

The Roman Pilgrimage (Part 20)



Part 20/20

The Roman Pilgrimage
By Derek Prince

This is the fourth and final session in the series of four sessions in which we've been working through the last five chapters of Romans. We've got to chapter 15 and we left off round about verse 5–7. I think we'll go back there and then go on from there. Romans 15:5–7, because this is, as it were, the objective of Paul in this writing. He's not writing simply to produce individual believers but his aim is to produce a body that can function in unity and in harmony. And some of the lessons that we looked at in our previous session emphasize the need for us to put the interests of the Body before our own personal opinions and convictions, at times.

So, Paul says:

> "Now may God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

That's what the church should be, a body of people who have one purpose: to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And all preaching and all teaching and all church activity should always have that as its goal.

And then Paul goes on:

> "Wherefore accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."

So there's another example of a practical application. Accept one another just as Christ accepted us to the glory of God. That's a challenging statement because Jesus didn't wait for us to get straightened out and really cleaned off before He accepted us. Isn't that true? He accepted us just the way we were and then He began to change us. I've seen that, I've dealt with so many people whose problem is rejection. The only solution is acceptance. You can't say, "Well, once you get straightened out I'll acknowledge you as a fellow believer." But you have to take people where they are just as God took us where we are. And so it's a challenging statement, "Accept one another just as Christ

© 1990 - Derek Prince Ministries, International, Inc.

accepted you." Don't expect everybody to be perfect. Everybody has problems—even preachers, even pastors, even the leaders of the work of God. Don't expect perfect leaders. Accept them the way they are if you believe that God put them in that place. We have to accept one another. Why don't you do that right now? Turn to the person next to you and according to gender or sex say, "Brother [or sister], I accept you the way you are." Turn to somebody, look them in the face. See how happy that's made some of you? You might have been sitting next to somebody who never really felt accepted in their life till now. If there's one place where people should find acceptance is the Body of Christ.

Now we're going on from that point of acceptance. We come to a point that was covered in our previous series of four sessions on God's plan for Israel and the Church. Paul goes back for a moment and he recapitulates the difference in the approach of God to the Jewish people and to the non Jews, the Gentiles, the other nations. And it's good in a way to recapitulate this at this point. He says in verse 8:

> "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision [that's the Jewish people] on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for his mercy; as it is written..."

And then he goes into the scriptures. Jesus came first and foremost as a servant to the Jewish people to confirm all the promises that had been made over the centuries to the Jewish people. But He also came to bring mercy to the Gentiles, to the other nations who had no promises, who had no previous history of God's covenants and dealings. So there's always this difference.

In Galatians, Paul speaks about the gospel of the circumcision, the gospel for the Jewish people; and the gospel of the uncircumcision, the gospel for the Gentiles. Now, it's not a different gospel, it all centers in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, His death, His resurrection, His ascension. He is the beginning and the ending, but there's a different approach. I've discovered this in preparing my self study Bible course which has been translated in many languages and circulated in hundreds of thousands of copies around the earth. I originally made it as a correspondence course when I was in Kenya about l960, and I had Africans primarily in mind. I thought to myself I want to present to people the basic truths which if I were a pastor I would want all the people in my congregation to know. And it was done in the form of questions and answers. You get a question, you get the scripture reference, you write in the answer. And then there are correct answers and notes and memory work as well. This has blessed, I mean, there's no way to count how many people who have been touched and changed by it.

But, as I've been living in Israel and in Jerusalem and particularly fellowshiping with Jewish believers in Jesus, I've come to see that you can't start there with Jews. I just start with the fact we're all sinners and we all need a savior, and go on from there. Which is true, but with the Jewish people you have to explain to them this is the outworking of the history that they've had from Abraham onwards. So, together with a young Jewish believer and by my standards, in Israel I worked out five introductory lessons. They're not really introductory but they take the whole thing back to Abraham through Moses and so on. This is now available for all people. I think it's very important for Gentiles to know the origin of the gospel, the origin of our faith. But I've seen that for Jewish people, in the last resort, it's essential. Because, Jesus was a servant of the circumcision to confirm and fulfill the promises that God had made to them.

But, for the Gentiles like me, I didn't have any background in the promises of God, except as a nominal Christian which is quite different. All I needed was mercy. You see, if I can put it this way in dealing with the Jewish people, God was dealing with a field that had been plowed and cultivated and sown over many centuries. When Jesus sent the disciples out to His own people He said, "You're entering into the labors of men who've labored long before you." So it was the continuing of a process that had begun way back. But the Gentiles were an uncultivated field. They'd never been cultivated. And the gospel just came to them without any background in the history of their ancestors.

So, I hope you can understand that because it's very important, especially as, thank God, more and more Jewish people are coming to believe in the Messiah. We need to know how to approach them. We need to know how to help them. At the present time there are hundreds of thousands of Russian Jewish immigrants coming to the City of New York. And basically, their minds are open. They don't have all the prejudices of European and American Jewry. They're just crying out for someone to tell them what it's all about. We're planning—I didn't mean to say this, but we're planning to have this new book of mine translated into Russian to be used there in New York, to be used in Israel where hundreds of thousands of Russian immigrants are pouring in. They don't know Hebrew, they don't know English, but they know Russian. Here is a golden

opportunity, here is a field that can be reaped if we'll put the sickle in right now. I didn't have a word of that in my mind when I began to preach but I felt the Holy Spirit just compelled me to say it.

So, I hope you understand. Now, I'm a Gentile. I have no Jewish background that I know of, though I sometimes wonder. But I mean, there's no reason to believe that I have one. And I want to say before all of you I am so deeply grateful to the Jewish people because every spiritual blessing that I have has come to me through them. How could I ever turn against them or become anti-Semitic? It would be just as they say, "biting the hand that feeds you." Well, I must go on.

Paul doesn't have to take a lot of time to prove that Jesus came to the Jews, he has to take a lot of time to prove that the Gentiles can come in. See? This was nineteen centuries ago. Now the boot is on the other foot. Let's just look very quickly at these promises which he refers to. The first is in Psalm 18:49. This is a great triumphant song of David after God had given him victory over all his enemies. It's also predicative of the Messiah.

> "Therefore I will give thanks to thee among the nations, O Lord, and I will sing praises to thy name."

When you read the word nations in most translations you need to say to yourself Gentiles. I think I've explained this earlier, but there are two main terms. There's people and nations. They're not always used that way because translators are not always consistent. But people, the Hebrew word is ?am?, is those who have a covenant relationship with God. The other word nations, Gentiles, ? goyim? in Hebrew, are those who have no relationship with God. Do you remember what Jesus said to the Syrophonecian woman when she came for the healing of her daughter? I'm paraphrasing, He said, "Well, you're just a little dog. You don't have any relationship with God. You're unclean, you're outside the covenant." She said, "True, I'm just a little dog. All I'm asking you for is a crumb that falls from the table of the children." What faith, brothers and sisters, what faith! I don't need a loaf, I don't need a slice, I just need one crumb to get the demon out of my daughter, that's all I'm concerned about. Many people have wondered why Jesus spoke to her in such harsh terms. I mean, if you call a person a dog here it's not altogether uncomplimentary. Some dogs are treated better than people. But in the Middle East, to call anybody a dog, that is another matter. I wonder if you can see it? To relate to God ultimately, there's only one way. You have to have a covenant. God does not relate on any other basis permanently but through a covenant.

Now, we who are Gentiles who trust in Jesus for salvation and believed in His atoning death and resurrection, we have become a people. So the New Testament tells us as believers is we are a people because we have a covenant relationship with God. So God has two peoples in the earth. The Jewish people who even though they are outside the grace of God at the moment are still a people, because of an unbreakable covenant that was made with them. And we, Gentiles, who used to be dogs—we're not dogs any longer—who have a relationship through the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. Can you see that? If you could grasp that, the Bible would be a whole lot more intelligible book. Often because of ignorance or because of arrogance we've approached the Bible without seeing this perspective.

Let's look at the other scriptures quickly. Deuteronomy 32:43:

> "Rejoice O nations, with his people..."

Do you see that? You've got both words there. Rejoice O ? goyim? with his people ?am?. Because now you can become a people. You can come into covenant relationship with God.

And then in Psalm 117:1, and there aren't many verses in Psalm 117. If you're ever going to memorize a psalm, start with that one. Psalm 117. The trouble with me is I'm in Psalm 119 and can't get out of it! Psalm 117:

> "Praise the Lord all nations. Laud him all peoples."

Now, that word peoples is a third word, we won't go into that. But it says praise Him all ?goyim?. See what Paul is doing. He's addressing it primarily to Jewish people. He said, "Look, our own scriptures said that God was going to return mercy to the other nations." Do you know what angered the Jewish people most in Paul's ministry? That he was taking the message to the Gentiles, because the Jews at that time regarded this as their exclusive right that no other nation had access to.

And then two scriptures in Isaiah 11:10:

> "Then it will come about in that day that the nations will resort to the root of Jesse [who's the root of Jesse? Jesus.] who will stand as

> a signal for the peoples [that's the third word] and his rest will be glorious."

So Paul is saying it's predicted in our great prophet Isaiah that the nations, the ?goyim? will resort to the root of Jesse.

And there's another scripture in Isaiah 42:4, speaking of the Lord Jesus:

> "He will not be disheartened or crushed until he's established justice in the earth, and the coastlands will wait expectantly for him."

The coastlands, I think I've explained, are all those parts of the earth that border on the ocean. So, all the continents are going to wait expectantly for the law of the Messiah.

We must go on because we've got a long way to go.

Turning back to Romans 15:13. Now again we come to the purpose of the teaching, Romans 15:13:

> "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

I think I better ask Ruth to come up. This is all right, I mean, we're in charge of this situation. This is one of our proclamations, that's why. While she's coming, let me point out to you how important hope is. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, "Now by faith, hope and love." I've heard many sermons about faith, quite a lot about love. I think I'm the only person I know of that I've heard preach on hope. And yet it's one of the three abiding realities. But you can only abound in hope by the power of what? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the greatest optimist. And when He comes in, you may have been the worst pessimist but you begin to become an optimist.

I was a professional pessimist when I got saved. I was born a pessimist and trained to be a pessimist. I mean, in my family if you weren't worrying, you should have been worrying about the fact you weren't worrying. But God has changed me. It didn't happen all in one moment, believe me, and I had a Danish wife who straightened me out from time to time.

So, here we are. "Now may the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Would you like to say that if I say it before you, would you say it after me? Stand up, change your position for a moment. Now, I'll say it phrase by phrase, and as you say this, it's being registered. It's going to stand to your account. All right? "Now may the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Do you feel better now? I hope you do. We've got to go on.

Romans 15:14–16. Paul was pretty forthright but he was also tactful. And here he is writing to a church he's never visited, although he knows a lot of the people in the church, and he's been giving them a lot of teaching, some of which is pretty strict. And so he kind of apologizes for being a teacher to them, but at the same time reminds them that he is the apostle of the Gentiles and that this is his job. This is a kind of lesson in tact which I desperately need. Verse 14:

> "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another."

In other words, really you hardly need teaching. And the he's given them fourteen or fifteen chapters of teaching. But he's, as it were, sweetening the pill at this point.

> "But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given to me from God [and that's the grace of apostleship to the Gentiles], to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable [to God], sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

What a view of his ministry! He said, "I'm like a priest in the Old Covenant. I've got a sacrifice to offer up to God, but it has to be sanctified." What was the sacrifice? The Gentile church. He said, "My sacrifice." A little later on in this epistle he says, "My gospel." What a sense of responsibility. "God has committed this task to me to make everybody know the message of the gospel in such a way that it includes not merely the Jewish people but the Gentiles." And he said, "I'm offering this up as a priest in the Old Testament would offer up the sacrifice." And every sacrifice, you know, had to meet certain conditions. It had to be anointed with oil, it had to have other things that accompanied. So Paul envisions himself as a priest offering up not just a little lamb or even a bullock, but offering up the

whole Gentile church to God. And, concerned that it will be sanctified, that it will be holy, that it will be set apart to God.

And so, in a way, one main thrust of Romans is to produce a holy church. He says, "Forgive me that I've written such a long letter, and I know that you really know much of these things, but this is my job. This is what God called me to do."

All right, going on now. Now we come to something very, very important which I'm particularly, what should I say, conscious of. So we're going to verse 17:

> "Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God."

I'll point out to you later that it's legitimate to boast, provided you boast about the right thing, not about yourself, but about the things that pertain to God.

Then he goes on to explain what he means:

> "For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me [I'm not talking about my own accomplishments], resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed..."

See, the ultimate purpose of his ministry was to bring the Gentiles through faith into obedience to the word of God.

And how did he do it? Verse 19 says:

> "...in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

That's the full gospel, it's a legitimate phrase. Paul says, "I haven't just preached in word, but my word has been attested by supernatural signs and miracles. I've fully preached the gospel." And the purpose of it was to make the Gentiles obedient, not just nominal believers, not just head believers but committed from the heart to the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth of His word.

Why this is so real for me is because five years I served as principal of a teacher training college for African teachers in Kenya in East Africa. And when I went there, my aim was not so much to teach them the secular subjects as to teach them the word of God and bring them to know Jesus Christ. And by the grace of God and His mercy, I can say we were successful. Hardly any student ever left that college that had not been saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit. Very, very few. One year we graduated 57 students, every one of them had been saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit. And furthermore, they set a record for the Educational Department of Kenya, because every one of them qualified to teach. And I still have somewhere in my records a personal letter from the Director of Education thanking me for those results. And what I want to emphasize is when you are a Christian, you should be better than you were before. If you were a teacher before, you should be a better teacher. If you were a nurse, you should be a better nurse. I taught those students, this I emphasized. The fact that you've been saved doesn't mean you can get away with sloppiness. It means you're going to be much more efficient than you were before. And it worked as God's word always does.

But anyhow, at the beginning of my time there I pounded at them with the word of God and they sat there, smiled at me and said all the right things. If I were to say, "Get baptized," they'd be baptized. Or do this or do that, and the reason was they knew they were dependent on me for their education. And education for them was the door out of a lower status. See? Why do the white people succeed and we don't? And their answer was in Swahili, ?eleemoo?. ? Eleemoo? is the Swahili word for education. If we get education, we'll be there.

So, we had willing listeners. But I realized after a while that their obedience was only in the head, it was motivated by self interest, because they wanted to get their certificate as a teacher. And so, I assembled the whole student body and they didn't know what I was going to say. I said, "I want to thank you that you're very cooperative and very willing. And when we ask you to do anything, you do it." And I said, "I know the reason why you do it, because you want to get your teacher's certificate." I said, "I understand it." But I said, "The things I am teaching you, there's a deep question inside you. And the question is this: Is the Bible really a book for Africans or is it only a white man's book with white man's traditions and customs that don't apply to Africans?" And I said, "A lot of your own African elders have been teaching you the latter, that it's just a white man's book and it doesn't apply for Africans." Then I said, "Now I can't tell you the answer." And that astonished them because they thought, you know, the white teacher, he has all the answers. I said, "There's only one way you'll ever find out whether this is from Britain and America or whether it's

from God. And that is if you have a personal experience in your own life of the supernatural power of God." And I said, "I can't do that. That can only come from God. But when it comes, you'll know for sure it didn't come from Britain and it didn't come from America. It came from heaven."

And so I left it at that and I didn't try to, as it were, persuade them. I just went away and prayed. And about six months later there was a visitation of God on that little college. Before that we said, "You ought to pray before you go to bed." But I don't know how many of them did, not many. After this visitation we couldn't stop them from praying. I mean, they would go on all through the night praying in the dormitories. And I would say every gift of the Holy Spirit was manifested in those next months. Amongst other things, just to mention it, we saw two people raised from the dead.

So, after that I called them together and I said, "Now, I'm calling you to witness that you know where this came from. You know it came from heaven and from God, not from Britain or America. Now you're answerable for what you know."

But you see that, that was such a demonstration to me of the truth that Paul is trying to convey here. You can get head acceptance by teaching people's heads but there's only one power that can reach people's hearts, that's the Holy Spirit. And when He comes in sovereign power, there'll be miracles, there'll be signs, there'll be wonders. I don't believe it's the signs that convince people. The signs get their attention but it's the power of the Holy Spirit that brings the signs and also convinces. And they become obedient from the heart, understand? There's a lot of difference between obeying from the head, which can be perfectly sincere and genuine. But obeying from the heart... And after that, one of the facts of it was that they got the burden for their own people. They would go out in the villages and start themselves to evangelize. We didn't have to form a program, the Holy Spirit directed them. And I always think whenever I read this passage in Romans 15, I always think back. Paul knew what he was talking about. If you want heart faith and heart obedience, it comes only by the supernatural power of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and miracles will accompany it. It's still true. That was, let me think how long ago, more than 30 years ago. But God hasn't changed, the word hasn't changed, the Holy Spirit hasn't changed.

I'd like to just turn your attention for a moment to the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 2. This particular epistle appeals to me because in it Paul is dealing with what he calls the wisdom of this world as distinct from the truth of God. And for many years I studied precisely what Paul was talking about, Greek philosophy. And so I think I can appreciate better than most how absolutely accurate Paul's words are.

So, 1 Corinthians 2, he's writing about when he came to Corinth.

> "And I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

That's a most unusual decision, to make up your mind to know nothing except one thing. Especially, I think, for Jewish people because if there's one thing they esteem, it's knowledge.

> "And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom..."

Which was the whole essence of Greek culture. The word orator comes from the Greek. I mean, the highest accomplishment amongst the Greeks was to be an orator, to be able to persuade people with words.

> "My message and my preaching was not in persuasive words or wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power."

The Holy Spirit is invisible but His presence can be demonstrated by what He does. I believe in the demonstration of the Spirit. It excites me. I never get too much of it.

And why did he do that?

> "That your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God."

It's good not to have your faith resting on the wisdom of men because it changes with every generation. All the philosophical theories that I studied 50 years ago are out of date now. Suppose my faith had rested in them, I'd have nothing left. But the word of God and the power of God never change.

You need to consider Paul's experience sometimes because he'd been to Athens before he went to Corinth. And Athens was the intellectual center of the Greek world. And he preached a rather intellectual sermon which he actually quoted from Greek poets. And the results were meager. I'm not sure whether he did the wrong thing or not but at any rate they were meager. Then he was going on to Corinth which was a large, wicked seaport with all the vices of the wickedness of a seaport. And somewhere between Athens and Corinth he made up his mind, "I'm not going to know anything among these people but Jesus Christ crucified." The city was turned upside down. The historians estimate the early church in Corinth grew to 25,000 persons. Out of what? Jesus Christ crucified and the power of the Holy Spirit. That will not bear witness supernaturally to anything but Jesus Christ crucified. We can have all sorts of elegant sermons and programs, but if you want the power of the Holy Spirit, you better focus on Jesus Christ and the cross.

One of the disasters of the contemporary church in so many places is the cross has been displaced from the center. And all sorts of gimmicks have been put in its place. But the Holy Spirit is not interested in gimmicks. I predict that there will come along some man or some men with a very simple time worn message and turn the church upside down. And it needs to be turned upside down. Do you know why? Because at the present moment the church is on top and God is underneath. All right, that's a prediction. Lord, grant that it might be true.

We must go back to Romans 15, I want to just touch on Paul's motive. Verse 20:

> "And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but as it is written, 'THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.'"

I believe that's apostolic motivation. I believe the key word for every apostle is go. When Jesus gave His final orders to His apostles, the key word was go and preach the gospel, go into every nation. An apostle is not a super pastor circulating amongst established churches. He's a man with a vision for the unreached. And that's where God bears supernatural testimony.

When you arrive among a group of people that haven't heard the name of Jesus and you start to tell them there was a Son of God who came to earth and died, rose again, what's going to make them believe? Supernatural testimony of the Holy Spirit.

You all probably heard of Corrie Ten Boom and her famous little admonition to preachers. "Kiss, K-I-S-S, keep it simple, stupid." We've got too sophisticated. Too elaborate. We need to come back to the Pauline vision of the Pauline message. Reaching the unreached, that's in a sense the slogan of our ministry. Reaching the unreached and teaching the untaught. And oh, what a joy to see the revolution that comes in people's lives who never really heard the truth, and receive it in a simple digestible form and digest it and go out and do it.

Where our material arrives in the Third World, they do things I never had the faith to do. They go out and open blind eyes. They're simple enough to believe. Well, I have seen blind eyes opened but not very often. I'd like to see a lot more.

In Pakistan, where we were were people who had never heard. There was this little old lady. Brother Mahesh Chavda was with us. He took a photograph of her as a picture typical of Pakistani misery. She was blind from birth and just sat there. The last night we were there, I think Mahesh preached. But it didn't make any difference who preached. And we prayed a collective prayer for the sick. We didn't lay hands on anybody. And what happened? This little old lady, at least 60 years old, blind from birth came forward to show that she could see. That's worth a whole trip to Pakistan, believe me. But it wasn't the only thing that happened.

I just want to inspire you with a sense of excitement. The gospel works, just give it a chance. Abandon your sophistication and your clever methods and your personal ambition, and be prepared to exalt Jesus and focus on the cross. God has no favorites, He'll do as much for us as He would for Paul if we meet the conditions. In fact, I believe He'll do more because I believe we're living in the harvest hour and I believe God is prepared to perform amazing miracles to reap the harvest.

Well, we must move on. In the next verse, Paul gives his itinerary. I was so happy to see this because Ruth and I regularly send out communications in which we give people our itinerary and say, "Please pray for us. We'll be in Ridgecrest on such and such a date and then we'll be wherever it may be. In Britain in July and August and so on, September." And I thought, you know, is that really scriptural? But here's Paul's itinerary, it really blessed me when I saw that. I'll just show you, I'll go through it very quickly. Verse 22:

> "For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you [in Rome]; but now, with no further place for me in these regions..."

That's a remarkable statement. "I've reached everybody between Jerusalem and Rome. So, the next step is Rome.

> "...but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia [that's the Christians in those places] have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints [the believers] in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain."

So he said, "At present, I'm in Corinth."—which was where this epistle was written. "I'm going to Jerusalem, I'm going to deliver up the money that they've offered, make sure the right people get the money, and then I'm going to go to Spain. But on the way to Spain I'll stop off and see you in Rome." And then he says, and this is a good statement if you think of the historical background:

> "I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ."

So here's Paul. He flies in by superjet to Rome airport and there's a limousine to meet him and he's taken to the air-conditioned hotel in preparation for the air-conditioned auditorium. Is that the way it happened? He said, "I know I will come in the fullness of the blessing." He came as a prisoner in chains, having had a pretty harrowing journey in which they'd been 14 days in a storm without seeing the sun, the moon or the stars. Landed on an island, wrecked. The first thing that happened—I always love this—Paul was out there gathering wood. You know, he didn't stand around and say, "I'm the apostle, you people need to get the wood together." He was out there gathering wood and what happened? A viper fastened on his hand. Well, that's the final, they say that's the last straw that will break the camel's back. Paul just shook it off into the fire. The people gazed at him, they expected to see him drop dead. And they said in their thinking, "This man must be a murderer. He escaped the vengeance of the sea but God has got him through the viper." But when he didn't, they said, "Well, this man is different." And the whole island came together and they had a revival on the island of Malta. He did come in the fullness of the blessing of God but he didn't come as a super apostle, he came as a very humble servant of Jesus Christ.

And he prayed. If you go back to Romans 1:10, he prayed to have a prosperous journey by the will of God to Rome. So how did God answer? He went as a prisoner in chains through a 14 day storm and a shipwreck. But it was a prosperous journey. Why? Because God's purposes were accomplished. 278 persons on that ship saw the miracle working power of God. They saw God who answers the prayer of a man and they knew that they were alive because of that man.

It's very interesting, because at the beginning of that journey the Roman Centurion and the captain of the ship were the people that gave the orders. By the end, it was Paul. He said, "Now, do this. Now do that. If you do that, you'll all perish." That's what I call promotion! Promotion God's way. Like Joseph got promoted. So, if you are languishing in a jail right now, you don't have to live there forever. God can promote you. Just one step from the jail to the highest office in the kingdom in the purposes of God. Whom does He exalt? The humble, that's right.

Listen, if you want to go up, you know the way. Go down, that's right. I've got a series of messages which says the way up is down. The lower down you go, the higher God will lift you. That's a guaranteed promise. Whoever exalts himself will be abased. But whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Do you want to be exalted? It's a written guarantee from God. Don't object when God puts you through humiliating situations. Just recognize this is the pathway to promotion.

Well, I could share from personal experience but I'm not going to.

Let's go on, we are in chapter 15, verse 30.

© 1990 - Derek Prince Ministries, International, Inc.

> "Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea [or unbelieving is the alternative translation], and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company."

I want to pick out one particular phrase there in verse 30, "that you will strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." The word strive is the word from which we get agonizing in modern English. It's the word that's used of a contest in the Olympic games. I want to present a challenge to intercessors. Do you know what it is to strive, to agonize, to go through a conflict on behalf of a servant of God?

Ruth and I are very, very conscious but, really, the success and extent of our ministry depends mainly on the intercessors who uphold us. And this is dramatic in Paul's case because he prayed that he might be preserved from the disobedient in Jerusalem. You read Acts 21 through 28, it's the story of how he had to be preserved. Two or three times there were specific attempts to kill him. He was subject to mob violence. He was rescued at the last minute by a Roman Centurion. The difference between life and death for Paul depended on the prayers of God's people. If they had not done what he said and striven together, he would never have made it to Rome. I cannot overemphasize the importance of intercession and accomplishing the purposes of God. There is no higher ministry than that of intercession. And the problem is many people who are called to intercession don't feel they're doing enough because they're not out front, they're not on a platform. And they kind of give up the ministry. Don't do it. God needs you. The servants of God in the ministry need you. Intercessors, be willing to strive together, to fight, to wrestle with the powers that seek to destroy men in the ministry and movements. The ultimate victory cannot be won without intercession.

And then we get that beautiful phrase at the end of this chapter:

> "Now the God of peace be with you all."

What a wonderful ending to a somewhat stormy chapter. "Now the God of peace be with you all." And if you look in your outline, there are seven places in the New Testament. We won't turn there because time is running out, but there are seven places in the New Testament where God is called the God of peace. And if you know or if you can enter into the meaning of that word in Hebrew, shalom—you all know that shalom is the Hebrew word for peace. It's the Hebrew greeting. But it's much more than what we understand by peace in English. It's related to a word that means completeness or perfection. I've written certain words down there. Harmony, wholeness, completeness, every account settled. The verb that's formed from it means to pay in full. And if you—this is so vivid to me, we had a man come to do some carpentry work in our house in Jerusalem. He gave me the bill, I gave him a check. I said, "I want a receipt." He wrote on the bill in Hebrew ?shalat?, paid. And that's why we can have completeness, because it's been paid for. Fully paid. Everything paid up in full and we can be totally complete in Jesus Christ. That's peace.

Now we're going to go into the next chapter and, of course, we don't have time to go through it detailed, it's not necessary. This is a chapter mainly of personal greetings. Some people have questioned whether it really needs to be part of Romans. But I think it's totally part of Romans because God doesn't just give us lectures and say, "Now, personal relationships are important", He demonstrates. After all this wonderful theology, Paul spends one chapter practically greeting people by name. That's a much more vivid way of saying personal relationships matter. It's not all there in the theoretical realm in the realm of doctrine, it's got to be lived out and worked out in personal relationships.

I made a little kind of outline here which I'll just look at with you. There were 36 individuals in this chapter that Paul mentions. And all but two of them by name. Those who were associated with Paul in ministry. Phoebe. Phoebe was the sister that carried the letter to Rome. She was a servant of the church, a deaconess of the church in ?Chenchrea?. That's in the ?Peloponese?. Think of Phoebe as not being faithful. We'd have never had the epistle to the Romans. God trusted one little woman with the supreme task of getting this letter.

You have to remember there was no postal service. Every letter demanded a person to take it. You think how many letters there are in the New Testament, you see how much importance they attach to communication with one another. I tell some people if the New Testament Christians hadn't been better letter writers than some of us, we would have

never had the whole of the New Testament. I wonder whether this is an area in which you need to check up.

I say this with caution, but Ruth and I have a principle that we never receive anything by way of encouragement or contribution from people without it being acknowledged. Obviously, we cannot do it all personally, though we do as much as we can. I was brought up with that. I think that's one of the things I can thank God for. I never receive anything from anybody, never visit a home without writing a personal letter of thank you. So, I think that's a New Testament principle.

I think also it builds personal relationships. It takes time and it takes thoroughness to build personal relationships. It's the little things that build the relationship.

Let's go on. Phoebe. Prisca, Aquila, two of Paul's long time friends who'd been in all sorts of trouble with him. You know, there's something about being in trouble with people. It builds a relationship. I think of John Wesley, one of his preachers had been accused of immorality. He said, "Well, I remember the time when he was with me on the platform and the stones were flying past us." Because they threw stones at Wesley many times. He didn't deny the charge but he had an association that gave him a different attitude toward the person.

Well, we go on. I'm so near the end. There was relatives of Paul, heads of households. And two people picked out as hard workers. Isn't that just typical of Paul? He could remember the women who worked hard. Do women work hard? I think they do. Usually they work harder than men, most times.

And then the list of people referred to elsewhere.

And then in verses 17–19, a warning against those who peddle false teaching for the sake of personal gain.

And then this remarkable promise in Romans 16:20:

> "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

We looked at the fact that the Roman church in three centuries defeated the Roman Empire. Without, as I said, all the apparatus of modern technology and media and propaganda. They just dethroned one of the most powerful empires in human history. But I believe it's a promise also to the end time church, because the feet are the lowest and the last. And I believe that Satan is going to be crushed beneath the feet of the church of Jesus Christ before our feet finally take off for a better place. Let's be encouraged.

And then there's this wonderful closing, in a way, doxology in verses 25–26:

> "Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel [notice that, my gospel] and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past..."

Isn't that exciting that God lets us into a secret that previous ages and generations have never been allowed to know!

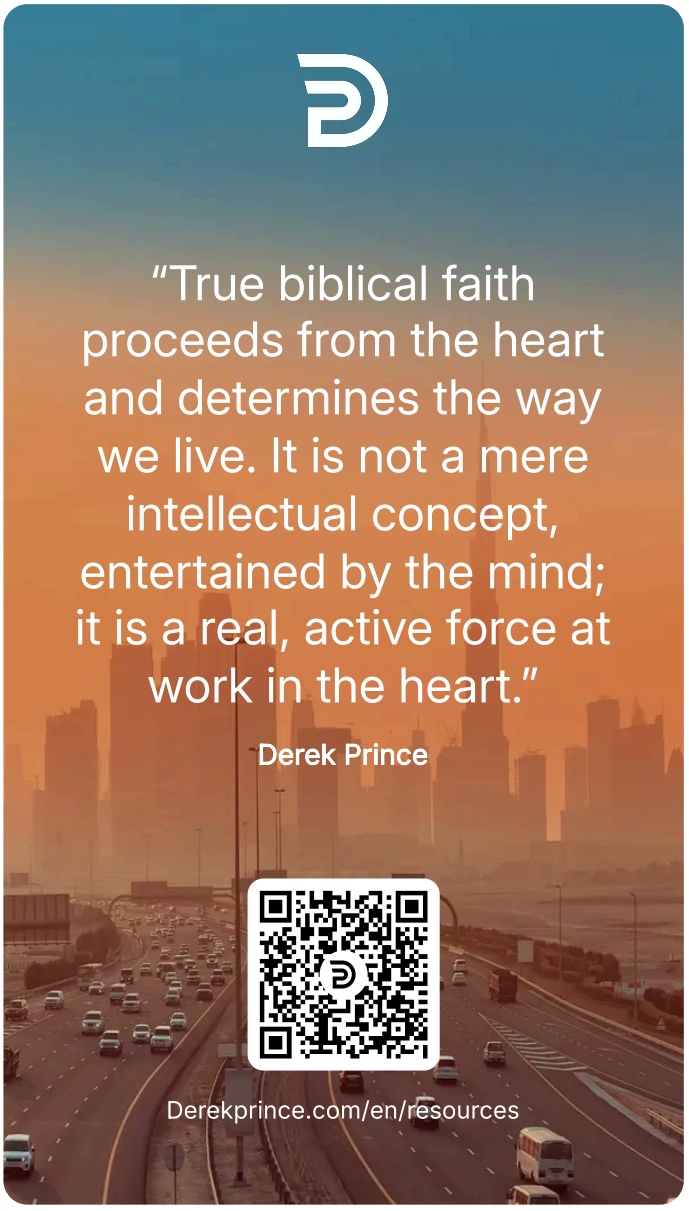
> "...but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, for obedience of faith..."

That's the message we have. What a privilege to receive it and what a privilege to proclaim it. You agree to that? Say amen, that's right. Bless you. Thank you, Lord.

© 1990 - Derek Prince Ministries, International, Inc.

Sermon

Transcript: MV-4318-100-ENG
Last Updated: 16 Sept 2026
Website: Derekprince.com/en/resources



© 1990 - Derek Prince Ministries, International, Inc.