

CONCERNING THE WAY

April 26, 2011

LESSON 121: PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS



Chapter 15 – Living a Life of Submission (cont.)

Romans 15:1-2 Now we who are strong ought to be patient with the weaknesses of those who are not strong and must stop pleasing ourselves. (2) Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building him up.

There really should not be a chapter break here, as Paul continues his discussion from chapter 14 about submitting to other believers who may be weaker in the faith. This is about what some call “doubtful things” – things which may not be declared to be sin in the Bible and which we have the freedom to partake in, but which immature or weaker believers may consider sin because of man-made taboos and traditions.

“We who are strong” – those believers who are mature in the faith and confident in their freedom in Christ. Those who are not strong are the believers who are weak in the faith, mentioned in chapter 14:1-3. These are people who may struggle with legalism – always worrying about whether they should or shouldn’t do something. But those who are strong must not boast in their strength, their understanding, but use their maturity to help those who are weak.

The point here, as in the last chapter, is not whether we should do those things or not, but especially in a situation where we are with other believers, we must focus on pleasing and honoring them instead of pleasing ourselves. This doesn’t mean we let others dominate us or take advantage of us, but, like Paul said, we are patient with them. We go out of our way to please them for the purpose of building them up.

Romans 15:3 For even the Messiah did not please himself. Instead, as it is written, “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”

Paul is quoting Psalm 69:9 here, giving us Jesus as the best example of what he is trying to tell us. If there’s anyone who ever had a right to please himself, it would be the Messiah. This verse in the Psalms means that He was insulted by people because of His association with the Father. Jesus was willing to set aside His own desires and rights and obey the Father even when He Himself might have chosen an easier path (Matthew 26:39). He had perfect freedom but chose not to exercise it so that the salvation of mankind could be accomplished. Imagine what can be accomplished through us when we give up our rights, our freedom, our desires, and obey God.

Romans 15:4 For everything that was written long ago was written to instruct us, so that we might have hope through the endurance and encouragement that the Scriptures give us.

This is referring to the Old Testament, and tells us that we can use those scriptures even today to give us endurance (patience), encouragement (counseling), and hope. Studying the scriptures not only makes the weak strong but helps us bear the weaknesses of others. This hope that Paul talks about is not some pie-in-the-sky desire that everything will turn out all right, but the confidence that all things

really do work together for our good (Romans 8:28).

Romans 15:5-6 Now may God, the source of endurance and encouragement, allow you to live in harmony with each other as you follow the Messiah Jesus, (6) so that with one mind and one voice you might glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah.

Paul may have been writing this because the church in Rome was having problems living in harmony. It's not surprising considering it was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. But Paul reminds them and us today that we need to live in harmony with each other and glorify God with one mind and one voice.

This means we are to be in unity with each other. But unity is often misunderstood. There are two main mistakes people make when it comes to Christian unity. One is that some assume that unity means that we must all agree on every point of doctrine. The other is that to have unity we must join with or be in outward unity with all Christian churches and organizations. Both of these are not what Christian unity is and not what Paul means here. Some individuals get very upset if you do not agree with their opinions about a non-essential point of doctrine. Concerning the other misinterpretation of unity, there are some churches and individuals who are working to unite with other churches and to do that they compromise their beliefs so as not to offend anyone. They do this just for the sake of unity. Finally, there are those who call themselves Christians that want to unite with other religions or religious groups. Again, they have to water down their Christian beliefs in order to find common ground with these groups. This is not true unity!

Notice from these verses what is the focal point of living in harmony with each other and being of one mind? Jesus! Jesus Christ is who we unite in! William Newell explains it well:

“When the Spirit of God is freely operating among a company of believers, the eyes of all of them, first, are toward Christ Jesus. They are thinking of Him, of His love, of His service, and of what will please Him. They are conscious of their blessed place in Him. Then follow, naturally, patient dealing with one another, comforting one another. Some of the company may know much more truth than others; many may hold varying judgments or opinions concerning particular matters. But this does not at all touch their unity—their conscious unity, in Christ; and it does not in the slightest degree hinder their being of one mind, and working together with one accord, and, in the vivid words of Scripture, be with one mind together according to Christ Jesus.” William Newell

Romans 15:7 Therefore, accept one another, just as the Messiah accepted you, for the glory of God.

We believers must accept each other, strong and weak believers alike. This brings glory to God. We may not like everyone. We may not like someone else's personality, or we may not like something they do. But we must accept each other with all of our faults, because the Messiah accepted us with all our faults. If God can heal the vast chasm that existed between Himself and mankind, can't we get along despite all our minor differences?

Romans 15:8-9 For I tell you that the Messiah became a servant of the circumcised on behalf of God's truth in order to confirm the promises given to our ancestors, (9) so that the gentiles may glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "That is why I will praise you among the gentiles; I will sing praises to your name."

This may shock some of you, but Jesus was not sent to earth to minister to us Gentiles. He was sent to the Jews. This might make some Christians angry today, but Jesus said it himself in Matthew 15:24. He came to fulfill the promises that God made to the forefathers of Israel. God did not make any promises or contracts to the Gentiles, but only to the Jews. Of course, He also came to reveal who God is, and to give His life a ransom for many, to become the propitiation for the whole world (1 John 2:2). That's where we Gentiles come in, what we benefit from. We get to share in the blessings of those promises, only because of God's mercy, not because of any covenants He made with us. But if you read the gospels, you see clearly that Christ's earthly ministry was only to the Jews.

These verses tell us a lot about what was going on in the church at Rome. The Jews and Gentiles in that church came from vastly different backgrounds, cultures, and traditions. These differences still exist today. Most Gentile churches don't have any Jews and most Messianic congregations don't have very many Gentiles. For the most part, we keep separate from each other. But Christ is our common ground, He brings us together, there is no difference in Him. He fulfills the promises given to the Jews through the prophets and in doing so brings mercy and salvation to the Gentiles. In verse 9 Paul quotes Psalm 18:49.

Romans 15:10-12 Again he says, "Rejoice, you gentiles, with his people!" (11) And again, "Praise the Lord, all you gentiles! Let all the nations praise him." (12) And again, Isaiah says, "There will be a Root from Jesse. He will rise up to rule the gentiles, and the gentiles will hope in him."

These are quotes from Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, Isaiah 11:10. Interestingly enough, these come from the three divisions of the Old Testament – the Law (Deuteronomy), the Writings (Psalms), and the Prophets (Isaiah), and from 3 of Israel's greatest heroes – Moses, David, and Isaiah. Paul gives us these scriptures to prove that God has always intended for all peoples, Jew and Gentile, to be one in Christ. We as Gentile believers can rejoice along with His people the Jews, because the descendant of Jesse (David's father), Jesus Christ, is also our King and our great hope. We have these blessings through the Jews. These verses will be fulfilled ultimately in the Millennial Kingdom, but it has started in this age of the Church. God is currently calling to Himself men and women, boys and girls from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

Romans 15:13 Now may God, the source of hope, fill you with all joy and peace as you believe, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This verse is a climax and conclusion to what Paul has been saying. Joy and peace comes to us from the Holy Spirit as we trust in Christ.

Paul's Future Plans

Romans 15:14-16 I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are filled with goodness and full of all the knowledge you need to be able to instruct each other. (15) However, on some points I have written to you rather boldly, both as a reminder to you and because of the grace given me by God (16) to be a minister of the Messiah Jesus to the gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering brought by gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Paul complements the Romans in verse 14. They weren't without problems, but it was a good church,

filled with godly people. He told them they were filled with goodness and knowledge. But he has been instructing them boldly on the importance of accepting each other. Let's look at how the Amplified version gives this verse:

Romans 15:14 Personally I am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are rich in goodness, amply filled with all [spiritual] knowledge and competent to admonish and counsel and instruct one another also.

The Greek word translated "instruct" can also mean admonish or counsel. There are thousands of books on counseling available, and there are always new techniques coming out, but Paul is saying you have all the knowledge you need to be able to counsel each other.

Notice Paul gives his credentials in verse 16. He was a minister of Messiah Jesus to the Gentiles. That's why Paul is sometimes referred to as "our apostle". Paul's God-given ministry was to the Gentiles. This was a difficult thing for most Jews to accept, even the believers, and even some of the original 12 apostles.

Because of Paul's sharing the good news with Gentiles, they became an acceptable offering to God. Like a priest, Paul introduced Gentiles to God, and then presented them like an offering to the Lord. God's willingness to accept Gentiles, set apart by the work of the Holy Spirit, shows His plan in the Church Age is to unite Jews and Gentiles in one body (Ephesians 3:6). Do you begin to understand how privileged we are? We have been adopted by God! (Romans 8:15-17, Ephesians 1:3-6)

Romans 15:17-19 Therefore, in the Messiah Jesus I have the right to boast about my work for God. (18) For I am bold enough to tell you only about what the Messiah has accomplished through me in bringing gentiles to obedience. By my words and actions, (19) by the power of signs and wonders, and by the power of God's Spirit, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of the Messiah from Jerusalem as far as Illyricum.

Paul didn't boast about anything he himself had done, but he boasted in what Christ had done through him. He doesn't speak or try to diminish in any way what happened at Pentecost with the original 12 apostles and their later work. He only speaks of what God has done through him. And he is specifically talking about his work with the Gentiles. What an awesome thing this was, to see so many Gentiles coming to Christ. This was a complete change in their very culture – from a wicked, pagan lifestyle to following Jesus.

But let's appreciate what Paul has done for us. Do you realize how important brother Paul is to us Gentiles? He is OUR apostle. We get our Christian doctrine from him. Like Moses was to Israel, Paul is to the Gentiles! We have the blessings as Christians that we have today because Paul obeyed God, and God used him in a special way.

Romans 15:20-22 My one ambition is to proclaim the gospel where the name of the Messiah is not known, so I don't build on someone else's foundation. (21) Rather, as it is written, "Those who were never told about him will see, and those who have never heard will understand." (22) This is why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.

Paul carefully planned his missionary trips. He only went to places where the gospel had not been preached before. Verse 20 tells us that there were other people spreading the gospel before Paul. They may not have had the theological understanding that Paul did, but they were teaching the truth

and people were coming to Christ. This was probably people who had heard the gospel preached by the apostles in Jerusalem or elsewhere and carried this good news to their homes throughout the Roman empire.

Romans 15:23-24 But now, having no further opportunities in these regions, I want to come to you, as I've desired to do for many years. (24) Now that I am on my way to Spain, I hope to see you when I come your way and, after I have enjoyed your company for a while, to be sent on by you.

Paul's ministry was not to stop at one place and settle down as a permanent pastor of a church. No, he was continually looking to spread the gospel to new areas. If he would have lived long enough, I have no doubt he would have travelled the entire world! We don't know if Paul ever actually made it to Spain, but ancient tradition says that he did. In about A.D. 95 Clement of Rome said Paul's travels reached "to the bounds of the west". Spain is as far west as you can get in Europe except for Great Britain.

Romans 15:25-27 Right now, however, I'm going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints, (26) because the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have been eager to share their resources with the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. (27) Yes, they were eager to do this, and in fact they are obligated to help them, for if the gentiles have shared in their spiritual blessings, they are obligated to be of service to them in material things.

At the time Paul was writing this letter to the Romans, the believers in Jerusalem were being persecuted. The Christian Jews, especially, were being persecuted. They couldn't get work because they were being shut out from the jobs by the unbelieving Jews. So Paul and believers in other towns wanted to bring a monetary gift to help these people in Jerusalem. This is really something. The believers in these areas in Greece realized they owed a debt of gratitude to the church in Jerusalem and wanted to help them. The Jews in Jerusalem had shared spiritual blessings with the Gentiles in Greece, and now they wanted to share material blessings with those saints in Jerusalem. Read more about this in Acts 24:17; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:13-14; 9:12-13; and Galatians 2:10.

Romans 15:28-29 So when I have completed this task and have put my seal on this contribution of theirs, I will visit you on my way to Spain. (29) And I know that when I come to you I will come with the full blessing of the Messiah.

This tells us that the gospel had really spread across the Roman Empire by this time, about 64 A.D. Paul was planning to go to faraway Spain in Western Europe to teach the gospel there. So, after he had taken the gift to Jerusalem, he was going to board a ship and take a trip across the Mediterranean – first to Rome, where he could visit the church he was writing to, and then on to Spain. Again, we're not sure if Paul ever reached Spain, but others certainly did and the gospel finally went to the furthest western reaches of the Empire. Notice that, even though it was Paul's ministry to be continually spreading the gospel to new areas, he knew that Jesus approved of his trip to Jerusalem and then to Rome.

Romans 15:30-33 Now I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, and by the love that the Spirit produces, to join me in my struggle, earnestly praying to God for me (31) that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, (32) and that if it's God's will, I may come to you with joy and be refreshed together with you. (33) Now may the God who grants peace be with all of you! Amen.

Notice the beginning of verse 30 that Jesus is ours, He is the Messiah of all of us who believe in Him. And the other thing that all believers have in common is the love that the Holy Spirit produces in us. Verse 31 – the unbelievers in Judea – this would be the Jewish people who hated Paul because they thought he was a traitor to Judaism. They would still have been trying to kill him if they could find him. So Paul was hoping he could avoid those people and make it safely to the church in Jerusalem. Well, he did make it safely to Jerusalem, and he would get to Rome, but he didn't know it would be in chains, after being imprisoned in Caesarea for two years and experiencing a shipwreck on the way. But it didn't slow him down much, because he was still a blessing to the church in Rome, and the Holy Spirit inspired him to write the letters to the Colossians, the Ephesians, and the Philipians while he was there.

Chapter 16 – Paul's Personal Greetings

A lot of people pass right over this final chapter in Paul's letter, thinking it's just not worth their time. But we really see Paul's heart in this chapter. Nowhere else do we see him being this intimate and loving. In this chapter Paul gives greetings and credits to a long list of people, 26 of them by name. He obviously had a lot of friends in Rome that were important to him. It's like the credits rolling at the end of a movie. Paul wants to make sure these people are recognized for their work for the Lord. Something to point out here is that there are a lot of women mentioned. Some people think that Paul was some kind of male chauvinist, but that's far from the truth. He worked with many women in the ministry and you can tell by the way he spoke of them that he respected and valued them very highly.

Romans 16:1-2 Now I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant in the church at Cenchraea. (2) Welcome her in the Lord as is appropriate for saints, and provide her with anything she may need from you, for she has assisted many people, including me.

“Servant” is translated “deaconess” in some versions. It has always been a debate in the church whether or not this is an official office in the church. There really is no evidence that it was, and this translation to “servant” is accurate. Many people in this office in churches think that they are elevated and entitled to rule over the church in some way, but the Greek meaning for “deacon” is clear – it means SERVANT. They are supposed to be servants, not masters.

There's nothing wrong with having the office of deaconess in a church, but we need to be careful not to be dogmatic about it either way. Some liberal churches think that Phoebe was the leader of a female “deaconess board”, but there is no scriptural evidence for that at all. Some are just so desperate to see an official office for females in the early church, they make things up that aren't there. See 1 Timothy 3 for a description of the office of elder and deacon in the church.

The Bible doesn't tell us exactly what Phoebe was doing in the church, but we can assume some possible duties she may have had, from Paul's other letters. We can be sure she was not teaching the Bible to men, but she may have been teaching other women and children. She could have been working in missions, with children, widows, possibly organizing collecting food and clothing for Paul, etc. She could have been doing both spiritual and physical work. But she was obviously valued as a big part of this church and Paul wanted to make sure she was commended for her work.

Romans 16:3-4 Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me for the Messiah Jesus, (4) and who risked their necks for my life. I am thankful to them, and so are all the

churches among the gentiles.

We know something about this husband and wife team from Acts 18:2, 18, 26; 1 Corinthians 16:19, and 2 Timothy 4:19. They moved, both because of persecution and their ministry, from Rome to Corinth, to Ephesus, and back to Rome again. Paul says they even risked their necks for him. They were true Christian heroes! They were obviously an important part of Paul's ministry. In Acts Prisca is called Priscilla, so this must have been Paul's nickname for her. Notice Prisca is mentioned first, before her husband. This may mean that she was superior in spiritual intelligence and activity to her husband even though Aquila was the head of the house (Acts 18:2). It is no accident that Prisca is mentioned first, as we see it also in Acts 18:26, and 2 Timothy 4:19. But where the household of the couple is mentioned, in Acts 18:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 16:19, Aquila is mentioned first. So Paul recognizes Prisca's spiritual position.

Romans 16:5-6 Greet also the church in their house. Greet my dear friend Epaenetus, who was the first convert to the Messiah in Asia. (6) Greet Mary, who has worked very hard for you.

So a church met in Prisca and Aquila's house. This Mary is not a Mary we have seen before. Some of the people mentioned in the upcoming verses are mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament.

Romans 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junias, my fellow Jews who are in prison with me and are prominent among the apostles. They belonged to the Messiah before I did.

It is possible that this could have been another husband and wife team. This Junias could be Junia, the feminine form of the name. The name Junia is more commonly found in Greek literature, but we just don't know for sure.

Romans 16:8-10 Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. (9) Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in the Messiah, and my dear friend Stachys. (10) Greet Apelles, who has been approved by the Messiah. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.

What does Paul mean here "approved by the Messiah"? We don't know. It's an interesting comment.

Romans 16:11 Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet those in the family of Narcissus, who belong to the Lord.

Because of his name, it is thought that Herodian must have been someone in Herod's household. This Narcissus may be Tiberius Claudius Narcissus, a wealthy freedman of the Emperor Tiberius. Narcissus was executed by order of Agrippina, Nero's mother, shortly after Nero came to the throne in A.D. 54 (which was a common thing in those days when one ruler replaced another). His slaves would have been known as "the household of Narcissus". Notice Paul says "the family of Narcissus, who belong to the Lord." Paul is only greeting those slaves of the household who belong to the Lord.

Romans 16:12-13 Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who have worked hard for the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, who has toiled diligently for the Lord. (13) Greet Rufus, the one chosen by the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.

Tryphaena and Tryphosa were probably sisters and maybe even twins. It was a common practice to name twins by using the same root word for both names. Persis must also be a woman, because it means "Persian woman". The end of verse 13 can be translated "his mother and mine", so some think

this may have been Paul's actual mother, but it's more likely that it was someone who was like a mother to Paul. Most of us know some wonderful women who have readily treated us as their own child, something that they will be rewarded for in heaven, I'm sure.

Romans 16:14-16 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. (15) Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints who are with them. (16) Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of the Messiah greet you.

Philologus and Julia may have been husband and wife. What is the "Holy kiss"? It was a common tradition in the early church, and you see it mentioned several times in the New Testament. "Holy" does not mean chaste, but more like a sincere loving greeting, as opposed to the deceptive kiss Judas gave Jesus in Luke 22:48. In the Eastern church this is still a feature in the liturgy, but it has been completely lost in the Western church.

Some translations say "churches of Christ", so there are some members of the Church of Christ that will say, "See, our denomination is mentioned in the Bible!" And they're being serious. They truly think they are the only true church today. People can be so silly sometimes!

Romans 16:17-18 Now I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who create divisions and sinful enticements that oppose the teaching you have learned. Stay away from them, (18) because such people are not serving the Messiah our Lord, but their own desires. By their smooth talk and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

Paul tells us that we should WATCH OUT for those who are teaching things that are in opposition to THE teaching that Paul has given them. This is an important command for us today. We should stay away from people like this, have no dealings with them. There are many of these false teachers out there today, and many of them are very popular. They say things from the pulpit, on the radio, on the internet, on TV, in stadiums, and in books that may sound good and make you feel good ("smooth talk and flattering words"), but they are not serving the Lord Jesus and their teachings oppose what is taught in the Bible. They have taken their eyes off the Bible, off of the Lord Jesus, and are serving themselves. Peter talks about this in 2 Peter 2:1-3, and Paul again in 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

"Unsuspecting" means naive. There are many Christians who are naive, mostly because they don't know their Bible. They can be swayed and deceived very easily. Be careful of "new" methods or teachings. People love new things, always want to try the latest fad, the most popular method. That may be fun for clothing styles but can be deadly when it comes to spiritual things. Most likely these methods are useless at best and outright heretical and dangerous at worst. **We don't need "new" teachings or new methods, we just need to know our Bibles and obey what God says in His Word.**

Romans 16:19 For your obedience has become known to everyone, and I am full of joy for you. But I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

After Paul warns the church to watch out for false teachers, he commends them for obeying God's commands. Everyone knew the church in Rome was a good church. But Paul knows even a good church can fall, so he warns them to be careful to keep the good going, and keep the evil out.

Romans 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be with all of you!

Paul just throws this little verse out there but doesn't explain it. It seems to recall Genesis 3:15, where God says, speaking to Satan, "He will strike you on the head". Paul seems to be saying that God will use us to crush Satan. The church through Jesus Christ will ultimately have the victory over the enemy, and he will be utterly defeated.

The Greek word translated "soon" can be interpreted two ways. It can be that something will happen quickly, or it can mean that when it does happen, it will happen very fast. We really don't know if Paul was speaking prophetically about something that was about to happen with the church in Rome. Many Christians were martyred in Rome under the rule of Nero. That may have been a tremendous witness to the rest of the world, and maybe that's what Paul is speaking of.

Romans 16:21-22 Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you, as do Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my fellow Jews. (22) I, Tertius, who penned this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Paul seems to have all of a sudden recalled a few more people he wanted to greet in his letter. Of course we know Timothy from the book of Acts and the letters he wrote to this young pastor. This Jason may have been the Jason who was Paul's host on his first visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17:6,7,9). We learn here that Paul did not actually write the letter, but dictated it to someone named Tertius.

It is thought that he was a Roman slave, because his name means "third". In slave families they didn't bother to think up names; they just numbered the children. So their names were First, Second, Third, and so on.

Romans 16:23-24 Gaius, who is host to me and the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus greet you. (24) May the grace of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be with all of you!

Quartus, which means "fourth", may have been Tertius' brother. In fact this verse may have been Tertius' personal greetings. Gaius is probably the man Paul baptized at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:14). This may also have been the Titius Justus of Acts 18:7, who offered the use of his house to Paul when the young church at Corinth was expelled from the synagogue next door.

Romans 16:25-27 Now to the one who is able to strengthen you with my gospel and the message that I preach about Jesus, the Messiah, by revealing the secret that was kept hidden from long ago (26) but now has been made known through the prophets to all the gentiles, in keeping with the decree of the eternal God to bring them to the obedience that springs from faith — (27) to the only wise God, through Jesus the Messiah, be glory forever! Amen.

Wow, what a closing statement! This is recognized as one of the greatest doxologies in the Bible. First of all, Paul above all else is giving God the glory. What does he mean by "my gospel"? Is there more than one gospel? Some think so. But no - it's the same gospel that was preached by the other apostles, but given to Paul directly by Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus and was designed to be taken to the Gentiles. That is the secret that was kept hidden from long ago, that the Gentiles would be offered salvation through the death of the Messiah. And this is the teaching that is able to strengthen (or "harden") us, make us tough. Paul speaks more of this secret, or mystery, as it says in

some versions, in Ephesians:

Ephesians 3:2-12 Surely you have heard about the responsibility of administering God's grace that was given to me on your behalf, (3) and how this secret was made known to me through a revelation, just as I wrote about briefly in the past. (4) By reading this, you will be able to grasp my understanding of the secret about the Messiah, (5) which in previous generations was not made known to human beings as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This is that secret: (6) The gentiles are heirs-in-common, members-in-common of the body, and common participants in what was promised by the Messiah Jesus through the gospel. (7) I have become a servant of this gospel according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. (8) To me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given so that I might proclaim to the gentiles the immeasurable wealth of the Messiah (9) and help everyone see how this secret that has been at work was hidden for ages by God, who created all things. (10) He did this so that now, through the church, the wisdom of God in all its variety might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm (11) in keeping with the eternal purpose that God carried out through the Messiah Jesus our Lord, (12) in whom we have boldness and confident access through his faithfulness.

This concludes our study in the book of Romans. Paul expands on many of the things he taught here in other letters, and I hope you will continue to study those on your own. I'll leave you with a short list of some of the important truths in Romans (and in Paul's other epistles which we have brought in as needed). This is something you can take with you and hold close to your heart. I pray that you see that:

1. Our history, our "old man" in the first Adam was ended at the cross. We no longer belong to that condemned family.
2. Jesus Christ, the last Adam, with Whom God has now connected us, is wholly a heavenly Christ, and that we are no longer under the Law of Moses, which was given to earthly Israel alone, and has been fulfilled in Christ.
3. We are absolutely connected with, joined to, this heavenly Christ, so that we have been received in Christ as belonging to heaven, like He does, that we are "the righteousness of God in Him"; that we are loved even as He is; and that our citizenship is in heaven. Our hearts must be convinced that these things are facts, not figures of speech, or things to be realized in some far future. We wait for the redemption of our bodies, but we ourselves are already in the new creation, and for us old things (all earthly things, "religious" or worldly), have passed away.
4. Blindness has (temporarily) come upon Israel; that the mystery of lawlessness is working; that sin will increase and "evil men and seducers grow worse and worse" in professing Christendom— of all these things we should be convinced: but knowing them beforehand, and understanding that the course of things on earth has nothing to do with our heavenly calling, we will continue steadfast in faith.
5. An ever-deepening humility will be formed in us by the knowledge that we have been called into this Divine union, so that there is fulfilled in us what our Lord prayed for: "That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in us.
6. Not only humility, but hope—the true hope of the well-taught Christian, will rise and well up in our hearts: "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).
7. The believer walks consciously justified from all things, and in newness of life; as a new creature in Christ; as made alive together with Christ, raised up in Him, and made to sit with Him in the heavenlies; as with Paul our example ran His course toward Christ Himself; as walking through many dangers on this earth, yet "holding fast the Head," in Whom the believer is complete positionally and being made complete in actuality; and so with ever-captivating hope he expects the day when Christ shall appear, and he becomes "in a moment" "like Him,"—seeing Him as He is.