

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

Romans 16:17-27 “The Final Instruction and Farewell to the Roman Church”

We have reached the end of our journey through the letter to the Roman church. Paul was able to successfully address the strife which existed between the Jewish and Gentile converts to Christ. With those teachings in their possession, the apostle provided some parting advice. There are three bits of sound wisdom imparted by Paul which would serve us well in the church today.

1) Watch out for troublemakers.

Romans 16:17-18, *“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. ¹⁸ 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.”*

The apostle repeatedly warned the young congregations of the first century to watch out for troublemakers which could upset the church. Just in regards to the Ephesian congregation we find the following.

- Acts 20:28, *“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”*
- Timothy 1:3, *“As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines...”*
- 1 Timothy 6:3, *“If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness...”*

We must always be on the watch for those among us that are troublemakers. When someone among the church sows discord among the brethren, they are troublemakers. When someone introduces false teachings among the congregation, they are troublemakers. When a person gossips and slanders others in the church family, we should take offense at such acts of troublemaking. It was true of the Roman church and is true today for us.

2) Be wise and innocent.

Romans 16:19, *“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 life of the Christian is to be filled with wisdom and innocence. Contextually Paul was referring to a wisdom of all that is good in Christ. Wisdom is the application of that which is learned along the way. James communicated this concept better than anyone in James 3:13 states, *“Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.”*

On the other hand, we can learn our lessons of wisdom from the world. James continued his argument that, *“this wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic”* (James 3:15). He concluded that the good wisdom from God is *“first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy”* (James 3:17). Those are the things that are good for which we should strive to become wise in. When we are seeking to become wise in that way, then the natural result will be innocence *“in what is evil”*.

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3) Focus on victory.

Romans 16:20, *“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”*

Paul borrowed language from Genesis 3:15, *“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”* This was from the account of the sin and fall of mankind through the actions of Adam and Eve. God was pronouncing punishment upon all three parties involved, beginning with the Serpent of old (Revelation 12:9), the devil. What does that passage have to do with the victory of the Christian? EVERYTHING!

From the very beginning, the devil has sought to deceive the people of God into a life contrary to the purpose of the Creator. There was only one commandment, *“but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die”* (Genesis 2:17). They blew it and began the path of sin for humankind. It was in Genesis 3:15 that we find the greatest and earliest promise ever to leave the mouth of God. Let us analyze the promise and make our application.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed”

From that moment in time, there would be strife between the devil and mankind. The strife would be throughout the generations, between her seed and his seed. We know who the descendants of the woman are, but who are the “seed” of the devil? We are told in 1 John 3:8-10 that *“the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning”* and *“the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious”*. The seed of the devil are the people who live their lives contrary to the will of God and seek to influence the children of God to do the same. This is why Jesus said to the hostile Jews in John 8:44 *“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.”*

“He shall bruise you on the head And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

The devil might have had an upper hand that day in the Garden of Eden, but there was an Individual, a Messiah, a Deliverer of humankind that would be coming through the seed-line of the woman. *“He”* will inflict a mortal wound upon the head of the devil which would break that curse of sin.

Naturally the devil knew his days were numbered and sought to prevent the Messiah from being successful. He would wage an all-out war to stop this from happening. Until then he would have to power to continue to bruise mankind on the heel with sin and despair. LET THE WAR AGAINST THE MESSIAH BEGIN!

Angry Cain

In Genesis chapter 4 we find the woman giving birth to a couple of sons. The devil thought, *“Surely one of these two men are the Messiah for they are of the seed line of the woman. If I can cause jealousy in the heart of Cain, perhaps his anger will stop the coming Messiah from laying a mortal wound on my head.”*

Cain was angry with his brother because God accepted Abel’s offering. Genesis 4:8, *“...And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”* Cain was a murderer and his brother was a dead man. It appeared for a moment that the Messiah was stopped in His tracks, but the devil was wrong. There was another righteous son

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born and his name was Seth. The Promised Messiah would be coming through his line. Brotherly Hatred could not stop the promise of the coming Messiah!

Righteous Noah

Seth begat Enosh, Enosh begat Kenan, Kenan begat Mahalalel, Mahalalel begat Jared, Jared begat Enoch, Enoch begat Lamech and Lamech begat Noah. The devil knew the seed line had expanded out of control and corrupted the world with sin. Genesis 6:5, *“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* God decided that he would flood the earth and destroy mankind and the devil had to be happy, for the Messiah would also not be able to emerge.

The Lord was resolved to destroy it all, but God saw that *“Noah was a righteous man”*. He led Noah to build an ark and survive the flood with his three sons and all their wives. The devil was only eight people from wiping out the Messiah, but a Corrupted Society could not stop the promise of the coming Messiah!

Infertile Sarah

The promise of the Messiah was revealed to come through Abraham. Genesis 12:3, *“And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”* The only problem was that his wife Sarah was unable to have children. If they cannot bring forth a child, then God cannot keep his Word. God opened up her womb in her later years and she brought forth Isaac. Infertility cannot stop the promise of the coming Messiah!

Enslaved Joseph

Isaac begat Jacob and Jacob begat twelve sons. The promise of God was going to come through one of the sons, but the devil did not know which one. If however the devil could destroy Jacob’s family, then God would prove to be a promise breaker. Joseph was sold into slavery while the rest of the family suffered from a deadly famine in the land (Genesis 42). Little did they know that God had paved a path for Joseph from slavery to Prime Minister. The entire family was moved to Egypt and thrived for the next four centuries. Slavery cannot stop the promise of the coming Messiah!

Wicked Pharaoh

The people of Israel multiply into millions and the Egyptians feared they would be overtaken in their own country (Exodus 1:10). Pharaoh decided to kill all the baby Israelite boys to eliminate the Jews. The devil was attempting to use man to stop the promise of the Messiah. In the end there was a baby name Moses who was spared. In the first forty years he became a princely son, in the second forty years a desert shepherd and in the third forty years he was a deliverer of the Israelites. Evil Government cannot stop the promise of the coming Messiah!

Sinful David

David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). He dropped a giant named Goliath as a teenager (1 Samuel 17). The Messiah was to come from his line (Jeremiah 23:5) and the devil sought to destroy him. David was tempted with Bathsheba, committed adultery and covered it up with the murder of the Uriah the Hittite. Yet David was not the Messiah, but it was through him He would come. Adultery and cover-up cannot stop the promise of the coming Messiah!

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Polygamous Solomon

We were told in 2 Samuel 7:14 that Solomon would be the builder of the Temple to God. Naturally the devil perceived him to be the Messiah and moved to trip him up in sin. Solomon was a billionaire with wisdom galore, yet he had a problem with too many wives. Many of the wives were foreigners and brought their false religions with them. Before it was over, Solomon was allowing some of his own children to be sacrificed to the fire of Molech. Certainly the devil was victorious over the Messiah. The only problem was that Solomon was not the Messiah, for He would come through his genealogical line. A Messed-up marriage cannot stop the promise of the coming Messiah!

Youthful Joash

Athaliah, the daughter of wicked Jezebel, had taken over the Southern kingdom of Judah. She destroyed all of the male heirs to the kingdom (2 Kings 11:1) and became a dictator of the nation. The devil had to be celebrating because the royal seed line was obliterated and God could no longer keep His promise. There was one little one-year old infant named Joash (2 Kings 11:2) who was hidden at the hands of Jehoida the priest. For six years he was concealed from the public until his seventh birthday. At that time, Jehoida rallied support and brought forth Joash for coronation. The populace overthrew Athaliah, Joash was on the throne and the promise of God remained alive! A Dictator cannot stop the promise of the coming Messiah!

Sickly Hezekiah

2 Kings 20 tells of a king named Hezekiah through whom the promised Messiah was to come. The chapter reveals that he had a mortal illness which was about to take his life. The big problem was he had no sons and if he dies, the lineage will be stopped. The devil wanted to take him out with sickness, but Hezekiah turned his face to the wall” (20:2) and sought the help of God. The Lord gave him fifteen more years of life and three years later Mannaseh was born. Fatal Illness cannot stop the promise of the coming Messiah!

Hateful Haman

The Book of Esther tells us that the nation of Israel was carried away into captivity. A high-ranking Persian official named Haman. He hated the Jews and sought to have them exterminated from the face of the earth. He was able to arrange a diabolical plan to do so and the countdown to the date began. It looked like the devil would finally have a way and the hopes off the Messiah faded away.

What the devil did not know was that Esther, a Jew, was married to King Xerxes. Through prayer, fasting and encouragement from her uncle Mordechai, she was able to influence the king to allow the Jews to be armed and fight for their lives. An Evil Plan cannot stop the promise of the coming Messiah!

This went on throughout the Old Testament and the people of Israel kept waiting for their Messiah to come. The devil was willing to make any attempt to prevent the Messiah from laying a mortal wound on his head. Finally in the Gospels, Jesus came.

- John the Baptist announced Him, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the people!” (John 1:29)

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- Luke said when Jesus was baptized that the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove (Luke 3:22).
- God Himself said from heaven, “This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well-pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)

The devil finally realized who the Messiah was. He moved quickly to attempt to cripple Jesus with sin. 1 John 2:16, *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.* This was the strategy the devil put Adam and Eve through in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:6, *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.* She physically desired the fruit, it looked good to her eyes and it called for her to be independent to God. Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

This would be the same attempt against Jesus. In Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus was led up into the desert to be tempted of the devil.

- a) He was tempted to eat bread while hungered...Lust of the Flesh (4:1-4).
- b) He was tempted to see angels in testing...Lust of the Eyes (4:5-7).
- c) He was tempted with independence from God...Pride of Life (4:8-10).

All three times Jesus held his ground. He quoted scripture and did not sin. He passed lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life. This left the devil with only one option...kill Jesus Christ of Nazareth before he could inflict a mortal wound upon his head. Fast forwarding to the execution of Jesus.

Matthew 27:45-51, *Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.* ⁴⁶ *About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”* ⁴⁷ *And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.”* ⁴⁸ *Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink.* ⁴⁹ *But the rest of them said, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.”* ⁵⁰ *And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.* ⁵¹ *And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.*

They pulled Jesus’ lifeless body off the cross as the devil smiled with joy. He had stopped the Messiah in His tracks by sending Him to an early grave. There appeared to be victory in the grasp of Satan, for how could the Messiah bruise his head from the grave?

Early on the first day of the week, the women in charge of embalming came to the tomb to find it empty. As the angel said in Matthew 28:6, *“He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.”* The devil did not know that Jesus would be confirmed the Son of God through the death, burial and resurrection. He did not know that Jesus’ death actually ushered in the mortal wound upon his head. 1 Corinthians 2:8 states, concerning the crucifixion of Jesus, *“for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”* Death was overcome and the works of the devil were destroyed (1 John 3:8).

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There was nothing in this universe that could stop the promise of God concerning the Messiah. Not hatred, not corruption in society, not health problems, not evil rulers, not lust, not a bad spouse, not a detailed plot, and not even death! God said the Messiah was going to lay a mortal wound on Satan which would destroy the devil's works.

When we become a Christian, Jesus allows us to share in the victory. We might be having a tough time on the job, but that will not stop you from going to heaven. We might have a broken down car that drips oil on the big crack in the driveway, but that won't stop the promise of God concerning us going to heaven. You might have bad health, come from a bad family, have a bad career with bad finances, live in a bad house in a bad neighborhood, but you still have the good promise of eternal life with Jesus Christ our Lord if you hold fast. Living for Jesus is how we are able to contribute to the mortal wound of the devil. Romans 16:20, "*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*"

The Closing Salutation

Romans 16:21-24, "*Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.* ²² *I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.* ²³ *Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother.* ²⁴ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*"

We close with the final salutation from the mission team who is with Paul. There were many people from many different backgrounds. No matter what the churches mission is, there is always a group of people needed to carry it out. It was right for Paul to make mention of them. It is also revealed in this text that Paul dictated this to Tertius for the writing.

The Closing Doxology

Romans 16:25-27, "*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,* ²⁶ *but now is manifested, 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;* ²⁷ *to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.*"

God's plan of salvation in the past was a mystery. It was not until the gospel was preached on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 that it was fully revealed. There are no more secrets. The entire plan is ours for the taking. His final words are a doxology. What better way to end a great letter to Christians than pouring your heart out in praise to God? AMEN!