

Romans

Bible Study

Established

Romans 16:17–27

We have come to Paul's last words to the churches in Rome. These last words are a wrap up of Paul's teaching on the elementary doctrines concerning our faith for those in the Church, the Body of Christ. The concepts presented in the book of Romans become the foundation upon which we can build the complete body of knowledge presented in the rest of Paul's books. Without a firm foundation of proper knowledge, we will be less equipped to understand and apply the books following Romans because we will not have been properly set firm in the faith.

Warning to the churches

The congregations in Rome were most likely small home churches that had been formed by people who had come to know Pauline doctrine. Some perhaps moved there to escape persecution from unbelieving Jews. Everywhere Paul taught, there were people who wanted to hinder his ministry and pervert what he was teaching (Galatians 1:7–9; 2:4; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13; 1 Timothy 1:3–7; Titus 1:10–14; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–2; 3:2; Acts 17:5; Romans 1:13). Other believers were certainly persecuted for their beliefs also.

Knowing that there were people who were perverting his teachings, and to maintain a solid doctrinal foundation for the Body of Christ, Paul instructed Timothy to carefully preserve the doctrine that was given to him. He tells Timothy to teach no other doctrine than what he learned from Paul (1 Timothy 1:3). Paul warned him that there will be those who come preaching the doctrine of devils (1 Timothy 4:1). Paul saw this happen to those in Galatia, where they left sound doctrine to go back under the slavery of the Law (Galatians 3:1–5).

An unfortunate translation of 2 Timothy 1:12 in some versions leads one to believe that Paul was talking about God preserving Paul's salvation to the end. This verse is not about eternal security; instead it is about God preserving His word.

A semi-literal Greek translation of 2 Timothy 1:12 would say that God is able to guard the deposit entrusted to Paul (He is powerful to guard my deposit, or guard what was entrusted to me). The context surrounding this verse does not support the idea that it refers to God protecting Paul's salvation. The previous verses show Paul giving a quick overview of what God has done for us, that He saved us according to His own purpose and grace through Jesus Christ (verses 9–10). Paul then says that it was this gospel that was given to him as a preacher, apostle, and teacher to the Gentiles (verse 11). This gospel is what God committed to Paul, and Paul was assured that God would protect what was entrusted to him (the Mystery doctrine) (verse 12). Paul then admonishes Timothy in the following verses to hold fast these sound words (of the Mystery doctrine which was committed to Paul by Jesus Christ) which Paul had taught Timothy (verses 13–14). Paul continues this thought in the next chapter by telling Timothy that he is now to commit these sound words to faithful men who will teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).

The whole context is about God preserving His word through faithful men. Paul was first in line to receive the Mystery doctrine. He then committed this doctrine to Timothy, who likewise was told to pass it on to faithful men. These are men who would be faithful in preserving and distributing the doctrine which was originally given to Paul by Jesus Christ.

The established believer (verse 25)

The whole book of Romans contains doctrine that establishes the believer firm in the faith. Paul begins the book of Romans by expressing his desire that the believers in Rome be established in the faith (Romans 1:11), and concludes the book of Romans by saying that Jesus Christ has the power to establish the believer through the doctrine contained in the book of Romans. When a believer is established, he is firmly held in place so that when anything comes along, he is not pushed off balance. The established believer is one who

is not blown about by every wind of doctrine because he has the information needed to know what he believes and why he believes it (Ephesians 4:14). The person who is sure of what he believes will continue to stand no matter what other teachings come his way. A complete understanding of reconciliation, justification, sanctification, and the freedom we have in Christ is essential and makes it possible to confidently live for Christ. The believer who has been established by the doctrine in Romans is one who is ready to move on and grow up in their Christian life. Those who don't have a good grasp of the doctrine in Romans will be ill equipped to grow in Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

Revelation of the Mystery (verses 25–26)

Paul leaves no doubt as to what doctrine establishes the believer in this Dispensation of Grace. It is the doctrine that came from the risen and glorified Jesus Christ, namely, the revelation of the Mystery. We know that Paul received the revelation of the Mystery directly from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11–12). The Church, the Body of Christ, and its future was planned out even before creation by the Godhead (Ephesians 1:4). This doctrine was kept a complete secret until Jesus Christ revealed it to the Apostle Paul. It was never revealed in any form until God, through Jesus Christ, told Paul what was going to happen after Israel's program of the Kingdom was put on the back burner.

Paul calls this new doctrine "my gospel" to distinguish it from Peter's doctrine of the Kingdom. He does this time after time to make sure there is no confusion about what gospel Paul is preaching (Romans 2:16; 2 Timothy 2:8; Ephesians 3:2–9). It must be understood that when Paul says the word *gospel* that he is often including the complete body of doctrine contained in what he calls the Mystery (Colossians 1:25–27). When Paul says he is eager to preach the gospel to those who are in Rome, he is telling this to people who are already believers (Romans 1:15). Romans 2:16 makes it clear that the gospel encompasses more than just how to get saved. Everywhere he went, Paul was preaching this good news that Christ had given to him (Romans 15:19–20). The same can be seen in 1 Thessalonians 3:2 where Timothy was sent to the believing Thessalonians to strengthen them in the faith. This was not about getting them saved, but about them growing in the faith by understanding and applying Paul's doctrine.

Ephesians 3:1–7 shows the process by which the other apostles and prophets in Paul's day were informed about the changes that God was making. Paul was given a stewardship, the Mystery. As a steward, he was made responsible, by God, for carrying the Mystery doctrine to the Gentiles (Colossians 1:25–26). He was made a steward by Jesus Christ who personally gave him the Mystery doctrine (Galatians 1:11–12). It was the Holy Spirit who then revealed to the apostles and prophets that what Paul was teaching was indeed from God. He did this beginning with Peter when He brought him to Cornelius. It was there that Peter witnessed the Holy Spirit come upon the Gentiles who believed, even without being baptized (unlike what happened in Acts 2). Acts 15 and Galatians 2 chronicle the process of the Holy Spirit working within the Jerusalem church to cause the leaders to understand that Paul was preaching a new, God-given doctrine.

Manifested by the Scriptures (verse 26)

Paul often quoted the Old Testament to support what he was teaching. At that time, Scripture consisted only of the Old Testament, so it was logical for Paul to use what Scripture was available at that time. He used Scripture to prove who Jesus Christ was. Both the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace rest on the Person of Jesus Christ and the work he did on the cross. We need to believe in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, while Israel needed to believe in Jesus Christ as Messiah, and then they were to prove their faith by their works (James 2:14–26). Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are the basis of justification for all believers throughout history. Paul's Mystery doctrine, though different from the Kingdom message, cannot be separated from the Old Testament. It is critically important to understand the connection between the Old Testament and what Paul is preaching. All of Scripture is important for our learning and understanding (Romans 15:4).

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