

Bible Study: Romans

(Part 4—Chapters 13-16)

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Chapter 13 Service to the Lord should take over every area of our lives if we are really serving the Lord with all our hearts. We have been looking at this section of the book called, "Service and Greetings." This section covers from chapters 12-16. Even our relationship to those in authority over us is under consideration in this subject of service to God. Whereas, Chapter 12 talked mainly about our relationship to other believers in the Church, Chapter 13 is about our relationship as Christians to earthly Governments.

Remember this service to the Lord comes as a result of our salvation and in no way gains salvation for us. The salvation issue has been settled when we were saved.

We are to keep the laws of the land to the best of our ability, with the exception of the higher law, the law of God. For example, if the law of the land says you should not share Christ with anyone, we should not obey this law. Peter and the other apostles were confronted with this over and over again. "So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard'" (Acts 4: 18-21).

(1) There are some very God hating governments in this world, but they have been allowed to exist by God's appointment. There is a reason they are existing, and God has a purpose for even bad governments. Some examples of how bad can be turned to good are found in the life of Pharaoh of Egypt in Moses' time. You also have the Jewish and Roman governments in Jesus' and Paul's time. For that matter most of the governments throughout history have been godless. Does that mean that we don't obey them? No, we must obey the laws that don't contradict the laws of God. It also means we might be put in jail, or killed by that same government, even as Paul was. Still, God is working behind the scenes to bring about His purpose in this world. Satan has a lot of authority here on this earth, but He is still subject to God's control!

There will be a time in the future when Satan will be bound for a thousand years, but people's hearts are still wicked without Christ as their Lord and Savior. We might think in a perfect society with only godly people in government all would go well, but this just is not so, people will still have free choices to make. To get back to the subject of verse one, we must respect the office the person holds, even if we cannot respect the person. Again, I am not saying that we should ever sin in order to keep the law of the land, but we should keep all the laws that don't violate God's law, the Bible.

(2) Let's use an example of a person that is against [abortion](#), and this person decides it's all right to go out and shoot an abortion "doctor." First, the person is wrong because it doesn't make sense to say it's wrong to abort babies, but it is all right to murder abortion "doctors." Second, that person is trying to take the law into their own hands, and that is wrong too! So as much as I hate abortion, it is also wrong to blow up or burn down buildings. It is absolutely wrong to harm people who are doing these horrible things. Remember earlier in Romans 12:19 it says, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. You see we can't right every wrong. We can speak out against injustice as John the Baptist did, and remember he was put into jail, and later was also beheaded for

speaking out against evil in government. The thing is, John didn't start a rebellion against the government, and neither should we. We can speak out against what is wrong in government, without using violence. Think about how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was able to make many changes in our United States government through peaceful protests. He used methods of demonstrating other than violence. We have seen this work in other countries like Poland, and elsewhere. The most effective way to change things we don't like is by changing people one soul at a time. In other words, by winning them to Christ, then they won't want to do sinful things, if their life is truly changed. Evangelism is the most effective way to change things for the good in this world.

(3) In most cases rulers realize that it is good to have people doing good rather than bad, so they will allow some believes to continue. There are those, of course, who are so wicked they can't stand for freedom of thought or discussion of matters of faith. They still don't usually punish people for helping others; no doubt, there are exceptions to this rule, as there are to every other generality. Often even unsaved rulers will reward Christians for their good deeds, even though they personally don't believe in the God of the Christians.

(4) The government does have the right of capital punishment, or why else would it say, "for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil." Swords are used for killing. The Bible is not against Christians being soldiers or police officers, who must use lethal force at times. They are in this case an arm of the government. There were believers in the military in both the Old and New Testaments. There has to be someone who enforces the law of the land. God is the one who instituted law for governments after the flood. "Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man" Genesis 9:5-6. In this way God keeps evil from taking over. That does not mean that governments always use capital punishment correctly. Governments should strive to punish justly, not allowing the rich to go free and the poor to die because of lack of legal aid. Think about how many crimes have been deterred by laws and swift justice. When we don't have swift justice evil grows in a society. We may think God's laws in the Old Testament were cruel, but in reality these laws prevented many crimes. For a time in Israel, when they obeyed God's law like they were commanded, there were hardly any murders, rapes, kidnappings, thefts, etc. When they thought they would be soft on crime and criminals many of the above crimes took place in Israel. So who has the better idea? God, of course, knows what works best. One day Christ will rule the world for a thousand years like it is suppose to be run!

I do know that there are fine Christians who do not believe they should take up arms to kill other human beings, nor do they believe people should be executed for any crime. If this is their true heartfelt conviction, then they should not violate their conscience. I do respect their view, and I believe we can agree to disagree in this area. One can not; however, use the Ten Commandments as a proof text for not killing someone in battle, or as a police officer killing in the line of duty, or as a government executing people. The word "kill" in the Ten Commandments means "murder" as the New King James Version has it. There were many times in the Old Testament Israelites were commanded to fight. So the Ten Commandments can not be used as a proof text against governments using lethal force to prevent evil from taking over.

(5) Law is given to keep evil from getting out of hand. Not only this, our conscience tells us it is right to have law and order in society. This principle has to be used, of course, with the greatest of caution. John Calvin was criticized for his use of capital punishment. Sometimes, I think, we don't understand how quickly evil can take over in a society if strict laws are not enforced. We are seeing in the United States today, a break down of our

society, because laws are not enforced, and evil is not punished. Because we are soft on crime, we think we are being nice to people, in reality we are causing many more to suffer. So Christians should be glad for laws, and not keep them because they are only afraid of getting in trouble, but because it is the right thing to do before God, in order to have a clear conscience.

(6) "And He said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'" (Matthew 22: 21) Jesus made it very clear we are to pay our taxes, even if we don't agree with everything they are used for. We once had a man in our Bible Study that said he felt we should rebel against the government because it wasn't doing what was right. I do not believe this man was truly born again, but only God knows. I do know he was very wrong in his viewpoint, and that Scripture tells it like it is, and is, that we are to give the government its due.

(7) We pay our taxes as Christians, and in some countries people actually have a right to say what happens with their taxes. We show respect to those in authority, even if we don't respect the person, we still need to respect their authority in the office they are in. Remember they are allowed to be there because God permitted it. In some countries people are allowed to choose their leaders, but even if they are not, they should still obey their leaders. Now, could a person serve in the military or on the police force of a country that is targeting Christians? No, I don't think they could, because then they would have to violate the law of God where it says we are not to take the life of innocent people.

(8) This verse is not saying it is wrong to borrow, because in other places it talks about not charging too much interest. It is saying we are to love our fellow man, and this debt we owe them is never completely paid. Here again in the Church Age we see the law fulfilled by loving God, and our fellow man.

(9) If you look at the second five of the Ten Commandments you will notice that they are man word. In other words "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

(10) Loving your fellow man is serving God!

(11) Wake up Christians, Christ's coming is right around the corner. His coming is one day nearer than the day we believed. We don't have much more time on this earth to serve the Lord.

(12) At this time, when sin is rampant on earth, and it seems as though evil will win, this time is almost over. The Lord's millennial reign on this earth is coming, so we need to put on the armor of God and fight in this spiritual warfare that we are in, Ephesians 6:10-18.

(13) Live like a Christian should, as a child of light, and not as a child of darkness. We are not supposed to be drinking alcohol, and getting drunk. We are not to be involved in sex sins or even thinking about sex outside of God's designed marriage. We are not to be fighting, or lusting after what others have.

(14) We have Christ in us, so people should see Him on the outside of us also. Don't be planning some way to have one foot back in the world, and one foot on the Lord's side. Be sold out to the Lord. Forget about what the world has to offer, think about what our kingdom in heaven has to offer. Joshua said, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" Joshua 24:15b.

Chapter 14

(1) A Christian is serving their Lord by showing love to those who are weaker in the faith. They are weaker because they believe there are some things that Christians can't do, we are not speaking about out and out sin, but questionable things here. For example, I heard of a Christian who told another Christian they would go to hell if they keep wearing jewelry. We need to love these Christians that do not know what God's Word teaches about these types of things that are in a "grey" area. We should take these Christians under our wing, so-to-speak, to help them, and not argue with them about what they believe. You can accept them even if they don't accept you.

(2) Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit uses an example of the principle he wants to address. Some Christians feel they can eat meat, others think they can only eat vegetables. That doesn't mean that that person who believes in only eating vegetables is any less a Christian, it only means they don't believe they should eat meat. I know there are many fine Christians in the Church today that do feel it is wrong to eat certain types of foods. The issue here is not so much the eating, but the hearts condition and our treatment of other Christians who believe differently than we do. We are not talking about basic areas of Christian doctrine, but minor issues of the Christian walk with the Lord.

(3) Don't look down on this person that thinks the Bible prohibits certain foods for Christians. Nor should the brother or sister who doesn't eat think they are any better than the one who eats anything. I had a friend who was truly saved, but he would not eat certain things, now should I have gone to make fun of my brother and told him he's all washed up? No, remember even though you may not agree with him or her you have no right to make fun or belittle them. He or she belong to God, they will answer to Him, not to us. Also, there is nothing wrong with what they are doing. They are just different from you in an area of their lives. They may even be healthier because of the way they eat. In their conscience they feel it is wrong to eat certain foods, even as some Jews believe today. This was also the custom of all Jews in the past, for example they would not eat pork, because it was forbidden by God's law for them.

(4) There are those Christians that hold their worship services on Saturday, others on Sunday. Some worship every day, the day is not the most important thing. The fact is these are fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This principle applies in many areas of belief. We will not all see "eye to eye" until we get to heaven. We should not stop associating ourselves with Christians that believe a little differently from us. We are to show the world we are one in Christ, John 17: 20-21. "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that you sent Me." This will be a great testimony to the world to see we are loving to each other in spite of our differences. We should be able to fellowship with one another as long as we don't compromise what we believe on the basic doctrines of the Word of God.

(5) God knew there would be differences among Christians and what they held to, but that was never supposed to divide us. "For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Some churches make no effort to fellowship with other believers, but this is contrary to the Word of God!

Right from the beginning of the Church Age, there were those who were born again Jews who wanted to

continue to have services of worship on the Sabbath, and this was not forbidden. Praise God, we can worship Him every day of the week, and we should do this. Most Christians have services on Sunday, to celebrate Christ's resurrection from the dead, on the first day of the week, but there is no command in Scripture to do this. Scripture does make it clear that Christ appeared to the disciples on the first day of the week. "Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week...Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came...And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came..." John 20:19, 24, 26.

The apostles it seems worshipped on both Saturday and Sunday to begin with. They even "broke bread" it says during the week. "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2: 46-47) This breaking of bread is a word for the Lord's Supper or Communion as well as fellowship of eating food together. Look at what happened when Christians were in unity, not worried about little differences!

(6) So the day should not be the issue, unless we are told we have to keep the Jewish Law as Christians. We do need a day of rest and that should be at least one day a week. Some Christians have a day of rest on Saturday and others on Sunday. This has been a point of contention in the Church at times. We need to be able to accept other Christians whatever side of this issue they are on. We are told that the Sabbath was given to the "Jewish nation" as a covenant between them and God. "Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed." (Exodus 31: 16-17) Even as the sign of circumcision was given to Abraham for the "Jewish Nation," "This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign for the covenant between Me and you..." (Genesis 17:10-11) Even though these are given to the Nation of Israel, it is very clear in the New Testament these were not a law for us in the Church Age. "But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.'"...The Gentiles were told by the leaders of the early Church: "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood...(then they wrote a letter and sent it with the brethren to the Gentile believers which said, "Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with word, unsettling your souls, saying, 'You must be circumcised and keep the law'—to whom we gave no such commandment" (Acts 15:5-29)

We do believe the Ten Commandments are still for us today, and for most Christians, Sunday is our Sabbath rest. All the Ten Commandments are commanded in the letters to the Church except for the Sabbath. Just the opposite is true, look at Colossians 2:16, 17. "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come but the substance is of Christ." We need to make up our minds about the day we will consider a rest, and a special day of worship for us. So too, eating certain things or not eating them should be a decision each Christian should make and go with it, but don't judge the other's service to the Lord or their motive. God will judge us!

My take on the Sabbath as Saturday, for the Jews will continue after the Rapture of the Church. The worship will revert back to much like what was before the Church Age, except Christ will be the Messiah for Israel as

He offered Himself before. Sacrificing will be by way of a memorial in the Millennial Reign of Christ. Therefore, I can understand, maybe Jews that are born again, or other Christians wanting to continue the custom of the Jews for a testimony to them. No doubt, it may be a means of reaching out to Jews who are not born again. In the Church Age, however, both Jews and Gentiles are One in Christ, and not under the Law of Moses. So we need to be able to fellowship with Christians that keep a day different from us, as we are both servants of Christ.

(7) Someone has said that, "No man is an island to himself." It is like the pebble thrown into a calm pond; it will cause ripples to spread out from where it hit, into every widening circles. We as Christians affect each other's lives like those ripples in the water. We also affect the world, as they look at us, and how we treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. We live for the Lord and for each other.

(8) Our life and death are in God's hands. We belong to Him, not to ourselves, so we should love our fellow bond servants, we serve the same Master.

(9) Christ died to redeem us, so we would be His whether here on earth, or in heaven after our bodies fall asleep. This means we will be together with many different types of Christians in heaven. In this regard I have written an article called: "The Holy Catholic Church." There is only one body of true born again believers. Jesus not only wants to be in charge in heaven but He wants to be our "boss" (Lord) here and now as well.

(10) Listen, you don't have to judge your fellow Christians' lives, God will do this at the Judgment Seat of Christ. At that judgment we will not be judged to see if we are saved, but for rewards we will receive for our life of service after salvation. In 2 Corinthians 5:10 we see this same thing: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." God has given us talents and gifts to use for Him in this life, so we are very accountable to Him.

Remember the story Jesus gave His disciples on this regard: How He gave his servants different amounts of money. One had five, another two, and even another that had one. The first two did something with their talents, and were rewarded for it. The third person who had received just one, had hidden it in the ground, he didn't even put it in the bank. He also said, "Lord I knew you to be a hard man..." Matthew 25:24. He was not a believer because believers don't feel this way about the Lord. The world does feel this way, and they will not use what they have been given to serve God with, so one day, they will be judged for their lack of faith and service. We as Christians will be rewarded and praised one day by our Lord Jesus Christ!

(11) Everybody in the world whether saved or not saved will have to give an account of their life to the LORD. If a person is not saved, they still will bow before the LORD JESUS CHRIST, everyone will have to admit that Jesus Christ is God! It will be too late to be saved, but they will still have to admit the truth!

(12) God will judge everyone in the World, you and I are not supposed to be doing this. Judging is not part of our job description as Christians. I do not mean, we are supposed to pretend there is no sin in the church or in the world. I do believe we are not to judge our fellow Christians in these minor issues of Christian walk with the Lord. There are so many things that fall into this category, it could be whether or not Christians can go to movies, or whether or not Christians can dance, on and on the list goes.

(13) Do not try to stumble or hinder your brother or sister in Christ, but rather encourage them and help them serve the Lord better. Someone has said, "He who throws mud at another, loses ground."

(14) Look, God made everything, and everything in itself is good, but if you are not satisfied in your own mind you can partake of something God has made, it is better you don't do it. For example, the television can be used for good or evil, but the television itself is not good or evil, it is just a material thing. What we do with it and how it relates to our Christian lives will make all the difference. One Christian in all good conscience can not watch T.V., but another Christian can.

(15) We had some Christian friends come to our home; we had turned on some classical music. One of the women we had invited to our home went over and shut off the radio. Now I could have said, "There is nothing wrong with that music (as I felt like saying), but after I had thought it over I decided the Christian thing to do was to not play the music while they were in my home, since they were offended by it. You see the classical music was not the issue really, just as the food is not the issue, but our reaction to a fellow Christian is the issue.

(16) So now, even though for me the music was something good, forcing the issue, and arguing about it could have caused something bad to happen between us, since I would not have been showing love for a weaker brother.

(17) The real goal in the Christian's life is not whether one thing is right to do or not. The Christian has their own private life it is true, but when they relate to other Christians in the Church, they have to consider other's beliefs also. Does that mean that we will never offend other Christians if we try hard enough? No, until we get to heaven there will be differences of opinions and beliefs. The point is, though, we as Christians want to live our lives, as far as possible, living in peace with other Christians. We are filled with joy of the Holy Spirit from within, and He helps us in this area, because with us it is impossible!

(18) We really live for the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the One we need to please, and we can live pleasing to Him by having a right relationship with other Christians.

(19) Look for things you can do that make for peace between brothers and sisters in Christ. We can help one another by building each other up in the body of Christ. One way, would be by praying for others that disagree with us. It is hard to stay enemies with someone, for very long, when you are praying for them. Think of something nice to say or do for them, even if they are different from you.

(20-21) Do not fight over little points of differences, be flexible and ready to put others first. Anything you do that you know your brother would be stumbled by if he sees you do it, don't do it. This is a hard statement, but if we love God, and our fellow Christians more than ourselves, and because we love Jesus, we are not to stumble them. Remember the song we talked about earlier, **JOY** is spelled, **J**esus first, **o**thers second, and ourselves (**y**ou) last. This is just the opposite of what the world teaches. They say, "Put you first, and all others after yourself." This won't fly in the Kingdom of God. During Paul's time, they were often thinking about whether or not a Christian could eat meat offered to the "gods." This is covered in 1 Corinthians 8, and is very similar to what we are talking about here. The principle is that we are not to impose our conscience on other Christians. Maybe we are convinced we can go to movies, for example, but another Christian thinks it is wrong. Would I try to argue with him or her that I am right, no; Paul gives the answer in the next verse.

(22-23) Do you have faith? (That you can go to movies for example.) Have it to yourself before God. So you have decided it is all right for you to do something. However, your brother in Christ does not feel the same way in his heart, then it would be wrong for you, or even himself to try and convince himself it is ok. For this person it would be sin, because he or she believes it is wrong. So we have the discussion about food, but the principle goes far beyond just food. It is a way of life for a Christian, how can we best serve the Lord and our fellow Christian, building them up in the Lord?

Chapter 15

(1) "Review" "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Serving God is helping others. In serving others we are serving our Lord. If you see some Christians with weaknesses, then help them.

(2) We are not to be lovers of ourselves, but lovers of others, building them up, not tearing them down.

(3) Christ is our example; He died for the helpless (us). Why did He do it, for Himself? "NO," it was for others.

(4) Those prophets who wrote Scripture as they were inspired by God, was it for themselves that they wrote Scripture? "NO," it was mainly for us, who would come after them, who God knew would need encouragement from Scripture, if we have the perseverance to study it.

(5-6) Just like Jesus and the prophets were an example of serving others, so should we be patient with one another. We need to work together and worship together in the Church, in so doing we will bring glory to God.

(7) Serving God is accepting one another, as Christ accepted us. This meant Jesus laying down His life for us who were strangers.

(8) Christ served the Jews, by dying for them, and by keeping the promises made to their forefathers.

(9) This also spilled over onto the Gentiles as it was prophesied beforehand.

(10-12) Many Jews had trouble accepting Gentiles, so Paul wants to make it clear from Old Testament Scriptures that the Jews have no grounds for not accepting Gentiles into the Church. (2 Samuel 22:50, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, Isaiah 11:10)

(13) This is a benediction: God has given all of us together wonderful joy and hope, that of eternal life. "Hope," here is not a wishful thinking type of thing, but something that is sure. We are happily looking forward to heaven, but living here below in the power of the Holy Spirit.

(14) Paul was quite sure that the Roman church was "full of goodness" (being good and doing good), not a lot of quarreling going on, but good things going on. They had good knowledge of God's will and purpose for them, and he was confident that they could correct one another.

(15) Paul had been given the gift of exhortation, among other things, and he knew that some of the things he would talk about were already known to them. He felt like they needed to be reminded of them. All of us as Christians need to be reminded of the Word of God and what it has to say about each area of our lives, and we

need this often because we forget so often!

(16) Paul was a priest of the Gospel to the Gentiles, which all of us are (1 Peter 2:9). What offering as a priest did Paul have to offer to God? Was it not the souls of the Gentiles who believed as the result of his bringing the message to them? They would be set aside or sanctified by the Holy Spirit as a result of their salvation.

(17-18) He says I have something to boast about in Christ, which is the change that Christ has made in my life. You see Gentiles were saved as a result of his testimony.

(19) Everywhere Paul went to share His testimony, miracles of God resulted, we should expect the same in our ministry, maybe not always to the extent that Paul saw, however we should not rule it out. If you think that God does not do the same miracles today as back then, you need to read a book like, *Anointed for Burial* by Todd and DeAnn Burke. It is out of print at this writing, but you can still find it on line. God's manifest power is clearly seen in this book about post-communist Cambodia. You feel like you are reading another Acts of the Apostles. Maybe the reason we don't see the same miracles in our ministry could be our fault and not God's. He has not changed, but we have. We have less faith, and we don't pray like we should, nor do we live holy lives close to God like we should.

Paul had saturated this area with the Gospel, from Jerusalem to Illyricum. Illyricum is seen on the maps of Paul's missionary journeys. It was a Roman province located in the area of the modern-day Balkans, on the east coast of the Adriatic Sea.

(20) Paul wanted to go to places where others had not preached the Gospel before, he would have had a "hay day" today in our time, because there are so many places around the world that have not heard the name of Christ preached. We should have this same desire! It might not be that we can go everywhere physically, but by our prayers and giving we can go where no one has gone before with the Gospel. Then, we too will have an offering to bring and present to God one day, the souls of all those we have helped bring to Christ! Paul wanted to be the first to preach in an area so he could lay a good foundation of the Gospel, the very thing he is doing in this book of Romans.

(21) I love how Paul and the other apostles quote Scripture to support their case. This should be our standard, the Word of God. Paul knew the Scripture teaches that one day the Gospel will go into the entire world even as this verse from the Old Testament book of Isaiah shows. Then too, Jesus says, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) Paul's ministry of preaching the Gospel wasn't finished in the region of Corinth where he was when he wrote this letter of Romans, but he felt it would be finished soon.

(22) He had a desire to go to Rome for many years, but he hadn't been given the "go ahead" by God yet. He was busy preaching where ever God sent him. God does give us certain desires; we should follow through on these!

(23-24) Paul having preached in Asia Minor and Greece was ready to move further west. Paul wanted to go to Spain by way of Rome. He knew the brothers would help him on his way to reach out to Spain. It is very possible that Paul did get to Spain after he was taken in chains to Rome. He may have been released for a time, so he could go to Spain, and then recaptured before he was beheaded under Nero in Rome. In Paul's mind, Rome was just to be a stop on the way to Spain. He felt the believers would be able to help him get to Spain after he had visited them.

We have no proof one way or another to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Paul did or did not make it to Spain in person. We do know the Gospel he preached and the inspired letters he wrote did go to Spain. Maybe God allowed Paul to think he would one day reach Spain in person because then he would not know the time and place of his death. Tradition tells us that Paul was beheaded in Rome, read *Foxes Book of Martyrs*. God is so gracious as to not let us know the exact time of our departure from this world. He knows we would worry about exactly how it would take place and so on. The only thing we need to know is where we are going and to be ready at any moment to go there. We can be ready, as we know Christ as our personal Savior!

(25) He was serving the Lord as he served the saints, and so should we! He was going to Jerusalem with an offering to help the poor Christians there (see Acts 19:21; 20:1-21; 2 Corinthians 8: 9). He probably had no idea how he would end up traveling to Rome after going to Jerusalem. Unbeknown to him, God had an "all expenses paid" trip by Roman soldiers.

(26) There was a collection he had from the believers in Achaia to give to the believers in Jerusalem. These believers may have been in the midst of a famine at that time or just because they were going through great persecution they need monetary help. At any rate, they were not able to make ends meet. You notice there was nothing wrong with collecting money from other Christians to help the poor. I believe God would have us do the same today. So often Christians have so much, and squander so much when they should be helping those in need around the world.

(27) He mentions that Gentiles were glad to help Jewish believers. In so saying, Paul is encouraging us to have this same attitude today. We can show our great gratitude for what the Jews have given us Gentile believers. We owe our very souls to them, since it was through them, that the Word of God came, and the Son of God came to save us.

(28) As soon as Paul dropped off the gift for the poor from the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, he wanted to leave for Spain visiting the church in Rome on the way. He didn't realize at this time he would in fact visit Rome, but in chains. He however had been warned, look at Acts 21: 8-14. This prophetic warning was probably meant to help him not to be surprised by the attack in Jerusalem, but not meant to keep him from going to Jerusalem, as the believers thought.

(29) He still would be in God's perfect will even though he would be under house arrest in Rome. God's ways are different than our ways, but as Romans 8:28 says there is a purpose for all of this in believers' lives. Paul would go "first class," in other words he didn't feel he went anywhere by accident. Neither should we feel this way. Everywhere we go we should have the assurance that this is the place God would have me to serve Him. First, we will see if we line up with the WORD of God. Then we need to know we have consulted the wisdom of other believers. This won't always be something that we can agree with. Paul was warned by other believers not to go to Jerusalem, if he had listened to them, he would not have been in God's will. Sometimes other believers don't know what God's will is for us. We had a threatening letter from our relatives when we started out to go to Bible School and serve the Lord. We also had other Christians who encouraged us, thank God for these.

To know God's will we need to see if the WORD of God, Wisdom of others, and the Will of God for us all line up. When we were getting ready to go to the overseas mission field, we had the Word of God which said "Go," Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20. We had consulted the wisdom of other believers concerning the matter. Other

missionaries and those older in the Lord than us had counseled us. Then we knew it was God's will for us to go to Trinidad and Tobago because of two striking circumstances. Earlier in our lives God had prepared us to work with this race of people. Also God had opened the door by a miracle. After He had poured water on the altar so to speak. Remember Elijah, he didn't want people to ever think the altar caught on fire by accident. The same is true in God's guidance for us. He made it humanly impossible for us to get our work permits. So we prayed, but the very day the student body of Multnomah School of the Bible prayed, God opened the door for us. That was the very day the permits were granted by the government! God had shown us beyond a shadow of a doubt where we were to go. So, as Paul wanted the fullness of God's blessing, we should want this same experience today in our lives!

(30-33)He begs them to pray for him, no doubt, he felt in his spirit a heaviness. We need to ask for prayer from others and pray for them also, that our joy may be full. Paul ends this section on service with a short prayer for them. Next we start the section on "Greetings."

Chapter 16

(1-2)Now we come to this finally chapter of our study. Here Paul will give salutations or greetings to the believers in Rome, and greetings from those in his group that traveled with him. Here in these first two verses we see a commendation for Phoebe a deaconess of the assembly in Cenchrea, a town just south of Corinth, in Achaia (Acts 18:18)

(3-4) She would have been well known to Priscilla and Aquila who had worked with Paul before. They were very close to Paul; he remembers how they risk their lives for him. Ever since Paul had met them in Corinth on his second missionary journey, they had been hard at work in the service of the Lord. They were also well known to the Gentile churches. (Acts 18:2,18,26; I Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19).

(5)One of the churches in Rome met in Priscilla and Aquila's home. Another one of the saints from Achaia (or Asia) was there also, Epaenetus, who was Paul's first fruits of his ministry in Corinth.

(6)We may not know who this Mary is, but we know this, that she was special in God's mind. Paul commends all the women that had helped him in his ministry, Philippians 4:3, says: "And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life." We may not always know who these servants of the Lord were, but one day on the other side we will see them and rejoice with them!

(7-10)Andronicus and Junia were Paul's fellow countrymen, who had been in jail with him at some time. These were with him, and were saved before he was saved. This would mean they had been believers for about twenty-five years. They were from Israel and were missionaries like Paul, which is what the word "apostles" means most often (sent ones). (See also John 13:16; 2 Corinthians 8:23; and Philippians 2:25.) We are just not sure who all these believers are because they are not mention else where in Scripture.

(11)Herodion may have been a relative of Paul.

(12-13)Here are some other believers known only to God, at this point. In this verse we do see someone whom Paul considered like a mother to him. Rufus' mother was like a mother in the Lord to Paul. What a close relationship he must have had to the believers! I have had to make appointments to get in to see missionaries or

pastors, I don't think Paul was like this, we should follow Paul's example.

(14-16) All these people Paul knew were suppose to be greeted with a "holy kiss." This was the custom then, I have seen it practiced today in Mexico, no doubt it is used in other parts of the world as well. For many Christians today, we give a hand shake or an embrace, but if we were close to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, it would be nice to have a "holy kiss."

(17) These that would cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which had been taught by the Apostles should be avoided.

(18) These are not real believers, but imposters! (Philippians 3:18-19)

(19) He has heard only good things about them.

(20-21) Timothy and Luke were with Paul, as was the case most of the time. We now find out that Jason is a near relative (Acts 17:5-9), which could be the reason for so much devotion to Paul when he was in Thessalonica. Sosipater, also a relative, is linked with him.

(22) Tertius, Paul's scribe, adds his greeting. Except for this we would not have known who actually wrote things down for Paul.

(23) Gaius, "my host," could this be the same as the Gaius who received the traveling brethren, and was commended by John for his Christian hospitality, in 3rd John? Erastus we find in Acts 19:22; 2 Timothy 4:20, but Quartus is not mentioned any where else. He probably had been a slave at one time because his name just means "fourth". Slaves were often named simply by number.

(24) The benediction of this verse concludes the letter and marks it as genuinely Paul's. Look at 2 Thessalonians 3:17-18, this word "Grace" was his trademark so to speak. Interestingly enough it is also found in Hebrews 13:25, but that is another study.

(25-27) Paul speaks of the "mystery" that has been revealed through him, this book of Romans and the teaching about the Church Age, look at Ephesians 3 also. The reason for this book is as we started out with that the "Way of Salvation" be made clear. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek (Gentile)," Romans 1:16. So we come to the end of this study. I think it is only appropriate that I end it the same way Paul did, with this prayer of benediction: "...to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen."

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