

This Worldwide Movement // Romans 16 // Romans # 31

Martin Luther King Day

This weekend is MLK Day--a time where we celebrate, remember, and prayerfully continue to pursue the legacy Dr. King championed.

In April 1963, **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sat in a small, solitary jail cell in Birmingham**, and it's there he penned his now famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Dr. King's letter confronted inaction and passivity with the authority of a biblical worldview, particularly one shaped by the gospel. We often talk about Dr. King's vision of racial equality. But "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" reminds us that this wasn't *Dr. King's* vision. It was *God's* vision.

Dr. King called for an end to racial injustice not by appealing to political correctness or even the will of the majority. Dr. King's "Letter" ground his call in God's purposes for humanity. A vision rooted in the gospel.

- Multi-racial unity, he said, is **God's intention** for his church.
- Reflecting the unity of the coming Kingdom of God is **God's intention** for the church.
- People of different ethnicities, backgrounds, political affiliations, income levels, and even languages coming together is **God's intention** for the church.

"Letter from a Birmingham Jail" was a thunderbolt in the battle for racial justice, and it remains a powerful wake-up call to this day.

A lot has changed in the past 57 years, but the need for us, the church, to lead out in the fight for racial reconciliation as a distinguishing mark of gospel proclamation is as pressing as ever.

The whole letter is worth a read, but one of my favorite sections reads like this:

I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, [but] as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label.

Was not Jesus an extremist for love? "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Was not Amos an extremist for justice? "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

Was not Paul an extremist for the gospel? "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Was not Martin Luther an extremist for justification by faith? "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise. God help me, Amen."

And John Bunyan? "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience."

And Abraham Lincoln? "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free."

And Thomas Jefferson? "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal ..."

So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice?

Summit family, we want to be fervently devoted as extremists of love, for justice, and for unity in the gospel.

This is **why, at the Summit, we've** established the Commission for Oneness and Reconciliation (CORE). CORE is made up of members from all over our church, and CORE's mission is to provide vision, leadership, and guidance to The Summit Church in our pursuit of racial reconciliation, ethnic diversity, and gospel unity.

CORE is our way of showing this isn't just talk for us. We want to move toward healing, racial reconciliation and unity in the body of Christ right here in our church. **With their guidance, we have put out a goal called "25 by 25"** – having a church membership that is at least 25% people of color by 2025.

What would it look like if 25% of our congregation, our leaders, our elders, our SG's, our staff—were people of color? By God's grace, I hope we find out very soon.

If you want to know more, and to access some of their resources, visit summitchurch.com/core.

COMMUNION

Well, OUR TEAMS are going to pass out the bread and the cup...

Once a month here at TSC we take communion together, and I think it's meaningful to do it in light of our desire for unity and healing.

Because, see, the gospel gives us a unity nothing else can.

- It destroys the pride that leads to division by showing us that we are all sinners in need of grace.
- It destroys the despair by making one person feel inferior to another because it shows us that we are special creations, made in God's image, recipients of his love.

Paul says that in the cross Jesus made us one by "tearing down the dividing wall of hostility." He **did that by shedding** his blood his blood for our sin, and the **way we remember that** is by taking communion together.

As you take that bread and cup, I want to remind you of two things:

1. **Only for believers**
2. **For believes, communion is a time where Paul calls us to "examine ourselves."** I think when it comes to division in the church, we'll all find that when we look within we've contributed plenty to the problem.

So I'd like for us to have a time of corporated repentance before we take the bread and the cup together by reading this prayer of repentance¹:

- **Forgive us, Lord, for the pride that leads to division, and the apathy that keeps us apart.**
- **Forgive us for looking at others with suspicion and distrust.**
- **Forgive us for not accepting others as freely as you have accepted us.**

¹ Adapted from Nolan Palsma's prayer for reconciliation, Pitcher Hill Community Church, North Syracuse, NY

- Forgive us for caring more about our preferences than your glory
- Forgive us, Lord, for not loving our neighbors as ourselves, and you supremely above all
- Reconcile, O Christ, by your cross, in your name, for your glory.

Eat and drink.

By the way, **many churches throughout the country** are commemorating another important event this weekend—**Sanctity of Human Life Sunday**. We haven't forgotten about that, but in order to **give that the weight it deserves**, we'll be focusing on it *next* week.

Romans 16

Well, for the last time, open your Bibles to the book of Romans. I'm kind of sad. Romans 16. **In your journal, p. 88.**

Can I just say, "We did it!"

- **FWIW, we broke all the church growth rules with this series.** According to the church growth gurus we're not supposed to do a series over 4 weeks long and it's supposed to have a really creative title. We overshot that by about 27 weeks and we were really creative with our title: 'ROMANS.'
- **But do you know why it didn't matter? We had 981 people give their lives to Christ** throughout this series.
- **And that's because the power is in the gospel, not in the presentation.** Romans 1:16. When you have a powerful gospel, you don't depend on flashy packaging.
- And, God as my witness, we **didn't skip** anything in this book, did we? In this series, we've talked about total depravity, God's wrath, predestination, homosexuality, the exclusivity of Christ,

modern-day Palestinian politics, how we should feel about Donald Trump, drinking alcohol and whether public school or home school is the best choice.

- **We said "circumcision" like 53x.**
- And you're still here! **Turn to your neighbor and say**, "I'm really impressed with you. *You*. You are a serious Christian."

Everyone stand up

- If you were here when we began Romans, remain standing"
- if you have heard every one of the messages... either here or by podcast, remain standing.
- If you were HERE for every message, remain standing.
- Extra credit: "if you were here AND you still have your Romans journal"

Romans 16...

- **Reading this chapter reminds me of a tradition my family had at New Years.** On New Years my mom cooked Corned beef and cabbage w/ coins in it. I hated corned beef and cabbage, but it was by far my favorite meal of the year.
 - Anyone else have that tradition? (You know how when you're a kid you just assume that what your family does, everyone does? Then you find out later that nobody did what you did? We got married and my wife was like, "You did *what?*"
- **Eating that meal is what reading this chapter is like.** This chapter reads like a random list of names, like it's Paul's list of Twitter followers or the credits at the end of a movie that you don't watch unless someone has told you they're followed by bloopers.
- **Most readers are tempted to skim through it.** But this chapter is far from irrelevant. Sure, it's a list of names, some of which are hard to pronounce.
- But it shows you the personal nature of Paul's ministry, and tucked among all the cabbage of these names are some awesome gospel-coins.

MUSIC

16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church in Cenchreae. ² So you should welcome her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever matter she may require your help. For indeed she has been a benefactor of many—and of me also.

³ Give my greetings to Prisca and Aquila, my coworkers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who risked their own necks for my life. Not only do I thank them, but so do all the Gentile churches. ⁵ Greet also the church that meets in their home. Greet my dear friend Epänetus, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.

⁶ Greet Mary, who has worked very hard for you. ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews and fellow prisoners. They are noteworthy among the apostles, and they were also in Christ before me. ⁸ Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. ⁹ Greet Urbanus, our coworker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

¹⁰ Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. ¹¹ Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet those who belong to the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. ¹² Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who have worked hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, who has worked very hard in the Lord.

¹³ Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother—and mine. ¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters who are with them. ¹⁵ Greet Philologus and 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 send you greetings.

¹⁷ Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them,¹⁸ because such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words.

¹⁹ The report of your obedience has reached everyone. Therefore I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise about what is good, and yet innocent about what is evil. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

²¹ Timothy, my coworker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my fellow countrymen, greet you.

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.²

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept silent for long ages ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God to advance the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles— ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ—to him be the glory forever! Amen.

We do not know most of the 26 individuals Paul names in vv. 1–16. And some of them had **some strange names**. If you are a new parent looking for a name for your baby, you might not draw a lot from this chapter.

² Some manuscripts include a vs. 24, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

- Rufus (vs. 13)
- *Philologus* (vs. 15): I don't understand what parent looks at a cute little baby in a crib and says, "Philologus." It literally means "fond of words." It would be like naming your kids "chatterbox" or "gabby."
- Then you have **Ampliatius** (vs. 8) and **Asyncritus** (vs. 14), which sound like pretty serious medical conditions to me
- Or ~~Epaphroditus~~ (vs. 5): a guy to keep around if you have an anaphylactic shock
- My **favorite, vs. 11, Narcissus**. That's another one I don't get, because it meant the same thing back then it does today. It's like naming your kid "Ego-boy."
- ~~Gaius (vs. 23) I'm not sure I even want to touch that one.~~

If you want your kid to hate you, choose one of those names.

But, here is what you can learn from the list:

1. Unity in the Body Outweighs Divisions in Society

- These names show you that the early church was diverse. They may sound strange to you, but they reveal a distinction in:
 - **Race**. Some are Jewish names, some Gentile names; some from the Middle East, **Asia, and Europe**.
 - Paul mainly seems concerned to demonstrate that the early church consisted of both Jew/Gentile.
 - Having them **together in one church** gave rise to all kinds of cultural and political problems, which Paul has dealt with in Romans.
 - **You have to wonder: Wouldn't it have been easier just to plant two separate congregations?** Jews over here; Gentiles there. Probably.
 - And it's easier to do today to do **church by races**.
 - But **Paul knew that these believers demonstrating unity** in one church was an important gospel witness.
 - **It's why we strive for it here**. And if you believe that, you have to do more than give a passing 'amen.'

- One of Dr. King's most famous statements was that the most segregated hour in America was...
- **If I could add one thing to Dr. King's statement**, it might be that an hour even more segregated is 6–7 every evening around the dinner table. Multi-ethnic unity on the weekends comes from multi-ethnic friendship throughout the week.
- At TSC we say we **don't want merely to host multi-ethnic events**, we want to live multi-ethnic lives.
- **So the list reveals distinctions of race. We also see distinctions of CLASS**. Some of the people were of considerable means—
 - For e.g., **Aristobulus (v. 10)** and **Narcissus (v. 11)** are both said to have been the head of a "household" or estate.
 - Some believe **Aristobolus** to be the grandson of Herod the Great. **Erastus Paul recognizes** as the City Treasurer.
 - **Other names, like Rufus and Urbanus**, were common slave names.
 - And here they all sit together in churches as equals.
 - **And that's what is behind Paul's command in vs 16:** ¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. Some of you single guys really latched onto that verse when I was reading it and you thought, "Now there's a verse I can get behind." It's how I first asked Veronica out. I said, "Hey, would you like to a Bible study on Romans? We're going to start in chapter 16?" Just kidding.
 - **The emphasis is on the word 'holy'**, there, and that's different than what you're thinking.
 - A kiss like that on the cheek was a **sign of equality and friendship**. In the church, royalty and slave met together as equals.
 - **That recognition of equality was the seed**, btw, that ultimately undid slavery in Western society.
 - One of the best works on the history of slavery is by an African-American named Thomas Sowell. He points out slavery has been part of human history in every major

culture, but only in Christianized societies did we see a moral struggle against it and all kinds of guilt literature get written in reaction and ultimately change come from within. And he says that's because in the gospel is a view of man that destroys the basis for those kinds of hierarchies. **There's only one race of people:** human. Only one class: sinner. Only one hope: the grace of Jesus.

- Finally, we see distinctions of **Gender**.
 - Of the **26 names mentioned, 8 or 9 are women**. (And the reason we are unsure whether it is 8 or 9 is we're not sure about Junia. Junia was a kind of unisex name, like Taylor or Jamie or Alex today. **(So, if you choose a name like that for your kid, that's cool—but if they get written about in the Bible a couple of thousand years from now we may not know if it refers to a boy or girl, and that will be on you.)**)
 - **Paul's inclusion of women for shout-outs** in this kind of letter was very intentional, and very unusual. **Rome and Jerusalem were both very male-dominated societies**. Yet, he calls these women "co-laborers," (vs. 3).
 - **Particularly worthy of note is Phoebe**. She is called "servant" in vs. 1, but the word is *diakonos*, which can be translated "deacon."
 - The **word can mean either**. It can mean generally "servant" or it can mean an official position of deacon.
 - **Deacons were a group of people** Paul says in 1 Tim 3 are appointed to work alongside the pastors to meet material and physical needs both inside and outside the church.
 - **We have deacons here, at every campus**. Some of you should consider joining it.

The question is, "Which version of the word is Paul using here?" Is she simply someone who serves, or does she holds the official office of deacon (or deaconess)? We can't be sure exactly.³ **The fact that she is tied to a location** "a *deaconess* of the church in Cenchræ" probably indicates some type of official position in the church.⁴

What we do know is that Paul recognizes her as a co-laborer and gave her a very important task: bringing the book of Romans to the Romans.⁵ She would have given it to them, conveyed Paul's wishes for it, and if they had questions, she would have answered them.⁶

Paul also mentions Priscilla, in vs. 3, and we know from Acts that she helped mentor Apollos, a well-known preacher in the early church.

- The **point is these women were prominent** and very influential in early ministry.
- They **weren't merely in the back making copies** and getting coffee for the men while they worked.

In the church, we see a society where distinctions of superiority based on race, class, or gender no longer apply.

Second, we see... 2. Love in the Body Is the Core of Christianity

- **What is striking in this list is how many people Paul felt personally connected to in this church.**
- If anybody in the Kingdom of God ever had an important job, it was Paul. His preaching and teaching would set the direction for the church for the next 2000 years. But he's not isolated off in his prophet's chambers alone by himself with God all the time.

³ Tim Keller, *Romans 8–16 For You*, 178,

⁴ Moo, 787.

⁵ She's commended to the church, which probably means she was the one who carried the letter.

⁶ Michael Bird

- He **seems to be swimming in friends**. And not just a bunch of Apostles just like him: Ethnically diverse friends. Weak and Strong. Slaves/Free. Rich/poor. Men/Women.
- **If I could be personal with you:** As the church has gotten bigger, I have felt this **temptation toward isolation**. You **believe the lie** that there's always important stuff to be doing and I don't have time for the messiness of ordinary relationships.
- Veronica and I have battled against that because we know that doesn't lead anywhere good.
 - People without friends always end up unhappy and warped in some way.
- **Ever notice how a lot of men, as they get older, have less and less friends?** They pull away and by the time they are in their late 50's they have very few actual friends outside of their wives.
- **That's dangerous**--it's not how God designed us to live and it leads to all kinds of problems. The *Scientific American* says that isolation/loneliness shortens your lifespan by 15 years, the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day.⁷ **Things that grow in a secret garden always grow mutant.**
- **Some Christians feel like the ability to live by yourself with just God** is a mark of spiritual maturity. That's actually wrong. Listen to **Tim Keller:** *Adam was not lonely because he was imperfect, but because he was perfect. The ache for friends is the one ache that's not the result of sin.... God made us in such a way that we couldn't even enjoy paradise without friends--human friends. Adam had a perfect "quiet time" everyday, for twenty-four hours a day. Yet, still he needed friends.... If you are lonely, you aren't dysfunctional, you're healthy. You're lonely because you're not a tree. You're lonely because you're not a machine. To need deep spiritual friendships is not a sign of spiritual immaturity, but of maturity. It's not a sign of weakness, but a sign of health."*

Love and connection in the body is the ultimate sign of Christian maturity.

⁷ <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/loneliness-is-harmful-to-our-nations-health/>

- **When Paul** lists out these people and praises them, he doesn't talk about how important they were, or how much they had given, or even how gifted they were in ministry. Over and over, he **only praises one thing:** *their devotion to God and their devotion to one another*--because, for Paul, that's the sign of maturity.
- The health of your **walk with Jesus is measured less** by how much you know or how gifted you are and more by how well you know and are known in the body of Christ.

Beware of any sense of important or busyness that cuts you off from that, because it's cutting you off from spiritual health

I've told you my wife has helped me with this. I get tempted...

- **"Fame is making yourself accessible to a bunch of people you don't really care about at the expense of those that you do!"** — **Veronica Greear, Spiritual Adviser to J.D. Greear)**
 - The health of your **walk with Jesus is measured less** by how much you know or how gifted you are and more by how well you know and are known in the body of Christ.
 - **We often don't acknowledge that today:**

3. Ministry by the Body Engages Every Member

This list shows you that there were a **whole lot of people involved in the ministry**, most of whom we'll never **hear about again**.

- **Like Tertius, vs. 22**, whom Paul says transcribed the letter. ²² **Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.** You say, 'Paul didn't write this letter?' Yes, but he would have dictated this letter to Tertius who was trained to write quickly and clearly, and that's what Paul indicates here. This is like the **cameraman ducking out from behind the camera** to wave.
- **Tryphaena and Tryphosa** and Persis who worked hard, really hard, Paul says, in the ministry.

- **Then you have Priscilla and Aquila (vs. 3)** who ‘risked their necks’ for the ministry, and opened up their homes for church meetings.
- **And Rufus’ mom** who evidently played a significant mother-like role in Paul’s life. Because Paul says, “Greet Rufus’s mother because she’s like a mother to me.”

Again, most of these people we’ll never hear from again, but they had a huge impact on the spread of the gospel.

Historian Stephen Neill says that nothing is more remarkable about the spread of the gospel in the first century than its anonymity.

- At the **end of the 1st century** there were 3 great church planting centers...
- The founding of the church in Antioch is recorded in Luke 11, and Luke doesn’t list the name of a single one of the founders. He only says, “...and the Lord’s hand was with **them**” (Acts 11:21). “Them.” “Them” is Luke’s way of saying “a bunch of dudes whose names I won’t mention because you won’t hear anything about them again anyway.” **They are the kinds of people** who get listed in the credits of the movie as “Bystander #3.”
- But they **planted a church that would one day send out** the Apostle Paul.

These are the people you see in Romans 16. Unknown people who **worked hard, they sacrificed. Many suffered and some died.** And because they did, we are here. When they lived, we were the ends of the earth. *Because they were faithful, we have a chance to hear.*

It’s our turn. If Paul were writing a letter to our church today--if there was a book of the Bible called “**Paul’s Letter to the SUMMIT**” (*that’d be pretty cool, huh?*) would he mention your name?

⁸ William Danker writes, “The business enterprises [of the Moravians] were the rockets that hoisted pioneer Moravian satellites into the missionary

In every generation that the gospel really spreads, it is because ordinary people grab ahold of their responsibility in the movement.

- One of the **greatest gospel expansions in history took place in the early 1700’s** through a movement mostly unknown to history called “The Moravian movement.”
- A really rich young man of privilege named Ludwig von Zinzendorf (That’s another name I’d encourage you parents to avoid) was **staring at a painting one day** in an art gallery called “Behold the Man,” a picture of Jesus bruised and bloodied on the cross.” Below it were transcribed the words, ‘All this I’ve done for you. What have you done for me?’ **He began to think, as I often challenge you,** to consider where you’d be without Jesus. Exactly the same place that millions in the world are without you.
- He **opened up his home and challenge people to be to the world what Jesus was to them. He began to train people to go** and gave away his fortune to help get them there.
- Their famous battle-cry became *preach the gospel, die, and be forgotten.*”
- **Their movement did not consist of only vocational pastors.** Moravians formed for-profit trading companies that enabled them to carry the gospel into difficult places. As we’ll see later in this book, business can take the gospel to places that “mission trips” can never get to. In fact, historians say the most successful and enduring of the Moravian mission works were those established by the trading companies, not the mission boards.⁸
- Moravians established gospel communities all over the world, from Greenland to Guyana, from Jamaica to Cape Town, and from New York to North Carolina.
- A few even settled in the place I would one day grow up—Winston-Salem, NC—and they established a gospel community there. Their gospel impact would shape the community I grew up in. My **home church was located less than a mile** from the Moravian gospel outpost they had established there in 1753.

heavens in an age when other Protestants were doing next to nothing.” *Profit for the Lord: Economic Activities in Moravian Missions and the Basel Mission Trading Company* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1971), 72–73.

Preach the gospel, die and be forgotten. Yet with an impact that resonates for eternity.

- **Is that going to be you?** We always tell you here: You have a part of the mission. God made you good at something. *Whatever that is, do it well to the glory of God and do it somewhere strategic for the mission of God.*
- A recent Forbes magazine survey indicates that 75% of college graduates think their job will take them overseas at some point. Probably too high, but if so, take the gospel!

Will you be part of this faithful THEM? I think **this chapter gives you a preview of heaven.** By listing out their names, Paul says, “Nobody ever sees you, but I see you, and I commend you.” **One day Jesus is going to do that.** Will he recognize you?

One of the most powerful things I've seen done in a church was... ~~PSF telling story of how many people involved in a woman's conversion~~

MUSIC

Paul's final words in Romans are reserved for God—as he reflects on the gospel he's just written about, and the movement he is a part of, he breaks into a prayer:

Vs. 25, ²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ,

BTW, that verse ties us back to Paul **opening message in chapter 1.**⁹

- In **Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed...for it is the power...”** the word for power *dynameo*, which is the same word Paul uses here, **“able”**.
- Paul is saying the same power **God uses to save us by the gospel is also the power he uses strengthen us** in the gospel.

- God **launched your salvation by the gospel**, he will sustain it by the gospel
- **The gospel is the power of God for all of salvation.**
- It's **not just how you begin** in Christ; it's also how you grow in Christ.
- It's **not just the diving board** off of which we jump into...
- Not **just the ABC's**.

Paul has spent 16 chapters trying to show you how the gospel is what you need to live the life God has for you

In Romans 1–2 Paul explained how understanding the gospel--**the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes**--changes our outlook on life. In the gospel we realize what a mess we were and why if we were to be saved, only God could do it.

Chapter 2 unpacks why religion can't save us. Religion neither removes the stain of our sin nor repairs sin's damage to our hearts. We have to conclude with Paul in **Chapter 3**, **“there is none righteous, not even one; There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away.** There is no one who does what is good, not even one.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Yet there is good news for us--alien righteousness, **redemption in Christ Jesus**, whom **God presented as an atoning sacrifice in his blood** through faith in his name, so that **God could be simultaneously righteous and the One who declares righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.**

⁹ Keller, 181.

Where does that leave our boasting? **It is excluded. For we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from the works** of the law.

It is the one who does not work, chapter 4 tells us, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, whose faith is counted as righteousness.

- To those who trust the promise just as Abraham did;
- who trust in Jesus **delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**

Romans 5 and 6 were our glorious reminder that **since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

And that **his life in us now** gives us victory over sin, because though the wages of sin are death the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

- **We must therefore reckon ourselves** dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ.

Romans 7 describes our ongoing battle with the flesh and sin.

- With Paul, we despair that though our minds know what we ought to do, our flesh just can't do it.
- We lament with Paul that there is nothing good in our flesh and cry out with him, **"Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"**

But with Paul, we answer, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And **celebrate with him in Romans 8**--the greatest chapter in the Bible--that there is **no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.**

That **regardless of what we're going through** God's plans for us are only and always good, that **that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.**

That those whom he foreknow, those he predestined, those he predestined, those he called, those he called, those he justified, and those he justified, he will glorify.

The confidence we have in salvation is the confidence we carry in life: *If God is for us, who is against us? He did not even spare his own Son but offered him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything? Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Romans 9, 10, and 11 show us that we can trust that God will keep these promises to us because he kept all his promises to Israel. Romans 9–11 present a God eager to save; a God who works mysteriously yet mercifully.

A God whose ways lead us to conclude: **"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways!**

Romans 12 is the hinge of the entire book--showing us that those who believe the gospel must inevitably become like the gospel. Those who have been greatly loved become people of great love.

Chapter 13 explains how our hope in God's eternal kingdom enables us to endure in this hostile one.

Chapter 14 expressed our motto as believers: **if we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.**

Chapter 15 shows us that we each have a role to play in God's kingdom, a sacred trust in carrying out his mission.

Chapter 16 celebrates the beauty of the body of Christ. In it we see a God who glorifies himself by putting our love for each other on display and by using us greatly in the world.

So, as we come to the end of this letter with Paul, how can we not say with him, **Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept silent for long ages but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God to advance the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles— to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ— to him be the glory forever! Amen.**

So as we close the books on this book, the only question is: *Do you know Jesus?*

- Have you experienced the saving power of this gospel in your life?

- The **whole book screams** that the reason he came is that you were desperately lost without him, so in love he came to take your penalty.
- But you **have to receive him**. You have to **surrender and accept him** for yourself.

You don't have to understand everything to believe. But you do have to understand. I am lost and desperate without Jesus, but he loves me and has offered himself to me and I say YES.