

Romans 21 - Stay on Mission

The theme throughout the book of Romans has been the relationship of the Law to this Age of Grace. To review:

- Chapters 1-8 deal with the role of the Law with respect to Salvation.
The function of the Law was to provide conviction of sin, not salvation. Grace does not give us permission to sin, so the Law continues to guide us in sanctification as we grow in grace.
- Chapters 9-11 answer the question about the role of the Jews, the people of the Law.
They are not displaced by the church, but the church is the outgrowth of the ministry of Israel to the world. Although much of Judaism has been set aside, God is not through with His people.
- Chapters 12-15 have been dealing with how we now walk in love in the spirit of the Law.
They cover our walk in the service of the Lord, our walk in the world, and our walk in the church. As we look at Romans 15, we are going to focus on the missionary aspect of our walk in the church. Since everything is related to the Law in Romans, Paul will make the point that the Jews' mission is the foundation of *our* mission.

1. The original mission -

- To the Jew first

In Rom 15:8-12, Paul introduces the topic of missions through the missionary call of the Jews. We have seen earlier in the first chapter how the Gospel was to the Jew first.

Rom 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Paul revisits this aspect of the Gospel in vs. 8..

Rom 15:8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers:

This gives us a sense of closure for the book of Romans and places the whole book not only in the context of the Law, but in the greater historical context of God's redemptive plan. He identifies how the promises of the Gospel had been made originally to the fathers: the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The historical context is that God created a nation to be His witness. Israel was not perfect in all of their ways, which is why they were set aside. They had not been established because they were greater in any way than any other people.

Deut 7:6-8 For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of

the earth.

7The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people:

8But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

God, by His grace had chosen them and sustained their righteous remnant instead of letting them become destroyed from the face of the earth in judgment. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of those promises. He came according to all that was in the Law.

Matt 5:17-18 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

18For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Luke 24:44-47 And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.

45Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

46And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Moreover, He came specifically as a minister to the circumcision (the Jews).

Matt 15:22-24 And, behold, a woman of Canaan [**specifically, a Syrophenician woman recorded by Mark**] came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

23But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

24But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matt 10:5-6 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

- And also to the Greek

Even though Jesus began the fulfillment of the promises to Israel because the promises had first been made to Israel, God's plan was to only *begin* with Israel. God used the Jews to literally create a paper trail to establish a record of testimony that the whole world might believe. Paul referred to the fact that the promises were made to the fathers, but in the next verses he singled out the objective

of the promises. The fulfillment of the promises would be how salvation would be brought to mankind in general.

This means that the mission of the Jews and Christ was not to set up an exclusive people but an *inclusive* people. By *inclusive* we do not mean how that is used to promote the normalizing of sin and perversity today. Inclusion means to bring people to salvation and righteousness through Christ. The Gospel mission of true Israel was supposed to reach out to the Gentiles. This was referred to back in chapters 9-11 and how they had lost sight of that due to the hardness of their hearts. The Jews were not supposed to be satisfied with maintaining a clique or a subculture in the world. Paul goes on to expound that mission.

Rom 15:9-12 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

10And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

11And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

12And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

We see this present in Jesus' ministry. We saw how though Jesus tested the woman's faith regarding His healing for her daughter, He did not deny her.

Matt 15:25-28 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

26But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* to dogs.

27And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

28Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Jesus sent the apostles first to the Jews, but remember that after the resurrection He told them repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). He also confirmed this just before His ascension in Acts 1.

Even the Jews, as a class, had rejected Him, the Gospel was for any who would believe.

John 1:11-12 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

Paul made four references to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Jews' mission.

In Romans 15:9, Paul referred to the heathen, or Gentiles, who would be included, from 2Sam 22.

2Sam 22:50 Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, **among** the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name.

In Romans 15:10, Paul referred back to Moses' song back in Deuteronomy:

Deut 32:43 Rejoice, O ye nations [**another word for Gentiles**], *with* his people [**the Jews**]: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, *and* to his people.

Moses foresaw how Israel would be judged for its rebellion, but in the end they would be redeemed. Their redemption would then have its effect on the nations, which refers to the Gentiles. According to Moses, the end of the mission of the Jews would be to include the Gentiles.

Then, in vs. 11, Paul referred to Psalm 117:

Ps 117:1-2 O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.
2For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD *endureth* for ever.
Praise ye the LORD.

The brevity of Psalm 117 brings the mission of the Jews into sharp focus. That mission was to all the nations, the Gentiles.

The third reference, in vs. 12, is from Isaiah and is even more direct:

Isa 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

The root out of Jesse is a reference to David, the son of Jesse, and then Jesus, the son of David, in His restoration of the Davidic Kingdom which was to include the Gentiles.

The original mission of the Jews would be fulfilled in reaching the Gentiles and the world.

2. Carrying the baton -

In ancient Greece, the relay race symbolized the role of messengers who would pass their information on in a relay. Where one runner might get worn out, a system of runners would ensure a message would arrive in a timely way. Important information would not be delayed by one runner having to make frequent stops to rest. Part of the success of a modern relay team is not just how fast the runners are, but how skillfully they can mesh together in passing the baton. In the next verses, Paul describes how he was doing his part to pass the baton of the Gospel in God's mission to the world. The Jews had received the baton of the Gospel, Paul carried it forward to pass it on to the Gentiles.

Rom 15:15-20 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

17I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

18For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

19Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from

Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.
20Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

Since Peter was the apostle to the Circumcision, or the Jews, he was the one who initiated the connection between Jews and Gentiles. After that, Peter ministered in the East where the Diaspora, the dispersed Jews, were heavily concentrated. Paul's ministry took him to Europe where he made a strong connection to the Gentile population.

The same spirit of missions is carried on in our day as missionaries reach out to create churches beyond our own mission fields into areas where there is either no or little Gospel outreach. As Paul said, "to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named."

To this day, we are still passing on the baton. We have got to always keep the mission mindset. We are sad to hear about churches closing down. One of the trends that we hear of is how pastors are getting older and retiring but there are no younger men rising up in ministry to replace them. Sometimes churches get older with no sense of mission and it is the whole church, not just a pastor, who has no one to replace them. To fulfill our sense of mission, we have to be sure to keep outreach as a focus of the church. However, we need more than that. We who are here must invest ourselves personally into the lives of the younger generation.

3. Stay on mission -

Paul next described his missionary plans.

Rom 15:21-33 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

22For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

23But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

24Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your *company*.

25But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

29And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

30Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me;

31That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;

32That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.
33Now the God of peace *be* with you all. Amen.

What is so very interesting about this passage is that Paul's mission didn't exactly unfold according to his expectations and intentions. He knew there was a possibility of difficulties when he would arrive in Jerusalem. He expected to minister to them on his way to Spain. What he did not know was how he was going to visit them, alright, but not the way he expected. He went to Rome by way of the discourtesy of the Jewish leadership as they took him to court. He made the actual trip on a ship by the courtesy of the Roman government as a prisoner. There is some hint that after Paul spent two years in Rome (Acts 28:30), according to Hippolytus he was acquitted and did go to Spain and was martyred by Nero later.

Acts 28:30-31 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,
31Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

I like to suggest that we should strive to be an Acts 29 church. Do turn in your Bible to Acts 29. What is notable about Acts 28 is that it ends the book of Acts so abruptly. It begs for an Acts 29. However, if there was an Acts 29, we would want and Acts 30. The point is that the book stops without an epilogue of any kind to let us know what happened. That is why I want to be an Acts 29 church...we are the continuing history of the church.

As you look at how things didn't go exactly according to Paul's plans, we can notice one thing for sure. Paul stayed on mission no matter what twists and turns they took. That is the way life is. We plan and work our plans. We work our plans and we face failures and successes. We can't get discouraged if things don't go how we imagined they would go when we first made our plans. We have to keep moving forward according to how God directs and redirects us. Even during the ministry of Paul, he was accustomed to God redirecting him.

Paul had, at one point, desired to move on to Asia minor. He eventually would end up there in Ephesus, but God had a detour that Paul had to figure out.

Acts 16:6-10 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,
7After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.
8And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.
9And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.
10And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

We might not know exactly what is next in our mission, but we can be sure it will have an eternal effect! We have to be willing to keep saying "Yes" to God no matter what He has planned for us.

4. What is your mission?

This brings us to God's call in your life. Do you have a mission and a purpose?

For some, their purpose is to make it to the next paycheck, the next promotion, the next amusement, and hopefully to a funded pension. Along the way, they keep discovering that there is some new expense, another loss of a job, or a debilitating sickness. In all of planning for life, do they have a plan for death? On one of the spam sales calls I decided to respond to with the Gospel. The caller plainly said he did not believe in an afterlife and hung up. What a miserable existence! You have a job as a spam caller and all you have to look forward to is oblivion.

What are *you* striving for? To bring some goodness into the world only so you can go to Hell because you deluded yourself that you were doing good but stayed stuck in rebellion? Today can be the day that you turn your heart over to Christ and join in the goodness of *God's* calling. Today you can ask Christ to take your sin and your life, to accept Him as your Savior.

If you are already a believer but you find yourself floundering, then your life can have a far greater meaning and mission. There is joy and purpose as long as we are on mission. Perhaps there is a step of commitment that you need to make and then stay on track with Christ. Perhaps you have been distracted and need to get back on track. Perhaps you are sidetracked because of some sin you are harboring in your heart. Or, perhaps you are on track and just want to give God the glory. This is a moment when you can present yourself to God and be fulfilling God's call in your life.

1. The original mission - Rom 1:16-17, 15:8, Deut 7:6-8, Matt 5:17-18, Luke 24:44-47, Matt 15:22-24, 10:5-6, Rom 15:9-12, Matt 15:25-28, John 1:11-12, 2Sam 22:50, Deut 32:43, Ps 117:1-2, Isa 11:10
2. Carrying the baton - Rom 15:15-20
3. Stay on mission - Rom 15:21-33, Acts 28:30-31, 16:6-10
4. What is your mission?