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The Gospel Story: Proclaiming Christ

Romans 15:14-16:27

Pastor Bryan Clark

Right theology, rightly understood, will cause you to fall more deeply in love with Jesus and to love one another more sincerely. Let me say that again: Right theology, rightly understood, will cause you to fall more deeply in love with Jesus and to love one another more sincerely. If that's true, then it's only fitting that Paul would end his finest theological letter with a discussion about people because, at the end of the day, theology is about people. It's about people's relationship with God; it's about people's relationship with one another. If you have a Bible, turn with me to Romans, Chapter 15 and we'll go all the way to the end of the book and then next week we'll try to review the entire book—all sixteen chapters in one shot. (gasp) That's what I think too! But...(laughter)...we'll try! We pick it up in verse 14:

And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

(*NASB, Romans 15:14)

This is his summary of the Roman church—that they're filled with **goodness** which is a word that means *moral or ethical goodness*. He's saying, “I believe Jesus has changed you and that's what defines you as a church—that you have **all knowledge**, meaning you *understand the truth*; you know what's true.” And finally, **to admonish one another**, to *challenge one another, encourage one another* to live this way.

But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again... (Vs.15a)

I just want to highlight that. It's interesting in both the Old and New Testament how much emphasis there is on the need to be *reminded*. This is a concept that comes up over and over again. The Old Testament, a lot of it is around the feast and festivals and the activities. Even in the New Testament—in the new covenant—it's baptism; it's communion; it's the things that keep reminding us of what's true. I would suggest to you that a Christian that doesn't have a high value on corporate worship—in other words gathering together to worship—is a Christian that simply won't really experience freedom in Christ. And the reason is this: because we have a tendency to forget. There must be some reason why God, in both the Old and New Testament, says over and over again that we need to be reminded. Now maybe part of it is because we have a bad memory but I think mostly it's because we live in a fallen world and every day you are bombarded with hundreds of messages that simply aren't true. And unless there is some sort of rhythm, some sort of discipline in your life to be reminded what's true, what we believe, how we should live, those messages eventually wear you down. So Paul is saying, “You know this but you need to be reminded.” So when we gather to worship, we're reminding ourselves: This is what we believe; this is what's true; this is who God is; this is what He's done for us; this is how we should live—because apparently we need these consistent reminders.

...because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, (Vs. 15b-18)

Paul says it's on the basis of the **grace** of God that he has a calling and his calling is to the Gentiles. He's been called to be a servant or a minister of Jesus Christ. But then he uses a very unusual phrase; he refers to himself as a **priest**. Now he's using this as a metaphor—to understand this it's helpful—it's not Catholic Priest; it's Old Testament priest and, as an Old Testament priest, the priest would offer an offering to God—a sacrifice to God that was acceptable to God—in an act of worship. Paul is, in essence, saying his calling is to the Gentiles and, as God has used him to reach the Gentiles, he basically presents the Gentiles as an acceptable sacrifice to God in an act of worship. It's actually a beautiful way of understanding his calling. It would be a beautiful way of understanding our own calling. As we all work together, lives that were once far from God, people who were once enemies of God, become worshippers of God! That's our act of worship; that's our priestly duty as we offer that to God in an act of worship to Him.

It adds a little intensity when you understand that the Gentiles were forbidden to be in the presence of the temple. At Easter we talked about the temple and how it had the outer court and then had the holy place and then inside of that is the Holy of Holies. The Gentiles weren't even allowed in that outer courtyard—strictly forbidden. And part of the imagery of that was that they were separated from the presence of God. They couldn't get anywhere near God. If you want to get a sense of how intense that still was, even in this time period, read Acts 21. It's actually the story of when Paul gets to Jerusalem and he has a Gentile convert with him. He goes into that temple courtyard area—just the outside courtyard—and he creates such a mob scene that they're going to kill him for doing that. It gives a sense of how strongly they felt about this. So, it's very significant when Paul is saying that now in the new covenant, his act of worship is to take these Gentiles and to present them to God and to present them to God—acceptable to God—because of the work of Jesus. He says that this work has been accomplished *through* him.

Now the wording there is important to note. I think sometimes we refer to ourselves as *partnering with God*. As a matter of fact, I've probably used that language myself. But this text is a good reminder that's probably not the best terminology. It's not so much that we partner *with* God; it's that God works *through us*. We become an instrument of God, but God's the One doing the work; He just chooses to do it through us, that we might share in something that matters forever. And then he talks about **it results in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed**. **Word** is worship and **deed** is lifestyle. Now theologians often wrestle with: what are the most simple ways to describe what the church is about? And one of those ways down through the years has been to narrow everything that the church is about to two things: worship and witness. You'll hear a lot of theologians talk about that. It's about worship and witness; it's about the people of God gathering together. From Genesis to Revelation, one of the highest values is when the people of God gather to worship.

This is our worship; this is when we as the people of God remind ourselves this is who we are; this is what we're about; this is who God is, and this is why we live the way we live. It would be true to say that the mark of a true worshipper is not someone who knows all the lyrics of the songs; it's not someone who is emotionally stirred. It is someone who, out of worship, witnesses! In other words, you can't truly be in the presence of a God who gave His Son to save the world without being compelled to witness. So, a true worshipper is a worshipper that is compelled to witness. Why do we witness? Because there are people who don't yet worship. John Piper said it well, "Evangelism exists because worship doesn't." Evangelism is a means to an end. The ultimate end is worship. So, for now, the church is about worship; it's about witness. A true worshipper is compelled to witness. Why do we witness? Because people don't worship! And so we find people who are separated from God. They're enemies of God; they're in darkness and we explain to them the message of Jesus. We invite them to experience what has changed our life—and these people, who were once

enemies of God, become worshippers of God! They come in and worship and, then, they too are compelled to witness. As a matter of fact it makes what looks like a loop—which is, again, where we get our concept of a *People Loop*. We worship and we witness—but, it's important to remind ourselves, at the end of the day, witness goes away and we worship forever. That's why the worship is the highest of the values. It is what we as the people of God will do for all eternity. So he talks about: that's the outflow of his ministry. Verse 19:

...in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; but as it is written,

**“THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE,
AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.”** (Vs. 19-21)

So this is kind of a summary of his ministry. He was called to be a church planter; he was called to take the message of Jesus to the Gentiles. The area he describes is roughly fourteen hundred miles—so a significant area. But he feels like he has covered the area with the good news of Christ. He's planted churches all the way along through that area. Now, when he's talking about building **on another man's foundation**, he's just talking about his own calling. His calling was to take the message to unreached peoples. But most of us do build on somebody else's foundation—and in Corinthians Paul says that is a wonderful thing. We're all in this together. But, in his case, he's called to the Gentiles who are unreached—which sets the tone then for what's next. What's next in the life of Paul?

For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased *to do so*, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. (Vs. 22-29)

Now, if you remember back in Chapter 1, Paul said, “I long to come to see you”. Now we're in the last part of the book and he says it again. He feels like God is compelling him to go to Spain—a place of unreached Gentiles. So he's going to go to Spain by way of Rome, stop, spend some time with them, and move on. As a matter of fact he says there, “I hope you'll help me.” That word *help* is a word that has strong financial overtones. In other words he's saying that you'll financially support me in my missionary work to Spain. But, before he goes to Spain, he has one job he has to complete. Now we're familiar with this story because we've talked about it several times but always from the basis of 1 and 2 Corinthians. The Corinthians had an idea of taking up an offering to send it down to Jerusalem because the saints in Jerusalem were struggling to survive. So the other churches of Macedonia and Achaia thought this was a great idea, so together they collected an offering that was going to go down to Jerusalem to help the saints there. That's what Paul is talking about. The money has been collected and now it's his job to take the money down to Jerusalem to deliver it to them. Now you have to understand in the ancient world, travel was very difficult; it was very dangerous. It was also very dangerous to travel with large sums of money. The chance of

getting robbed along the way was pretty high. So Paul and whoever is with him are committed to getting this offering to Jerusalem. But what he's saying is, "This isn't just about the money." This is about the Gentiles saying that they love their Jewish brothers and sisters and they understand that the Messiah came from the Jewish people and they're indebted to them and they want to express their gratitude. In other words, they want to reach out to them with this love gift. And Paul is hopeful that the Jewish believers will understand that the Gentiles love them and appreciate them and that they will come together in unity. It's everything that he was talking about in the last two chapters—that this is part of the *Gospel Story*. And Paul says, "I am so committed to this that I personally am going to take this offering." He doesn't want to give it to some messenger who will show up and say, "Here, here's the money!" but rather he wants to emphasize what the money's about. This is about the Gentiles; this is about the churches; this is about their love for you and their commitment—that it would actually bring unity.

When he says, **put my seal on it**, what he's saying is he himself is going to see this through—that God would use this for the intended purpose. But it's important to understand that Paul's commitment both to these Gentiles who had given the gift and his Jewish brothers and sisters whom he loved would cost him two thousand extra miles in his journey. If he would have just given the gift to a messenger and gone on to Spain, it would have saved him two thousand miles. Understand, in a culture where travel was difficult, where travel was dangerous, this is a wonderful insight on the heart of Paul—that Paul wasn't just some ivory-tower theologian spouting theology. He had a beautiful heart for people. He loved these people. He loved the people who had given the gift. He loved his Jewish brothers and sisters and he had that level of commitment in order to see this thing through. Verse 30:

Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and *that* my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find *refreshing* rest in your company. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen. (Vs.30-33)

So he tells the church in Rome, "This is my plan." What he asks of them is that, "You would pray for me." First of all he says, "Pray for me for safety because of the enemies in Jerusalem," those who were disobedient. He's talking about the Judaizers, those that were neck deep in Jewish legalism, that frankly wanted Paul dead. It's staggering when you realize he was willing to travel two thousand extra miles just to fulfill his commitment, but even more so when you realize the risk that awaited him in Jerusalem. If you think he was exaggerating this, read Acts 21 and 22. It tells you the story of what actually happened when he got there, and what actually happened is: almost immediately there was a mob scene; there was chaos. They were going to kill him and so the Roman government grabbed Paul and arrested him, basically to save his life. They decided to scourge him just to quiet him down, viewing him as a trouble maker, and just literally moments before they scourged him, they found out he was a Roman citizen, and they backed off and they released him. But once they released him the mob almost killed him again, and other than the sovereignty of God, he never would have gotten out of there with his life. So if you think he's exaggerating, go back and read those two chapters and you realize his life was in danger in Jerusalem. But, again, his level of commitment to these people was so high he was willing to take that risk.

I think sometimes we think we're really laying it down when we sacrifice an hour or two a week for something related to our mission. But, realize the level of commitment that this guy had to the cause of Christ—even to the degree of laying down his life for the cause.

Second of all he says, “Pray that the mission would be successful, that my Jewish brothers and sisters would receive the gift, that they would understand that this comes from Gentiles who have been redeemed. They love you and they're indebted to you and let's bring the church together.” And then he basically says, “I hope to finish this and then come to Rome to spend a little time there, enjoy your company, rest up and then head to Spain.” Chapter 16:

Chapter 16 is one of those chapters that, if you're reading through in your daily Bible reading, you get to Chapter 16; you get a few verses into it and then you speed read to the end. And you wonder: why is a chapter like that even in the Bible?—because it's filled with very difficult names to pronounce—and I will demonstrate that for you in just a moment. (laughter) But, if you were here the Palm Sunday that we moved from the chapel into this auditorium, Easter Sunday was the first official week in this facility. But on Palm Sunday, halfway through the morning, we actually got up and moved over here and, of all the texts in the Bible that I could have chosen to speak from that morning, it was Romans, Chapter 16, because the reminder of Romans 16 is that, at the end of the day, it's all about people. Ministry is about people; theology is about people. It's about people loving Jesus more deeply; it's about people loving one another more deeply. If our theology and our ministry aren't ultimately about people, we've missed something, and so that's what this text is about. He says:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well. (16:1-2)

Now most think that Phoebe was a wealthy business woman. Paul is giving her a letter of commendation—commending her to them—which was fairly typical in that culture. “She's coming; take good care of her.” The word **help** there is the same one that Paul used—has financial overtones. Apparently she had been very generous toward the cause of Christ, and Paul is saying, “Hey, she is a sister in the Lord; take good care of her.” She's also referred to as **a servant of the church**. It's the Greek word from which we get the word *deacon*, in this case a *deaconess*. Most scholars think she held the office of a deaconess. I would agree with that; I think she is probably there on some official capacity. Verse 3:

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the *household* of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the *household* of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. (Vs. 3-16)

Now just a couple of observations: number one, those of you that are young couples still having children, here's a wonderful list of potential names! (laughter) Very helpful. Number two, when he refers to **apostles**, it's apostles small "a". This gets a little confusing, but that Greek word was actually a very common term. It meant, literally, *a sent one*. So, you have Apostles, capital "A", which is *The Twelve* and you have references to apostles who were what we would think today as missionaries, *sent ones*. Very similar you have Disciples, capital "D" which is *The Twelve* and you have disciples, followers of Christ. It's the same kind of a distinction.

One of the things that's interesting, when you go through the names, is the diversity. You can tell by the names there's both male and female; there's both Jew and Greek; there's both free and slave; there's certain names that were only common among the slaves. It's a wonderful snapshot of what Paul's been talking about. This is the church—male/female, rich/poor, Jew/Greek, slave/free—it's everybody together in Christ. It may not be striking to us but to a first century reader it would have been striking—the level of respect and honor and value that Paul was giving women. It just was not commonly done in a first century document. So the fact that he celebrates Phoebe and celebrates these women in this list is a real insight, again, into his heart and how progressive he was with his theology in a world that didn't see it the same way that God sees it.

I mentioned a couple of weeks ago about the value of a relationship inventory, asking yourself: who are the people I hang around with and what's the level of diversity in that? This is a wonderful example of that and what a wonderfully diverse list of people that Paul obviously knew and was addressing here. Verse 17:

Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. (17-20)

It's interesting that Paul waits till the end of the letter to talk about false teachers—most likely referring to the Judaizers—those who were going to try to come back with some additions to the message of the gospel: certain rules, certain religious things you had to do in order to experience God's salvation. He's basically saying, "These are people that confuse you and these are people who create stumbling blocks in pursuing your relationship with God, and we should stay away from them." Now what makes it difficult is, often times groups that don't really adhere to the Scriptures often use the same language. I think Paul's talking about the message of Romans, so let's just start there. Salvation by grace through faith—that's the core of the gospel story. So, if I was to say it's salvation by grace through faith, there are lots of denominations, there are lots of groups that would say, "We believe that!" They use the same language; it gets very confusing. Sometimes it's just a matter of how we are defining our terms—because we're not defining them the same way. One of the ways I've seen over the years that you get a really clear sense of what a denomination or a group believes is what happens when you choose to leave. This is suddenly when the truth comes front and center. Suddenly you start to find out the distinctives—and the distinctives that they will say are what make us unique—and what ultimately are necessary for salvation. And the final card is, if you leave our group, you can't be saved. At that moment they have revealed their hand. They do believe there is something more than salvation by grace through faith. You need them and you need their distinctives or you can't get in! And at that point there is clear evidence that they have gone beyond the message of the gospel. It's usually when you choose to leave that they finally reveal themselves.

It's also interesting that the text says that they operate by their **smooth and flattering speech**. These groups are very kind; they're very compelling; they're very helpful; they're very loving when they're in recruiting phase. But, decide to walk away and suddenly you're exposed to the dark side. It becomes very unkind; it becomes very unloving. As a matter of fact, you might find yourself shunned! And again, there's a revelation of what's really true deep down in this group or this organization.

He also talks about these false teachers not being slaves of Christ but **slaves of their own appetites**. How would something like that happen in a context like ours? I think it happens like this—and it does happen—you have someone who's a rather charismatic personality that slowly starts to disagree and very quietly and very subtly starts to make those disagreements known, and usually pursues those who are either new Christians or not very theologically savvy, who now are confused. Because, who's right? Is this church right? Is this person right? Now I'm confused as to what's true. That's what he's talking about. It's starting to create dissention; it's starting to create a roadblock to pursuing the truth. This person is very benevolent, just like it talks about here, with **flattering speech** and **smooth speech** as this person starts to really love on these people and starts to do things for these people and they basically become very loyal to this person. And little by little you have one charismatic person that now has quite a following, that is now out of step with the church. That's almost always how it happens. What the text says is, “We have to deal with it because this is potentially very destructive.” It's the responsibility of the leaders of the church to deal with movements like that before they lead vulnerable, young believers astray.

You might ask me the question: how important is that? Well, it would be captured in verse 20. I think he's making a reference to Genesis 3:15—*that the seed of a woman, which would be the Messiah, would ultimately be bruised on the heel, but would crush the head of the serpent*. So he's referring back to that. That statement all the way back in Genesis 3 and the statement here, are best understood as simply stating: At the end of the day, God wins! Why is it very important to be on God's team? Because at the end of the day, God's team wins—and His is the only team that wins! It's not about being a Berean or a Lutheran or a Baptist or a Catholic or anything else. It's about truth and it's about God's truth. And it's about being faithful to the truth, because at the end of the day, God is truth! And it's God's team that wins and that's what he's saying and that's why we deal with false teaching.

Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother. [The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.] (Vs. 21-24)

And now the Doxology of the book:

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, (or revealed) and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen (Vs. 25-17)

So, what's he saying there? **Now to Him**, which is God, **who is able**, that word **able** is the Greek word from which we get our word *dynamite*. The God who has the explosive power to do what? — To establish you. Maybe the best way to think about this in the context of Romans is everything we

claim to be true in Romans 8. That was kind of the culmination of the first 8 chapters. It's the God who has the power to make all of that true of you, based on the gospel story. So, according to the gospel—and what's front and center in the gospel story but the preaching of Jesus Christ—he says, “This is the story that for years has been unfolding: the gospel story is Genesis to Revelation.” It was a mystery and then it was revealed through the prophets and through the writers of Scriptures. Jesus, then, was the revelation, the fulfillment of God's promise, which moves to the third and final phase which is the make-known phase—*make known to the nations*. You might say there are three big phases in the gospel story. It was a mystery, and then it was revealed and fulfilled, and now it is the make-known phase or the proclaim phase. There are the people of God who lived through the mystery phase, people who lived through the revealing and fulfillment phase. We are the generation that lives in the make-known phase. We are the generation that lives in the proclamation phase. Our phase of the story is: the work has been done; God kept His promise; the Messiah has come; salvation is available. It is our job to make the message known to the nations. It's very important to understand there's been a baton pass from generation to generation and our baton pass—our leg of the journey—is to be proclaimers that the mystery's not a mystery anymore. The promise has been fulfilled, that this is salvation now found in Jesus! That's our responsibility; that's the last real phase of the story before Jesus returns!

He says at the end of verse 26, this leads to **obedience of faith**. Faith is believing; obedience is the outflow of that—that we would believe it to such a degree that we live it. And why do we do that? Ultimately, for God's glory. So that kind of sums up the whole book. If you were to ask me, “What is the one thing out of this entire study of Romans that we need to do,” my answer would be the same as what I've emphasized all the way through this study. The answer would be to *believe it!...to believe it to such a degree that we live it!* I started this series in September by saying over the years I've become convinced that we as Christians simply don't really believe what we say we believe! If we really believed it, our lives would reflect that. At the end of the day, everybody lives their belief system. If I want to know what you believe, all I have to do is look at how you live. What is the one thing that God asks of us? We don't have to do a bunch of religious activity; we don't have to do a bunch of religious works; we don't have to do any of that. The work has been done. God has already done it. He offers it as a gift of His grace. The one thing that He asks in return is that we just believe it—and we believe it to such a degree that we actually live that way to the glory of God! “*To God be the Glory for great things He has done!*”

Our Father, we're thankful that's true. Lord, we don't have to go out and do a bunch of religion and a bunch of stuff. We just need to believe, to have the courage and the faith to believe that You tell the truth, that what You've revealed to us in this Book of Romans is indeed true. Lord, that's my prayer for every single one of us, that we would believe this, that we would believe it to such a degree that we would live like it, that the world would see our witness, that others might become worshippers of the God who loves them and gave His son to redeem them. Lord, this I pray in Jesus' name.

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The Gospel Story: Proclaiming Christ

A Study of Romans

Romans 15:1-14-16:27

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. Has our study in Romans caused you to fall more deeply in love with Jesus and with one another? If yes, in what way? If not, why not?
2. Why do you think some people who have lots of Bible knowledge end up so arrogant and unkind to others? What's the core problem?
3. Can a true understanding of grace result in spiritual arrogance? Why or why not?
4. Most people tend toward one extreme or the other. Either they have a bent towards more knowledge but struggle to love people or a bent towards loving people but lack understanding of what's really true. Which way do you lean? What makes Paul the ultimate "Theologian/Pastor?"

Bible Study

1. Read Romans 15:14-21. How does Paul view his role to the Gentiles? Some have defined the two main responsibilities of the Church as Worship and Witness. Where do you see that in this text? How does this describe LBC's people loop?
2. What do we learn about our calling from these verses? In what way do we function as "priests" related to our calling to serve?
3. Read Romans 15:22-29. In what ways do you see Paul's level of commitment to people from this text? How does Paul's commitment to his calling compare with our "Christian Celebrity" culture today?

4. Read Romans 15:30-33. Compare Acts 21:15-22:30. The Acts account is what actually happened to Paul once he arrived in Jerusalem. How does this account affect your view of Paul's commitment to his calling? What do you learn from his example for fulfilling your own calling?
5. Read Acts 16:1-16. Why would Paul use up 16 verses in a book, that is characterized by an economy of language, on names? What does this text teach us about Paul and his heart?
6. What's the concern in Romans 16:17-20? How might this concern show up in churches today? What are some of the characteristics of these false teachers according to this text? How can we "keep your eye on those..." in our own context today?
7. Read Romans 16:25-27. Rewrite this paragraph in your own words. What is the primary responsibility of the church today? How do we do that?

Application

1. How does this final section of Romans capture and reveal Paul's heart? What do you learn from that? What one area of your life, based on this final section of Romans, would you like to grow in?
2. Who are some of the people you might list in the final chapter of your Epistle? Why?
3. Reviewing what Paul was willing to sacrifice for his calling, what is your level of commitment to your calling?