



# ROMANS: WEEK VI

STEVE WATSON | DAILY BIBLE GUIDE | 2016

**Previously, in Romans:** *In his instructions on community life, Paul is advocating for radical inclusion, radical mutual respect, and radical trust in God's judgment, not ours.*

Monday, March 21 – Romans 14:13-23

<sup>13</sup> Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another. <sup>14</sup> I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. <sup>15</sup> If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup> So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. <sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. <sup>19</sup> Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. <sup>20</sup> Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; <sup>21</sup> it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble. <sup>22</sup> The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. <sup>23</sup> But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

Points of Interest:

- 'resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another' – The language of "stumbling block" recalls comments from 11:9-12 about the hurdles that get between people and their inclusion in God's story of love and grace. The judgment of others can function as one kind of stumbling block, but so can insensitivity to the cultural scruples of others. Paul doesn't want the so-called strong – the majority Gentile believers – to offend the Jews among them by serving them non-kosher foods at their worship feasts. This reminds me of how our educated, empowered women defer to some of very traditional gender norms when gathering for interfaith events with our Muslim neighbors. Are those gender norms "right"? Personally, I don't think so, but that's not the question we're asking. We're looking to remove stumbling blocks from people's experience of God's love.
- 'I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself' – Though Jewish, Paul's own conclusion is that the more libertine practices of the Gentile believers are on to something. Nothing created by God, certainly no food, is inherently unclean, he says. This is not what the Mosaic law taught him and not how he lived prior to his own encounter with Jesus. If anyone could insist on this as a new law, it would be Bible-writer Paul. Yet when it comes to ethical practices in the community of faith, Paul advocates for a limited relativism. Receiving the welcome of Jesus, and doing so in united community, is more important than agreement on moral practice.

- 'if your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love' – Love for neighbor, not purity of principle, is the highest value in the Jesus community.
- 'the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' – Here's another theological grounds for Paul's reasoning. The nature and aims of Jesus' kingdom are joy, peace, and right living (which is primarily right relationship.) Controversial matters of ethical practice are secondary.
- 'the one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval' – Follow Jesus as Lord as Paul is describing in this chapter, and you'll make God and the people around you happy, and both of those are worthwhile aims, conducive to "righteousness and peace and joy."
- 'what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding' – This is another barometer for healthy living in community – defaulting to the behavior and attitude and lifestyle that will promote peace and one's own and others' betterment and encouragement.
- 'do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God' – I love the simplicity of this line. The work of God is clearly about people – inclusion of people in the family of God, uniting of Jew and Gentile in the "olive tree" God is growing (11:17-24), and the development of a community of love and joy and peace. Why would we ever risk destroying that over relatively petty controversies?
- 'the faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God' – Peace, inclusion, and mutual welcome don't mean that our lives and our choices aren't important. Just as we're off if we do what causes our neighbor to stumble, we're off if we do what we don't approve of or even have doubts about. Our own consciences and convictions and lies of faith matter, and we're encouraged to pursue them earnestly, while also holding the greater peace and encouragement of the community in mind.

**Taking It Home:**

*For you* – Is there anything in how you speak or act that makes it harder for other people to follow Jesus or to be part of your church or community group? How can you pursue peace and mutual upbuilding in your church, without betraying your own conscience?

*For your six* – Pray that each of your six would experience acceptance and welcome by community today, and specifically that God would remove any stumbling blocks they might have that would prevent them from having faith in God.

**Previously, in Romans:** *Paul has been encouraging mutual respect and accommodation for others, in order to experience the peace and unity that is pleasing both to God and people.*

**Tuesday, March 22 – Romans 15:1-13**

15 We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

<sup>2</sup> Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. <sup>3</sup> For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

<sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness

and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup> Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. <sup>8</sup> For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, <sup>9</sup> and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles,  
and sing praises to your name”;

<sup>10</sup> and again he says,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”;

<sup>11</sup> and again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
and let all the peoples praise him”;

<sup>12</sup> and again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse shall come,  
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

<sup>13</sup> May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### Points of Interest:

- ‘We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak’ – In ethnicity, Paul identifies with the so-called weak in Rome, but in morals and conscience, with the so-called strong. Rather than insist that the weaker or the minority comply with the rest of the community (as would usually be the case both in Rome and in our own times), Paul says the majority have an obligation to run their communities in ways that welcome and give dignity to their more marginalized members.
- ‘the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me’ – Jesus’ sacrificial love doesn’t just give us salvation, it is also the model for our love of neighbor. The citation from Psalm 69:9 specifically highlights shame and rejection, implying that even if it causes us some degree of sacrifice or humiliation to support the marginalized in our faith communities, to follow Jesus is to do so.
- ‘with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ – Paul envisions the Jesus people in Rome praising God in peace and harmony. It’s like an old Coke commercial, but with Jesus and not a commercial product at the center of the singing. The Roman house churches were

limited by space and persecution to gathering in groups of only 10 or 20 people, so they had never experienced this kind of large group communal singing, but they're invited to imagine that their communal harmony will bring the same joy to them and God that this kind of chorus would.

- 'welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God' – This line is a summary of the whole section: mutual welcome that mirrors God's welcome of each of them. It also hints at more of the reason for this mutual acceptance and peace. It glorifies God, perhaps inherently in the chorus of praise it produces as we just heard. It also seems to be part of Paul's expectation for how more Gentiles will come to know God, by seeing profound love and unity among the people who worship Jesus.
- 'a servant of the circumcised... in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs' – Verses 8 and 9 summarize the mission of Jesus that Paul has explained throughout the letter. Jesus fulfilled the promises given to the Jews since their founding fathers, for God to be with them and make them both blessed and a blessing to others.
- 'and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy' – Jesus also fulfills God's promise that all people on earth will be brought into revelation of God's trust and experience of God's goodness and care.
- 'as it is written... ' – As God's commitment to the whole earth, and not just Israel, wasn't spoken about as much in his tradition, Paul cites this commitment from all three sections of Jewish Scripture – the law, the prophets, and the writings.
- 'may the God of hope fill you...' – The hope in the closing benediction is tied to the prophecy from Isaiah that the Gentiles too will hope in Jesus. The God of hope wants them to be full of this hope, even when it will take the power of the Holy Spirit for this to be so.

#### Taking It Home:

*For you* – What if at least part of the purpose of God in your life is bound up with the harmony and love you bring about in your community of faith? How can you agree with and participate in this purpose God has?

*For your city/church* – The thrust of this passage seems to be that all along, God has been eager to have people like you in God's family, and that God would say the same thing about many other people and groups in your city. Pray that God does things in the life of your church that would effectively and broadly communicate God's hope, joy, and peace.

**Previously, in Romans:** *Paul has wrapped up his fourth and final segment exploring the good news of Jesus for Jews and Gentiles and is moving toward closing encouragements and comments.*

Wednesday, March 23 – Romans 15:14-33

<sup>14</sup> I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. <sup>15</sup> Nevertheless on some points I have written to you rather boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God <sup>16</sup> to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. <sup>17</sup> In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God. <sup>18</sup> For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, <sup>19</sup> by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ. <sup>20</sup> Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation, <sup>21</sup> but as it is written,

“Those who have never been told of him shall see,  
and those who have never heard of him shall understand.”

<sup>22</sup> This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. <sup>23</sup> But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you <sup>24</sup> when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while. <sup>25</sup> At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; <sup>26</sup> for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. <sup>28</sup> So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will set out by way of you to Spain; <sup>29</sup> and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

<sup>30</sup> I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf, <sup>31</sup> that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, <sup>32</sup> so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. <sup>33</sup> The God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

Points of Interest:

- 'I myself feel confident about you...' – The first line sounds like flattery, but it's really just in keeping with good manners. After asking anything of their recipients, ancient letters often politely assume that the people reading were of course the good people that would do such a thing anyway. The “filled with” goodness and knowledge is also a contrast to the godless humanity at its worst, “filled with wickedness, evil, etc.” from the end of chapter 1.
- 'I have written to you rather boldly' – Paul acknowledges that he's been pretty direct for a stranger, but that this is the kind of thing God has led him to do for work.

- 'so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable' – Why is Paul this direct-speaking minister and priest? So that God will get this "offering of the Gentiles"? This could seem like God needs a bigger pool of people to give him money or sacrifices or something, but I'm pretty sure that the people themselves are the offering here. Paul has been quoting fairly constantly from Isaiah, and at the very end of Isaiah, people from all nations – even perhaps as far away as Spain – come to God to worship and bring an offering. In Jesus, Paul has realized that the people themselves in all these places are an offering, that God enjoys these people and their love.
- 'I have reason to boast of my work for God' – Paul gets a bad rap for these moments where he seems kind of full of himself. This sort of thing isn't just normal in Greco-Roman culture, though, it's a typical move of an ambassador to establish his authority. In the teaching of rhetoric, we call this ethos – the reason we should pay attention to this particular speaker. The Romans should take Paul seriously because the Spirit of God has been working with him to bring Jesus' good news all over the place.
- 'from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum' – Illyricum was the area of the today's Baltic states, just across the sea, east of Italy. Scholars who have reconstructed Paul's travels have noticed that he was really strategic about making his way from the city where Jesus died and rose again, to the very ends of the known world, which in Paul's case, centered around the Mediterranean sea. It's like Paul looked at a map of the Mediterranean world – the only kind of map that would have ever been available to him – and saw that a path toward the ends of the earth would have taken him through Illyricum and on through Rome and beyond. And he made his plans accordingly.
- 'those who have never been told of him shall see' – Paul grounds his working strategy in Isaiah again, this time 52:15. Paul's job, as he understood it, was that of a pioneer, or a faith entrepreneur: to take the good news of Jesus to places where it has never been. Other people, as Paul hit on in Romans 12:6-8, have other gifts and other jobs.
- 'to come to you when I go to Spain' – On the one hand, Paul really wants to meet these famous Roman house churches, as he's said since the first chapter. On the other hand, he assures them he's not trying to make himself their new leader or overstay his welcome. They're more of a pit stop for him on the way to Spain – the land on the far Western ends of their maps, the land of barbarians as far as Rome is concerned, and perhaps the land mentioned at the very end of the book of Isaiah as well. The whole book of Romans makes a lot of sense when you read it as a Kickstarter appeal for Paul's gospel journey to Spain.
- 'I hope to see you on my journey and be sent on by you' – Paul doesn't want to be over-explicit and impolite about it, but he expects the Romans to overcome their own internal divisions and come together to provide him with some financial and logistical support.
- 'I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints' – First off, Paul has to run an errand in Jerusalem. Now this was not at all on the way! It's far to the East of Corinth, in Greece, where Paul was writing this letter. But another one of Paul's big life missions, before going on to Rome and Spain, was to collect a financial offering from Gentile believers in Greece and bring it to desperately impoverished Jewish followers of Jesus in Jerusalem.

- 'for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service' – This offering likely had political significance to Paul. Jewish believers still had only an awkward peace with this growing number of non-Jewish, uncircumcised followers of Jesus who weren't even following the Jewish law as part of their new faith. By collecting a large financial gift from all these new churches he had started amongst the Gentiles, Paul might hope to warm the hearts of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem toward them.

Paul says the Gentile churches have been happy to chip in too, and that there's perhaps something spiritually fitting and beautiful about this. The blessing of Jesus, with its roots in the Jewish story, is returned by these new believers when they help feed their new spiritual cousins in Jerusalem.

- 'that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea' – Like most of what Paul did, though, this was a dangerous mission he was on. He was carrying a large amount of cash into a city where many who don't follow Jesus view him as a traitor to his faith and culture, and many who do wonder if he's taken this message of Jesus to the Gentiles too far. Paul hopes he'll make it out and get to Rome alive, and asks for prayers that this will happen. It turns out that the only way that Paul will ever get to Rome is in chains, but that's a story for another day.

#### Taking It Home:

*For you* – Paul has a focused life mission with two huge goals at this point in time – bring a financial contribution from the Gentile churches to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, and then bring the good news of Jesus to the end of the world. He invites the Romans into their own mission as well – peace and love with one another, and support of his work when he arrives. What long-term life mission does God seem to have for you? Is there any particular work that you think you might be called to today? Ask God for discernment and courage around this?

*For your 6* – Pray for the work of your six, that they will find ways to devote their lives to good that God is doing in the world. Another prayer today for your six could be to pray that they will either be the recipients or benefactors of some practically and spiritually significant generosity.

**Previously, in Romans:** *Paul has explained the most practical purpose of his letter – to visit the Roman churches and get their support as he travels to Spain. Even in this, his focus on the good news of Jesus to both Jews and Gentiles is readily apparent.*

#### Thursday, March 24 – Romans 16:1-16

16 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, <sup>2</sup> so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.

<sup>3</sup> Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup> and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. <sup>5</sup> Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ. <sup>6</sup> Greet

Mary, who has worked very hard among you. <sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. <sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. <sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. <sup>11</sup> Greet my relative Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. <sup>12</sup> Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and greet his mother—a mother to me also. <sup>14</sup> Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters who are with them. <sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. <sup>16</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Points of Interest:

- 'I commend to you our sister Phoebe' – Cenchreae is the seaport nearest to Corinth, in Greece, where Paul wrote this letter. Phoebe is a church leader in that community and apparently a woman of some means as well. In addition to being part of her church leadership team, Paul trusts her with the responsibility to hand-deliver this letter to Rome, likely at her own expense. Perhaps she'll also stick around and organize the advance team for Paul's intended visit and trip to Spain.

In other Pauline letters, there are comments that question his backing of women in church leadership, but in this chapter alone, three women are named as high-authority church leaders. Phoebe is the first. Whatever Paul says about how women lead, it has to be interpreted in light of his substantial and, in his context, pretty radical actual endorsement of their leadership.

- 'Prisca and Aquila....' – Prisca is the second female leader mentioned here and has her name placed before her husband's, unusual for the first century. Best as we can reconstruct their story from elsewhere in the New Testament, they were Jews living in Rome who were evicted from the city after the Edict of Claudius exiled Jews from Rome. At some point, they began to follow Jesus and became significant friends and partners of Paul's throughout the 50s A.D.
- 'Greet also the church in their house' – Prisca and Aquila are now back in Rome, leading a small church in their home. These are the kind of house churches we think of when we think of the first century Jesus community – several families and individuals that met several times a week for meals and worship in the living rooms of a relatively wealthy host. As we'll see in a minute, though, there aren't the only kinds of house churches.
- 'Andronicus and Junia... they are prominent among the apostles...' – Paul greets a number of people either known to him personally or by reputation or through friends. Paul cared a great deal about the relationships he picked up in his travels and in a time before email, phone, and postal service, did his best to remind them of his love and prayers. Two of the people he singles out are apostles, one of whom is Junia, this chapter's third female leader. "Apostle" literally means sent one, and it usually referred to people who helped establish new work for Jesus, often people who personally knew Jesus during his lifetime.
- 'greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus' – Beyond house churches meeting in wealthy families' living rooms, scholars detect other types of house communities in these greetings. Those who belong to the family of Aristobulus, and in the next verse, to Narcissus, would be slaves or

laborers working in these households. Based on the names, the lists of people in verses 14 and 15 likely share leadership of communities that meet in slum tenements. There is no indication of singular leadership or wealthy patronage for these communities.

- 'Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.' – In many ways, this could be the true climax of the letter to the Romans. Their communities are all connected to the broader community of Jesus, who has welcomed them. And they are now told to extend greeting and love to one another. Jews and Gentiles, men and women, privileged and slaves – they are all in this life of Jesus together, and they are all invited to greet one another in love and friendship.

Taking It Home:

*For you* – Thank God today for all the people that lead and host and fund community groups and churches. Consider also sending your greetings and appreciation today to one of them, or to someone else significant in your life that you don't get to see very often.

*For your city/church* – What would a "greeting with a holy kiss" look like today? How can followers of Jesus extend love and friendship across different within and beyond our churches? Brainstorm what this would look like with someone else this week, and see how you can make it so.

**Previously, in Romans:** *Paul is wrapping up the letter to the Romans with closing greetings and blessings.*

Friday, March 25 – Romans 16:17-27

<sup>17</sup> I urge you, brothers and sisters, to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offenses, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; avoid them. <sup>18</sup> For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded. <sup>19</sup> For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you to be wise in what is good and guileless in what is evil. <sup>20</sup> The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy, my co-worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.

<sup>22</sup> I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord.

<sup>23</sup> Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

<sup>25</sup> Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages <sup>26</sup> but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— <sup>27</sup> to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

## Points of Interest:

- 'an eye on those who cause dissensions and offenses' – Avoiding dissensions and mutual offenses has certainly been a part of the theme of Romans. Perhaps Paul wants to urge them to watch out for this kind of thing one more time. And yet overall, the themes in this paragraph and its stridency of tone don't really sound like the rest of the letter.

A second possibility, one we're not used to thinking about, is that Paul didn't write these words at all. As with pretty much every single ancient text, no one has the original, handwritten copies of any of the books of the Bible. Written nearly two thousand years ago on papyrus that didn't always age well, they most likely are now composted pulp somewhere in a subterranean ruin. The text that is translated in our Bibles is based on an amalgam of all of the most ancient copies of these writings. For about 99% of the words, there is fairly unanimous agreement on what the originals were likely to have said. But now and then, there are variants, and scholars have to practice the discipline of textual criticism to determine what the original authors were likely to have meant.

So even very old Bible translations like the King James Version from over six hundred years ago are largely adequate fine, but they're not only in an outdated form of the English language, but are a little less accurate due to advances in archaeology and scholarship. All this to say, you can be confident that something like 99.9% of your Bible is accurate where it counts. But here and there, there are small disputes over words and verses.

Romans 16:17-20 is one of two places in this chapter where this is the case. The tone and theme differs from the rest of Romans, and the vocabulary and argumentation don't match Paul's in Romans and in the other New Testament letters he wrote. It is possible that the unity expressed with the line "Greet one another with a holy kiss" was just too full of love and that leaders in later first century Roman churches added these words to censor those they didn't agree with.

- 'Timothy, my co-worker, greets you...' – The savvy reader will notice that this flows as if it came right after vs. 16, where yesterday's passage ended with a number of greetings. This is yet another reason that some scholars think the previous four verses weren't part of the original letter.
- 'vs. 24' – Those of you looking at the passage will note that in this translation, it jumps from vs. 23 straight to vs. 25. That is because verse 24 would read like this: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. It's a short benediction, a closing blessing. But then verses 25-27 have a longer closing blessing. Scholars are pretty sure that Paul wrote only one. So some translations have eliminated verse 24.
- One of today's best scholars on Romans, Robert Jewett, who I've mentioned a couple of times, thinks the opposite is true. He thinks verses 25-27 are later additions to the text for similar reasons as the addition in verses 16-20. The tone and vocabulary and themes of these three verses don't match, and they easily could have been tacked onto copies of the letters that circulated? Why? Nero persecuted the early Christians in Rome just after this letter was written, and then in the late 60s A.D., Rome's armies invaded Palestine and besieged Jerusalem, crushing a Jewish rebellion there, destroying the city and its temple, and scattering Jews abroad. Afterwards, the Gentile churches increasingly distanced themselves from their Jewish roots, a tragic early chapter of anti-

Semitism in the Christian story. Whereas all mentions of the Gentiles in Romans are alongside the Jews to whose story they are connected, here the new ending of Romans focuses on Gentiles alone. This isn't what Paul intended at all.

Taking It Home:

*For you* – Thank God that questions about the accuracy of the Bible's text are exceedingly rare. If Romans does end with a simple word that the grace of Jesus is with us all today, how is the presence of Jesus to both love and lead you an encouragement to you? Ask Jesus to be with you in all that you do today, inviting his grace and leadership in places where you particularly know you will need it.

*For your 6* – Perhaps the many, many failings of churches over the years have given some of your 6 a negative view of Jesus. Pray that Jesus will find them anyway, to give them grace.

## Saturday, March 26 – Romans Recap

It's been nice spending the past forty days in Romans with you. Personally, I'm ready to start again and travel through the text over the next forty days as well. But today, rather than fill your minds and ears with my commentary, we'll simply recap some highlights of our journey through Romans. Below are sixteen short excerpts that capture some of the highlights and flow of Paul's letter.

### Romans 1:14-17

<sup>14</sup> I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish <sup>15</sup>—hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome. <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.”

### 3:21-26

<sup>21</sup> But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, <sup>23</sup> since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; <sup>24</sup> they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup> it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

### 4:13-17

<sup>13</sup> For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup> If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup> For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

<sup>16</sup> For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of

Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, <sup>17</sup> as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

### 5:6-11

<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup> But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

### 6:5-11

<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For whoever has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

### 8:1-2

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

### 8:18-23

<sup>18</sup> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup> for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; <sup>23</sup> and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

### 8:31-39

<sup>31</sup> What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;  
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

#### 9:1-5

<sup>9</sup> I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit—  
<sup>2</sup> I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh.  
<sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; <sup>5</sup> to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

#### 11:25-33

<sup>25</sup> So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup> And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written,

“Out of Zion will come the Deliverer;  
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.”  
<sup>27</sup> “And this is my covenant with them,  
when I take away their sins.”

<sup>28</sup> As regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; <sup>29</sup> for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup> Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. <sup>32</sup> For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

<sup>33</sup> O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

#### 12:1-2

<sup>12</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

#### 12:9-13

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup> love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the

Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

13:8-10

<sup>8</sup> Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

15:1-6

<sup>15</sup> We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

<sup>2</sup> Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. <sup>3</sup> For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”

<sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15:28-29

<sup>28</sup> So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will set out by way of you to Spain; <sup>29</sup> and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

16:16

<sup>16</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Taking It Home:

*For you* – What has most struck you in your reading of Romans? Take a moment today to write down one of the larger insights or gifts that Jesus has given you. Ask God for help in remembering this and having it stick with you far beyond this season.

*For your church, your 6, and your city:* Pray for another Jesus movement in our own times, for the good news of Jesus to captivate and fill your church and to encourage your friends and your city as well.