

THE CLOSING WORDS OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS **Romans 16:17-27**

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

We have come to the closing verses of the Book of Romans. This magnificent book has been used by God to start many revivals. In the fourth century God used it to bring Augustine to a saving knowledge of Christ and the church was revived. When it appeared that the gospel would pass from the face of the earth during the Middle Ages, God used this book to bring Martin Luther to Christ in the sixteenth century and the revival of the Reformation had its beginning. Several hundred years after the Reformation, in which the spirit of Christ permeated the whole of Europe and America, there was a turn to formalism and much of the spirit of the Reformation was extinguished. Then in the eighteenth century, God used the Book of Romans to save John Wesley and there was a great revival of Christianity in England and America. This book has caused a revival of true Christianity in the hearts of multiplied thousands of Christians down through the years as they have obeyed its teachings. God has used Romans to cause a revival in my own heart.

Now the question is, "Has there been a revival in your heart as you have read these messages and studied the Book of Romans?" If it has not caused your heart to burn for Christ, then there is something radically wrong with your Christian experience.

WARNING CONCERNING FALSE TEACHERS — Romans 16:17-21

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" — The Apostle Paul warned these Romans to be on the alert for false teachers who deny the true Christian faith and to avoid them. False teachers destroy one's faith and cause divisions and scandal in the professing church. How soon did this very church in Rome open its doors to just such false teachers as he warned them against, and so by the seventh century the Papacy itself was enthroned in Rome!

"For your obedience is come abroad unto all men" — These Romans were obedient and zealous Christians and had a good reputation in all Christian circles. This, no doubt, was because they had sound doctrine and did not follow false teachers. The Romans were Christians who believed God and this resulted in obedience. It is really impossible to have faith without its resulting in obedience.

A person may say he has faith that a chair will hold him up. He sees that the chair is well constructed and strong, but he does not really believe until he sits down and lets the chair hold him up. Obedience must result from faith or true faith has never been exercised.

“I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple (innocent) concerning evil” — This is a profound verse, one that is desperately needed among Christians today. In context, it is speaking about doctrinal error; that is, Christians should not be occupied with error but with truth.

This verse can also apply in the area of morals and ethics. Christians are to be wise unto good and innocent unto evil. They should desire to grow in the knowledge of God and to be naive concerning evil. Because evil destroys the mind and body, the less we know about it the better off we are.

In our modern society those who count it a mark of distinction to be “in the know” about everything think that they are not sophisticated unless they have tried everything at least once. Yet God says He wants us to be unsophisticated to that which is evil.

Some kids raised in Christian homes say they wish they had been in the world for a while before they were saved. Having had a Christian background since birth, they know very little about sin and think they have a poor understanding of salvation. Don't believe this! The less we know experientially about sin, the better off we are. The problem of children raised in Christian homes is not needing to experience sin but getting a better concept of what sin really is, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The frightfulness of sin experienced before conversion never leaves the mind, although the sins have been forgiven. How many times I have begged God to take out of my mind things I did as a non-Christian! Even though I have been forgiven, these things still come back to haunt me at times.

Our minds and hearts are like a garden which grown weeds naturally, but to grow flowers, it must be cultivated. Our hearts and minds produce sin naturally because we are sinners, but if we are to produce fruit for God, we must plow, harrow, plant, cultivate, nourish, and weed our minds of sin.

“And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” — The thought here is that if these Romans were true to Christ and obedient to God, any doctrinal error that might have crept in through the wiles of Satan would be crushed by God.

Paul believed that Satan was a real person, not an impersonal force. In Scripture, Satan is called the great deceiver and he has craftily brought the mass of mankind, even many of those in professing Christendom, to believe that he does not exist. Wherever this is believed, Satan has a free hand. You who know God must believe that He will crush Satan's plans and bless you as you obey his commands.

GREETINGS FROM THE CHRISTIANS IN CORINTH — Romans 16:22-24

Paul wrote the letter of Romans from Corinth, and the saints there were anxious to send their greeting to the saints at Rome.

“Timotheus my workfellow, . . .” -- Paul had taken Timothy as a young man and trained him, not just theoretically but on the job. Every pastor should have four or five Timothys.

“And Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you” — These were relatives of Paul’s who he had led to the Lord. Now they were active in helping him in the ministry of reaching others for Christ.

“I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord” — Tertius, probably a slave, was an amanuensis; that is, he wrote down word for word what the Apostle dictated. But he wanted to give his own greeting. Paul did not write most of his letters personally because we believe he had eye trouble that caused him to have to write with large letters.

“Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you.” -- Gaius was probably a prosperous businessman who lived in Corinth and he had opened his home to the Apostle Paul and his home was also used for the meeting of the local church in Corinth. He had the spiritual gift of hospitality and used it for the Lord.

“Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you” — Erastus was the city treasurer who had trusted Christ. Archeologists have found a stone marker in Corinth bearing the name of Erastus as city treasurer. While the stone was covered for centuries, those who read God’s Word have known Erastus’ name quite well. How wonderful to know that there have been, and are today, men of note, position, or honor who have followed the Lord Jesus Christ.

Queen Victoria of England said that she wished the second coming of Christ would take place while she was alive that she might have the privilege of laying the crown of the British Empire at his feet.

Another English queen, Elizabeth, was known to read I Corinthians 1:26 over and over, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” She thanked God continually for her salvation for she understood that God calls not many of nobility to salvation.

“And Quartus a brother” — This is a slave name. Naming slaves was as simple as one, two, three in those days. The first was called Primus, the second, Secundus, the third, Tertius, and the fourth Quartus. Tertius and Quartus, who were slaves on this earth, had trusted Christ. Their names will be primus in heaven, for our Lord said, “The first shall be last and the last shall be first.”

The Bible speaks of the “koinonia” or the “fellowship” of true Christians. This new kind of fellowship hit the Roman world with a wallop, for it was held together by love — the love of Christ for Christians and the love of Christians for one another. The only place brotherhood really works is in true Christianity. The idea of brotherhood apart from regeneration and new life in Christ is simply a fairy-tale.

Slaves in the Roman Empire could be treated worse than animals. They could be sold or killed at the pleasure of their owner. In the *koinonia* they were given an equal place at the communion table with their Christian masters. We can imagine that Gaius has been a cruel master before he came to know Christ under Paul’s ministry and was transformed. He then began to talk to his slaves about Christ and some of them responded to Christ. What a revolution! Slaves and masters could sit at the same table, eating the same bread and drinking the same wine. The social effects of Christianity on the Roman world is more than any of us can imagine.

EXHORTATION TO REMEMBER THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH — Romans 16:25, 26

“Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began“ — In the Old Testament salvation was almost exclusively of Jews, but at the coming of Christ a new truth was revealed — Jew and Gentile form the Church of Jesus Christ and are on an equal footing before God. All who trust Christ as personal Savior make up this body and they are all one in Christ. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

“But now is made manifest, and by the Scripture of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of the faith“ — This truth — that all who trust Christ form the Church (called out ones) — is for all nations. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The object of preaching Christ is to bring men to the place where they obey God through Christ.

God has commanded all men to believe and repent (change their minds about Christ).

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved . (Acts 16:31).

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: . . .“ (Acts 17:30).

Men are to obey this command and be saved from sin and the consequences of sin, A failure to obey Christ for salvation will result in judgment.

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear” (I Pet. 4:17, 18)?

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (II Thes. 1:7—9).

“To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.” — Paul began this epistle with God and ended it with God, for salvation, from beginning to end, is of God and to God alone belongs the glory.

CONCLUSION

God, the author of salvation, calls men to salvation through Christ Jesus. When you respond to God’s inner and outer call of the gospel, you will be converted. You will show forth the fruit of becoming a new creature, receiving the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and the assurance of heaven after death.

If God is calling you now, obey that call and submit to Christ as your Lord and Savior. Do not delay your submission to Christ one moment; upon this decision rests your eternal destiny.