**Lesson 43: Praise God for His Simple Plan of Salvation!**

Text: Romans 16:17-27

**Introduction**

Man complicates what God has made simple. This could be applied to many areas of life: marriage, parenting, finances, work, etc. It can certainly be applied to God’s simple plan of salvation. As we conclude our study of Paul’s letter to the Romans, we find that Paul emphasized the importance and simplicity of the gospel to the very end of the letter. The church planting effort was endangered by the presence of false teachers who complicated the matter of salvation. Paul believed it necessary to sound the alarm. He also provided a fitting conclusion to the letter.

1. **Before concluding Paul’s letter to the Roman believers, let’s review some of the key truths presented in this monumental book of the Bible.** 
   1. Historical Background: The audience to Paul’s letter consisted of Jews and Gentiles. Paul wrote to give his travel plans and to ask for their support. He planned to deliver a special love offering to the church in Jerusalem hoping that this gift would improve relations between the Jews and Gentiles. Next, he planned to visit Rome on his way to Spain (Romans 15:28). Since he had never been to Rome, they needed to be introduced to him and what he preached. The epistle is his declaration of faith in Christ. Therefore, it is relevant to all of us. We are blessed to have it!
   2. Content: Paul’s epistle to the Roman believers is focused on the gospel (Romans 1:16-17). It explains how God worked so that He might have a relationship with sinful man. Paul presented an irrefutable case regarding the lost state of all humanity (Romans 1:18-3:20). Against that dark backdrop, Paul proclaimed God’s plan of salvation for all who will believe (Romans 3:21-5:21). Although some claimed that this doctrine of salvation by grace led to lawless living, Paul argued that it led to a radically transformed life (Romans 6-8). His doctrine was not anti-Jewish, as some proposed! In chapters 9-11, Paul shared his great burden for the unbelieving Jews. It is God’s will to save all Jews and Gentiles who will call upon Christ. The doctrine of God’s saving grace must be applied to daily living (Romans 12-16). What we believe should determine how we behave!
2. **As Paul concludes his letter to the Roman believers, he provided instruction regarding how they should deal with false teachers. (v. 17-20)**
   1. The identity of the false teachers is not possible to discern. It may be that they were not currently located in Rome. It could be that Paul was sounding the alarm based on that which was transpiring in the churches in the east. They were either encountering false teachers or they would soon.
   2. It may be that the numerous people mentioned in verses 1-16 prompted Paul to issue the warning. He dearly loved the brothers and sisters to whom he had just sent greetings. He did not want to see any of them get off course in their Christian lives. The false teachers were self-centered, divisive, and persuasive. They would not spare the flock of God in Rome.
   3. The Roman believers were to take two actions in response to those who taught false doctrine: They were to identify and avoid them. (v. 17)
      1. The verb “mark” has a rich meaning. It is the word from which we receive our English word, “scope.” He encouraged the believers to scope things out. Low and Nida define it as, “to continue to regard closely; to watch; to notice carefully.” They should identify those who taught divisive doctrine and “keep an eye” on them. We must always be on the lookout for those who would disrupt the unity of the church!
      2. Serious threats as described above require a serious response. Paul instructed the believers to avoid such individuals who would divide the church. The word *avoid* literally means to “turn away from; shun” (Friberg). They were not to allow them to teach and influence the members of the church. They were to “purposefully avoid association” with the false teachers (Low and Nida). Have nothing to do with them! This does not fit well in today’s religious climate, but it is the course of action for those who care about the doctrinal purity and unity of their church.
   4. Paul provided two reasons they should do so. (v. 18)
      1. The divisive teachers were not really serving Christ as they posed to do. They really served their own belly. There is question as to what is meant by this phrase. Were they given to gluttony? Were they greedy? Were they overly devoted to strict dietary laws? Was “belly” another way of referring to their flesh? Whatever Paul’s intended meaning, it is clear that they were not teaching because they loved Christ, but rather they loved themselves!
      2. They could take advantage of the simple in the church. They will use their good words and fair speeches to sway those who have limited knowledge and experience. False teachers are skilled in dressing up false doctrine. They know how to package it so that it is convincing.
   5. Paul knew that he was writing to believers who were obedient to do what they were taught (v. 19). This is a great quality to have—as long as they were discerning of that which was contrary to sound doctrine. They should be wise in that which is good and simple concerning evil. Knowledge of the truth would keep them from being swayed by false doctrine.
   6. He trusted God to deliver them in general and specifically from false teachers. (v. 20)
3. **Paul included greetings from fellow-workers who were with him in Corinth. (v. 21-24)**
   1. Timothy was Paul’s closest associate. (v. 21a)
   2. Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater were traveling with him to Jerusalem to deliver the special offering. (v. 21b)
   3. Tertius wrote down what Paul said. (v. 22)
   4. Gaius was from Corinth and most likely hosted the church in his home. (v. 23a)
   5. Erastus was the city treasurer and Quartus was a brother in Christ (v. 23b).
4. **The doxology provides a fitting conclusion for a letter written in praise of God’s plan of salvation. (v. 25-27)** 
   1. It echoes the opening of his letter in its emphasis on the gospel.
   2. Paul was confident in the stabilizing effect of preaching the gospel of Christ. (v. 25-26).
      1. The mystery concealed in the Old Testament has been revealed in Jesus. (v. 25-26a)
      2. It was manifest so that people might believe and obey the truth. (v. 26b; Romans 1:5)
   3. It was appropriate to end the letter by giving glory to God through Jesus Christ. (v. 27)

**Conclusion**

It has been a blessing to study Paul’s letter to the believers in Rome. We have seen that the wisdom of God is displayed in the gospel, God’s simple plan of salvation. I pray that God might give you many opportunities to declare your faith in Christ! Praise God for His simple plan of salvation!