

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 213 – August 1st – Romans 15:1-21

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Romans

- Barrett, CK *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1957.
- Dunn, JDG *Romans*, Word Biblical Commentary Vols 38A, 38B, Dallas, Word, 1988.
- Moo, Douglas, J *Romans: The NIV Application Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000.
- Murray, John *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Vols, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1959 & 1965.
- Wright, NT *The Letter to The Romans*, The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol 10, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2002.

Ending of Romans

Some MSS include the doxology of 16:25-27 at this point in the epistle. Others include the doxology both here and at the end of the epistle. Origen reports that Marcion omitted chapters 15 and 16 of Romans from his edition of Paul's epistles: this may account for the displacement of the doxology. Others suggest that Paul may have issued the letter in two forms; a shorter form may have omitted chapter 16 or even chapters 15 and 16.

Verse 1

Ὁφείλομεν δὲ ἡμεῖς οἱ δυνατοὶ τὰ ἀσθενήματα τῶν ἀδυνάτων βαστάζειν, καὶ μὴ ἑαυτοῖς ἀρέσκειν.

ὀφείλω owe, ought, must

Paul identifies himself explicitly with the 'strong' group.

δυνατος, η, ον possible, strong
ἀσθηνημα, τος η weakness
ἀδυνατος, ον impossible, weak

Those areas where the 'weak' are lacking in power.

βασταζω carry, bear, endure

Cf. Gal 6:2. "The strong are actively and lovingly to assume the burden that the weak are not able to carry for themselves, moderating their own conduct to identify as much as possible with them." Moo. It means far more than 'put up with.'

The language here is similar to that used of the Suffering Servant, cf. particularly Matt 8:17.

ἀρεσκω please, seek to please

Verse 2

ἕκαστος ἡμῶν τῷ πλησίον ἀρεσκέτω εἰς τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς οἰκοδομήν·

ἕκαστος, η, ον each, every
πλησιον neighbour, fellow man.
ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting
οικοδομη, ης f upbuilding, encouragement

It is this consideration which must govern our actions towards our brothers and sisters. Wright comments, "This is, clearly, what the love spoken of in 12:3-13 and 13:8-10 looks like at street level."

Verse 3

καὶ γὰρ ὁ Χριστὸς οὐχ ἑαυτῷ ἤρεσεν· ἀλλὰ καθὼς γέγραπται· Οἱ ὀνειδισμοὶ τῶν ὀνειδιζόντων σε ἐπέπεσαν ἐπ' ἐμέ.

The thought here is parallel to that in Philippians 2.

ἤρεσεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἀρεσκω
γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω
ὀνειδισμος, ου m reproach, insult, abuse
ὀνειδιζω reproach, insult, abuse
σε Pronoun, acc s συ
ἐπιπιτω fall upon, come upon

Cf. Ps 69:6. This psalm is often quoted Messianically in the NT, cf. Matt 27:34; Jn 2:17; 15:25; Acts 1:20; Rom 11:9. The insults or reproaches mentioned in the Psalm are levelled against God. Paul assumes "that this great poem of the suffering and vindication of the righteous Israelite found its ultimate embodiment in Israel's Messiah and his crucifixion." Wright. Cf. Phil 2:6-8.

Verse 4

ὅσα γὰρ προεγράφη, εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν διδασκαλίαν ἐγράφη, ἵνα διὰ τῆς ὑπομονῆς καὶ διὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως τῶν γραφῶν τὴν ἐλπίδα ἔχωμεν.

ὅσος, η, ον as much as, how much
προεγράφη Verb, aor pass indic, 3s
προγραφο write beforehand
ἡμετερος, α, ον our
διδασκαλια, ας f teaching, doctrine, instruction
ὑπομονη, ης f patience, endurance
παρακλησις, εως f encouragement, counsel

γραφη, ης f writing, Scripture
ἐλπις, ιδος f hope, ground of hope

Wright comments on this verse, "This ... echoes 5:1-5, ascribing to Scripture what is there effected through the Spirit on the basis of God's work of justification... The Scriptures, and their multiple interpretations of the Messiah's suffering, give God's people hope; and in that context (vv. 5-6) they will be able to think the same way and to glorify God together."

Verse 5

ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς ὑπομονῆς καὶ τῆς παρακλήσεως
δόξη ὑμῖν τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν ἀλλήλοις κατὰ
Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν,

δόξη Verb, aor act opt, 3 s δίδωμι
φρονεω think, have in mind
ἀλλήλων, οἰς, οὗς one another

A unity of mind and heart, rooted in union with and conformity to Christ, leads to praise (v.6).

Verse 6

ἵνα ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν ἐνὶ στόματι δοξάζητε τὸν
θεὸν καὶ πατέρα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ
Χριστοῦ.

ὁμοθυμαδὸν adv with one mind, together

"Only when believers cease to quarrel with one another and speak with one heart and voice will they be able to praise God as they should." Moo.

Wright expresses it the other way around, saying, "The object of coming to a common mind (ὁμοθυμαδὸν *homothymadon*), a word found frequently in the early chapters of Acts (e.g., 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57), is thereby to come to a common worship, literally 'with one mouth.'"

εἰς, μία, ἐν one, a, an, single
στόμα, τος n mouth, utterance, voice
δοξαζω praise, honour, glorify, exalt
πατηρ, πατρος m father

Verse 7

Διὸ προσλαμβάνεσθε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς καὶ ὁ
Χριστὸς προσελάβετο ὑμᾶς, εἰς δόξαν τοῦ
θεοῦ.

Cf. 14:1.

διὸ therefore, for this reason

Paul is concluding his plea for unity in the Roman church.

προσλαμβάνομαι welcome, accept, receive
ἀλλήλων, οἰς, οὗς one another

καθως probably means more here than 'in the same way;' here it probably has a causal sense.

προσελάβετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
προσλαμβάνομαι

Some MSS read ἡμᾶς rather than ὑμᾶς.

δόξα, ης f glory

εἰς δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ has in view the glorifying of God in praise and worship.

Wright comments, "The verse forms a typically Pauline paragraph-opening, containing the various elements that will then be developed."

Verse 8

λέγω γὰρ Χριστὸν διάκονον γεγενῆσθαι
περιτομῆς ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ
βεβαιῶσαι τὰς ἐπαγγελίας τῶν πατέρων,

διακονος, ου m & f servant, minister
γεγενῆσθαι Verb, perf pas infin γίνομαι
περιτομή, ης f circumcision, those
circumcised, Jews

ἀληθεια, ας f truth

"The Messiah became a servant to the circumcision [i.e., of ethnic Israel] in order to confirm God's truthfulness [i.e., his faithfulness to his promises]." Cf. 3:4, 7. The following two clauses are "parallel and consequential" Wright.

βεβαιω confirm, verify
ἐπαγγελια, ας f promise

Jesus came as a servant, particularly of the Jews. He came to fulfil the promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, promises of which circumcision was the seal. However, these promises did not concern the Jews alone but involved also the Gentiles (v.9). "It is by bringing Israel's history to its climax that God, through the Messiah, has opened the way of mercy to all nations." Wright.

Verse 9

τὰ δὲ ἔθνη ὑπὲρ ἐλέους δοξάσαι τὸν θεόν·
καθὼς γέγραπται· Διὰ τοῦτο ἐξομολογήσομαί
σοι ἐν ἔθνεσι, καὶ τῷ ὀνόματί σου ψαλῶ.

ἔθνος, οὗς n nation, people; τα ἔ. Gentiles
ἐλεος, οὗς n mercy, compassion
δοξαζω praise, honour, glorify

"Paul is still conscious of making his final appeal to the community. The Messiah became a servant to the circumcision – so you Gentile Christians should love and serve your Jewish brothers and sisters in the Messiah, and not look down on them; and this was in order that the Gentiles should join with God's ancient people in united praise – so you Jewish Christians should celebrate the fact that you have people of every race joining with you in the messianic community." Wright.

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

ὁμολογεω confess, declare, give thanks
 ὄνομα, τος n name, title, person
 ψαλῶ Verb, fut act indic, 1 s ψαλλω sing,
 sing a hymn of praise, sing praises

Paul supplies a series of texts demonstrating God's purpose to bring glory to himself among all nations. These texts are from Ps 18:49; Dt 32:43; Ps 117:1; Is 11:10, i.e. the quotations are from the Law, the Prophets and the Writings – every section of the OT Scriptures.

Wright comments, "As Richard Hays has persuasively argued, the opening citation from Ps 18:49 (17:50 LXX), when read in the wider context of that psalm, is intended not simply as a messianic prophecy now fulfilled, but as a statement of the embodiment, in Jesus the Messiah, of the pattern of suffering and vindication through which (as the next verse says) God's salvation and mercy are poured out, not least 'upon God's Messiah, to David and his seed for ever' (Ps 17:51 LXX). The citation thus ties in both with the mention of mercy in the earlier part of v. 9 and with the explicitly Davidic statement in v. 12, while itself making the central point that the Messiah himself, understood as the one praying in this psalm, is standing there, surrounded by Gentiles, singing God's praises." (see R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*).

Verse 10

καὶ πάλιν λέγει· Εὐφράνθητε, ἔθνη, μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ.

παλιν again, once more
 εὐφράνθητε Verb, aor pass imperat, 2 pl
 εὐφραίνω pass be glad, rejoice
 λαος, ου m people, a people

λαος is often used to signify the people of Israel.

Verse 11

καὶ πάλιν· Αἰνεῖτε, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, τὸν κύριον, καὶ ἐπαινεσάτωσαν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ λαοί.

αἰνεω praise
 ἐπαινεσάτωσαν Verb, aor act imperat, 3 pl
 ἐπαινεω commend, praise

The call for the whole world to join in the praise of God "was and is the challenge of Jewish monotheism." Wright.

Verse 12

καὶ πάλιν Ἡσαΐας λέγει· Ἔσται ἡ ρίζα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, καὶ ὁ ἀνιστάμενος ἄρχειν ἐθνῶν· ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἔθνη ἐλπιούσιν.

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἰμι
 ρίζα, ης f root, source, descendant

Cf. Rev 5:5; 22:16.

ἀνίστημι midd rise, stand up, come back to life
 ἄρχω rule, govern

Paul intends a reference to Jesus' resurrection, cf. 1:4. "The idea of a risen Messiah 'ruling the nations' is, further, packed with explosive implications, especially in a letter to Rome whose own emperor claimed to rule the nations. Paul, we may suppose, has had this verse of Isaiah in mind throughout the whole letter, waiting to produce it as the final move in his entire argument." Wright.

ἐλπίζω hope, hope for, hope in, expect

Verse 13

ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς ἐλπίδος πληρῶσαι ὑμᾶς πάσης χαρᾶς καὶ εἰρήνης ἐν τῷ πιστεῦναι, εἰς τὸ περισσεύειν ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἐλπίδι ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος ἁγίου.

ἐλπεις, ιδος f hope, ground of hope
 πληρῶσαι Verb, aor act opt, 3 s πληροω fill,
 make full

εἰρήνη, ης f peace
 πιστεῦω believe (in), have faith (in)

"The 'joy' and 'peace' he wants them to experience are two of the essential values of God's kingdom that Paul has encouraged the strong to make a priority (14:17). The Holy Spirit, by whose 'power' the Christians in Rome will be able to 'overflow with hope,' is the third of the kingdom essentials listed in 14:17. Only when Jew and Gentile at Rome rejoice together in their *common* hope will they be able to praise God as he wants to be praised – with the united hearts and voices of a *community* of believers." Moo.

"What the community needs is precisely that eschatological perspective on their present life that is supplied in 12:2 and 13:11-14: in other words ... in order to be the people they are called to be in the present, they need a constant and lively sense of God's promised and assured future." Wright.

περισσεύω increase, abound; cause to increase, cause to abound
 δυνάμει Noun, dat s δυναμις

Verse 14

Πέπεισμαι δέ, ἀδελφοί μου, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ περὶ ὑμῶν, ὅτι καὶ αὐτοὶ μεστοὶ ἐστε ἀγαθωσύνης, πεπληρωμένοι πάσης γνώσεως, δυνάμενοι καὶ ἀλλήλους νοουθετεῖν.

πέπεισμαι Verb, perf pass indic, 1 s πειθω
 perf act & pass have confidence, be confident

Note the emphatic use of αὐτός – αὐτός ἐγὼ 'I myself'

αὐτοὶ ... ἐστε 'you yourselves are'

μεστος, η, ον full
 ἀγαθωσυνη, ης f goodness
 πεπληρωμένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl
 πληρωω fill, make full, accomplish
 γνωσις, εως f knowledge, understanding
 ἀλλήλων, οισ, ους one another
 νουθετεω instruct, teach, warn

"Paul, in other words, did not need to write to them because they were in bad shape, but because his apostolic vocation demanded that for his new phase of work they should be brought in as partners." Wright.

Verse 15

τολμηρότερον δὲ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἀπὸ μέρους, ὡς ἐπαναμνηστικῶν ὑμᾶς, διὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ

τολμηροτερος, α, ον more boldly

Neuter of adjective used adverbially.

ἔγραψα is an epistolary aorist.

μερος, ους n part, in part, partly
 ἐπαναμνησκω remind, remind again
 χάρις, ιτος f grace

Paul views his ministry as an unmerited gift from God – an act of grace.

δοθεῖσάν Verb, aor pass ptc, f acc s δίδωμι

Verse 16

εἰς τὸ εἶναι με λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, ἱερουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα γένηται ἡ προσφορά τῶν ἐθνῶν εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.

λειτουργος, ου m servant, minister
 ἔθνη nom & acc pl ἔθνος, ους n nation
 ἱερουργεω serve as a priest

Paul pictures his ministry in terms of the making of a priestly offering. "His task has been to ensure that when the sacrificial offerings are brought before God – the sacrificial offerings that consist precisely of the Gentile world itself – they are pleasing to God because they have been made by the Holy Spirit." Wright.

εὐαγγέλιον, ου n good news, gospel
 γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι
 προσφορα, ας f offering, sacrifice, gift

Cf. Is 66:20.

εὐπρόσδεκτος, ον acceptable
 ἡγιασμένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s
 ἁγιαζω sanctify, set apart as sacred to God, consecrate

ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ stands in apposition with εὐπρόσδεκτος.

Verse 17

ἔχω οὖν τὴν καύχησιν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν·

καυχησις, εως f boasting, ground for boasting

"Because God is the One who has given Paul this service, he can legitimately 'glory' in it (v.17). Glorifying or boasting in something can be wrong when we are trying to take credit for our own achievement (cf. 2:17,23; 3:27; 4:2-3), but it is appropriate when it is the product of God's own work (cf. 5:2,3,11)." Moo.

τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν has priestly overtones, cf. Heb 2:17.

Verse 18

οὐ γὰρ τολμήσω τι λαλεῖν ὃν οὐ κατειργάσατο Χριστὸς δι' ἐμοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν ἐθνῶν, λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ,

τολμαω dare, be brave

λαλεω speak, talk

κατειργάσατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
 κατεργαζομαι do, accomplish

Paul's point is twofold:

- i) He would not dare to boast of this if it were not Christ's work;
- ii) He would not dare glory in it if it were not a work that Christ was performing *through him*.

ὑπακοη, ης f obedience

Cf. Rom 1:5, where Paul describes his calling in terms of being used to bring the Gentiles into the obedience of faith ὑπακοην πιστεως.

Verse 19

ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος· ὥστε με ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ κύκλῳ μέχρι τοῦ Ἰλλυρικοῦ πεπληρωκέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

δυνάμει Noun, dat s δυναμις

σημειον, ου n miraculous sign, sign, miracle

τερας, ατος n wonder, object of wonder

"'Signs and wonders' (NIV 'miracles') is standard biblical terminology for miraculous acts that accompany and give credence to God's Word. The phrase is especially prominent in Old Testament descriptions of the Exodus (e.g., Ex 7:3,9; 11:9-10; Deut 4:34; Ps 78:43) and in the book of Acts (e.g., Acts 2:22,43; 4:30; 5:12; 14:3; 15:12). Paul perhaps uses this expression to signal his importance in salvation history. God works miracles through him because he is God's 'point man' to open up the Gentile world to the gospel." Moo.

B and one or two other sources omit θεου while many MSS read πνεύματος ἁγίου rather than πνεύματος θεου.

ὥστε so that, with the result that
κυκλῶ adv in a circle, round, round about
μέχρι until, to, to the extent, as far as
πεπληρωκέναι Verb, perf act infin πληρῶ
v.14

"Paul has brought to the divinely ordained climax his commission to plant thriving, self-reproducing churches throughout the region he has described. He is now, therefore, in a position to move on." Moo.

Verse 20

οὕτως δὲ φιλοτιμούμενον εὐαγγελίζεσθαι οὐχ ὅπου ὀνομάσθη Χριστός, ἵνα μὴ ἐπ' ἄλλότριον θεμέλιον οἰκοδομῶ,

οὕτως thus, in this way
φιλοτιμεομαι make it one's ambition,
endeavour, aspire
εὐαγγελίζω act. and midd proclaim the
good news
ὅπου adv. where
ὀνομαζω name, call; pass be known
ἄλλοτριος, α, ον belonging to another
θεμελιος, ου m foundation
οικοδομεω build, build up

"There is nothing wrong with building on someone else's foundations. Significant ministers like Apollos did just that (see 1 Cor 3:3-11). But this is not the job God has given Paul. He sees himself carrying out the commission given to the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 52:15, revealing the good news to people who have not been told before and who have not heard before (Rom 15:21)." Moo.

Verse 21

ἀλλὰ καθὼς γέγραπται· Οἷς οὐκ ἀνηγγέλη περὶ αὐτοῦ ὄψονται, καὶ οἱ οὐκ ἀκηκόασιν συνήσουσιν.

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

Cf. Isa 52:13-15.

ἀνηγγέλη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s
ἀναγγελλω tell, proclaim, preach
ὄψονται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 pl ὁραω
trans see, observe, perceive
ἀκηκόασιν Verb, perf act indic, 3 pl ἀκουω
συνήσουσιν Verb, fut indic, 3 pl συνιημι
understand, comprehend

Post Section Note

In the above verses we see something of Paul's view of his missionary calling and his strategy in pursuing it. Paul saw himself to have a mission to the whole inhabited earth – to the Nations (Gentiles). He is under obligation to proclaim the message to all (cf. 1:14).

Paul describes his mission as extending from Jerusalem, even though he had not preached there, since Jerusalem is the place from which the Gospel first spread. Although Paul had not preached in every town and village throughout the areas he mentions, he had preached in key centres throughout the region and had planted churches:

- i) Philippi in Macedonia – of which Illyricum was also a region (Phil 4:15);
 - ii) Thessalonica in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess 1:7f);
 - iii) Corinth in Achaia (1 Cor 16:15; 2 Cor 1:1);
 - iv) Ephesus in Asia (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19).
- Having planted churches in key centres, Paul expected the Gospel to be propagated from these and so he considered these areas 'evangelised' and was keen to move on to a new areas where no-one had yet worked – such as Spain (15:24). This was Paul's missionary strategy. (On this, see particularly Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*)

In all this, Paul's driving motive was his conviction concerning the universal Lordship of Christ (Phil 2:6-11, cf. Rom 1:11). Paul's mission was to declare Christ's lordship and to call upon every knee to bow to him.