

## ROMANS 12:1-16:27 | LIFE TODAY

*Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 46*

## ROMANS 15:15-16:27 | PAUL'S MINISTRY TO ALL

*Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 51*

## ROMANS 15:15-19 | PAUL'S KINGDOM MINISTRY TO GENTILES

**VERSE 15 - BLACK**

Paul transitions from discussing the recipients' behavior during Israel's upcoming period of blindness to his own role. He aims to remind the recipients of the letter about his role, initially in the Kingdom (15:15-19), and later concerning the mystery (16:25-27).

At first glance, especially when this verse is considered in isolation, it may not seem like Paul is referring to a kingdom ministry. This is particularly true when he speaks "**of the grace that is given to me of God.**" This phrase closely resembles the mystery that one could easily assume it is. However, as we will see, the following verses challenge that assumption. It is beneficial for the reader to note that verse 15 ends with a comma, not a period. Verse 16 further explains the "**grace**" mentioned in verse 15.

**VERSE 16 - BLACK**

God's grace, under which Paul was commissioned, was to be "**the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.**" Once again, this sounds like a "mystery ministry." However, recall that in Acts 9:15, on the road to Damascus, God said to Saul, "**Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.**" The Acts 9 ministry to the Gentiles was **prior to** the message of the mystery. Saul was baptized and joined in the very assembly he persecuted, an assembly which was under Peter's Kingdom authority.

So the words concerning the grace of God to minister to the Gentiles in vv. 15-16 **could be** either the kingdom or the mystery ministry, and these words alone cannot make the determination. However, Paul continues by speaking of being a minister of "**the gospel of God.**" You may recall that Paul begins the epistle speaking of this same Gospel, which he says was "**promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures**" (Rom. 1:2). Such a Gospel cannot be the same one that was "**in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men**" (Eph. 3:4), and thus cannot be the Pauline / mystery Gospel.

Further evidence is that Paul speaks of "**the offering of the Gentiles**" being "**sanctified.**" This is terminology of the Law, not of grace. That the sanctification comes from the Holy Ghost does not change the matter. The giving of the promise of the Spirit is a matter of the Hebrew prophets and not of the mystery.

Paul's engagement in the kingdom ministry is highlighted in Acts 9. Paul journeyed to Jerusalem, but the assembly there doubted his discipleship (v. 26) until Barnabas, the runner-up for Judas's position, vouched for him. Later, in Acts 13:2, Barnabas and Saul were set apart for Kingdom work. They

journeyed to Gentile territory to spread the Kingdom message in the synagogues of the nations. However, when this message was rejected, Paul was entrusted with the grace message (Acts 13:38-39). From that point, Paul undertook a dual ministry: he delivered the kingdom message to Israel and the mystery message to individuals. The fact that the mystery was assigned exclusively to him and was his responsibility (Gal. 2:7) does not imply that he was forbidden from sharing the truth of the Kingdom gospel and the future reign of the Lord with the nations. Recall, after all, that the Kingdom message was one for even **"the uttermost part of the earth"** (Acts 1:8), and Paul, as Saul, was first commissioned to take that Gospel, then later given the mystery Gospel. In fact, a fairly casual reading of Paul's epistles shows that many of them contain kingdom related material.

One additional comment on verse 16: when Paul refers to being a **"minister"**, he uses the Greek term λειτουργός [leitourgos]. This term, like the other language in the verse, is deeply Jewish and is frequently translated as **"priest"** in contemporary versions. The imagery of a *priest* and his *sacrifice* is rooted in Jewish symbolism.

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#### VERSE 17 -

Paul's priestly ministry to the Gentiles was given as a point of **"boasting"** concerning the things to which God had called him.

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#### VERSE 18 -

The beginning of verse 18 ties in with verse 17. Paul will glory in the **"things which pertain to God"** (v. 17) and will refrain from things which God has not **"wrought by me."** Once again, I do not think this pertains to the mystery revealed to Paul, but rather to the kingdom work done by Paul among the nations. In fact, this work was **"to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed."**

I think it is difficult to make the obedience **"by word and deed"** issue go away. The Greek word ὑπακοή [hupakoa] is used 16 times in the Scripture, always as some form of obedience. Once again, this simply does not sound like something that is **"not of yourselves"** (Eph. 2:9).

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#### VERSE 19 -

Paul guided the Gentiles to become **"obedient"** (v. 18) **"through mighty signs and wonders"** and **"by the power of the Spirit."** This approach aligns more with the kingdom's grace manifestations than God's grace dispensation. This method is reminiscent of Paul's arrival in Corinth, where he **"reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks"** (Acts 18:4). He described his ministry there as being **"in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"** (1 Cor. 2:4). While miracles and wonders are not exclusive to the kingdom Gospel, they are so closely associated with it that they began to cease with the rejection of that kingdom.

Paul performed these **"mighty signs"** through the Spirit, from Jerusalem to Illyricum (modern-day Albania, Serbia, and regions east of the Adriatic Sea). In these places, he **"preached the gospel of Christ."** This Gospel refers to the Messiah and His future reign, which is what "Christ" always signifies.