

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ROMANS 15-16

One of the New Testament's favorite expressions is the two-word phrase, "**one another.**" There're at least 58 "**one another commands**" in the NT. Here're a few examples: "Bear one another's burdens" - "Build up one another" - "Care for one another" - "Comfort one another" - "Forgive one another" - "Honor one another" - "Be kind to one another" - "Be hospitable to one another" - "Love one another" - "Pray for one another" - "Submit to one another" - "Serve one another" - etc.

These commands highlight the character of the relationships that should exist in the body of Christ. All believers in Jesus have a responsibility to *one another*.

And Romans 15-16 revolve around four more of these "**one another commands**"... **Chapter 15:5** "be like-minded toward one another" - **15:7** "receive one another" - **15:14** "admonish one another" - and **16:16** "greet one another." The final two chapters of Romans focus on the Christian's duty toward "*one another.*"

Verse 1 of Romans 15 picks up where Romans 14 left off, "**We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.**"

Once, two men were out in the woods when a giant, angry grizzly bear jumped out of the bushes. Immediately one of the men reached into his backpack, and pulled out his running shoes. His buddy asked him, "You're not going to try, and outrun that grizzly are you? Full grown grizzly bears can run 30-35 mph?"

While lacing up his shoes, his buddy answered him, "*Don't worry, I know I can't outrun a grizzly bear, but I don't have to! All I have to do is outrun you!*"

And sadly, that's the attitude of many Christians. Rather than "**bear with**" a weaker brother, we run out ahead of them, and leave them to get eaten by the spiritual grizzly bears. Our goal should be to *love one another* - put others first, not just save our own skin!

The previous chapter warned us about using our *freedom in Christ* in a way that causes a brother to stumble... Maybe you can enjoy a glass of wine with your meal. But the brother or sister, who struggles with alcohol, sees you, and assumes *that if it's okay for you, it's okay for him*. Your example causes a brother to sin.

This shouldn't happen. We need to *bear with* the weaker brother... Like taking a walk in the park with a toddler - you don't expect the child to walk at your pace. The adult slows down to stay in step with the child. A mature Christian is willing to do the same.

Our goal isn't to *flaunt our freedom*, or *prove our point*. We should love and help other Christians grow.

Verse 2, “Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “*The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.*”

Paul quotes Psalm 69:9. It’s a prophesy concerning Jesus. Our Lord came to earth to bear our burden!

Do we need to go any further than Jesus, for an example of someone who forfeited His own freedoms, and rights, and privileges for the good of others? We follow Jesus by realizing the impact we have on others.

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

The example of Jesus is just the tip of the iceberg. The OT is full of folks who forfeited their freedom to serve others. *Noah... Joseph... Moses... Daniel... the prophets* set aside their own well-being for the good of others. They now stand out as models for you and me.

Verse 5, “Now may the God of patience and comfort...” Remember this name for God the next time you fail Him, and worry He might’ve given up on you.

Apparently, God wants to be known as “*the God of patience...*” If you’re a knucklehead like me - a slow learner - and you need lots of long-suffering this is a great comfort! Our great God is “*the God of patience.*”

And may God “grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus...” Here we have one of the NT’s “one another commands” - “**be like-minded.**” In light of Romans 14, and his teaching on gray matters, I’m certain Paul isn’t advocating perfect agreement on all minutia of church life, or every detail on doctrine. But is it possible for us to be of “**the same mind**” when it comes to the big stuff? *I think so!*

The Bible is God’s Word and the arbiter of truth. Jesus is God’s Son, our final authority. Grace through faith is God’s only way to be saved. The Church is the body that spreads those truths to a lost world. All Christians should be united on the big stuff!

Recall the old adage, “In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things charity.” But pay attention to the first line: “**in essentials unity.**” There are some non-negotiables on which we should agree.

And here’s why we should be “like-minded...” Verse 6, “That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our praise packs a bigger punch when it’s offered in unison! It pleases God when He sees and hears His children glorifying Him with “*one mind and one mouth.*”

When my kids were little, on rare occasions they would approach their parents with a unified front. Zach was usually the spokesman, “Dad, we all want to go to Brusters for some ice cream...” Natalie and Nick would chime in, “Yea Dad, we do...” Then little

Mack, “Me too, Dad. Me wants ice cream, too...” The kids didn’t know it, but I was usually so weary of their squabbling, *and so excited they could actually agree on anything*, I was more than willing to give them whatever they asked.

I think this is behind the offer Jesus makes to us in Matthew 18:19, “*If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.*” *In praise and in prayer* it delights God when we come to Him with like-minds.

“*Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.*” Here is another “*one another command*” - “*receive one another...*”

When the prodigal son returned home the Father don’t wait for him to walk up the road to the house, he ran to meet him, embraced him, and welcomed him.

The Father didn’t hold the sorrowful son at arms length until he’d proven his sincerity. The boy wasn’t placed on probation, or bonded until his court date, nor did he have to wait 90 days for his benefits to kick in. He was given full family membership immediately.

And this is the way we should treat newcomers into the Body of Christ - *whether they’re new believers... or renewed believers... or just plain newcomers...* Let’s “*receive one another, just as Christ also received us...*”

It’s been said, “*The Christian church is the only society in the world in which membership is based on the qualification that the candidate is unworthy of membership.*” The church is a **grace place**. We’re open to anyone who repents of their sin and believes...

The church isn’t a sorority you pledge, or a country club to which you apply, or a hospital that checks your insurance. We take everybody that Jesus brings us.

Verse 8, “*Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written (he quotes Psalm 18:49): “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.”*”

In Romans 11 Paul talked about God’s plan for Jews and Gentiles. It’s God’s will for both to be saved. Here he reels off four OT Scriptures to prove his point...

Verse 10, “*And again he says (Deuteronomy 32:49): “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!”* Gentiles will join the Jews in rejoicing over God’s goodness and mercy.

Then Psalm 117:1: “*Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!*” Then Paul’s fourth quote... “*And again, Isaiah says (he quotes 11:1,10): “There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope.”*” The root of Jesse is prophetic of our Lord Jesus. He was born of Jesse’s family tree - the lineage of his son, David. And Isaiah says this “*root of Jesse*” will one day reign over both Jews and Gentiles.

So **Psalm 18, Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 117, Isaiah 11** all affirm the inclusivity of Jesus. He's **an equal opportunity Savior**. He saves Jews and non-Jews alike, and receives praise from whoever calls on His name!

Verse 13, **"Now may the God of hope..."** And here's another great name for God. Not only do you serve **"the God of patience and comfort"** but also **"the God of hope!"** *How can you be out of hope - or call a situation hopeless - if you truly serve "the God of hope"?*

Recall the old song we sang as kids, **"I've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart..."** Then a second stanza, **"I've got the peace that passes understanding down in my heart..."** But there's a third, **"I've got the happy hope that heckles heathens down in my heart..."**

I love that **"the happy hope that heckles heathens."** Our world has no hope, while Jesus makes all things possible. Our hope heckles the world's hopelessness!

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." We have abounding hope!

"Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."

And here's a third **"one another command."** We've read, **"be like-minded toward one another"** and **"receive one another"** - and now, **"admonish one another."** The word **"admonish"** means **"to remind or to caution."**

If ever you see a brother start to stray get involved. It's our business to say something, and warn a brother!

Verse 15, **"Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you..."** Here, Paul encourages the Roman believers **"to admonish one another."** But thankfully, he had taken seriously his command, and had admonished them!

In fact, if Paul hadn't, most of the NT would've never been written. Paul cared for the churches and was not afraid to confront them when necessary... Likewise, when he see a fellow believer going sideways we owe them a warning. Real love will admonish a brother.

Paul finishes his thought in verse 16, **"Because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."**

Paul was **"the apostle to the Gentiles."** They were his mission field. In essence, the Gentile churches were his offering to God. Thus, he wanted them to be godly.

"Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished"

through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient..." This was a wise policy. Paul didn't speak on subjects he hadn't personally experienced. If Paul wrote of it; he'd lived it firsthand...

And this was not that limiting to Paul, for he writes, "In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

Paul preached the Gospel of grace, and saw miraculous displays of God's Spirit - what he called "signs and wonders." As Jesus promised miracles followed the message - and I believe they'll be the Gospel's traveling companion wherever it goes.

Paul was called by God to take the Gospel to the Gentile world. And here he files his travel report... He logged from "Jerusalem... to Illyricum" or 1400 miles...

From Mount Calvary in Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified, and the earth quaked, and the veil in the Temple was torn in two - to northern Macedonia where another earthquake rocked a Philippian jail - across the breadth of the Roman empire countless lives had been transformed and redeemed by the Gospel of Jesus!

In the next verses Paul reflects back on how he had preached the Gospel, and how thousands of lives had been transformed. Paul had come to realize the Gospel was the world's most powerful change agent.

Verse 20, "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written (and he quotes Isaiah 52:15): "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand." Paul's goal was to reach the unreached. He tilled up unplowed fields. Paul targeted new areas for his ministry. He was a pioneer at heart...

In 1980 after I finished Bible College I had several opportunities to connect with Calvary Chapels in California, but that seemed like such a waste. I wanted to start a Calvary in the South where there weren't any.

And that remains our attitude. This is why we support a young man in the Congo. Rather than plant on another man's foundation, Pastor Daniel has gone where no one has gone before. We want to help him.

Even in our own lives do we limit our interactions to other Christians, or do we make time for folks who've yet to believe? I read recently that only 34% of Americans claim to have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. There're still plenty of unreached to reach.

Verse 22, "For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. But now no longer having a place in these parts..." Paul had written his letter to the Romans from the port city of Corinth. But he was on the move... "And having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while."

Paul wanted to go to Spain. And he hoped his voyage would layover in Rome so he could visit the church. Whether or not he made it to Spain we don't know. But Paul did journey to Rome, courtesy of the Caesar. In Acts 27 he was sent by Governor Festus.

“But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.” At the time Jerusalem was his immediate destination. **“For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.”** Famine had hit the region of Judea. Paul had collected an offering from the believers in Greece he needed to deliver.

“It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.” The Gentile believers in Europe realized they stood on Jewish shoulders. The Jews were the chosen of God - they'd been custodians of the Scripture - the heirs of God's covenants - the family of our Lord...

The Gentiles owed the Jews a spiritual debt. *And how do you repay such a debt?* According to Paul, with your monetary support. This is true of a church, pastor, or ministry. I'm not trying to be self-serving in saying it, it's just a biblical principle. **Anyone who invests in you spiritually; then you should encourage them financially.**

The Jerusalem Church had funded the missionaries who took the Gospel to the Gentiles. Now it was time for the Gentiles to return the favor to the Jews.

Verse 28 tells us, **“Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me...”** Paul could've used the principle he'd just laid out to advance his fund-raising efforts. But rather than money, he asks for prayer. This is what he needs most.

And pray **“that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.”** Paul makes three prayer requests... **protection from his enemies - completion of his mission - and rejuvenation with his friends!**

Romans 15 ends with Paul's salutation, **“Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”** So that Chapter 16 becomes devoted to his personal correspondence.

Which emphasizes the fact that **Paul was not only a great soul winner, he was also a great friend maker.**

In Chapter 16 the apostle mentions 35 different people by name. Remember Paul had never been to Rome, yet he knew many of its church members. It's amazing, that before the days of social media - *while Paul wasn't busy winning the world for Jesus, and writing most of the New Testament letters* - the apostle spent a lot of his time

keeping up with friends. Paul was a people person - *as every Christian should be*. He loved the people His Lord Jesus died to save...

When we get too hurried - or feel too important - for personal relationships our priorities are out of kilter!

And the first person Paul mentions is a gal named Phoebe. He writes of her, **"I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea."** Cenchrea was the seaport of the metropolis of Corinth.

The Greek word translated **"servant"** can also be rendered **"deacon."** And this is one reason why I believe women served as deacons in the early church.

Remember, deacon was not a position of authority, but of service. The deacons were *the designated doers* in the church - and women served in this capacity. The Revised Standard Version renders verse 1, **"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea."** Even today, needs often pop up in church life that necessitate a feminine touch. That's why God appointed deaconesses to serve.

And Paul says of this lady, Phoebe, **"that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also."** Apparently, Phoebe was the letter carrier who delivered Paul's epistle to the Romans.

Imagine, it's the spring of 58 AD. Paul watches Phoebe slip the opus of our faith - this grand document of theology - under her robe. He trusts her to get it to its recipients, and now tells the church at Rome to receive her, respect her, assist her when she comes!

But his greetings continue in verse 3, **"Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus..."** Aquila and Priscilla appear seven times in the Scripture and always as a team. Paul first met them in Corinth in Acts 18. Like Paul, they were tent-makers by trade.

And everywhere Aquila and Priscilla settle they end up with a church meeting in their home, *including Rome!* Here was a couple who opened *their hearts* and *their home* to the Lord... as well as putting their *heads* on the chopping block. For Paul says of them, **"Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles."**

We don't know the exact incident Paul is referencing, but Aquila and Priscilla were not fair-weather friends. Somewhere along the line they put themselves in harms way to protect Paul. They were faithful friends.

Verse 5, **"Likewise greet the church that is in their house."** Remember churches met in halls and homes for the first 300 years of Christianity - *and it was the Gospel's most expansive period*. We had no single-use buildings or facilities, **and yet the Church exploded!**

“Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.” Epaphroditus was Paul’s first convert in the region of Achaia, or southern Greece. Other folks would follow, but Paul always remembered the first.

“Greet Mary, who labored much for us. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.” Here’s an older couple. Andronicus and Junia were fellow Jews. In the past they had been arrested for Jesus’ sake. They’d been believers in Jesus even longer than Paul. Although we know little about them, Paul recognizes that they were respected and appreciated by the apostles at the time.

Verse 8 continues to list Paul’s friends in Rome, and notice the terms of endearment... “Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. Greet Apelles, approved in Christ.” The Greek word translated “*approved*” means “*tried and tested*.” Apelles had been through the fire and found faithful!

Verse 10, “Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.” Herod the Great, the infamous Herod who murdered the Bethlehem infants on the first Christmas, had a grandson named, “Aristobulus.” *History tells he lived in Rome*. What an irony if this was the same man!

Imagine, the brutal killer's own grandson now following the newborn King from Bethlehem - amazing!

On the other hand, the fact Paul addresses Aristobulus’ household and not him per se, could mean he was an unbelieving husband with a believing wife and kids. Perhaps a whole family had been saved, but the husband was dragging his feet... *If you know such a family, and we have some, pray for their Aristobulus!*

Verse 11, “Greet Herodion, my countryman.” This man too, was a fellow Jew... “Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.”

Verse 12, “Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord.” And both names are feminine. “*Tryphena*” means “*dainty*” and “*Tryphosa*” means “*delicate*.” The Greek word translated “*labored*” means “*to toil to the point of exhaustion*.” Put it all together, and Paul is saying, “*Dainty and Delicate rolled up their shirtsleeves and worked hard for the Lord*.” The ladies with the prissy names were actually rugged laborers.

“Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord.” This name is also feminine. The church in Rome sounds like **Calvary Chapel** - *full of ladies who were diligent servants*. They weren’t allergic to hard work!

Verse 13, “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.” Mark 15:21 tells us the man who helped Jesus carry His cross, Simon the Cyrene, had a son, “*Rufus*.” Many folks believe this is the same guy.

It could be Simon's *selection from the crowd* that day and *his experience with Jesus* led to his and his family's conversion. He returned to Cyrene, led his wife and sons to Christ, *and they later moved to Rome.*

“Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them.” Here’s a group of men, and all that’s listed about them is their names. Yet imagine seeing your name in the Bible - in Paul’s letter! **“Wow, he remembered me!”**

I hope you know whether or not your pastor recalls your name, you can trust that Jesus does. John 10:3 says of our Good Shepherd, **“He calls His own sheep by name.”** Jesus addresses each one of us by name.

Visit the Old Natural Bridge in Virginia and you'll see hundreds of names carved into the boulders around the bridge. But near the top of the cliff you'll see initials for the name **“George Washington.”** Even the father of our country couldn't resist some personal graffiti. We all love to hear our name spoken, and see it written.

I once had a friend who worked with the elderly, and he told me the secret to relating to older folks was to call them by their *first name*. When you get older you become everyone’s elder, and you’re only referred to as *“Mr.”* or *“Mrs.”* Thus, you rarely hear your given name. **We all, young and old, love to hear our name!**

Remember, Paul is writing the Bible. He's got limited scroll space and strategic subjects to cover - yet it's interesting to me that he leaves room at the end to mention these saints by name. It adds credibility to the old saying, **“God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love.”** That statement is really true!

Verse 15, **“Greet Philologus...”** The name means **“Lover of the Word.”** It reminds me of the little boy who wanted a Bible just like his mom's. He was asked, **“Why don't you want a Bible like your Dad's?”** He said, **“Mom's Bible is more interesting, she's always reading hers.”** *Ouch!* I hope we all - moms and dads - are deserving of the name, **“Lovers of the Word.”**

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

Greet one another with a holy kiss.” Here’s one more **one another command** - **“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”** And notice the key word: **“holy kiss”** versus a **“lustful or sneaky or Judas’ kiss.”** In Roman culture, a kiss was a form of greeting, like our handshake. Paul is telling them to greet each other with a *holy handshake*.

Verse 16, **“The churches of Christ greet you.”** Surely, it delighted all believers, worldwide, to know there was a church at the heart of the empire. All Christians sent their greetings to the strategic church in Rome.

In August 2018 CalvaryCSM took a team to Austria to minister at a retreat we did for the CC in Rome. We then traveled to Italy on that Sunday to attend their church. We felt the same importance in our ministry.

Today, the CC Roma, and the other CCs in Italy, are at the epicenter of Catholicism. They’re taking the Gospel to folks steeped in religion - who don’t realize their lostness.

They think they're saved by the church. The churches in Italy are still a big deal with a big task.

Paul writes in verse 17, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them."

We are to "note" those who stir up strife and conflict. This involves identification. *How can a church avoid divisive and troublesome people if their leaders don't point out those people?* This is one of the more unpleasant, but important responsibilities of leadership.

Verse 18, "For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple." Unfortunately, a deceiver or divider doesn't wear a sandwich board around his neck identifying himself as a rogue. *A true man of God speaks only what God wants said.* Whereas, a religious leader out for himself tells people what they want to hear. And it's due to this kind of *flattery* he can develop a *following*.

That's why such a deceptive leader can't be tolerated, *even a little*. He'll hoodwink simple minds and manipulate gullible hearts. **ID him; then avoid him.**

Verse 19, "For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil."

Be experts in what's good, and naive to what's evil.

"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly." Here Paul mentions the ancient promise of Genesis 3:15. The verse foreshadowed the future.

On the cross the serpent will bruise Messiah's heel, but in the end Jesus will crush Satan's head and strip him of all his authority... The Bible tells us that at the end of the age, Jesus will return and those who believe in Him will come to earth with Him. And our first order of business will be to crush the Antichrist and his army. We'll share in Christ's ultimate triumph over Satan.

Verse 20 ends with another salutation, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with you. Amen.*" Paul now shifts focus from his Roman friends to his Corinthian colleagues. "Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you."

I, Tertius, who wrote *this epistle, greet you in the Lord.* Don't get confused here. Paul, not Tertius, is the author of Romans. Tertius was Paul's stenographer.

It was customary for Paul to dictate his letters to a scribe; then at the end he'd pick up the pen, and add his signature. Here, Tertius adds his own greeting.

"Gaius, my host and *the host of the whole church, greets you.*" Evidently, Paul was staying, and the Church in Corinth was meeting, in the house of Gaius.

"Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you..." The treasurer of the city would've been a high-ranking public official - a Roman dignitary. And apparently, in Corinth such a man had embraced the Gospel.

Several years ago we traveled on a Footsteps of Paul tour. And in Corinth our guide showed us an inscription in the stones of the main cardo. It referred to an important city official named, "Erastus." NT scholars believe it's the same Erastus here mentioned by Paul. Another proof of the historical reliability of the Bible.

"And Quartus, a brother." The names "Tertius" and "Quartus" are the Greek numerals "three" and "four."

In the Roman world oftentimes slaves were never given proper names, just a number. It's possible these two believers, "Tertius" and "Quartus," or "Three" and "Four" were former slaves - now considered "brothers."

Never underestimate the revolutionary impact Christianity had on slavery in the ancient world. Overnight, slaves and nobles became equals in Christ.

Paul closes for good in verse 24, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." And then he adds a benediction. "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ..." Jesus is able to establish us in our faith. His Gospel bulldozes sin, buries doubts, and packs a firm footing on which we can stand.

Once, a wino approached DL Moody after a meeting. The man was drunk as a skunk. He shouted, "Mr. Moody, I'm one of your first converts." Moody replied, "You must be one of my converts, because you sure don't look like you were converted by the Lord." Jesus causes us to *stand strong* - not *flounder in bondage*.

Paul goes on to say the Gospel of Jesus is "according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began..." The good news of our salvation was formulated in the mind and heart of God, a mystery to man, yet Paul says it has... "but now (been) made manifest (or evident to all), and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith - to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen." And with that final flurry Paul concludes his glorious letter to the Romans.