

Take-Home 15: To the Only Wise God

Romans 15:14-16:27 · The final sheet; keep all fifteen

What We Found

Paul's ministry is "the priestly service of the gospel" (15:16), aimed by principle at unreached ground, "not where Christ has already been named" (15:20), and by plan at Spain (15:24, 28), by way of Jerusalem with the collection: Gentile churches repaying spiritual blessings with material ones (15:27), communion made visible. His travel prayers, read with providence's hindsight, were answered sideways and greater: he reached Rome in chains, and Rome kept him forever. The letter very likely traveled in the care of Phoebe, our sister and deaconess of Cenchreae, helper of many (16:1-2), to a church of more than two dozen named believers, house churches, neck-riskers, and hard workers: doctrine landing in named people.

The Bible's first promise of redemption stands at the letter's door: "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (16:20), Eden's protoevangelium (Gen 3:15) with the Body sharing the Head's victory. And the last discovery was the letter's frame: the mystery is made known to all nations "to bring about the obedience of faith" (16:26), the very phrase of the very first sentence (1:5). The letter's last thought is its first, and the study's question, what must a person do to be saved, became its answer: receive everything, grace, Christ, Baptism, the Spirit, by a living faith that hands God everything, works through love, and perseveres, all supplied, sustained, and crowned by God himself. "To the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ! Amen" (16:27).

My Final Answer

In one sentence, dated today: what must a person do to be saved? Write your third and final answer below, and keep it with your Session 1 and Session 8 answers.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Preaching through Romans 16, St. John Chrysostom lingered over the names as over relics, marveling at 16:7: "Oh how great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!" (Homilies on Romans 31). And in his final homily he confessed he loved Rome above all because Paul wrote to her in life and rests in her in death. The greatest preacher of the ancient Church ends the letter with an emotionally charged meditation on Paul and Rome's people.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. LAWRENCE

The tradition recounted by St. Ambrose (On the Duties of the Clergy, Book II): ordered in 258 to surrender the Church's treasures, the deacon St. Lawrence gathered Rome's poor and presented them: these are the treasures of the Church. Paul's collection theology (15:26-27) in a single scene: the wealth the churches carry is Christ in his members.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS

"The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience" (Against Heresies, Book III, quoted at CCC 494). And the Catechism finishes our title thread in one sentence: "The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith" (CCC 148). The phrase that frames the letter has a face, a name, and a yes.

Live It From Here

- Keep all three answers together, dated, and reread them yearly.
- Take one first concrete step toward your Spain within seven days, and tell one person from this group what it was.
- Read Romans again, alone, one chapter a day for sixteen days, and watch how much of it now reads you.
- Entrust it all to the one who most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith: one Memorare or one decade, for this group.

Memory Verse

"Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations."

Romans 1:5 (RSV2CE)

The Benediction

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

Romans 15:13 (RSV2CE)