

“The Power of the Triune God's Work in His Church” Romans 15:14-21

Author: Paul the apostle (a Roman citizen by birth), born to proclaim God's gospel (Gal 1:15-17).

Date/Provenance: Late 50s AD (58-59). Written from Corinth on his third missionary journey.

Purpose: Systematic proclamation of the gospel that saves (Rom 1:16-17), Paul's “Magnum Opus.”

- 14 – Paul has been correcting issues between the weak and strong (Rom 14:1-15:7), but still addresses *all* these believers as *brothers*. Just as Christ has accepted believers (whether weak or strong) and Paul has encouraged others to welcome all those welcomed by Christ, Paul himself displays full acceptance of believers in Rome, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom 14:3, 18-19, 15:7).
 - Being “full of goodness” is quite a compliment, but one that can really and truly be said about Christians as the Holy Spirit produces this fruit in us after God's own character (Gal 5:22, Eph 5:9, 2 Thess 1:11). In addition to a life now oriented away from evil and towards good, Paul also reminds the church that they possess “all knowledge” (they have God's Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit to apply it)! This knowledge is furthermore for the purpose of “instructing one another.” App: Who does ministry in the church? While maintaining the distinct character of ordained officers (ministers, elders, deacons) the answer for a healthy church *must* be everyone! The saints as a whole are to be equipped for ministry (Eph 4:11-16). This does not mean everyone is competent to handle every possible issue, but it does mean God's Word, being taught and applied to specific situations by the body of Christ w/the power of the Holy Spirit, is sufficient for all the issues we face (2 Tim 3:16-17, 1 Cor 2:14-16, 1 Cor 10:13, Jn 16:14, Gal 5:6, 5:22-25).
- 15-16 – Again, Paul has been bold when correcting where it was needed. But he views the grace given to him to be a “priestly service” offering up the Gentiles as holy to God. John Murray:
 - “The dignity belonging to this office of preaching the gospel is...hereby underlined and the kind of priestly action performed in the exercise of the apostolic office is thus shown to be of an entirely different character from that of the Levitical priesthood and also from that of Christ himself... The expression ‘the offering up of the Gentiles’ is without precise parallel in the New Testament. But it has its parallel in Isa 66:20: ‘And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an offering unto the Lord.’”
 - App: To be an acceptable offering (recall Rom 12:21-2, cf. 1 Pet 2:5), what is involved? Not just hearing the Word but living according to it by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit (Mt 7:24-27, Jas 1:22, Rom 2:13, 6:5-12). No works-righteousness (Eph 2:8-10, Jas 2:26)!
- 17-19 – Paul's pride is not in himself but the work of the Holy Spirit bringing about “word and deed” obedience (v18). The same Spirit who produced “signs and wonders” as the gospel went out to the Gentiles (Acts 1:8, 2:1-4, 3:1-10, 14:4, 19:6-8, 19:11, 2 Cor 12:12) produces this word and deed obedience that fulfills the purpose of gospel ministry (not merely making converts that keep on living as before but *disciples* who are transformed for God's glory – see Mt 28:19, Rom 6:1-10, 8:2, 8:13, 14:8, 1 Thess 1:8-10). Note Paul's trinitarian theology that naturally flows from his heart into this Spirit-inspired letter! App: Sometimes app is *primarily* about our thinking and worship.
- 20-21 – Paul has told us he is the apostle to the Gentiles before (Rom 1:5, 11:3, Gal 2:8) and here he speaks of God's foreordained plan (revealed by prophecy) to bless all the nations in which he takes part. By “named” he does not mean “the loose sense of merely known or reported but in the sense of acknowledged and confessed” (John Murray, cf. 1 Cor 5:11, Eph 3:15, 2 Tim 2:19). We are a part of the same era as the Lord is still gathering and perfecting His flock and will soon come again when all who are ordained to eternal life are added. May *all* members of Scots Kirk always bear the flawless Word which the Spirit powerfully uses to justify, sanctify, glorify (Rom 10:17)!