

## Romans 15:14-33

“Some Personal Plans”

As we approach Vs 14 of Ch 15 we enter into what we might consider the final phase of the book of Romans. As we've discussed in the past the book is broken down into 2 major divisions the 1<sup>st</sup> being doctrinal, the 2<sup>nd</sup> dealing with duty. and Those who like to break it down a bit more speak of Ch's 9-11 as being dispensational, how God *dealt* with Israel, turned then *from* Israel, but will ultimately return to His dealings *with* Israel when the fullness the Gentiles has come into fruition. But to keep it basic we have doctrine and we have duty. and As we've mentioned over and over it's essential that it be that way because what I do isn't nearly as essential as *why* I do it, the motive behind my actions. and So Paul spent the majority of his writing developing who God is, what He's done, what we have *in* Him, who we are *before* Him. and Once we have a right relationship with God, proper perspective *of* God, then we're able to rightly respond *to* God. Not out of a sense of legalism, or religious regimen for the sake of righteousness, but out of an overflow of love *for* Him, I give all that I am *to* Him, dedicate my life to be used *by* Him. and That's been the break down thus far, Paul has developed various *principles*, and then beginning in Ch 12 he begins to instruct us as to how that demonstrates itself, and how those things are to spill out of my life in the *practical*. and Though in the broad picture we could still classify Vs 14 and following of Ch 15 as practical, Paul really begins now to move into the *personal* as he is winding down his writing.

So he began with principle, moved into the practical, and now that he's coming to a close he begins to get personal. That is, he begins to share a little about himself, what his plans are, what he's purposing to do, what his priority is, his perspective on certain matters. and In this section we see Paul the priest; Paul the preacher, Paul the pioneer, and Paul the man of prayer. Notice.

### Vs14-16

Did you see how effortlessly the triune God has been woven into Vs 16? Paul speaks of himself as a minister of *Jesus Christ*, ministering the gospel *of God*, that the Gentiles might be acceptable-that is, sanctified by the *Holy Spirit*. Now don't ask me to explain it, or make common logic of it, but from the 1<sup>st</sup> page of your bible throughout the totality of the Word of God we see the reality of the trinity. 1 God represented distinctly in 3 persons. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit, I suppose one of the most powerful portraits is pictured for us at the baptism of Jesus Christ There J.B. was baptizing people in droves preaching repentance, preparing them for the coming of the Lord, and we read in Luke's gospel, "...it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.'" Luke 3:21-22 and So there you have Jesus being baptized, the Spirit like a dove alighting upon Him, and the Father speaking out from heaven saying, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

Now you can say what you like, there's just no denying the reality of what happened there, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit all represented distinctly, separately at one time. and Of course Jesus spoke all the time of the Father, yet He breathed on His disciples and told them to receive the Spirit, He spoke of the Helper, the Holy Spirit that He would send to them which we seen in Acts Ch 2. Yet the bible is clear, *"Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other."* Deut 4:39 We read in Isaiah, *"Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.'" and Again, "Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,"* Isa 46:9

Remember Paul told Timothy that there was only 1 God and 1 mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. But the bible is equally clear that the Father is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, so what gives, it doesn't add up? The problem is that addition has nothing to do with it, because it's true that  $1+1+1=3$ , but it's equally true that  $1*1*1=1$ . and That's the language that *Jesus* spoke, what did He say? *"I and My Father are one."* John 10:30 and There are other things that people try to share to help us rationalize it, we being an inferior trinity in that we're spirit, mind, and body, yet still 1 person, and that's probably about the best illustration I've heard, but every illustration breaks down. The bottom line is that we were never asked to comprehend the fullness of God, because we can't. We were simply asked to believe the reality of what He states in His Word, so we take it on faith, 1 God, 3 persons, The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

But back in Vs 14 we take note of Paul's tender touch in how he rounds off this practical portion of his letter to the Romans. He says, (Read) or another way to understand that is that Paul is saying, "I realize that you don't need me to tell you what's right." Because as you read Ch's 12- where we're at today you'll see that Paul pulled no punches. He's in essence said, "Hey, God needs to be your priority, you should be living your life as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, it's your reasonable service. Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you might walk in the perfect will of God. He's told us that God has gifted each and every one of us by His Spirit and that we're to be about the business of ministering to one another in the gifting that God has entrusted to us. When someone rubs you wrong, don't repay evil for evil, have regard for good things in the sight of all men, submit to the government, pay your taxes , cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

Then when he got to Ch's 14 through where we're at today in Ch 15 he really let go, and administered a pretty hard pill to swallow speaking to both the weak and the strong in the faith. Their respective roles towards one another, now what constitutes weakness? Paul would say, "If you think that it's sin for a brother or a sister to act out in a way, or be apart of an event that the scriptures neither command or condemn you're weak." He used diets and days of the year for his example, we spoke of culturally relevant church taboos such as dress code, hairstyle, tattoos, music style, piercings, movies, and on and on the list could go.

But the idea is that whether you think those things are for you or not is irrelevant, I don't have any tattoos, don't dress on the cutting edge. The point is do I see those things as sin, or as detrimental to someone's standing before God? If I do, I've got some growing to do in that area, if I don't praise the Lord, you can take it or leave it. and The exhortation has been that if you struggle with a person's liberty don't judge them because God has received them.

If you choose to walk in that liberty, don't show contempt for your brother or sister who struggles with it, God has received *them*. The kingdom of God isn't diets, or days of the year, the clothes we wear, or the style of our hair, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Which is to say we're to focus *not* on externals, but on *eternals*, the bible is clear, "...*the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*" 1 Sam 16:7 So we're to receive one another *just as Christ received us* to the Glory of God, graciously, joyfully, whole heartedly, with every fault and frailty. and We come together on the common ground of praise because God is worthy of all that we are.

But as we get here to Vs 14 Paul says, "Listen, I'm confident that you yourselves are full of goodness," referring to the fact that they're not going to be all self seeking, but they'll do the right thing, they'll be considerate of one another, uphold and encourage one another.

"That you're filled with all knowledge," meaning not that they know all there is to know about everything in the absolute sense, but that when it comes to the gospel message, they understand it, they've got a grip on the full scope of Christianity. "and Able also to admonish one another." That is, able to counsel and correct one another.

So Paul is wanting them to know that even though he's written some pretty heavy things, in what might even seem to be a blunt and straightforward tone, it's not because he thinks that they're ill informed, or immature. To the contrary he says that he believes that they're *well informed and spiritually mature*.

So then what's the deal, what gives, why say and share these things if you think we're already aware of them? In Vs 15 Paul tells us. He says that he's written more boldly on some of these points, "as reminding you." The bible is big on the fact that we have a need as humanity to often times be *reminded* when it comes to the various principles of the Word of God and how they're to evidence themselves in the practical. After admonishing Timothy to hold fast to sound doctrine, how we need to run and finish well the race that was before him, Paul told him, "*Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.*" 2 Tim 2:14 He told Titus, "*Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.*" Titus 3:1-2 In Peter's 2<sup>nd</sup> epistle he said, "*I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.*" 2 Peter 1:12

Now don't misunderstand me there are all sorts of pitfalls and snares along the narrow road of the Christian life and experience, but 2 of the more subtle dangers are #1 Familiarity,

and #2 Forgetfulness. Isn't it amazing the way we tend to remember things we wish we could forget, but forget the things we wish we could remember? No doubt in part that's due to the fact that we have an enemy who's constantly hurling firebrands of condemnation at us, reminding us of our failures/faults and all of that. But then at the same time he's seeking to constantly snatch the seed of the Word of God out of our hearts and minds.

So we need to be consistently reminded of things, no doubt as we grow we glean 1<sup>st</sup> time insight with regard to various matters of the Christian faith. But more than not it's not that we didn't know it, but that we've grown overly familiar *with* it, or have slowly forgotten *about* it, so we need to be reminded *of* it; and not just in a way that makes us go, "Oh yeah I remember that," but that convicts us to reinstate that principle, or that precept into our walk and relationship with Jesus Christ and our bros and sisters around us. We need the truth of God's Word refreshed, and reinforced in our lives. Paul says, "That's why I'm saying these things, and sharing these things."

Besides it was his calling as the apostle to the Gentiles, that was the grace that God had given him. To be (as Vs 16 says) a *minister* of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, *ministering* the gospel (or good news) of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We spoke in our introduction of Paul *the priest*, when he speaks of himself as a "minister" here, it's not the common word for minister that's often translated simply "servant." But it's used most often in the NT to describe those who serve God in some form of public worship. It described J.B. dad Zacharias in his Levitical priesthood in Luke 1:23, we see this word in Philippians and in Hebrews in conjunction with the same basic meaning. and I don't want you to misunderstand me we know that the priesthood under the earthly institution of the old covenant has been done away with. Jesus Christ is our eternal high Priest, and the only mediator between God and man. But Paul is speaking figuratively here in the way that the bible tells us that we're all to serve as king's and priests unto our God.

What Paul is basically saying is that even as under the Old Covenant the priesthood was busy about various temple rites, preparing and presenting offerings to God. So to under the New Covenant his "priestly service" is found in sharing the gospel and as the Gentiles receive it they're sanctified as by the Holy Spirit making them an acceptable offering to God. Let me put it to you another way. Paul sees himself as preparing the Gentiles to be an acceptable offering to God through the preaching of the gospel, and as they hear it, respond positively *to* it, they're sanctified by the Holy Spirit and he then can offer them up, commending them to God.

It's no different than what you do, or what I do today, the ministry is a sacred service, when you share the gospel with someone you are ministering to them, should they receive it they then become acceptable *before* the Lord and so then you present them, that is offer them *to* the Lord. They're not yours, they're not mine, they belong to the Lord, so we give them, that is offer them to Him.

We've spoken of Paul the priest, here's Paul the preacher. But we've got to draw attention to a couple of things here real quick. #1 Notice he glories *not in himself* (Vs 17) but in Christ Jesus, in the things which pertain to God. and #2 Along with that he therefore refuses to speak of himself, or his own personal accomplishments (he told the Philippians that he counted all that a wash for excellency of knowing Christ) but he would only speak of those things which *Christ* accomplished through him. Or to understand that another way, he realized that when it comes to matters of eternity we can do nothing in and of ourselves. Jesus said, "*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*" John 15:5 There is nothing of eternal value accomplished in or through me apart from Christ, but we also understand that as Paul said, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" Phil 4:13 and Paul is here saying, "That's where it's at. I won't dare to speak of any of those things Christ has not accomplished through me." and Notice the 2 categories #1 In Word, and #2 In deed, and this is where it gets right up close and personal for you and me, because so often what can happen is that I can boast of the work of Christ, the accomplishments of Christ, and then turn right around and discredit all of it by the way that I speak, or the attitude I take, or the deeds that I do. The way I lead my life doesn't match the things which I boast in regarding Christ, my walk don't match my talk and so my message is discredited.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9 Paul spoke of how he subjected his flesh to godly discipline lest having preached to others he himself should become disqualified. and That's the general gist here, Paul is saying that not only is his witness and the validity of Christ in his life in word, but in deed, and the deeds that were done through him were at times radical. Mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the same way that God shows His work in your life, (Mighty signs and wonders? Perhaps, but more specifically) by the power of the Holy Spirit. It's the Spirit's work *in* you that will make the work and word of God real to others *through* you. and Paul says here that through the power of the Holy Spirit he's been able to preach the gospel of Christ fully from Jerusalem, round about to Illyricum. Which pretty much encompassed the eastern most reaches of the Roman empire, a span of about 1,400 or so miles; (Quick side note, in Vs 16 he calls it the gospel of God, here he calls it the gospel of Christ which again calls attention to the unity and deity of Christ as one with the Father, same message).

Vs20-24

Paul the *pioneer*. He says in Vs 20, "I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation." and It's not that it's wrong to preach the gospel where it's already gone, he told the Corinthians, "I planted, Apollos watered."

Apollos had come along and watered the seed that had been planted through the apostle and then God gave the increase, but Paul felt called to a pioneering type ministry taking the gospel to otherwise uncharted territories as it pertains to the message of Jesus Christ and Him

crucified. and There were just so many areas of untapped opportunity that he didn't feel a release to head west until he'd preached in just about every major metropolitan that he could get to in the North East. and He'd plant churches that could permeate out from there. and He says that that's why he's been unable to come to them thus far, because he's still had places to pioneer in the east, but now that he's covered a span of around 1,400 miles that direction he wants to head North West, go through Rome on his way to Spain and continue to pioneer new frontiers with the gospel.

#### Vs 25-27

Generally it's the home church that contributes to missions, here it's the church plants of the missionary (Paul) that are contributing to the home church in Jerusalem. There was some radical poverty going on in Jerusalem at this time, due to famine and persecution, but what I want you to notice is that not only was it their duty, but that it *pleased* them to make the contribution. and What I'm trying to get across is the fact that just because it was necessary, that didn't make it a cumbersome obligation, it pleased them to have the opportunity. 1<sup>st</sup> of all what made it their duty? Paul recognized a debt that was owed by the Gentile churches to the Jews in that God gave us the scriptures through the Jews, sent His Son to be the Savior of the world through the Jews, we're just eternally indebted to the work that God has done through the Jews.

So it was a small thing that having invested into the Gentiles spiritual things, that the Gentiles would invest into their Jewish brethren material things. It's just a general rule found in the scriptures that when we're ministered to spiritually, that we do well to get behind the work from which we're fed (or for that matter any other missions or godly organization that God places on our hearts) materially. Paul told the Galatians, "*Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.*" Gal 6:6 Of course he told the Corinthians that having sown spiritual things *for* them, that it shouldn't be a big thing if they reaped material things *from* them. Now I realize that many have fleeced the flock and done great damage to the name of Christ through these types of things, but I can't belittle, or make less of what God's Word says just because some have perverted it for self centered reasons and selfish gain. It shouldn't be a big deal, or a begrudging matter to support materially, the work that invests into our lives spiritually. and If it is a begrudging thing, than don't do it, wait till you have give willingly from the heart as unto the Lord because God loves a cheerful giver. Notice Vs 28

#### Vs28

You see it's not about the loot, it's about the fruit. Remember when Paul was writing to the Philippians about the support they had given him financially, and he said, "*Not that I seek*

*the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.*” Phil 4:17 You see you may not be able to be apart of the ministry *physically*, or go on mission trips *specifically*, but the bible teaches that when you support that work, or that mission *financially* (out of a right on heart before the Lord meaning not begrudgingly or out of necessity) that you reap the same fruit as if you’d gone there, or been apart of that *personally*. That those who guard the supply lines, prayerfully, or are apart of a work by supporting it materially, they’ll gain the same reward as those on the frontlines personally. (1<sup>st</sup> Sam 30) So you should know that when you support missions it’s going a lot farther than simply paying someone’s bills, or providing for them physically, it’s reaping rewards for you spiritually, eternally. As a fellowship there are a # of missions that we support as the Lord leads us to.

You’re familiar with our brother Bernard in Nigeria, out there on the frontlines, we support him somewhat personally, helping with his personal needs medically, but then also needs of his fellowship, getting bibles for them, we’ve secured P.A. for them, various projects that need done. In our last trip there a few years ago God provided for us to drill a fresh well for them there at the church in Agbor as well as other construction projects in the city. We’ll contribute to Samaritans purse occasionally, or Safe Harbor, G.F.A. as God leads we’ll support Souls harbor here locally, salvation army, and there are some other things, of course we have our own inner city out reach through our own labor of love that ministers every week, we’re able to support the entire tower fee that feeds our community CSN 24/7. and As you and I take part in supporting what God is doing here, you’re inadvertently, perhaps not even knowingly reaping fruit from all of those other things as well, not to mention just the on goings of the ministry practically.

So Paul says, “I’m going to secure this fruit to them, the I’ll come by you on my way to Spain. You see, he had plans, purpose, priorities, but yet in the midst of it all he was flexible, if the Lord wanted to do something else, or take him in a different direction he was open to it. It’s wise to have goals, pray it over, make your plans, and work towards them, you’ve heard that the person who aims at nothing will hit it every time. Wisdom dictates that we should seek the Lord, have short term/long term plans and purpose, then proceed accordingly, allowing the Lord free reign to realign them as He should so choose.

Vs29-32

You see this is his plan, what he’s purposed to do, but he wants to remain *in* the will of God, he wants to come to them *by* the will of God. So he asks for their prayers, and again if the apostle Paul seen the need for prayer on his behalf, how much more do you and I need one another’s prayers?

This word translated, “Strive together with me” agonizing together, he’s calling on them to pray passionately together with him, to partner with him in prayer. It’s the same root word that described Jesus’ anguished prayer in the garden that He asked His disciples to join Him in

and they failed, leaving Him to struggle alone. Pastors, preachers, ministers, desperately need the prayer support of their flock, it's desperately needed and thoroughly appreciated. Never underestimate the power of prayer, and I would beg you that you would strive together with *me*, in prayers to God *for* me, and I'll pray for you.

Paul prayed for deliverance from the unbelieving Jews, knowing that as He preached the Word of God it so often brought on feelings of hostility from the hearers who would reject it. He said pray for my deliverance in that capacity, my acceptance in my service to the saints (the gift he was bringing) and that I might come to you by the will of God. and He would, not in the way he thought (he'd be bound in chains, and brought by Roman soldiers) but he would come to them by the will of God. In jail there in Jerusalem God told him that he would testify of Him in Rome. So some personal plans of Paul, let me encourage you to seek the Lord, let Him lead you and guide you, that you might have proper perspective, proper priorities, and be purposed about His plan for your life.

Vs33

Prayer Points: God we want to be sensitive to Your direction for our lives, pursuing Your plan, being led by Your peace, yet remaining open to Your changing of our direction at any time. Teach us what it means to strive together in prayer, and Lord that we wouldn't discredit the message that we share by the actions that we show or the words that we say... Thank You that You're faithfulness to refresh us in those areas we seem to be in such need of being reminded, thank You for you're your goodness, Your grace, and Your compassion.

If you've never given your heart to Christ you need to know that God's peace won't be with you until you've made peace with God. and Peace with God is found through the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed upon the cross, Jesus was crucified for our transgression and raised for our justification. What that means to you is this, the only way to stand justified before God is by faith in His Son who bore your sin, that you might be robed in His righteousness. So if you want to be washed whiter than snow today, being forgiven for all your sin, give your heart to Christ, believe in Him and He'll make all things new.