



ROMANS

Lesson 14: The Marks of a Healthy Church

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Paul describes the marks of a healthy church body then explains why his trip to Rome was delayed. He commends specific individuals who have worked especially hard to keep this church healthy and growing. Finally, he sends greetings from fellow Christians who knew many believers in this church. Tertius, Paul's amanuensis, sends his greetings too.

A. MAIN IDEA

These last two chapters in the book of Romans present a picture of what a healthy church looks like and the impressive results that come from a mutually caring body of believers.

B. CENTRAL QUESTION

What does a healthy church look like, and how should a church deal with divisive individuals?

C. ROMANS CHAPTERS 15 & 16 (NLT)

THE MARKS OF A STRONG FELLOWSHIP WITHIN THE CHURCH (15:1-13)

Mark No. 1: The strong bear the weaknesses of the weak (15:1-3)

We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. ² We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. ³ For even Christ didn't live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, "The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me."

Mark No. 2: A strong desire to study the Bible (15:4)

⁴ Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.

Mark No. 3: There is harmony in the church (15:5-6)

⁵ May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete

harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. ⁶ Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark No. 4: Believers accept each other without discrimination (15:7-12)

⁷ Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. ⁸ Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. ⁹ He also came so that the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote: "For this, I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing praises to your name." ¹⁰ And in another place it is written, "Rejoice with his people, you Gentiles." ¹¹ And yet again, "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles. Praise him, all you people of the earth." ¹² And in another place Isaiah said, "The heir to David's throne will come, and he will rule over the Gentiles. They will place their hope on him."

Mark No. 5: Everyone is filled by the God of hope (15:13)

¹³ I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE MESSENGER OF GOD AND HIS PLANS (15:14--16:27)

The minister or minister of God (15:14-21)

¹⁴ I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them. ¹⁵ Even so, I have been bold enough to write about some of these points, knowing that all you need is this reminder. For by God's grace, ¹⁶ I am a special messenger from Christ Jesus to you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News so that I might present you as an acceptable offering to God, made holy by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷ So I have reason to be enthusiastic about all Christ Jesus has done through me in my service to God. ¹⁸ Yet I dare not boast about anything except what Christ has done through me, bringing the Gentiles to God by my message and by the way I worked among them. ¹⁹ They were convinced by the power of miraculous signs and wonders and by the power of God's Spirit. In this way, I have fully presented the Good News of Christ from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum. ²⁰ My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard, rather than where a church has already been started by someone else. ²¹ I have been following the plan spoken of in the Scriptures, where it says, "Those who have never been told about him will see, and those who have never heard of him will understand."

The messenger and his ministry (15:22-33)

²² In fact, my visit to you has been delayed so long because I have been preaching in these places. ²³ But now I have finished my work in these regions, and after all these long years of waiting, I am eager to visit you. ²⁴ I am planning to go to Spain, and when

I do, I will stop off in Rome. And after I have enjoyed your fellowship for a little while, you can provide for my journey. ²⁵ But before I come, I must go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the believers there. ²⁶ For you see, the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have eagerly taken up an offering for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the spiritual blessings of the Good News from the believers in Jerusalem, they feel the least they can do in return is to help them financially. ²⁸ As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will come to see you on my way to Spain. ²⁹ And I am sure that when I come, Christ will richly bless our time together. ³⁰ Dear brothers and sisters, I urge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to join in my struggle by praying to God for me. Do this because of your love for me, given to you by the Holy Spirit. ³¹ Pray that I will be rescued from those in Judea who refuse to obey God. Pray also that the believers there will be willing to accept the donation I am taking to Jerusalem. ³² Then, by the will of God, I will be able to come to you with a joyful heart, and we will be an encouragement to each other. ³³ And now may God, who gives us his peace, be with you all. Amen.

Commendations to these strong believers in Rome (16:1-16)

Romans 16:1 *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. ² Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me. ³ Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. ⁴ In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches. ⁵ Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home. Greet my dear friend Epenetus. He was the first person from the province of Asia to become a follower of Christ. ⁶ Give my greetings to Mary, who has worked so hard for your benefit. ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did. ⁸ Greet Ampliatius, my dear friend in the Lord. ⁹ Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. ¹⁰ Greet Apelles, a good man whom Christ approves. And give my greetings to the believers from the household of Aristobulus. ¹¹ Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet the Lord's people from the household of Narcissus. ¹² Give my greetings to Tryphena and Tryphosa, the Lord's workers, and to dear Persis, who has worked so hard for the Lord. ¹³ Greet Rufus, whom the Lord picked out to be his very own; and also his dear mother, who has been a mother to me. ¹⁴ Give my greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters who meet with them. ¹⁵ Give my greetings to Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas and all the believers who meet with them. ¹⁶ Greet each other in Christian love. All the churches of Christ send you their greetings.*

The messenger's final warning: mark divisive people (16:17-20)

¹⁷ *And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them. ¹⁸ Such people are not serving Christ our Lord;*

4. How has this study in the book of Romans impacted your growth as a believer in Jesus Christ?

5. Looking ahead to 2024, what books of the Bible, or topics, would you like to study?

E. SUMMARY

The book of Romans provided us with a concise summary of the Gospel. In its initial chapters, Paul focused on doctrine, that is, on the pillars of truth that we know about ourselves and about God. The last five chapters focused more on advice and encouragement for how to live out of this knowledge. Through this book, Paul has invited us to ask whether our daily lives reflect our faith in Jesus. Are we following Him, uplifting and supporting others?

No matter where we find ourselves, Paul assures us that thanks to God's righteousness there is reason for hope. He boldly declares in Romans 8:38, "And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love."

Sources used in this study

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