

JUDGES & ROMANS: RUINED TO RIGHTEOUS

Lesson 20: Righteous Works

Key Verse: In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.~ Romans 15.17

Winning the game of Settlers of Catan requires cooperation, collaboration, and building relationships.¹ This idea of unity as the only tool for winning was intentionally designed by the game's creator, Klaus Teuber². No one is eliminated, you cannot destroy another's building, and communication is required in Catan. "Victory points" are achieved through building cities and towns, leading to actual victory with a score of at least ten "victory points". Diplomacy, listening, and collaboration are the key tools for victory. Likewise, God's **Sovereign** design of His Church requires cooperation, collaboration, and building relationships. Unity is the only tool for successful evangelism, or the spread of God's gospel to all nations. God's people must be willing to engage in **works** with an "you can't do it by yourself" attitude so that no one is eliminated or destroyed. Unity of God's people amplifies God's gospel to all the nations who with one roaring voice proclaim, "to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ. Amen." (Romans 16.27)

Oh Sovereign God, there is no other God beside You. (Isaiah 45.5-7) You have sovereignly and faithfully equipped each of us to study and obey Your word this year. You have been faithful in protecting us as we studied great sins. You have been our Light even when the darkness of Judges surrounded us. Your grace has been our steady strength when You revealed our sins to us. Thank You for repentance. Thank You for fulfilling Your Promise of a Redeemer to crush Satan. Thank You that we live in this Hope You have secured for us eternally by Your Son, Our Lord and Messiah, Jesus. Call us to obedience in service to the mission field You have chosen for each of us. Holy Spirit, enable us to be bold in our "words and deeds" that lead others to Jesus" – to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen." (Romans 16.27)

Romans 15.14-16.27 I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. **15** But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God **16** to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. **17** In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.

18 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, **19** by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;

20 and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, **21** but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand." **22** This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.

23 But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, **24** I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. **25** At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. **26** For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. **27** For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.

28 When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. **29** I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, **31** that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, **32** so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.

33 May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

CH 16 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, **2** that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

¹Wikipedia, [Catan](#); August 21, 2025, Denverite: [Nations best sheep traders converge in Denver for Catan championships](#)

² April 25,2023, NPR: *All Things Considered*, [Klaus Teuber, Catan board game creator, dies at 70](#)

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, **4** who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

5 Greet also the church in their house.

Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.

6 Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.

7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.

9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.

10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ.

Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.

11 Greet my kinsman Herodion.

Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.

12 Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa.

Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.

13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.

14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them.

15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. **18** For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. **19** For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. **20** The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

21 Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. **22** I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.

23 Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

25 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages **26** but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— **27** to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Diamonds: Perhaps here Paul calls out to his scribe, Tertius (16.22), “Hey Tertius! Read me what I said in this letter. I can’t remember if I covered everything!” It’s a good question because scholars know Paul had up to three months to write this letter³. We have noted Paul’s normalcy confirmed in his occasional inability to keep his train of thought in this letter (Lesson 10: Romans 5.12-6.32) as well as occasional difficulty sticking to his main idea. (Imagine how many times Tertius would have had to answer Paul’s question, “Do you know where my phone is?” 😊)

Paul concludes his letter by exposing his heart first for God and then for the missional work in spreading the truth of God’s gospel in Jesus Christ (Romans 15.15-21).

1. You studied both Jesus Christ and The Gospel in Lesson 2: “Righteous through Gospel Power”. Read this deity and doctrine from Lesson 2 as well as your answer to Question 8 from Lesson 2. Connect both Jesus Christ and The

³ Technically Paul could have written this letter in a few days, up to three months. Google “how long did it take Paul to write Romans” for more insight.

Gospel using anything you have discovered or learned in both Judges and Romans. In other words, how and where do you see Jesus Christ and The Gospel in both Judges and Romans?

The book of Judges exposed the cycle of sin that God's people had willingly chosen through their perpetual disobedience of God's commands. Even more, they willfully ignored God's warnings of His plan to give them over to the gods of their own making if they continued to worship them rather than Him (Judges 10.10-16). Thus, the people entered a dark cycle of sin leading to shame leading to God's wrath and judgment against them. In the end, all they had left was their total depravity. But here in Romans 15.14-17, Paul teaches us of God's cycle of grace in Jesus Christ (Romans 15.15). Through Paul's intentional reference to the "priestly service of the gospel of God" (Romans 15.16), Paul introduces a new cycle of God's grace leading to obedience leading to hope that leads to God's glory, to the glory of His Holy Name.⁴ Thus, God's people enter a cycle of Light of life that leads to eternal Presence with God! (John 8.12; Revelation 21.23-24, 22.5)

2. You, like Paul, are called "to be a minister of Christ Jesus...in the priestly service of the gospel of God..." (Romans 15.16). Paul's letter was bold in reminding God's people of the mindset (Romans 12.1) and hallmarks of such a priestly service. As you exit this study, review the mindset and hallmarks Paul provided in Romans 12.1-15.13. What "word(s) and deed(s)" is God calling you towards in the "priestly service of the gospel of God"? In other words, in what practical evangelistic role, mindset, conversation, and/or behavior is God requiring your obedience to Him? (This can be a small matter or a larger vision/call. Remember, the body of Christ needs every organ, body part, and toenail! Romans 12.4-5)

-OR-

If God hasn't called you to obey Him in service, boldly ask that your siblings in Christ pray alongside you so that you too serve in obedience to Him! The body of Christ needs every organ, body part, and toenail! (Romans 12.4-5)

Paul had every reason to be "proud" of his "work for God" (Romans 15.17) but he isn't pointing to himself. Rather, he is confirming the authority God has given him to complete God's missionary work. The "signs and wonders" Paul references are those limited to a time period of miracles God allowed for the express purpose of "authentical[ing] the unique ministry of the apostles."⁵ Jesus exhibited the same authenticating power during his limited time on earth.⁶ Paul completes his thought by explaining God's unique mission for him is to cover new territory where Christ has "never been told of" and the gospel has never been heard (Romans 15.21). This is in accordance with fulfilling Isaiah's prophecies in Isaiah 52.15. Now, finally, he is optimistic that his plan to come visit their church in Rome will actually happen (Romans 15.22-29)! 🗺️ 🏠

3. Paul has "longed for many years" to fulfill his dream of coming to visit them (V 23). His goal for the visit is refreshment (V 24, 29, 32), and for some material support (V 24; *propempō* means to help on one's journey with food, money, by arranging for companions, means of travel, etc.)⁷. Paul was likely tempted to force his will on God, rather than wait on the LORD to fulfill His will. Contrast Paul's method of discerning God's will with the method God's people chose in Judges 17-21 (no need to read Judges 17-21! Rather review your answers to Lesson 19: Ruined and Dark). What strategy for discerning God's will do you think is better, and why? How often do you follow the better strategy?

But first, Paul must detour to Jerusalem to deliver financial support to impoverished Christians in that city. Paul never

⁴ Stott, p. 384

⁵ Stott, p. 385

⁶ Keller, p. 171

⁷ Stott, p. 390

explains the source of their impoverishment.⁸ Instead, Paul's focus is on the willingness and indebtedness ("owe") of the Gentiles providing this significant aid to their impoverished Jewish siblings in Christ (Romans 15.25-27).

4. According to Romans 11.11-12, 17-18 and 13.8-10, what are the two reasons the Gentile Christians are both "pleased" and "owe" support for their impoverished Jewish-Christian siblings? What influence do these two reasons have on your support of missionaries today?

Paul ends this instructional portion of his closing remarks by a call to "mutual encouragement" most especially in prayer for himself: for his "safety from his enemies", for a positive reception of the gift to Jerusalem, and that he would actually get to see them for real.⁹ Dr. Timothy Keller notes: "We may not be on the mission field, but we are always to be on mission by being on our knees."¹⁰ Paul then ends his letter of exhortation to his siblings in Christ with a Jewish benediction of God's peace being present with them all (V 33).

Paul's greeting in Romans 16 reveals a diverse church full of real people. It is suspected that Paul knew them all through the history of Jewish-Christian refugees and exiles during the reign and death of Emperor Claudius (Rome).¹¹ In addition, travel was more frequent than typically suspected by modern readers.¹² Within this list of twenty-six people (Romans 16.1-15), we find both Jewish and Gentile Christians, royal and/or socially high-ranking Christians, regular people, men and women, potentially slaves and freed people, as well as an ultra-rich woman, Phoebe.

Paul commends Phoebe for being a leader within her church community and for her extraordinary financial support of not only himself, but "of many". Her arrival to them was likely because she was engaged in a lawsuit and would need a safe place to stay during her business in Rome.¹³ Paul held the nine women he mentions in his closing in high regard, describing four of them uniquely as "hard working". There is much controversy about the roles within the church leadership they held, as well as their role within Paul's missionary support team. Dr. Stott shifts the focus from justifying their role to noting Paul's comfort with their leadership roles and their support of his missionary ministry.¹⁴ "...Paul appears to recognize and not to criticize [Priscilla's] leadership...Andronicus and Junia [feminine name] were indeed outstanding missionaries. The prominent place occupied by women in Paul's entourage shows that he was not at all the male chauvinist of popular fantasy. Does it also throw light on the vexed question of the ministry of women? As we have seen, among the women Paul greets, four were hard workers in the Lord's service. Priscilla was one of Paul's fellow workers, Junia was a well-known missionary, Phoebe a deacon¹⁵. On the other hand, it has to be said that none of them is called a presbyter in the church, even though an argument from silence can never be decisive."¹⁶

5. What two cautions does Paul want God's church to be watchful of in Romans 16.17? How does Jesus teach this same caution in Matthew 10.16?

6. What two tools does Paul tell you that you have when you are evaluating the actions and words of those within your church community, especially in leadership roles (Romans 16.17b-18)?

Paul's Christ-conquering reminder of the futility and ultimate reality of Satan's plight are meant to draw his readers to God's promises in Genesis 3.15. However, Paul points his readers to the first blow to Satan, Jesus Christ, as he exhorts his readers to remember the source of their current victory over Satan: grace.¹⁷

⁸ Stott, p. 391: The source of their impoverishment could be the "severe famine" referenced in Acts 11.27, or possibly a result of their generosity in selling their assets to give income to others (Acts 2.44, 4.32)

⁹ Keller, p. 174-75

¹⁰ Keller, p. 175

¹¹ Stott, pp. 400-401

¹² Stott, p. 400

¹³ Keller, pp. 177-178, Stott, pp. 398-399

¹⁴ Stott, pp. 401-403

¹⁵ Stott states: "The general meaning of *diakonos* (broadly 'ministry' or 'service') may be correct here. On the other hand, we know that the office of 'deacon' already existed, in however undeveloped a form (Philippians 1.1; 1 Timothy 3.8,11)." p. 399

¹⁶ Stott, p. 403

¹⁷ Stott, p. 408

7. Choose your favorite – or least favorite – judge from your study of Judges. What difference do you think the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ would have made in their lives? (There isn't a perfect nor wrong answer because we are asking you to use your imagination!) Who in your life needs their story impacted by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ? Ask your group to faithfully pray for them during our break from this Bible study (yes, this is a similar question to Question 2 of Lesson 3: Covenantal Righteousness)

One more time, Paul calls out to Tertius, "What did I say at the beginning of this letter?"

8. You are Tertius, reading out the beginning of Paul's letter so he can write his final doxology. Read Romans 1.1-6 immediately followed by Romans 16.25-27. What is Paul's final message to you?

Deity: Sovereign~ (Romans 16.20; Judges 1.2) "God's absolute rule and authority over all things."¹⁸ (Genesis 50.19-20; Psalm 115.3; Daniel 4.25) God's sovereign will is "a reference to the fact God's choices and decisions are in no way constrained by factors outside Himself (Psalm 33.9-11; Romans 9.6-28; Ephesians 1.3-6); also, God's right to choose without being answerable to anyone or anything outside Himself." (Matthew 11.25-27; Revelation 4.11)¹⁹

9. In your completed Lesson 1: Ruin of Sin, find your favorite thought(s) highlighted from each paragraph in the Deity: Sovereign. Transfer your highlights to this lesson. -OR- Read the three paragraphs below, highlighting your favorite thought(s) from each of them. Where do you see an example of God's Sovereignty from your study of Judges and Romans in each of your highlighted thoughts? In other words, where in the story of Judges and/or Paul's letter to the Roman church do you find an example that demonstrates or explains your highlighted thought? (The bullets after each paragraph are for you to record your example.)

"Nothing is outside God's sovereignty (Job 1.21)...And yet we must not take this to mean that God superintends good and evil in the same way. God works in us to will and to do according to His purpose (Philippians 2.12-13). We are not told that God works in us to will and to do what is contrary to His purpose. The most heinous act in the history of the universe – the crucifixion of the Son of God – was clearly and directly decreed by God, but that did not render Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the people of Jerusalem innocent of their sin (Acts 2.23, 4.27-28). The decree to act is not the same as the act itself. Everything happens according to God's will, but He does not will that everything comes to pass in the same way."²⁰

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God does not merely turn hard situations for our good; He ordains hard situations for our good (Genesis 50.20)...God providentially reigns over evil (Judges 9.23; 1 Samuel 16.14; Isaiah 45.6-7; Amos 3.6). Death, too, is in the Lord's hands (Deuteronomy 32.39; 1 Samuel 2.6). All our days were written in God's book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139.16). Our God "does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." (Daniel 4.35). God is God because He has the power to do what He wants, the wisdom to carry it out, and the sovereign authority to immutably appoint whatsoever to come to pass (Isaiah 46.9-10)...Therefore, we can be patient when things go against us, thankful when things go well, and have confidence for the future that nothing will separate us from God's love²¹ (Romans 8.38-39).

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"Only a God possessing absolute power can exercise absolute control over all things. God works all things after the counsel

¹⁸ MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 937

¹⁹ MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 187

²⁰ DeYoung p. 79

²¹ DeYoung pp. 96-97

of His own will (Ephesians 1.11). He determines the number of stars and gives to all of them their own names (Psalm 147.4). The God of heaven rules over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in His hands, and no one can withstand Him (2 Chronicles 20.6). Although God is the doer of all that is done – we believe in proximate causes, human volition, and human responsibility – yet everything that comes to pass has its origins in the sovereignty of God. Nothing escapes His control, and no one operates independent of His will and power...Unlike our exercise of power, God never wields power capriciously or callously. The good news in God doing whatever He pleases is that God always works for the good of His people and for the glory of His Name.”²²

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Doctrine: Works²³~ (Romans 15.26) “...it is the consistent witness of the New Testament that growth in godliness requires exertion on the part of the Christian. Romans 8.13 says by the Spirit we must put to death the deeds of the flesh. Ephesians 4.22-24 instructs us to put off the old self and put on the new. Ephesians 6 tells us to put on the full armor of God and stand fast against the devil. Colossians 3.5 commands us to put to death what is earthly in us. 1 Timothy 6.12 urges us to fight the good fight. Luke 13.24 exhorts us to strive to enter the narrow gate. 2 Peter 1.5 puts it plainly: ‘Make every effort.’”

“Christians work – they work to kill sin, and they work to live in the Spirit. They have rest in the gospel but never rest in their battle against the flesh and the devil. As J.C. Ryle²⁴ put it, the child of God has two great marks about [her]: [she] is known for [her] inner warfare and [her] inner peace.”

“Of course, our effort can never win God’s justifying favor. Whatever we manage to work out is really what God purposed to work in us (Philippians 2.12-13; 1 Corinthians 15.10; Hebrews 2.11). The gospel is truly the A to Z of the Christian life. But let us not misunderstand what it means to be gospel-centered. As gospel Christians, we are not afraid of striving, fighting, and working. These are good Bible words. The gospel that frees us *from* self-justification also frees us *for* obedience. God did not tell the Israelites, ‘Work hard and I’ll set you free from Egypt.’ That’s law without a gospel. But neither did God tell them, ‘I love you. I set you free by my grace. I ask nothing more except that you believe in this good gift.’ That’s gospel with no law. Instead, God redeemed the people by His mercy, and that mercy made a way for obedience.”

“Justification is wholly dependent on faith apart from works of the law. But sanctification – born of faith, dependent on faith, powered by faith – requires moral exertion. Mortify and vivify (put to death and make alive) is how older theologians used to put it. When it comes to growth in godliness, trusting does not put an end to trying.”

10. Review all your Scripture-Soaked Prayers. How do you see your work and your growth in godliness through the journey of your Scripture-Soaked Prayers? How do you see God’s work of sanctification growing your “obedience of faith” (Romans 16.26)?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: Surviving the spiritual cancer of sin inspires a believer’s devoted service.

- I. Living Sacrifice (Romans 15.14-33) **T1:** Saved sinners live to the praise of God’s glory.
 - a. How have your life choices and deepest desires changed as a result of Paul’s teaching in the book of Romans?

²² DeYoung, pp. 58-59

²³ DeYoung, pp. 265-266

²⁴ DeYoung quoting Ryle, *Holiness*, p. 69

- b. In what new ways have you become a living sacrifice?
 - c. How are you living to the praise of God's glory?
- II. Living Stones (Romans 16.1-27) **T2:** Saved sinners live to one day hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant".
- a. What do you need to change to live in a way that you will one day hear those words from the lips of your Savior?
 - b. How devoted is your service to Him?

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