

THE ROAD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

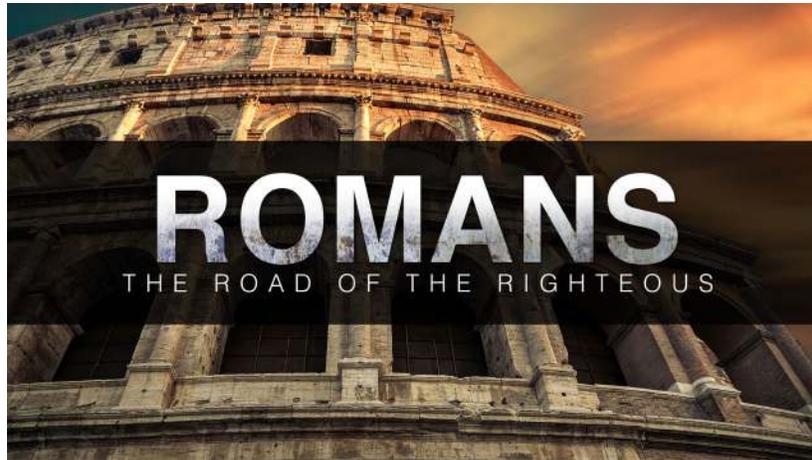
Expositional Study Of Romans

Romans 16:21-27

Written By

©Pastor Marty Baker

March 29, 2020



When Liz and I married in May of 1980, I took a job for one year working for Ireland Landscape in Stockton, CA. One day as I headed to my truck after taking care of the turf at an apartment complex, I watched as a blond, long-haired, muscle-bound, tattooed mean-looking dude walked away from a car near me. As he walked away from the vehicle, I noticed he had left a book on the roof of the car. So, I yelled, “Hey, man, I think you left something on the top of your car.” When the blue book turned out to be a Bible, I started talking more in depth with him.

That book, which I still have today, turned out to be the Bible he received while a prisoner in San Quentin Penitentiary. His name was Alan Reasoner and he loved that Bible because he came to know Christ as his Savior in that pen. Eventually, I got him a job working with me, so for the next year I disciplined him, and he taught me much about life and dealing with really rough, wicked people.

In the summer of 1981, Liz and I moved to Dallas so I could attend Dallas Theological Seminary. I hated leaving Alan, who was now my best friend, but I had to move on. I counseled him how to live for Christ, how to avoid temptation, and how to stay strong in his faith and he said he would give it his best effort.

His old life of drugs and his old motorcycle gang, The Renegades, proved to be too much for his newfound faith. Not long before he died in a motorcycle accident, he sent me what became his last letter to me. I keep it in my desk to remember him. Here are Alan’s last words with pen and ink:

I am really excited about seeing you brother [He planned to ride his bike from northern California to Dallas]. I'm starting to write down things I want to ask you. If you think of any special things you want to tell me, write it down. I don't think I could get said what I want to say or ask all my questions in less than a lifetime. Write down books too. I wish I were leaving tomorrow to come and see you. I am working for John Morris now. The company is called Abide Landscape. He is partners with a bro from church, Steve Yoshimi. I work with Steve every day. I remember when he got saved. He is one of the best examples of what obedience to God's Word can do for a person I've met. His spiritual growth is a beautiful thing to see. It's a lot like when you and I worked together. We are memorizing together now. I really miss you Marty. I hope and pray you can come out here after school. Of course, you may not want to associate with 'the laity' so much then! I'm fine now Marty. I want to be conformed into His image more than anything else. I just can hardly wait to see you as I know it will bring me closer to Christ. I hope you can read this mess. Pray for me to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 'Finally brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you' (2 Corinthians 13:11). I love you both. In Him, Alan.

When someone close to you in your life writes you words like this, you remember them, you study them, and you are thankful for them. Alan is now conformed to the image of Christ because he is in His glorious presence, and I look forward to seeing him face to face. In the meantime, I'm still drawing strength and insight from the last letter this seasoned criminal who turned to Christ wrote me. Thank God for the power of final words.

Paul's final words to the Romans are equally memorable. But, like Alan's letter, they are much more than this. As we read through the Apostle's closing remarks to these saints, we easily unearth this gold spiritual nugget:

Final Words Of Great Saints Are Spiritually Instructive And Motivational (Rom. 16:21-27)

What do we learn? Join me as we sink our interpretive shovels into the rich soil of these final verses to one of the greatest letters in the New Testament. As we do this, as we analyze the dirt for those nuggets from God, I think we readily we see two nuggets:

Nugget 1: We learn things about others

Mind you, we learn things about other saints, really traits they possessed, which we should seek to emulate. First up is Paul's best pastoral friend . . .

Timothy: Serve like a shepherd. Read the text and you will readily see how I arrived at this character conclusion about this young man.

²¹ Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and *so do* Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

Timothy, whose name means "one who honors God," was a native of Lystra, a city Paul preached in during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6). Acts 20:4 lists two of Paul's friends with these

words, “Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy.” Since the two towns were located next to each other, the implication is that one friend was from Derbe, while the other, Timothy, hailed from Lystra. His mother, Eunice and his grandmother Lois were both believers (2 Tim. 1:5), but his father was a godless Greek. Paul’s statement in 1 Timothy 1:2 that Timothy was “my true child in the faith,” illustrates that the apostle was instrumental in leading this young man, from a spiritually divided family, to Christ.

From 2 Timothy 3:10-11, we learn that Timothy was well aware of Paul’s persecutions during his first missionary journey:

¹⁰ Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, ¹¹ persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me (2 Tim. 3:10-11).

This is significant for I’m sure Paul’s stoning in Lystra, Timothy’s home town, made quite an impression on him. The townspeople stoned Paul for his faith outside the city and left him or dead, but Paul awakened, stood up, and then went on preaching the gospel. That courage, that unshakeable faith in the risen Messiah must have served to plough the heart of this young man. Never underestimate how God will powerfully use adversity, hardship, and suffering for the furtherance of His name.

Timothy went on to become one of Paul’s go-to pastors and missionaries. He accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey, and he remained with Paul for 1 ½ years as Paul taught in Corinth . . . the location for the composition of Romans (Acts 18:5; Rom. 16:21). He also joined Paul on his third missionary journey, although he is not mentioned until they reached Ephesus, in Asia Minor. During Paul’s two-year stint here, he wrote 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:8), and in 1 Corinthians 16:10 he mentions that Timothy was traveling to Corinth on a mission for Paul. Not long thereafter, we learn from 1 Timothy 1:3 how Timothy eventually became the head pastor of the mighty Ephesian church. During Paul’s second imprisonment, he wrote Timothy in Ephesus and asked him to come and be by his side since everyone save Dr. Luke had deserted him (2 Tim. 4:11). He put forth this request because he knew what kind of faithful friend he had in this pastor and shepherd.

From this brief synopsis of Timothy’s life as a believer, it is no wonder Paul called him my “fellow worker.” This man, this leader knew how to work hard for God. When given a difficult and complex pastoral assignment, he did it without question. When the going got tough, he got going. Even a temporary imprisonment for his faith did not slow him down (Heb. 13:23). And he was not so full of himself he could not take instruction. Paul’s first and second letters to him demonstrate he was humble, malleable, and teachable, key ingredients in a leader who will do great things for God.

From Timothy’s quick greeting to the Romans we are reminded of just what kind of saint and servant he was for Christ. All of this, of course, makes us stop and ask ourselves some personal questions: Am I known as a hard worker in the church of God? Do I stand with other Christians no matter what happens? Am I the type of saint other saints can rely on when the chips are down? Am I willing to live sacrificially, to endure hardship so the gospel can, and will, go forth? Am I a Timothy to a Paul? Yes, who is my Paul? And if you are a Paul, a leader’s leader, you must ask, “Who is my Timothy?” How exciting to think that the next convert God gives you just might be your Timothy. When he/she comes to Christ, you must then resolve, as Paul did, to pour your spiritual life into theirs so they can do greater things for God than you have done.

Next up on the character list are two interesting men:

Jason & Sosipater: Don't flinch in the fight. We don't know anything definitive about Lucias. He could be Lucius of Cyrene, a well-known prophet/teacher in the Syrian Antiochan church (Acts 13:1), or he could actually be Dr. Luke because Lucius is the Roman form of his name. But we cannot be certain so we must turn to the two men we can know something about:

²¹ Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

Jason is probably the man in Thessalonica who allowed Paul to use his home as a base of operations for reaching the city. Jews, who vehemently opposed Paul's teaching about the resurrection of Jesus as the Christ, caused a riot. Interesting. They did not debate the biblical facts with Paul concerning the Messiah, but resorted to riotous behavior. Sounds like some in our culture.

⁵ But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. ⁶ When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." ⁸ They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. ⁹ And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them (Acts 17).

What a man of God. Jason took Paul in when he had to know his presence could bring trouble to his life and home. But he did not flinch in his faith and hospitality. Even when the weak-kneed authorities had Jason and other key saints put up a bond designed to motivate Paul to leave town, according to 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10 and 2:14-16, the saints here continued to courageously and fearlessly proclaim the gospel of Jesus, the Christ. This is why I say Jason was some kind of man of God. He had a fierce, fearless, you-are-not-going-to-intimidate-me faith.

Sosipater is most likely the Sosipater from Berea, one of the men who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem to give the financial gift to the struggling mother church (Acts 20:3). He willingly sailed with Paul, knowing that persecution and trouble typically followed Paul's preaching and teaching. He went anyway. Again, I say, who is your Sosipater? Really, who are the three godly buddies who stick by our spiritual side no matter what? Paul had three Jewish converts who stuck by him: Lucias, Jason, and Sosipater. May God give you three buds like this. And may you today determine to be these types of saints to other saints. Believe me, every church leader, no matter what their position is in the church, need a threesome like this. They will be especially needed as our culture becomes more antagonistic to the faith, to the teaching of biblical truth, and to the belief in absolute truth.

Another man mentioned by Paul here is most interesting.

Tertius: Use your gifts for God. What was his gift? Being a scribe:

²² I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Paul typically dictated his letters to a scribe, who was also called in Latin an amanuensis (“of the hand”). The greetings Paul adds in some of his letters (1 Cor. 16:21; 2 Thess. 3:17; Col. 4:18), coupled with the statement in Galatians 6:11-18 that he wrote this portion with his own hand, buttresses the assertion he used scribes.

Could you imagine being a scribe and writing a long letter like Romans in Greek onto a scroll? The scribe had to follow dictation quickly and accurately, while he worked with a reed pen with some carbon-based ink. A scribe also had to be meticulous and very precise, especially if he believes he wrote the very inspired words of God. Here’s a picture of what a scribe’s final product would look like. Talk about a hard, demanding, and exacting job.

Tertius helped Paul at a whole other level, didn’t he? He took his specialized gift and employed it for the work of God. Did you know our church is full of Tertius-types? After my State of the Church address, I received a slew of emails from people who desire to help me edit my various books/commentaries. This will be an exciting ministry opportunity for these highly skilled people, and it will be demanding as they work through the 1,500-page commentary on Matthew and the 800-page commentary on Romans, to mention a few works which need work. But what greater thing can you do than take your secular gift and use it for sacred work? The former impacts the here and now, while the latter echoes in eternity. I like Paul thank God for Tertius. And if you would like to step up and say, “Hey, I’m Tertius, and here is how I could be used for God,” then let’s talk . . . by electronic means, of course, given COVID-19.

Another instructive saint appears in verse 23:

Gaius: Throw out the welcome mat. This is what the Scripture teaches us about his life.

²³ Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you.

Undoubtedly, this is Gaius from Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14), and since his full name could have been Gaius Titius Justus, he could have been the who hosted Paul on his first visit to Corinth (Acts 18:7). If this was Gaius, then his house was located next to the Jewish synagogue. Interestingly enough, Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue became a believer in Jesus the Messiah. Don’t you know that Gaius had something to do with this. He also appears to have welcomed the Corinthian church into his home. Interesting. Right next door to the synagogue was a home which sang the praises of Jesus the Messiah, and which taught that Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophesies of the Old Testament. Don’t tell me God does not know what He is doing in His quest to impact people with the gospel.

What stands out from the brief mention of Gaius? He had the gift of hospitality. Can you imagine opening your home up, in a hostile environment, to people from all walks of life to worship Jesus? Imagine the complaints you would receive about the loud worship disturbing others. Imagine the complaints you would receive about “parking,” and/or loitering problems. Imagine all the work you would have to do to get your house ready each week for all those people? Wow, what a commitment to being hospitable. If you learn anything from the life of Gaius it is this: Don’t flinch about rolling out the welcome mat at your home to other saints. Sure, during this Wuhan Corona Virus we have to adapt how we do this, but you can still do it. Hosting, say, a *Life Group*, via Zoom is acting like Gaius. Attending a weekly *Got Questions* via Facebook where I will answer apologetic questions live with our ladies is to be hospitable. God’s church needs people like Gaius. Is that you?

The last person we focus on is most intriguing:

Erastus: Let The Secular Impact The Sacred. From this short greeting, we learn how the gospel had touched lives up and down the social stratum:

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.

Erastus was the city treasurer for the wealthy city of Corinth. What does a city treasurer do? Here is how one web site defines this job for our modern day:

The city treasurer manages the investments of the city using standard government accounting procedures. He is responsible for working with the budget committee to prepare the city's annual budget. Throughout the year, the treasurer supervises expenditures and receipts and keeps the city on budget. The city treasurer records accounts payable and receivable in a timely manner, and prepares the payroll for the city. He works with auditors to certify tax assessments and levies. The city treasurer also collects building permit fees and other special fees assessed by the city for services, such as water and sewer.¹

The treasurer is the ultimate bean counter, a person who knows how to handle and manage money. By definition, he had to be a person of stellar, dependable character, as well as someone who paid attention to the details and was highly organized.

Think about it. This man took his secular abilities and put them at the disposal of the Church. Amazing. I'm sure he used his secular job to, also, broadcast the seed of the gospel. His value the Lord was evidenced in both areas without question. How about you? Are you using your secular abilities to impact the sacred world and vice versa? Does your secular world know you are a follower of Christ? Great. Do you have spiritual discussions around the proverbial water-cooler (when there isn't a virus quarantine, of course)? Great. You can even have these discussions online or by text. Is your sacred world, your church, benefitting from your unique secular skill set? Once more, I can't emphasize enough how we will need many more skilled folks to step forward to help us expand this ministry as we move into the new building this summer. Your marketing, graphics, writing, and computer skills will prove to be just what the church needs. Are you ready to step forward and say, "Hi, my name is Erastus and I'd like my secular skills to be used in the sacred world." I'll be looking for you.

It's true. The final words from great saints are instructive and motivational. By just this short analysis of Paul's words of greetings from saints in one church to saints in another church we gain flashes of insight regarding how God wants us to live for him. Hopefully, the Spirit has arrested your attention, and you are now convinced it's time to move onward and upward in your Christian walk.

A second spiritual nugget we see in the soil of this Scriptural passage is found in verses 25-27.

¹ <https://work.chron.com/city-treasurer-duties-12297.html>, accessed March 26, 2020.

Nugget 2: We learn things about God

In one long sentence in the original text, Paul culminates his thoughts to the Romans in a wonderful, moving doxology. What is a doxology? Its meaning comes from its base word which means “to give glory.” Here, Paul is so overcome with everything he has written about in the last 16 chapters when it comes to the power of the gospel of Christ, he breaks into a doxology in order to give the living God praise.

²⁵ 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 (Rom. 16).

What a doxology. Let's briefly study it so we can learn from its content.

In this doxology, Paul introduces us to three concepts about Jesus and His gospel.

One: His Gospel stabilizes you.

²⁵ Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ,

The gospel which saves you acts like a stabilizer kit attached to a kayak. Once it is bolted on it would take a tsunami (or wake from a very large passing boat) to flip you over. This is what the gospel does in your life. Before you knew Christ, you easily succumbed to temptations . . . why . . . you might not have even felt you were sinning because you had done this so often. However, your faith in Christ not only saved your soul, it equipped with the inner power of His Spirit (Eph. 1:15ff; 4:30) to withstand the best and most clever deceptions of the Devil. His presence, therefore, helps you stand strong and true for God for a change. His gospel also helps you stand in the fact that your faith is stabilized until you see Christ face to face. Is this not what justification by faith is all about, anyway? Once you are saved you are saved, and as Paul says in Romans 8, nothing can separate you from your standing with God. How comforting. Give God the glory!

Second,

His Gospel revolutionizes you. In what way? It revolutionizes your understanding of the redemptive plan of God, as articulated from Genesis to Revelation. Once this gospel is your gospel, once it has washed away your sin, once it has given you a new heart and mind, now, for the first time in your life you begin to connect the dots regarding God's ancient plan to save repentant sinners. Here is how Paul couches this point:

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,

Old Testament saints knew that the promised Seed was coming to deal with Satan and sin (Gen. 3:15). They knew, as Cain and Able learned, that God expects blood sacrifice from those who'd dare enter into His holy presence to worship Him (Gen. 4). They knew that God would bless the world through the presence of the Jews (Gen. 14) They knew that God would send a prophet

greater than Moses (Deut. 18). They knew, from the construction of the Tabernacle and the Temple, coupled with the blood sacrifice required in Leviticus 1, that no man could approach God with the prescribed and perfect sacrifice. They knew that the Messiah would be an eternal Davidic king (2 Sam. 7; Psalm 2; 89). Saints in the Old Testament knew much about God's redemptive plan for sinful mankind, but they only understood it to a point.

No saint in the Old Testament understood the mystery of how God would send His Son to be the Savior/ Messiah, and that He would use His sacrificial death to fulfill the Law of Moses and provide the means whereby Gentiles could also be His people. Even though there were hints of God reaching out to the Gentiles in the Old Testament, as in the Abrahamic Covenant, no one saw what was coming. No one. God's redemptive action was a *complete* mystery. As Paul's writes in Ephesians:

⁸ To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; ¹⁰ so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*. ¹¹ *This was* in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3).

God's gospel, which included the death of His Son, caught everyone off guard. God's glorious gospel which brings Jews and Gentiles together in an entity now called the Church caught everyone flat-footed.

But now we know. Yes, now we know the essence of the gospel. Yes, now we can look back with eyes of faith and connect the dots.

- Ah, Jesus is the greater Adam who lived a perfect life so He could undo the sinful works of Adam.
- Ah, Jesus is the greater Isaac insofar as He actually laid His life down to be our sacrifice for sin.
- Ah, Jesus is the greater Moses because He delivers people from the sea of sin.
- Ah, Jesus is the greater Joshua because He defeats the forces of evil.
- Ah, Jesus is the greater David because He has more power and is perfect.
- Ah, Jesus the sacrifice of all sacrifices because He was only offered up once for our sins.
- Ah, Jesus is the High Priest of all High Priests because He is eternal (Heb. 4, 7).

What was a mystery for thousands of years is now clearly known in our day? Jesus is the Christ, as prophesied, who alone was capable of dying for our sin, rising from the grave, and building His Church composed of all peoples. No wonder Paul says we should give Him praise. Do you? Will you?

Lastly,

His Gospel energizes you. How does it energize you? To obey the Lord who redeemed you.

leading to obedience of faith; ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

Before you were saved you obeyed your lusts and desires. You did not give God the time of day and laughed and scorned those who did. Before you were saved you were, as Paul argues in chapters 6 through 7, a slave to sin.

But now you are free, and you know it. Now, the gospel has freed you to live for the wise God who broke your chains. Now, you, of all people, can joyfully sing the words of the old hymn and really mean them:

Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord, to Thee—
Take my moments and my days—
Let them flow in ceaseless praise, let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my will and make it Thine—It shall be no longer mine:
Take my heart—it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne, it shall be Thy royal throne.

Give Him the glory due His name before you close your study of this wonderful, moving, and challenging book, the book of Romans.