

26-1018sc - Detailed Summary

26-1018sc - *The Book of Romans*, Steve Cain

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26-1018 - The Book of Romans 15:14-33

Summary of Transcript (0:04 - 47:43), Teacher: Steve Cain

(0:04 - 1:27) Opening Prayer for Understanding

Steve opens the class by leading in prayer. He thanks God for the opportunity to gather on the first day of the week with brothers and sisters in Christ for the purpose of studying His word. He acknowledges that God has provided what He wants His people to know, with the Holy Spirit as the instrument who worked through various inspired authors. He prays that God was with the translators who worked with the original languages so that their skills would yield an accurate translation that can be trusted. He asks for blessings of understanding, insight, and wisdom specifically for dealing with what Paul wrote in Romans, as well as related material from other authors. The prayer closes in Jesus' name.

(1:27 - 9:18) Plans for Romans and Full Chapter Reading

Steve notes that the class is on chapter 15 and expresses the hope of finishing Romans that day if possible, though it depends on how quickly chapter 16 can be covered. He mentions that some material in chapter 16 is difficult to understand and invites help if available, otherwise they will move on. He observes that they have already dealt with some of chapter 15 and raises the question of what the group would like to study next, welcoming input on subject matter or books. Preferring book studies over topical ones, he then reads Romans 15:1-33 from the New International Version. The reading covers bearing with the weak, pleasing neighbors for their good as Christ did, the Scriptures teaching endurance and hope, mutual acceptance that brings praise to God, Christ as servant confirming the promises to the patriarchs and bringing Gentiles to glorify God (with supporting quotations from the Old Testament), the God of hope filling believers with joy and peace, Paul's conviction that the Romans are full of goodness, knowledge, and competence to instruct one another, his bold writing because of the grace given him as a minister to the Gentiles, his priestly duty so that the Gentiles become an acceptable offering sanctified by the Holy Spirit, his glory only in what Christ accomplished through him by word, deed, signs, wonders, and the Spirit from Jerusalem to Illyricum, his ambition to preach where Christ was not known, his hindrance in coming to them until now, his plan to visit Rome on the way to Spain after delivering the collection from Macedonia and Achaia for the poor in Jerusalem, the mutual obligation of material and spiritual blessings, his request for prayer for safety from unbelievers in Judea and favorable reception of the gift so he may come to them with joy, and the benediction of the God of peace. He notes that this concludes the substance of the letter, with chapter 16 consisting of salutations and the formal close.

(9:18 - 16:00) What Unites the Roman Christians

Steve asks if anyone has comments on chapter 15 before they proceed, then confirms that the previous week ended at verse 14. He recalls that Paul is writing to Christians in Rome whom he has not yet met personally, intending both to impart information and blessings and to be encouraged by them. He asks what most basically unites the congregation Paul is addressing. The response is that they have been baptized, have put on Christ, have acknowledged Jesus as the Christ the Son of the living God, and have been reconciled to God through Him so they can approach without fear, being cleansed from sin. Sin separates people from God, who will not mingle with it; therefore reconciliation is the fundamental matter. Steve emphasizes that this common standing in Christ is the “mountain” Paul wants them to focus on, while other matters should be treated as “molehills.” Jesus intercedes as priest and presents righteousness as the lifestyle God desires. Believers should not judge one another over differing convictions—such as details about the end of time or the precise working of the Holy Spirit—since those have no bearing on salvation or being right in the sight of God. God has promised eternal life regardless of those secondary questions. Steve notes his own anticipation of the end when Jesus will acknowledge His people, referencing the Hebrew letter, and the hymn that “we’ll understand it better by and by.” The common ground is the fellowship God has extended through Jesus: faith that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God and that God is reconciling people through Him. These are the tests of fellowship; opinions are not. Differences of opinion produce conflict in proportion to how invested people are in those opinions.

(16:00 - 20:12) Divisions Over Opinions and the Call to Peace

Steve expresses appreciation for verse 14, observing that the wording “I myself am convinced” suggests Paul had reflected before affirming that the Romans were full of goodness, filled with knowledge, and competent to instruct one another. He illustrates how secondary convictions can divide, recalling his father becoming upset with a brother who held a different view of events at the resurrection or the end of time. When that brother tried to teach and press his opinion, tension arose and conflict followed. Such disputes over opinions are what produce splits, resulting in groups labeled “antis” on one side and others on the other. He recounts an experience in Fort Wayne in the 1960s in which a hired preacher held an opinion the congregation did not share; the members overruled him, he took those who agreed with him, and a new church was started. God hates divorce and does not want His people to divorce or split; He desires unity and shared belief. Paul is seeking peace, urging them to stop judging one another and to hold as their common denominator being in Christ, reconciled to God, with sins forgiven. Differing opinions should not cause people to sit apart or “section out.” Sometimes such differences affect attendance or force separation, which is occurring in the brotherhood and which Paul does not want. That concern is a major reason for what he writes. Preachers are hired in part to help congregations maintain peace among themselves.

(20:12 - 22:36) Paul’s Compliment and Constructive Use of Abilities

Steve turns directly to verse 14 in the New International Version: “I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge, and competent to instruct one another.” He notes that Paul is immediately complimenting the Romans and affirming their ability. The abilities they possess should be used constructively rather than to separate one another. This is the purpose behind Paul’s writing: to encourage them to employ what they have for building up rather than for division.

Steve returns to the idea that Paul had a deliberate purpose in writing the letter. He quotes the continuation of the text: Paul has written quite boldly on some points to remind them again, because of the grace God gave him to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. God gave him the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This language frames Paul's ministry as a priestly offering of the Gentiles themselves to God.

(22:36 - 24:56) Paul's Jerusalem Visits and Message Comparison

Reading these verses prompts Steve to ask why Paul went to Jerusalem after his conversion. He notes that Paul went three years after he was converted, returned, and then went back again something like thirteen years later, as the Galatian letter indicates. The purpose of the first visit, Steve says, was to compare his message with what was being taught by the other churches of Christ. He draws an analogy to why a person goes to a school of preaching: to make sure of having the right perception of the gospel. In the present congregation the preachers are home-bred; their sermons come from what they have learned from other preachers and Bible classes rather than from formal schooling or college Bible courses. That situation requires some reservation about whether one is doing what is needed. Higher education is undertaken to learn and know one's trade. Paul is pointing out that the Romans have not had the benefit of his personal preaching; they have been self-taught.

(24:56 - 27:33) Origin of the Church in Rome

Steve observes that, according to what is known about the Roman church, no apostle had ever been there. The only people who arrived were those who had been at other churches. The church in Rome came into existence because of transients. Many of them, he suggests, had been present on the day of Pentecost and may have been among the three thousand who were baptized that day or later. As they traveled they established the church in Rome. Catholics believe Peter was there and even point to a stairway where they claim the impression of Peter's face remains from someone pushing his face into it; that, however, is tradition. One reason Paul wants to go to Rome is to give them the benefits of a trained person. He is already doing so by writing the letter, helping and encouraging them toward the right perception and concept of what they ought to be doing as Christians and thereby alleviating some of the problems.

(27:33 - 32:11) Jerusalem Council and Circumcision Controversy

Steve again notes Paul's planned visit to [Jerusalem] and asks why he is going this time. He states that the first time Paul wanted to compare his message with the apostles to make sure he was not preaching in vain. According to the Galatian letter, he is going now because someone from Jerusalem has come and upset his followers about being circumcised. He wants the matter straightened out in a meeting of the minds. He takes Timothy (or Titus) with him; they hold a council. This gives Peter the chance to explain his experience with Cornelius and gives Paul the chance to report his experience as a minister among the Gentiles. They compare the information and conclude that the teaching requiring circumcision is in error. Paul says they did not compel Timothy to be circumcised, though Steve immediately corrects that Timothy was circumcised while Titus was not. Paul circumcised Timothy so that Timothy would not be a hindrance when entering synagogues to teach the Jews. They did not add anything to Paul's message. After his baptism Paul went away for three years, during which he was taught by Jesus himself, then returned to

Damascus, faced a problem, and went to Jerusalem where Barnabas introduced him to the church. The difference is having confidence in one's message and being sure one is right. Paul wants the church in Rome to have that same confidence in the message they are preaching; the letter itself has been effective in conveying it.

(32:11 - 34:35) Gentiles Acceptable and No Distinctions

Quoting verses 15–16 again, Steve asks what Paul is saying. He is saying that the Gentiles have responded to the gospel in the same manner as the Romans and are therefore acceptable to the fellowship. They must be included because they have responded just as the Romans have. There is no difference: both were baptized into Christ. They are acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Believers receive the Holy Spirit and are sanctified by Him when they properly respond and are baptized for the remission of sins, accepting Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. There is therefore no spiritual or intellectual difference; both have Christ and both are reconciled to God. The result should be peace, with no separation based on skin color or former status. No distinctions are to be made; they are in Christ and in God.

(34:35 - 42:06) Abraham, Circumcision, and the Mosaic Law

Paul was ordained by God to preach to the Gentiles, and the message he preached was the same message the Romans received. He knows this because he has been to Jerusalem, compared his message with the church there, and confirmed that circumcision is not required. The only apparent difference is circumcision, yet the Gentiles do not need to be circumcised. That is what some wanted to impose, but Paul pointed out in the third chapter of Romans that the real difference is spiritual circumcision. God declared Abraham righteous before he was circumcised. Circumcision was a sign and a test recognizing that Abraham was righteous; it did not create the relationship. Later, circumcision was added as a religious requirement under the Mosaic law. The Mosaic law had nothing to do with Abraham's relationship with God and did not change the promise God had made to him. It was added to teach the people what sin is. Paul says that if it had not been for the law of Moses he would not have known what sin was; he identifies covetousness as an example—he did not know that wanting what another person has (possessions, lifestyle, job, or family) was a sin until God told him. The law of Moses was added so that people could recognize sin and teach one another how to live righteously. They misused it, however, employing it to condemn and judge one another (smoking, dancing, drinking). The Jews treated it as tradition and broke the actual laws. Jesus spoke of Corban: people established the rule of Corban so they could avoid supporting their parents. The law commands “Honor your father and mother,” which means taking care of them (double honor). By declaring possessions dedicated to the temple, a person could claim freedom from that obligation, leaving parents without support. Thus the law was misapplied. It was only temporary until Jesus came; once He came it no longer needed to be enforced. Believers are now to live righteously by walking in the light as He is in the light. At baptism they were advised to walk in newness of life. Scripture admonishes them to put away jealousy, anger, and other sins. Galatians 5 lists the works of the flesh and then the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace. That is what Paul is pointing out in this letter as well.

(42:06 - 46:34) Signs, Wonders, and the Holy Spirit's Work

The Gentiles are an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore Paul glories in Christ Jesus in his service to God and will not speak of anything except what Christ has

accomplished through him in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what he has said and done. Paul recognizes that God has been with him and that his accomplishments are the result of God working in him. God helped him by the power of signs and wonders through the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum he fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. God used signs, wonders, and miracles to make him effective, and believers still have that record to appeal to. Steve returns to what he calls his mantra: according to Jesus in John 16 the Holy Spirit's job is to convict the world of sin. He asks whether the Spirit is restricted to convicting the world only through believers or can work divinely elsewhere. In his opinion the Spirit is not restricted to believers; He works through governments and other nations. Discoveries come through excavating tells—archaeology—which confirm the message. How did those things get buried there? Was it by accident or the product of the Holy Spirit? Such findings supply ammunition for the message. The Spirit should not be restricted to individual believers; He is allowed to do His job. Believers are a tool of the Spirit, and He provided the Bible and many other things. Paul says he was able to do what he did not because he was Paul but because God ordained him and he was obligated to do it, and he wanted to do it without bringing expense to the church. He acknowledges that it is not himself. In the Corinthian letter he says he did not come with excellency of language or as an eloquent speaker; he knows he is not eloquent and that the Holy Spirit is working through him.

(46:34 - 47:43) Thorn in the Flesh and Closing

In the second Corinthian letter (Steve believes chapter 15) Paul gives a litany of his sufferings and mentions a thorn in the flesh. He does not identify what it was, but he prayed three times for relief and each time was told that God's grace is sufficient in weakness. Steve applies this to the class: keep preaching; God's grace is sufficient through them. His time is up. He had hoped to finish chapter 15 that day but will finish it next time; only one more chapter remains. He asks the class to keep in mind what they would like to study next and says he is open to suggestions, though he himself would love to get into Hebrews or Corinthians. He thanks them for their attention.

Verses Steve Covered in this class

Romans 15:1–33 (full chapter read aloud from the NIV), with the main discussion centered on **verses 14–16** and the surrounding material in the chapter.

Details from the class:

- Steve confirmed they had already covered up through **verse 14** the previous week.
- He then re-read and focused especially on **Romans 15:14–16** (Paul's conviction that the Romans are full of goodness, knowledge, and competent to instruct one another; his bold writing because of the grace given him as a minister to the Gentiles; and his priestly duty so the Gentiles become an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit).
- The rest of the chapter (vv. 17–33) was part of the initial reading and received some reference (Paul's ministry from Jerusalem to Illyricum, plans to visit Rome en route to Spain, the collection for Jerusalem, request for prayer, etc.), but the bulk of the class time went to the themes raised by vv. 14–16 and related digressions.

Other passages referenced (not the main text of the class):

- Galatians 1–2 (Paul's visits to Jerusalem and the circumcision controversy)
- Acts 15 / Jerusalem Council material
- Romans 3 (circumcision / spiritual circumcision) and Romans 7 (law revealing sin, especially coveting)
- Mark 7 (Corban)
- Galatians 5 (works of the flesh vs. fruit of the Spirit)
- John 16 (Holy Spirit convicting the world of sin)
- 1 & 2 Corinthians (Paul's lack of eloquence; thorn in the flesh)

Bottom line: The class covered **Romans 15:1–33**, with the focused teaching and discussion primarily on **15:14–16** and the implications of that section.