

GEMS FROM THE ENDINGS OF THE EPISTLES
Part VII: Gems From The Ending Of Romans, A. D. 57
(Romans 15:14-16:27)

I. Introduction

- A. The epistle to the Romans was written by Paul from Corinth around A. D. 57 during his third missionary journey (Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 434).
- B. Paul had never visited Rome's believers (Romans 15:22-23), so to prepare them for his arrival, his long ending in Romans explained his delay in visiting them, it greeted many believers in Rome and gave intense guidance with the longest benediction of Paul's Biblical epistles. We view this ending for our edification:

II. Gems From The Ending Of Romans, A. D. 57; Romans 15:14-16:27.

- A. Paul stated the critically important Biblical basis of capable Biblical counseling by believers in Romans 15:14:
 - 1. He wrote that his readers were full of goodness and knowledge, competent to "instruct" one another. The Greek word for "instruct," *nouthetein*, means "to counsel, admonish" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 496).
 - 2. Jay Adams' book, Competent to Counsel (1970) used this verse to start the Biblical Counseling movement that we also support, the view that believers using Scripture in the Spirit's power are competent to counsel.
- B. Paul then explained that he had written boldly to his many Gentile (as well as Hebrew) readers in Rome since Christ had called and gifted him to minister primarily to Gentiles, Romans 15:15-19.
- C. The apostle then explained how this ministry had delayed his visiting his readers in Rome, Romans 15:21-22:
 - 1. Paul wrote that his calling to the Gentiles was one of pioneer, foundation-building based on the discipling principle stated in Isaiah 52:15 (Romans 15:20-21; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Rom. 15:21).
 - 2. This fact explained why he had been so preoccupied with pioneer work with the many unreached Gentiles that he had been unable to visit Rome's believers who had previously been well disciplined, Romans 15:22.
- D. Paul then gave his readers his future plans on his finally coming to visit them, Romans 15:23-33:
 - 1. Running out of unreached areas east of Rome, Paul planned to go to Rome to minister to his readers and to be helped by them on his way to evangelize west of Rome as far as Spain, Romans 15:23-24.
 - 2. However, Paul was first going to Jerusalem with an offering for the saints there who had given the Gospel to the Gentiles before he planned to go to Rome and eventually end up in Spain, Romans 15:25-29.
 - 3. Paul thus asked his readers to pray that he might be delivered from harmful foes in Judaea, Rom. 15:30-33.
- E. Since Phoebe was a female "servant" in the Church who was likely carrying this letter from Corinth to Rome, Paul urged his readers to assist her in her ministry since she had been so helpful to many believers, Romans 16:1-2. The Greek word "servant" is *diakonon*, used for the office of deacon in passages like Philippians 1:1 (B. K. C., N. T., op. cit., p. 499), but also in a general sense of "servant" as in Romans 15:8 (*Ibid.*). Since Paul forbade women from exercising authority over men in 1 Timothy 2:12, *diakonon* here carries the general meaning of "servant" and **not** that Phoebe was an official deacon with authority over men in the Church!
- F. In Romans 16:3-16, Paul greeted the largest group of people recorded in any of his epistles, likely since he had never visited Rome and since he was trying to establish good relations with them to prepare for his visit.
- G. What follows in verses 17-20 is a warning that the readers should note those who cause divisions and put obstacles (*skandala*, "traps, snares," *Ibid.*, p. 501) in their way that were contrary to the teaching they had learned. Those who did this did not serve Christ, but their lusts, using smooth talk and flattery to deceive the naïve, Romans 16:17-18 NIV. Paul was confident that his readers obeyed the truth, but he wanted them to be wise about what was good and innocent about what was evil, Romans 16:19. He was sure that the God of peace would soon crush Satan under his readers' feet (Romans 16:20 NIV), an allusion to Genesis 3:15 and a claim that shows we should not fight Satan in our power, but rely on God for Satan's defeat (cf. 1 John 2:14b).
- H. Paul then sent greetings from other believers with him (Romans 16:21-24). Of note with regard to Christian apologetics is Paul's reference to "Erastus, who is the city's director of public works" (Romans 15:23b NIV). Excavations at Corinth in 1929 exposed a pavement inscribed in Latin with the words, "Erastus, curator of public buildings, laid this pavement at his own expense" (Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, 1991, p. 110).
- I. Paul then gave his closing benediction which is "the most complete statement of the message he proclaimed, what in this passage he called my gospel," Romans 16:25-27; *Ibid.*, p. 502.

Lesson: Paul gave intense guidance in his closing to the epistle to the Romans that is very applicable to our time.

Application: May we heed Paul's intense guidance in the closing to his epistle to the Romans for God's blessing.