to do amazing things through our lives but that has everything to do with Him and nothing to do with us. **It isn't the "gifts of the Spirit" that indicate the sanctification of the Spirit it is the "fruit of the Spirit" that does!**