

## Appendix 2: "That you may be established"

By L.A. Mott Jr.

The Roman saints were famous for their faith (1:8), but, like all Christians, needed to be "established in the truth" (2 Pe. 1:12). This is what Paul saw to be needed in Rome. This is why he wanted to go to Rome. But he would accomplish this purpose by means of teaching, providing them with a full exposition of the gospel; and in fact this is exactly what he does in this epistle. All along the way Paul was being warned that "bonds and afflictions" awaited him in Jerusalem (Ac. 20:22f; 21:4, 10-14). He did not even know for sure that God would permit him to reach Rome. Perhaps it would not be his will. Paul, of course, was always ready to bow to the will of God. But at the same time he would want to do everything he could to provide for the need of the Roman disciples. So he writes this letter. He may never reach Rome, but they would have the letter, which would fully establish them in the faith.

Peter addressed people who were "established in the truth," but anticipated the need for them always, even after his death, "to call these things to remembrance" (2 Pe. 1:12-15). False teachers were coming and the Christians needed to be able to remember the truth, lest they be carried off. So Peter put the truth in writing (2 Pe. 3:1f) in two epistles and in the Gospel of Mark, which according to the evidence contains Peter's memoirs written by Mark.

So with Paul. He knew the Roman disciples to be "filled with all knowledge," but he too wrote "as putting (them) again in remembrance" (15:14-16). At the end of the epistle, after the full presentation of the gospel with all its implications, he warns about teachers who cause divisions "contrary to the doctrine which ye learned" (16:17). Paul rejoices in the obedience of the disciples, but explains the reason for his warning: "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil" (16:19). When such teachers appeared, with the Roman letter in hand the disciples would have all they needed to tell the difference between truth and error.

Finally, the closing doxology: "Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel ..." (16:25-27). To establish you! Again at the end as at the beginning.

I believe this purpose clause explains the reason the book of Romans was addressed to the Roman saints. The importance of fortifying this community of believers is incalculable. From such a radiating center the faith of these folk had spread far and wide, was "proclaimed throughout the whole world." But think what it would mean if the Roman Christians were taken captive by false teachers! The error would be spread just as rapidly as their faith. Paul evidently saw Rome as such a great radiating center. He wanted to do all he could for the disciples.

This passage is like Ephesians 1:15-23 in providing a clue to the purpose of the book. In each case Paul perceived the needs of a group of Christians and did all he could to fill those needs. He prayed for the Ephesians that God would provide "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him;" etc., and God answered his prayer by giving him, and through him them, the epistle to the Ephesians. Likewise, Paul saw the need of the Romans to be established. It would be along time before he reached Rome. At the time he could not even be sure it would be the will of God for him to go. But they would have Romans!

But so do we! It served them first, and now it serves us as well. Just think what this epistle promises to do for you! What a treasure the Lord God gave us through the earthen vessel Paul. How much we ought to value it! How much we ought to read it and search it and memorize it, so that we too may be established, never to stray, never to fall!

Please pardon me for using so many exclamations. But if ever we are going to be excited about anything, is this not the time?