

Bible Reading Notes

the good way

32. 'So you want to serve the Lord!'

Romans 15.8-13

Monday 16th September – Sunday 22nd September

Many of the potential 'quarrels' over 'disputable matters' (Rom.14.1) stemmed from the diverse backgrounds of the believers in the church at Rome: particularly, of course, the co-existence of Jew and Gentile.

It's this which prompts Paul to address, and to some extent justify, the ministry which he has exercised as the apostle to the Gentiles. While the passage here, however, is necessarily focussed on Paul's specific ministry, what he writes provides a helpful perspective on the ministry which each believer individually, and the church collectively, will exercise.

Along with the verses in Romans 15, a number of other passages have been included in this study to highlight the way in which from the very outset God's promise was essentially and consistently *inclusive* (rather than exclusively applied to the Jews); and to underline the extent to which all ministry is ultimately future-oriented. We live and serve *in hope*: a hope that's rooted in God's promise, altogether more glorious than we can begin to countenance, and prefigured in the remarkable multi-cultural nature of Christ's church as we gather and worship together.

Try and read all the passages, but concentrate on 'days' (1), (2) and (7) since they all relate to the passage in Romans 15.

1) Monday 16th September – Christ’s ministry

Read [Romans 15.8](#)

“.. *Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth ..*” (Rom.15.8)

Jesus came not to be served but to serve ([Mk.10.45](#)): now risen from the dead, He continues to minister (serve) and His followers are called to share in that ministry along with Him – a ministry which has the glory of God as its ultimate aim.

What does Paul mean by referring to Jesus as ‘a servant of the Jews’?

In what three ways does Paul describe Jesus’ continuing ministry?

How does this help define for Christ’s church what our priorities should be?

Why is so much stress given to ‘the promises made to the patriarchs’?

Those promises included both a line and a land (see eg [Gen.17.4-8](#)): what bearing do such promises have on what’s happening in the Middle East today?

Prayer: I thank You, Christ Jesus my Lord, who has given me strength, that You considered me trustworthy and appointed me to Your service. What mercy You show!

2) Tuesday 17th September – good news for all

Read [Romans 15.9-12](#)

“.. *Therefore I will praise You among the Gentiles ..*” (Rom.15.9)

Jesus is good news for *everyone*. God’s great purpose always embraced both Jew and Gentile and that note in the gospel message sounds out through the whole Old Testament like a steady drumbeat. The Gentiles weren’t an afterthought: nor are you!

The reality, and indeed the richness, of God’s mercy is pervasive in Paul’s thinking (see [11.30-32](#), [12.1](#) and [1 Tim.1.12-17](#))! How can you ensure that you remain always conscious of and grateful for that mercy?

What different emphasis is highlighted by each of the four quotations from the Old Testament?

What do each of these quotations teach us about the ministry of Jesus in which as His church believers are now involved?

How would you answer a critic who points to all the troubles in the world and argues that Jesus’ rule over the nations is either non-existent or ineffective?

Prayer: How I think You, my Lord and God, for those who sounded out Your praise to me and helped me to rejoice, along with all Your people, in Yourself and in Your rule.

3) Wednesday 18th September – blessing

Read [Genesis 12.1-3](#)

".. all peoples on earth will be blessed through you .." (Gen.12.3)

God's call to Abram is mirrored in the call of Jesus to His disciples ([Mt.28.18-20](#)). He was to *go* – and wherever the Lord would take him, the direction of travel had all people on earth in view. The blessing on disciples ([Lk.24.50](#)) spills over to the world.

In what ways have you experienced the call of God to 'go'?

How (if at all) has a 'missionary' mindset grown in your heart?

Prayer: *You have set Your heart on all peoples, O Lord. Forgive me that often I can be all too 'clannish', and stir in my heart a deepening love for those who differ from me.*

4) Thursday 19th September – bearing witness

Read [Acts 1.1-8](#)

".. and to the ends of the earth .." (Acts 1.8)

Jesus came to bear witness to the truth ([Jn.18.37](#)). That's not all He came to do, of course! But it *is* the part of what He came to do, the aspect of His continuing ministry, which He entrusted specifically to His people. And it always has the nations in view!

If a friend asked you what's meant by 'the kingdom of God' how would you answer?

Our primary calling as believers is to bear witness to Christ and 'declare the praises' of the Lord ([1 Pet.2.9](#)): how has the Spirit helped you do that?

Prayer: *So Spirit, come, put strength in every stride, give grace for every hurdle, that we may run with faith to win the prize of a servant good and faithful.*

5) Friday 20th September – sent out

Read [Acts 26.12-18](#)

".. I am sending you to them to open their eyes .." (Acts 26.17f)

Saul of Tarsus was both a zealous Jew and also a citizen of Rome: a man with a foot firmly planted in two camps: his conversion (thrice recorded in Acts) marked a pivotal moment in God's ancient plan to extend His blessing to the nations of the world.

Like Saul, every believer is appointed 'as a servant and as a witness' (v.16): how does that calling find expression in your life?

Compare v.17 with [Jer.1.7-8](#): believers are always a 'sent' people: in what ways have you been conscious of the Lord *sending* you?

Prayer: *Thank You, Lord, that You send me out each day to serve You. Help me today to remember the privilege of that call and to point others to You in what I do and say.*

6) Saturday 21st September – multi-national praise!

Read [Revelation 7.9-10](#)

“.. a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation ..” (Rev.7.9)

A tiny glimpse into a glorious future too wonderful for words adequately to describe. A *multitude*. A *great* multitude. A *great multitude that no one could count*. Every nation, every tribe, every people, every language. Uniting to praise our Saviour God!

The gathering of God’s people every Sunday is a signpost to the future: what steps might you take to help others rejoice in the prospect of that future?

Are there people in your fellowship from other backgrounds whom you might get to know better?

Prayer: *How wonderfully varied is Your family, Lord! Help me savour the different gifts that others have, the different insights they bring, the different strengths they display.*

7) Sunday 22nd September – overflowing with hope

Read [Romans 15.13](#)

“.. may the God of hope fill you will all joy and peace as you trust in Him ..” (Rom.15.13)

Our trust in the Lord is always, and essentially, forward-looking: the Spirit of God impresses on our hearts both the promises of God, and the activity of God in His Son, and fills our hearts with a joyful assurance and an eager anticipation of coming glory!

Why do you think Paul describes the Lord here specifically as ‘the God of hope’?

What has been your experience of the ‘joy and peace’ to which Paul refers here?

How are believers able under God to sustain this joy and peace even through times of sorrow, adversity and pain?

What steps might you take, beyond looking to the Lord in prayer, to ensure that your living is marked by this sense of ‘overflow’ (see [Ps.23.5](#))?

Prayer: *On this fresh resurrection day, help me look back with gratitude rather than nostalgia, Lord: and forward in hope and expectation instead of anxiety and fear.*