



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

ROMANS 9-16

Week 4

Practicing Mutual Support

Romans 14:19-23

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever found yourself offending another Christian by doing something that you thought was acceptable and permissible? How did you resolve the issue—or did you?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What two principles should rule Christian conduct in matters not essential to salvation (v. 19)?

2. What should every Christian be doing? What should every Christian be avoiding (vs. 20-21)?

3. How should your personal relationship with God determine your choices (vs. 22-23)? Should your conduct always be based on faith?

4. Ultimately, what is really important in the kingdom of God?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Based on this section, complete this sentence: The goal of Christian peace is _____.

2. How can one Christian's freedom negatively affect another Christian? For example, what upsets you?

3. Think of a group you belong to where there may be tension and conflict. How can you be the person who does "what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (v. 19)?

WINDOW
on the Word

*For additional background on the early Jewish Christian tension over **which foods to eat and which to avoid**, read Acts 15. At that Jerusalem council, among other decisions it reached, the Jewish church in Jerusalem asked the gentile church in Antioch not to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols.*

The Obligation of the Strong

DAY 23

Romans 15:1-6

“There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people,” said President George Bush at his inaugural address on January 20, 1989. Think of his words as you read today’s verses.

1. What is the obligation of the spiritually strong in their relationship with spiritually weaker neighbors (v. 1)? Why is this important in Christian circles (v. 2)?
2. How does Jesus provide the perfect example of this treatment (vs. 3-4)?
3. What virtues does God give to Christians?
4. How do we bring glory to God (v. 6)?

1. Apply the first verse to yourself. Have you been strong and supportive of someone weaker? Have you been weak and benefited from someone stronger?
2. Who is a neighbor you can encourage and build up? How do you plan to do this?
3. How do you know that God is at work in your Christian circle or your church? How does God’s activity in your group compare with verse 5?

*Verse 4 speaks of the Scriptures providing **hope**. The Bible gives hope by revealing that God is present in every circumstance of our lives, both the good and the bad.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

*“May the
God of
hope fill
you with
all joy and
peace as
you trust in
him, so
that you
may
overflow
with hope
by the
power of
the Holy
Spirit”*

Romans 15:13



The Inclusive Church

DAY 24

Romans 15:7-13

Some groups are open, inviting and welcoming, while others are closed, detached and rigid. If you were a stranger visiting your church, what words would best describe it?

1. What is Paul's opening command (v. 7)? What reason is given for this command?
2. How was Jesus a servant of Jews and gentiles alike (vs. 8-12; see Lk 22:24-30)?
3. What is the apostle's desire for Christians who read his letter (Ro 15:13)?

1. How well do you accept other people—especially those whose views differ from yours? Do you tend to be intolerant?
2. What actions and words in your life have brought praise to God?
3. Would you say your life is filled with God's joy, peace and hope? If the answer is no, what steps could be taken for you to experience those gifts from God?
4. If your church would be described as unfriendly and uninviting, what could be done to remedy the situation?

*Paul uses Old Testament statements to bring **hope** to Christians, both Jews and gentiles. God had made his intent known through the prophets, and Paul uses Psalms, Deuteronomy and Isaiah to support his point: Jesus has come so that Jews and gentiles may glorify God.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

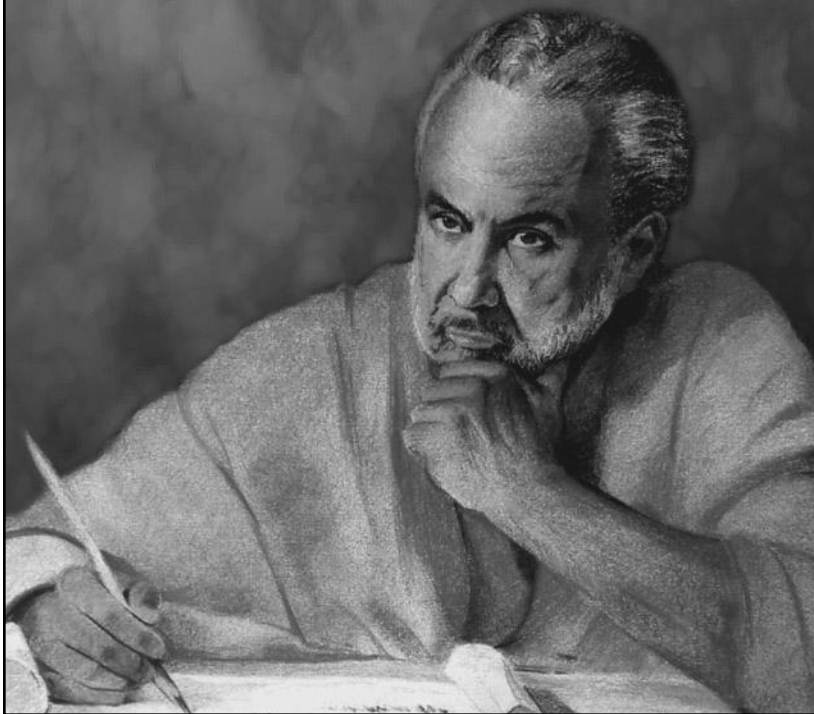
out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

“I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:15



Artwork by Richard Piña

“I Glory in Christ Jesus”

DAY 25

Romans 15:14-22

What are you really proud of about your Christian life? In what do you glory? In this passage, Paul explains his satisfaction and fulfillment in the ministry God had both given him and enabled him to perform.

1. How does Paul describe the mission Jesus had given him (vs. 14-16; see Ac 9:15)?
2. How does verse 16 parallel Paul's comments in Romans 12:1?
3. What is Paul's "glory" (v. 17)? How did he fulfill the mission given him (vs. 18-20)? What was the role of the Spirit?

1. Make a list of areas in your life that you have developed since becoming a Christian.
2. Paul clearly sees himself as an instrument in the hands of Christ. In what ways is your life being used by God?

Paul had not established the church in Rome, but he wanted to personally bring his message to them. He had already lived for 18 months in Corinth and about three years in Ephesus. He was careful to acknowledge that the foundation of the Roman church had already occurred—and that he needed to continue planting other churches until God enabled him to visit Rome.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

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on the Word

Requesting Prayer

Romans 15:23-33

OPENING
up to the Word

“Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you,” preached St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430). While Paul absolutely disagreed with Augustine in terms of any benefit his efforts might have on the salvation God granted him, do you think Paul was still a hard-working person as he proclaimed the gospel?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why is the apostle travelling? Now that the gospel has been planted throughout Asia Minor and Greece, what is Paul’s plan (vs. 23-25)?
2. How does Paul, apostle to the gentiles, feel about the Jewish believers at Jerusalem (vs. 25-27)?
3. Paul asks Roman Christians to pray for him. Does he sound frightened or merely concerned? Why would someone want to harm him? See Acts 21:27-33.

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have a look at your schedule over the last few weeks. What does it say about your priorities in life? How do they compare with the priorities listed by Paul for his life?
2. When you need prayer, whom do you ask to pray for you? Why that person?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Paul’s plan was to visit **Spain** (v. 28) because it was at the other end of the Roman world. He had a desire to bring Christianity to that great land.*

PRISCILLA

AND

AQUILA

Names: *Aquila* means “eagle.” *Priscilla* or *Prisca* “means “ancient.”

Background: Aquila was originally from Asia Minor, living in Pontus, on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Priscilla and Aquila lived in Rome, but were among the Jews expelled by Emperor Claudius. They later moved back to Rome after living in Corinth and Ephesus.

Family: Aquila may have been a Jewish freedman and Priscilla may have come from a wealthy Roman family. Interracial marriage was unusual in that day.

Occupation: Like Paul, they were tentmakers, producing portable shelters for living, working and traveling.

Known today for: Explaining the way of God to Apollos the orator (Ac 18:26). They also assisted in planting at least three congregations—those in Rome, Corinth and Ephesus.

The Prominent Role of Women

Romans 16:1-16

OPENING
up to the Word

What is your attitude toward women? Do you feel they should be ordained? Do you feel women should be accepted as spiritual leaders?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Go over Paul's list of people whom he commends. How many women? How many men?
2. Why is Phoebe especially commended by the apostle (vs. 1-2)?
3. What contributions did these people make to the life of Paul. Who were Paul's prison mates? His friends? His co-workers?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Write a list of people who have been helpful to you. Then, consider sending them a note expressing your gratitude and explaining how they helped you.
2. Perhaps you have not been in prison like Paul, but who have been some companions with you in your suffering?
3. Who has been like a mother (v. 13) to you? Consider ways you can pass on that kindness to another person.

WINDOW
on the Word

*From the opening verses it is clear that some women played prominent roles in the early church. **Phoebe** (v. 1) was a leader of the church at Cenchræa, a harbor village near Corinth. Scholars speculate that Paul asked her to carry his letter to Rome. **Junius** (v. 7), mentioned as "outstanding among the apostles," is often considered to be a feminine name, though that is sometimes debated.*

FEMALE COWORKERS



Artwork by Dan Andreasen

During Paul's journeys around the Mediterranean, many believers helped him spread the gospel. A lot of these laborers were women, several of whom are listed in Romans 16.

Some of these women had intervened to save Paul's life. In several of his letters he lists their names and expresses his gratitude to them. Here are some of the women mentioned:

APPHIA
EUODIA
LYDIA
MARY OF ROME
PERSIS
PHOEBE
PRISCILLA
SYNTYCHE
TRYPHENA
TRYPHOSA

PHILEMON 2
PHILIPPIANS 4:2-3
ACTS 16:13-40
ROMANS 16:6
ROMANS 16:12
ROMANS 16:1-2
ROMANS 16:3
PHILIPPIANS 4:2-3
ROMANS 16:12
ROMANS 16:12

The Home as a Center of Fellowship

Romans 16:3-4

OPENING
up to the Word

Priscilla and Aquila are remarkable personalities in the New Testament. Although not much is known about them, this is certain: they moved a great deal but wherever they settled, their home became a center of Christian fellowship.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. We meet Priscilla and Aquila in several New Testament passages, beginning in Acts 18:2. Where did Paul meet them and what did they have in common with him?
2. Where did Paul then take them (Ac 18:18)?
3. In Ephesus, how did they help the Jewish Christian Apollos (Ac 18:24-26)?
4. After Apollos had left Ephesus, Paul returned to the city (Ac 19:1). Would he have found Aquila and Priscilla there?
5. We read that Paul later addresses the couple as part of the Roman church. Why is the apostle grateful to these two people (Ro 16:3-4)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Is there a married couple from your past for whom you feel a special affection and gratitude?
2. Who would you identify as *fellow workers* with you in Christ?

WINDOW
on the Word

***Claudius** was emperor of the Roman empire from A.D. 41 to 54. In A.D. 49 an uproar came from the Jewish quarter in Rome over someone named Chrestus. Many scholars feel this was another name for Christ. Claudius, who saw little difference between synagogue Jews and Jewish Christians, required all Jews to leave Rome. Among them were Priscilla and Aquila (Ac 18:2). Besides the passages cited above, Paul mentions this couple in 1 Corinthians 16:19 and 2 Timothy 4:19.*

Helpful and Faithful Friends

Romans 16:17-24

“Friendships multiply joys and divide griefs,” observed Thomas Fuller (1654-1734). Was that true for the apostle Paul?

1. What blunt advice is offered here (vs. 17-18)? Why is this good advice? What is wrong with the people Paul warns against?

2. What words of encouragement does Paul offer his readers (vs. 19-20)? Why is experience not always the best teacher?

1. What kinds of people should you keep a healthy distance from?

2. Assume you are writing a letter to a distant friend describing Christ-followers you know. Who are some of the people you might mention as faithful servants of God? What is it about them that impresses you?

DAY 29

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

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Wisdom QUOTES

**"WISDOM IS A GOOD PURCHASE
THOUGH WE PAY DEARLY FOR IT."**

Proverb

**"THE INTELLECT OF THE WISE IS LIKE GLASS; IT
ADMITS THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN AND REFLECTS IT."**

Augustus John Cuthbert Hare (1834-1903)

**"THE ART OF BEING WISE IS THE ART
OF KNOWING WHAT TO OVERLOOK."**

William James (1842-1910)

**"IF A MAN EMPTIES HIS PURSE INTO HIS HEAD, NO
ONE CAN TAKE IT FROM HIM."**

Benjamin Franklin

**"THOUGH A MAN BE WISE, IT IS NO
SHAME FOR HIM TO LIVE AND LEARN."**

Sophocles

**"ONLY A FOOL TESTS THE DEPTH OF THE WATER
WITH BOTH FEET."**

African Proverb

**"THE MAN WHO HAS
UNDERSTANDING HAS EVERYTHING."**

Jewish Proverb

Romans 16:25-27

How do you feel when someone praises you? How do you feel when you praise others? Are you stingy or gracious with your praise—a Scrooge or a saint?

1. How does the book of Romans reveal the “mystery hidden for long ages past” (v. 25)?
2. As stated by the prophets, then by Jesus and now by Paul, how does the Eternal God want nations to respond to him (v. 26)?
3. How does Paul see that Christians can glorify the “only wise God” (v. 27; see also 15:14-17)?

1. Briefly—in four sentences or less—write the mystery of the gospel message.
2. Paul ends with this benediction to the only wise God. As a final exercise, write your own benediction to God.

*The book of Romans ends with a **benediction**—a praise to God. In Paul’s version, he feels blessed to have been able to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. How powerfully he has done that in this book!*

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