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On this issue of the offering of the Gentiles that we find here in Romans chapter 15, Paul is saying in verse 16 that his ministry, ministering the Gospel of God, is so that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. So in what way can Paul's ministry make the offering of the Gentiles sanctified? Because immediately we think about the salvation work of Jesus Christ. That is certainly complete in terms of making all of us acceptable before God for salvation, right? We don't need the ministry of Paul to make us more acceptable.

So what is it that he's talking about here? One of the things that helps us is to think about what sacrifice and offerings are. And as I mentioned, this is something where we've had a little bit of a misconception left over from the way we view the Old Testament in some cases. But think about this.

Offerings and sacrifices and so forth are a part of the law of Moses. It was part of what God prescribed for Israel, right? What was the purpose of those sacrifices and offerings? And I'll make this a multiple choice. Was it for salvation or was it for worship? Could you bring an animal sacrifice to the temple or to the tabernacle and gain salvation? Was that the purpose of bringing the offerings and sacrifices? It was not.

The whole structure of the Levitical priesthood and the offering of animals and the waving of grain and the presenting of bread and all the other things that took place, that was worship life. That was spirituality in Israel, not salvation. The law of Moses when it comes to worship isn't talking about salvation.

It's talking about the life of someone who's already saved, who wants to approach God, who wants to have fellowship with God restored, who wants to express thanksgiving to God or a desire to acknowledge sin before God, who wants to reestablish holiness in the sight of God after having failed. But this was something that was unique to Israel because Israel was God's chosen people. As we've pointed out many times, Israel represents the believer.

They're out of Egypt. The Passover lamb has already been slain. And we sometimes tend to think, well, the law, the sacrifices, that was Old Testament salvation, and it wasn't at all.

That was spirituality. And so, when an Israelite brought an offering to God, it wasn't to obtain salvation. It was to communicate with God, to worship God, to be restored to fellowship, to atone, to confess sin, and so forth.

So, when Paul here in Romans talks about an offering being brought before God, he's not talking about salvation either. Paul, as a Pharisee and as a student of the law, understands very well what the function of the law was. And the worship life of Israel was something designed for people who had already recognized that God was who He claimed to be and who desired to maintain their relationship with Him.

So, when Paul says that this offering of the Gentiles, the purpose of my ministry, is that this offering might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, he is talking about the group of Gentiles that have come to faith in Christ and their approach to God when they stand before God at the judgment seat of Christ. Will they be approved or disapproved? The standard by which everybody measured in Paul's day was the Jewish faith. The faith of Israel.

The faith of the Old Testament. And it was a very difficult thing. We saw in the book of Colossians and Galatians especially how hard it was to shake the traditions of men, to shake the view that said it's our righteous acts that qualify us to stand before God.

And everybody thought of the Christian church in the first couple of generations as Jewish because everybody in it was Jewish. The people gathered on the day of Pentecost were pretty much all Jewish. That's why it raised such a stir when Paul began his ministry many years later and the Gentiles started getting the Holy Spirit.

People said, we've never seen anything like this. What does it mean? Because it didn't happen on the day of Pentecost. And so, the fact that Gentiles would come before God on the last day and be acceptable in His sight just like Jewish people, this was something of a foreign concept.

But it's something that these people had come to understand. They were proselytes to Judaism. Their original understanding was, well, if I'm going to come before God, I've got to become Jewish.

And so, they had come to the Jewish faith and the Jewish synagogue and the Jewish Old Testament Scriptures. At a later point when the Gospel of Jesus Christ came in its salvation aspect, salvation from the lake of fire, they recognized that Christ was the fulfillment of the prophecies, that He was the Savior. They accepted Him.

But now the question is, well, how am I acceptable before God? Do I continue to observe the Jewish faith? Do I keep the law? What is the means of pleasing God as a believer in Jesus Christ? That's what Paul addressed in Galatians. And that's what he addressed in all of his preaching of the Gospel. How are you acceptable in God's sight? What is the means of a believer approaching God and being accepted? And he says, it's my goal in my ministry of the Gospel that the offering of the Gentiles be acceptable, sanctified in the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, the things that count in life, coming before God with those things as Gentiles, apart from the law, apart from the seed of Abraham concept and the birthright of being an Israelite.

And he says that I have written, brethren, he says in verse 15, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points reminding you because of the grace given to me by God that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles ministering this Gospel that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. What is it that makes our life acceptable to God as believers? Unbelievers are made acceptable in the sight of God by the

work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The life of a believer is made acceptable by what God does in us through faith.

By grace, through faith, we are saved from the lake of fire. By grace, through faith, we are established, we are enabled to stand, we are enabled to bear fruit. The Word of God and the Spirit of God bring the power of God into our lives and that's what transforms us and that's the fruit.

That's what makes us acceptable. You can be a believer and be unacceptable in God's sight. That's where discipline comes from.

That's where reprimand and the exhortation to turn and change our ways comes from. We're not always acceptable in God's sight. Jewish people under the law, Israelites under the law, could be rendered unacceptable to come before God and worship.

They could be contaminated. They could have a disease. They could have an emission.

They could have come in contact with something dead. There was dozens and dozens of things that could disqualify a person from approach to God. They weren't acceptable.

They could not approach. And that had to be cleansed. It had to be sanctified.

It had to be corrected before one could approach God. And this was all in the realm of faith, all in the realm of the life of a believer. And that's what we have here.

It does not exclude the concept of evangelizing people the way we tend to think of it, that we can communicate the Gospel and people will come to faith. But the emphasis that Paul is making here is to believers. I've written you these 14 chapters to remind you of the things that will make you acceptable in God's sight.

Understanding these truths, having the landscape of your mind changed by these things is what will make you acceptable in God's sight. An acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We know that the primary mission of God the Holy Spirit in terms of our daily life is to lead us into all truth, to make the Word of God real, to remind us of it, to help us see how to apply it, be guided by it, that the Holy Spirit doesn't whisper in our ear.

I heard a thing this morning on a Christian radio station. There was a lady who's a regular on this station and who hosts a show, and she was calling in by phone from a retreat that she has gone to. And she was expressing her hopes that this retreat would be a blessing and that God would speak to her during the course of this retreat, would speak to her in terms of what she had been exposed to, a ministry that focuses on joining God in His work, on looking around to see what God is up to and jumping in and participating with that.

And she felt like this retreat would give God an opportunity to speak to her and help her see

where God was at work so that she could join Him in His work. I would submit to you that that is not a scriptural concept. God is not a still, small voice whispering in our ear.

There's no way to identify that impulse or that urge and to say this is from God. God speaks to us through His Word. If you want confirmation of this, and let's just address this while we're here and it will save us time later, turn to Hebrews 1. The Word of God is very clear about itself and its role in our lives.

But look what the author of Hebrews says right at the outset of his letter. He says, "...God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds, who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." And it goes on to give a wonderful description of Jesus Christ. But what does it say in verse 1? In the past, God spoke to us at different times and in many different ways.

Sometimes it was dreams. Sometimes it was visions. Sometimes it was oracles.

Sometimes it was the Urim and Thummim. Sometimes it was the prophet. Sometimes it was an angel.

Sometimes it was a theophany, an appearance of Jesus Christ Himself like the soldier, the captain of the armies of God that appeared to Joshua. God used an abundance of different ways to communicate in the past, and why was that? There wasn't a complete and available written record of God's Word for people to have access to. But in the unfolding of God's plan, once Jesus Christ came, everything about Jesus Christ that we could come to know and understand was set down in the Scriptures.

And in these last days, that's how God communicates. It's through His Son. How do we find out about Jesus Christ? It's in the 66 books of the Bible.

God the Holy Spirit leads us into that truth. He enables us to understand the Scriptures. That's where God communicates.

Now, God didn't say anything about my mortgage payment. And God didn't say anything about this particular situation and that particular circumstance and this particular test that I'm facing. It doesn't say anything in there about this and that and the other.

Yes, it does. The principles of the Word of God apply to every circumstance. It is totally sufficient.

And granted, we can't go and find a verse that we can yank out of context and apply to any given circumstance. But the truth of the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit changes our perceptions. It helps us see what is real and what's not real, what's important and what's not

important.

And in the shifting of our priorities, granted, we may be making a particular decision where we have three different options and none of those options are specifically mentioned in Scripture. But when our thoughts and our priorities are conditioned by the Word of God, it will become clear that one of those things most closely reflects divine priorities and divine viewpoint and the goals that God has for our life as opposed to goals that we might have or that other people might have for us. So, in these last days, God has spoken to us through Jesus Christ.

And Jesus Christ is the Word. John 1.1, In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory.

And John says in his epistles, I am writing these things to you so that your joy may be full. He doesn't say that you'll have some joy and the rest of it will come when the Holy Spirit speaks to you. He says, I'm writing these things down and you're going to have the Word that God the Holy Spirit can use.

That's where divine guidance comes from. It's not an impulse. It's not a wet fleece.

It's not any of the things that God used in former days. Hebrews tells us God isn't speaking that way anymore. He has a new way of speaking and it's through His Son.

So that's what Paul has in his mind here when he's talking to these Roman believers. And he says, I'm ministering this Gospel to you so that you will be able to live a life that is acceptable in God's sight. That's what he tells us in all of his writings.

You can go to the first chapter of Colossians and he talks about the worthy walk that's grounded in understanding the truth of the Word of God. There is nothing more important in our lives than our exposure to the Word of God. If you're driving your car down the highway and you never look at the dashboard, you never pay attention to the warning lights, you never listen, and in some cars, smell, to be aware of what's going on in the car, your priorities are never going to change.

You'll be sailing down the road at 70 miles an hour until your transmission falls out and your engine turns into a twisted lump of metal, which has happened to me. Certain cars have no indicators on the dashboard because the engine is in the back. But suffice it to say that if we don't expose ourselves to the Word of God, those things that God the Holy Spirit uses to speak to us aren't going to be there.

How can we expect to be led by the Spirit of God when we don't give Him anything to say, when there's nothing in our soul that He can use to speak to us? That's the role of the Word of God. And to have one without the other, to seek the ministry of the Holy Spirit without the Word, or to concentrate on the Word and ignore the Spirit is like having one tube out of a set of epoxy. You can have the resin, and it's the smelliest, gooiest stuff in the world, and it's good for nothing.

You can have the hardener, and it's good for nothing. It's not sticky. It doesn't do anything.

It's only when the two are together in the right balance that you have the strongest adhesive that man has ever come across. And that's Paul's ministry. He says, I've been called and appointed to this gospel so that the Gentiles, specifically, can be an offering acceptable in God's sight, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

So in verse 17, he says, therefore, I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. And in Greek, this says, in things face to face with God. It uses the word pros, P-R-O-S.

Things that God is looking at, the things that count in God's sight. When God turns His face and looks, these are the things that are important. I have reason to glory in the things that God is face to face with.

He says, I won't even dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me in word and deed to make the Gentiles obedient. I will make the Gentiles obedient in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And I want to point something out here to you because this reads strangely in all of the English translations that I have checked.

Verse 18 says, he's basically saying, I'm not going to speak, I'm not going to dare to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to make the Gentiles obedient. He says, I don't want to talk about anything except what Christ has been able to do in this ministry of the gospel. That's what he's trying to say.

But notice here, it says, I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me in word and deed to make the Gentiles obedient. And it sounds like it's Paul's words and Paul's deeds that are helping to make the Gentiles obedient. That is, in my humble opinion, not what Paul is saying here.

You might recall that in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, Paul makes a point of the fact that it's not his wise words. It wasn't his imposing presence. He came in meekness and fear and trembling.

He said, I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He said, I didn't come to you in powerful words of wisdom and an eloquent, logical argument and so forth. It wasn't my words at all.

And I'm going to show you something here on the board, which I hope will help make this clear, because there is a point to this. In a lot of the translations, these things are parallel that say, in word and in deed, in signs and wonders and in the power of the Spirit. But let me show you how this looks.

So, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, Paul says, he says, first of all, by word and by deed. And these

are two words that if you've looked at the Greek at all in the past, you know what these are. They are words that have even come over into English in some cases.

And that is logos and ergos. Now, the particular form that these are in, and this is heavy grammar and you can just bear with it for a moment, but this is the dative, locative or instrumental. This is actually logoi.

It has an ending oi and ergoi, oi. And in reality, it's even a little i underneath the o, like so. And there's no preposition.

He says basically that those things which Christ has wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient. And then it says this and this. Logos chi ergos or logoi chi ergoi.

And so we have to figure out how to fit that into the sentence. He says, Christ has been doing these things in me to make the Gentiles obedient. And then it says these three words, logos chi ergos.

And so from the case of these, the dative, locative or instrumental, we either have to say in word and deeds. That would be the locative if it was a physical location that you were in. It could be by means of if it was an instrumental, by means of words, by means of deeds.

Or it could be the dative, like with reference to words and with reference to deeds. But when we go to the next set of things where it says by means of words, by means of deeds, by power of signs and wonders, by power of the spirit. Now we do have a completely different construction.

Now we have the preposition en by deuteronomus, by power in both of these subsequent things. And we have this preposition en, which can mean in, it can be by means of. And so these are different things.

And to make a long story short here, what Paul is saying is that Christ is working through Paul to make the Gentiles obedient in word and obedient in deed. These two words, logos and ergos, refer to the obedience of the Gentiles, not to the means by which they are brought to that obedience. We know this from other passages.

Paul is not saying it's my words and my deeds that are making the Gentiles obedient to the faith. This is an example of translation based on interpretation. It's been translated this way because people see salvation in Paul's ministry, that he's trying to get people saved.

Well, he's not bringing them to Christ by his, and it's his witnesses bringing them to Christ. It's his words and his deeds. It's his example that he's setting in front of people that's bringing them to Christ, that's evangelizing them.

That's what people see in this verse. But we've already established he's talking to believers and he's talking primarily about a ministry to believers. And this obedience of the Gentiles is not the

obedience that means they're coming to Christ and turning away from pagan idols.

This obedience is spirituality. What do they do after they come to Christ? What do they do because they are believers? Paul's ministry is bringing them to obedience in word and in deed, in the word and in deed, in the word and in deed manifestations of their life. That's why the Romans are known for their faith throughout the world, because their words and their deeds reflect the obedience that comes from faith.

Paul says back in chapter one that that's his ministry, to bring about the obedience that comes from faith. And that's what he's talking about here. He's recapping that same concept.

So this ought to read, I won't dare to boast about anything except those things which Christ has wrought through me to make the Gentiles obedient in word and in deed. God has used the ministry of Paul. And you stop and think about it.

Look at the books of the New Testament. How much of what Paul says in his epistles is evangelism and how much of it is Christian life? It's a huge proportion of teaching to believers about how to live the Christian life. That's the thrust of his ministry.

There's a reason for that. His epistles are a reflection of his calling as an apostle. And we sometimes think apostle means evangelist.

Apostle means a leader in the body of Christ, someone who helps us know the Word of God and reflect Jesus Christ in our lives. Let me just give you a few points here to substantiate Paul's ministry, because it substantiates the purpose of this letter. All of these things are tied together.

God's purpose for believers is being fulfilled in the ministry of an apostle. So God's purpose for the apostle, God's purpose for believers and the purpose of this letter are all intertwined and they all go to one primary thing. When Paul was first converted, you remember the Damascus Road incident and he was struck down in the road and everybody else heard thunder and he heard the voice of Jesus Christ? There was a man in another town that had a vision and God said, By the way, I'm going to send this hater of Christians to you.

And he told him a little bit about what the mission would be. Turn to Acts chapter 9, verse 15, Acts 9, 15. The Lord appeared to Ananias in Damascus.

This is where Paul was headed to go persecute the Christians. Ananias was a Christian. So the last thing he wanted to see was Paul showing up on his doorstep, Saul at that time.

But the Lord appeared to him in a vision and he said. Arise and go into the street, which is called straight and inquire of the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus. For behold, he prays and a verse 12 of Acts 9. And he, Paul, has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hands on him that he might receive his sight.

Ananias answered, Lord, I've heard by many of this man how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all the call on thy name. But the Lord said to him, go your way.

He is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. So this is a statement of what Paul's ministry is going to be.

God is separating him out for a specific function. He's going to bear the name of Christ. And we know this is more than simply the letters of the word that designates Jesus Christ.

Name means reputation. Name means his person, his work, his character, his identity. Everything about Jesus Christ is going to be what Paul brings to the Gentiles and the kings and to the sons of Israel.

We know also from Acts 26.16, Paul is himself talking about this same experience. In Acts 26.16, he's recounting this episode to the audience here. And he says, he quotes, he says, we were all in verse 14 of Acts 26.

We were all fallen to the earth. And I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

But rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in which I will appear unto you. The things which he has seen. Now, Paul is a student, Saul at this time, is a student of the Old Testament Scriptures, and he has seen a lot in God's word.

And he is now seeing Jesus Christ. And he is very soon going to put those two pieces of knowledge together. And he is going to see the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.

That, by the way, is a fascinating subject. You can think about lots of different references to it. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus and Jesus appears to them after his resurrection and he opens the Scriptures to them and shows them from the Old Testament everything about his life and work and ministry.

It's all there in the Old Testament Scriptures. Several places in the New Testament we find this taking place where Jesus Christ is revealed in the Old Testament. And yet, for some reason, we couldn't see him.

But Jesus tells Paul at first hand, this is the purpose I'm appearing to you. I'm making you a minister and a witness of the things which you have seen and the things in which I will appear unto thee, delivering me from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom I now send thee to do

what? To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. And this encapsulates the ministry of Paul.

Does it include evangelism? Absolutely. To turn them from darkness to light. Does it include the ministry to believers, the teaching ministry that brings us to maturity? Absolutely.

To turn us from the power of Satan to the power of God. Power for living is not a part of salvation gospel as we understand it. That's a part of our life as believers.

That's one of the basic things in Hebrews chapter six, the foundation, repentance away from dead works and faith toward God is the very first thing new believers should be taught. And not only receiving the forgiveness of sins, but inheritance among those who are sanctified. Inheritance belongs to believers who advance.

Inheritance among all of the saints, among all those who are sanctified, belongs to those who grow and begin to reflect the glory of Jesus Christ. And the first thing that Paul has to do is to bring about obedience to Jesus Christ. So Paul has both of these things in his commission, his initial commission from Jesus Christ.

In Romans 1.5, we've already seen Paul say that his mission is to bring about the obedience that comes from faith. Now, obedience is not a part of salvation from the lake of fire, is it? You don't have to obey to be saved. That's the lordship salvation fallacy.

That if you don't accept Jesus Christ as your Lord, and by that they mean you have to be obedient, to accept someone as Lord is to obey them, to accept their authority and to live, to respond to that authority. And that's the place where lordship goes astray. Obedience is a part of spirituality, not a part of initial salvation.

But you can see this even more clearly in Ephesians chapter three and verse seven. In Ephesians, Paul is talking about his ministry again. In fact, in nearly every single one of his books, Paul talks about his ministry as an apostle.

In Ephesians chapter three, he's talking actually to the Laodicean church, as we have seen. And he says right there at the beginning of the chapter, for this cause, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if you've heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given to me for you, how that by revelation he made known to me the mystery, which in other ages, verse five, was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. Where have I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effectual working of his power unto me, less than the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery,

which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the angels, this is our angelic part, this is the context of human history, is a demonstration to the angels, demonstrated to these principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.

Now, the church are people who have accepted Christ in the past, right? So, our poor little cat here with his new haircut has entered the room. Yes, he does. Don't laugh at him.

But this is the purpose that Paul has. It's not only evangelism, which is certainly a part of his apostleship, but also ministering the truth of the mystery, which brings the church to the point of proving God's point in the angelic conflict. And this is his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

And he says, I don't want you to faint at my tribulations for you, which is your glory, in verse 13. And then he gives this great prayer. His goal for these believers is that they might be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, in verse 16, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

Now, he's not talking to unbelievers. This is to believers. This is a part of his apostleship, to minister these things so that believers can grow.

And we can go to many other passages. Let me just read you a few. Colossians 1.25, Paul, in that entire first chapter of Colossians, talks about his desire for those believers and the way that he wants to minister to them.

He desires that the word of God be fully known to them so that Christ can be in them. In Colossians 2.2, he wants their hearts to be encouraged and knit together in love, that they may have the full riches of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery in Christ. Perhaps the clearest passage is Titus 1.1, where Paul talks about his apostleship right in the introduction to this one.

And he says, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect or for the faith of God's elect and the acknowledging of the truth that leads to godliness. The NIV says that he's a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time. And at his appointed season, he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God, our Savior.

And he's telling Titus here that the teaching ministry that Titus has as a pastor is also a part of what Paul does as an apostle. Now, we've belabored this point at great length, but it's critically important to understand that the epistle to the Romans is written to believers for their edification,

for their growth, for the building up of their spiritual life in Christ. That's the reason we have all of these statements and all of these truths communicated.

It's not to evangelize them. They're already evangelized. He assumes their knowledge of that.

And we'll see that as we finish up the last... We're going to actually cover now in very brief form the last part of chapter 15 of Romans and chapter 16. We've seen Paul tell them that he desires to come and see them and to impart a gift to them. And in verse 22 of chapter 15, he says, for this cause, I have been much hindered from coming to you.

But now having no more place in these parts where he's been preaching the gospel and all these other areas, he says, I have a great desire these many years to come to you. And when I take my journey to Spain, I will come to you, for I trust to see you in my journey and to be brought on my way to Spain by you, if first I'd be encouraged by your company. And this is going to be a stop on the way to Spain.

Paul's going to go to Spain and evangelize Gentiles and teach them in the faith, bring them along as believers. But he's not going to make Rome a target. And he says, it's because I don't want to build on another man's foundation.

I want to minister where Christ has not been named. He says in verse 20, he says, I have strived to preach the gospel not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation. But as it is written, to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand.

And these folks in Rome, many of them were proselytes to Judaism. They knew about the Christ. It's a part of the Jewish faith.

And Christ had been named among them and they have come to be believers. And he has written in this gospel and he's hoping to be encouraged by them, with fellowship with them. But in terms of evangelism, he's going to go on to Spain and preaching Christ where he's not been named before among the Gentiles.

He says, I'm on my way to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. And he says, I'm on my way to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. In verse 25, it is pleased the believers in Macedonia and Achaia to make a contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem.

It is pleased them very much and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is to minister to them in material things. And so there's a whole separate study, which when we return to this part of the book at the conclusion of our study of Romans, we'll get into the issue of Paul's trip to Jerusalem.

But in a nutshell, it's a very interesting thing to look at to see Paul's motivation for going to Jerusalem. He states so many places what his purpose is. It's to preach Christ to the Gentiles.

That's his calling. That's his mission. We've just seen it substantiated all through the New Testament.

In what way does carrying a monetary contribution to the Jerusalem church fit into that calling? It really doesn't. And that's why we see in Acts 21 that God, the Holy Spirit, telling Paul, don't go to Jerusalem. God, the Holy Spirit, flat out tells Paul in Acts 21, don't go.

And you might at some point browse through that, but Luke is writing here in Chapter 21 of Acts. It came to pass after we had left these people in another place and had launched, we came with a straight course to Koos and the day following to Rhodes and from there to Potara and finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set forth. When we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, sailed into Syria, landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload her burden.

Finding disciples, we tarried there seven days, who said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem. God, the Holy Spirit, communicated through believers there who evidently had a prophetic gift or a communication gift. Don't go to Jerusalem.

And Paul went anyway. And yet we find God appearing to Paul after he has been incarcerated in Jerusalem and saying, you have testified to me here in Jerusalem, you must also testify to me in Rome. And if you were here for our study in the life of David the other night when we saw that there were some parts of David's life that were working well and other parts that weren't, and there were failures that David committed and yet it did not disqualify him from being used in God's plan and from God working in his life.

That's the same with the Apostle Paul and it's the same with all of us. Paul makes a mistake in going to Jerusalem. It's not a part of his calling.

It's not a part of his mission. God warned him numerous times, if you read the account in Acts, that bondage and chains awaited him in Jerusalem. The believers in Tyre flat out tell him in the Holy Spirit, don't go.

And he goes anyway. And we can, with some trepidation, guess at the reason. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles.

Everybody else was a part of the Jewish community and the Jewish church and the Jewish faith. Paul was something of an outcast and a renegade in the eyes of the Jews. And yet he's had a very prosperous ministry in all of these places beyond Jerusalem.

Now, these churches have taken up a collection because there's hard times in Jerusalem and the saints there are very poor monetarily. He could have sent this offering back. And if you read in Corinthians, in some places, he says, when you get your offering together, I may send it back to

Jerusalem with some representatives from your church.

He says, and if it seems appropriate, I may go with it. But at that earlier stage, he isn't planning really to accompany this offering back. But at a later point, Paul decides, I am going to take this back.

And we get the idea that maybe he wanted to validate or to prove or to be justified in the eyes of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem that he really did have a legitimate ministry. How can they argue that this is not legitimate when I'm coming to their aid with offerings that came from the Gentiles? They can't very well throw rocks at the Gentiles anymore when the Gentiles have given this big offering. And I'm the apostle of the Gentiles and I'm presenting it.

And you get the idea, perhaps, that Paul wanted to sort of justify himself in the eyes of the saints at Jerusalem. And of course, he winds up going to an unacceptable length to do this when he goes so far as to take a vow in the temple. And it doesn't accomplish any good.

We don't find any of the notices in Acts that talk about the word of the Lord being magnified or many people coming to Christ. From the point that he makes the decision in Acts to go to Jerusalem, the fruitfulness of his ministry decreases and he is rejected. And when he gets to Jerusalem and he makes his testimony before the Jews, he's rejected and they cry out and have him locked up and he eventually gets sent to Rome.

And we think, well, Paul has fallen off the wagon, he's made a bad decision, he's gone to the wrong place, he's out of the, quote, geographical will of God, it's all over for Paul. But Jesus Christ is going to appear to him in prison and work with Paul's decisions. He's going to say, OK, you've testified to me here in Jerusalem.

You're going to also testify for me in Rome. And so we can't make a decision that gets us off a track of God's plan and never recover, as we see in Paul's example. We'll cover that in detail when we get to the end here.

But I think that in reviewing chapter one and chapter 15 of Romans, we've seen that Paul is manifestly and abundantly addressing himself to believers. And we then come to chapter 16, which is basically a list of commendable believers. He says, I commend to you Phoebe, our sister.

She's the lady that's going to carry this letter to the people at Rome and she's going to hand deliver it and express some verbal information that's not in the letter. And she is a servant of the church, which is in Cancria, the word for servant is the word from which we get deacon. Some people have decided that she held an office in the church and was a deaconess.

But diakonos simply means to be a minister or a servant. And she was a servant in the church. She served in the areas where she had opportunity.

Receive her in the Lord as become a saint and assist her in whatever business she has need of you, for she's been a comfort to many and of myself also. Then we have a list of people to greet. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their own necks, unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Likewise, greet the church that is in their house. And this couple hosted a group not unlike the one that we have here in their house. And there were many such house churches.

In fact, up until about 300 A.D., that's the only kind of church there was. Groups of believers met in people's homes and worshiped together and celebrated the Lord's table together and studied the word of God and sang hymns and performed the worship that we now associate with a church building under a steeple. For the first 300 years of the church, that was all done in homes.

And we see that over and over again in notices such as this. Then he goes on to give a list of salutations. There's some very interesting information about various ones of these people that we'll look at in more detail.

But let me just point out to you that this is very unlike Paul to greet believers by name. He normally entrusted this sort of greeting to the messenger. Phoebe would normally have given these greetings to the church at Ephesus or Corinth or Philippi or Thessalonica.

And in the other letters of Paul to churches that he had established and where he had personally been, he is very brief in his personal greetings. But there's an entire chapter of personal greetings here. Why is that? And I would like to suggest to you that here is a group that has not been ministered to by an apostle.

There hasn't really been any spiritual leadership there in terms of pastors or apostles to organize and to teach and to provide a good example and good teaching for the believers in Rome. They're meeting in various house churches. They're sort of a loose collective and there hasn't been a spiritual presence there.

Paul, however, knows of people in that community that he knows have a good understanding of the plan of God, have a good understanding of the faith. Priscilla and Aquila have spent years with Paul. And there are many of these other people, many of these other people are believers that he has a good idea of how they think.

And in this list of greetings, by suggesting these names to all of these believers in Rome, he's saying, these are approved believers. If you have a question or if you're interested in having fellowship with believers who understand the plan of God are right, here they are. Here's Mary and Andronicus and Junia and Amplius and Apelles and all of these others.

These are people that by listing their names, Paul suggests them as worthy believers, people who have a good understanding and who are believers with whom fellowship will be beneficial,

who understand the right gospel, who understand the plan of God the way that Paul understands it. You'll also notice through here that he says in several cases, my kinsmen. And we think, my Paul had a large family with lots of branches in Rome.

But the word kinsmen here, *sungenes*, or came from the same place is basically what it means, is the same word that he uses in Romans Chapter 9, I think it is, when he talks about the Israelites and he says, they are my kinsmen after the flesh. So when it says my kinsmen, these are Jewish believers that are approved and are worthy. And whenever you see the word kinsmen in this chapter, that is an indication that this is a Jewish believer that's being referred to as opposed to a Gentile.

So this is a ministry to believers in Rome. And when we begin next time, addressing ourselves to the doctrinal part of this letter, that's going to help us a lot because we understand that these are truths that apply to us. Paul's not trying to evangelize us.

He's trying to tell us something about our daily life as believers, about the potential that God has created for us, and about the principles that if we make them the object of our faith, it's going to change us. We can live a life that is acceptable in God's sight. We can stand before God at the judgment seat of Christ and not be ashamed.

The offering of the Gentiles, which includes us, can be acceptable in God's sight. These truths are Paul's ministry as an apostle to us. And we have the same opportunity that those people had in Ephesus and Corinth and Rome to respond to the teaching of the word of God under the ministry of the Holy Spirit and be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.