

Romans 15

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Tape #8134
Pastor Chuck Smith

Let's pray. Father, with hearts filled with excitement and anticipation, we gather, as we look to You. The work that You're desiring to do in our lives tonight as You teach us more and more of Your wonderful grace and Your mercy and Your love and Your goodness unto us, Your children. Father, we pray that our hearts might be in tune with Your heart, tonight, that You, Lord, will speak to us and allow the word of God just to minister to us and to our needs. We just commit now Lord, this time, that You might use it for the edification of the church. Building us up in the things of the Lord, giving us the strength that we need to cope with the world in which we live. To be an example to them of what true Christianity is. Lord, help us. We fall short. We realize that. But not by desire, it's just by weakness. So make us strong. Strengthen us tonight, Lord, in the things of the Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Let's turn now in our Bibles to the fifteen chapter of Romans as we continue our journey through the word of God. In the fourteenth chapter you will remember that Paul is dealing with Christian unity that is created by Christian love, accepting each other though we may differ in some of our ideas and interpretations of the Scripture. Basically the early church had a split over the Jewish aspects of the church and the Gentile aspects of the church. Many of the Jews were still following the Kosher laws. They were very concerned about the diet, that it be Kosher. Many of the Gentile believers had never really heard of the Kosher laws and were not really worried about keeping Kosher. So it developed this kind of division between the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers. Many of the Jewish believers were insisting that you could not really be a Christian without keeping the Jewish laws, even the ritual of circumcision. So Paul, an apostle to the Gentiles, though he was one of the strictest Jews at one time, he had been called of God to be an apostle to the Gentiles. God took one of the most strict of all of the Jews and made him an apostle to the Gentiles. In so doing, Paul came to a recognition and a realization that Jesus Christ has really set us free from the traditional observances of dietary laws and things of that nature. So going to the Gentiles, he had this liberty and this freedom. So yet the rule of Paul was to walk in love and try not to be an offense unto people. So he said he had learned to be all things to all men that he might gain the more. To the Jews, I became as a Jew. He could go and enjoy fellowship with the Jews, keep Kosher and all. Or he could go into a Gentile home and have ham, just give God thanks and eat it. He had this liberty. He said all things are lawful for me. There is nothing unclean of itself unless a person esteems it to be unclean. Then to him it is unclean. Now Paul sort of put it in the category of "weak in the faith" and "strong in the faith." If you have a tender conscience, weak in the faith, then you are better off not to do those things for which you feel guilty. In the same token, a person who had no qualms or conscience about it, should not openly flaunt his liberty in Christ to the extent of stumbling another brother for whom Christ died. If you have liberty, Paul said, have it to yourself, in your own homes, enjoy it. But don't just flaunt that liberty so as to stumble or hurt someone else. But basically the real law is love! Walk in love. Be considerate. Now Paul is showing that in the church, we are one, both the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers. Throughout the Book of Romans he has been showing that we are all of us sinners. We have all come short of the glory of God. We were all in need of redemption. God has provided that redemption through Jesus Christ through whom we must all come in order to be redeemed.

So in that same flow as we enter into the fifteenth chapter here, Paul is continuing the same thought in the first few verses, as he says, *We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.* If you are strong in the faith, if you feel a liberty of doing certain things, then you need to bear the infirmities of the weak. Understand them and don't live to please yourself. Again the key is love, not living for myself, not living to please myself, but walking in consideration and in love for another person's feelings, not being an offense unto them or using my liberty in such a way as they are offended.

²*Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.* Let's just seek to do those things that will please that we might build them up. The whole idea as a church is that we should be interested in building one another up in the things of the Spirit. We should be encouraging one another in the things of the Lord. We

should be praying one for another. We should be concerned about the weakest member of the church. And if you are strong, then help bear the infirmities of that weak. Seek to build them up. Seek to encourage them, to strengthen them, to do those things that will edify or build them up.

Then he uses Christ as our example, ³*For even Christ did not please Himself*; Jesus said I didn't come to do my own will but the will of Him who sent Me. And He submitted Himself unto the Father's will, even unto death, the death on the cross. We remember in the Garden as Jesus was praying, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not what I will but Thy will be done." He didn't come to please Himself, but to please the Father.

but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." That is out of Psalm sixty-nine, the prophecy of the Messiah, who bore the reproach of the people against God. Now, the early apostles bore the reproach of Jesus Christ. Jesus said unto them, don't be surprised because the world hates you. It hates me.

So that often times, we when we are reproached by the world, are bearing the reproaches of Christ. It isn't a personal thing. It isn't that they just don't like you. What they don't like is Christ in you. Your walk and your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ, that troubles them.

We used to sing the chorus, I have the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart. Then there was, I have the peace that passes understanding down in my heart. I have the wonderful love of my Blessed Redeemer way down in the depths of my heart. There were so many verses that they added to that, but then there was that one, I have the happy hope that heckles heathens, down in my heart. And when you have that happy hope in Jesus, often times the heathen are heckled by it. And they reproach you, but it isn't to be taken personally, it is bearing the reproach of Christ, so that when the disciples were beaten, they went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for Jesus' sake.

When we are reproached for Christ's sake, we ought to have that same attitude, realizing that I am bearing the reproach of my Lord. Now He bore the reproach of God, the people who were rebelling inwardly against the law of God, people who were rebelling against the truth of God. Jesus said to them one day when they were ready to stone Him, I've done a lot of good works. For which of the works are you stoning Me? They were sort of baffled. They realized they really didn't have a reason to stone Him, but He said it's because I've told you the truth, because He told them the truth about God. He exposed their hypocrisy. That angered them. So the reproach against God that was deep down in their heart against God. He bore that reproach, willing to give Himself to bear the reproach that they had in their hearts against God.

So Christ is our example. He didn't live to please Himself, willing to bear the reproach that the people had in their hearts against the Father. Not coming to win popularity contests. Not coming to pat everybody on the back and tell them how wonderful they are, but coming to reveal the truth to them that they are all hopeless sinners and we are desperately in need of the grace and the mercy of God.

Now Paul goes on to say after quoting Psalm 69, ⁴*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 word of God, the Scriptures, and of course Paul is referring here to the Old Testament, was written for us, for our learning. And the purpose is to bring to us patience and comfort from the Scriptures. And the end result is hope. Patience and comfort of the Scriptures, patient because we see that God is patient. God is patient in working out His purposes in mankind. God is patient in sending the Messiah. God was patient in dealing with the nation of Israel. Over and over we see the patience of God manifested in the accomplishing of His purposes on this earth.

It's interesting that God never seems to be in a hurry. We often find ourselves in a great hurry. David was sort of frustrated because God didn't seem to be in a hurry. He would oftentimes pray, Lord, don't tarry! Answer now! Answer quickly, you know. And it was a thing that he was disturbed many times because God wasn't seemingly, working fast enough to please him or to take care of the situations that he was facing. So God though is not in a hurry. He is patient in the working out of His purposes. Look at Abraham. The patience with which God dealt with Abraham in giving him the promised son. Through Abraham, God promised that the Messiah would come. And yet Abraham is over a hundred years old before Sarah conceived and bares Isaac through whom the seed shall be called, the patience of God.

So as we read, God is patient, but He always accomplishes His purposes. The purposes of God shall stand. God will accomplish His purpose. God said to Habbakuk, though it tarries, wait for it. The vision that you saw is

for a time and a season. And though it tarries, wait for it because it shall come. And so often the purposes of God seem to be delayed but they always are fulfilled.

We are told in the book of Hebrews that we have need of patience, that after we have done the will of God, we might obtain the promise. Again in Hebrews, referring to the Old Testament saints, "Who through faith and patience, inherited the promises." So through the Scriptures it should develop patience, first of all. Realizing that God is not in a hurry.

Secondly, comfort, because God always came through. God's never failed in His promises to the people. He always came through. And thus I have hope. I have hope that God is going to come through. He is going to meet my needs. I don't have to worry. Through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

⁵*Now may the God of patience* Oh yes He is! He is so patient. So patient as He dealt with Israel. So patient as He has dealt with me and with you! So patient as He has worked out His eternal purposes on this planet, Earth. Even yet I marvel at the patience of God. I really, honestly am surprised and disappointed that Christ has not returned yet. I don't know how God can be so patient with this generation in which we live. How God can be so patient as men openly defy His laws, blaspheme His name? We do know that the purposes of God shall be fulfilled. We do know that God is going to judge the world because of this unrighteousness. We know that that's going to happen, but the patience of God, the God of patience.

James said, have patience brethren because of the coming of the Lord. Establish your soul because the husbandman is waiting for the complete fruit of harvest. So he tells us the reason why the Lord hasn't come, is there are still people who are not saved. If you are one of them, please accept the Lord. Let's get this thing over with!

Talking of the last days, Peter said scoffers will come saying, where is the promise of His coming? Since our fathers have fallen asleep everything continues as it was from the beginning. But he said, "God is not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness." He is faithful to us and then he gives the reason for the waiting, He's not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Oh the patience of God! He is the God of patience!) *and comfort* (Or consolation. Now we read here that the Scriptures give patience and comfort or consolation. For He is the God of patience. He also is the God of comfort or consolation. And the promise of the Messiah was the consolation or the comfort for Israel. You remember Simeon, the aged man who was living in Jerusalem, who had the promise of God that he would not die before seeing the Messiah. He was a man, the Scriptures said, who was waiting for the consolation of Israel, that is the coming of the Messiah. God spoke a secret to his heart. You will see Him! You won't die before seeing Him. So Paul speaks about the God of all comfort, who comforts us in our trouble in order that we might be able to comfort you with the comfort wherewith we were comforted.

So the God of all comfort *grant you to be like-minded* (Like minded to what? Like minded to Jesus, who pleased not Himself, who didn't live to please Himself, but was considerate and sought to please others.) That you would be like-minded, *toward one another, according to Christ Jesus*, (The example that he has given to us.) ⁶*that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. So that the church might be unified, together as one, now, not that we would all be one denomination, but God, I believe has a purpose for each of the denominations. I don't think that Paul is trying to say that we all need to be of the same denomination and have to each of us have to dot our I's and cross our T's. We don't have to all, you know, just line up like ducks in a row, little robots, all moving at the same time and the same kind of movement.

There is plenty of latitude within the church for different forms of worship. And we should never exclude someone because they worship the Lord by a different form than we are comfortable with. They probably are not comfortable with the form of worship that you enjoy. So there is plenty of latitude there.

Where we need to draw the line is of course in the basic doctrines which deal with the deity of Jesus Christ and with His atonement for our sins, His atoning death upon the cross, His atoning resurrection from the dead and those basic doctrines of Christ. There must be an agreement there, the nature of Christ, the deity of Christ, but outside of that there is just lots of latitude. And we need to have that kind of latitude as accepting them as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

It is unfortunate that within the church there, often times, is jealousy that develops when one of the churches is being blessed, is growing, is multiplying. There often develops this jealousy, like that you know, I wonder why

God blesses them and all. Sort of a “sour grapes” kind of an attitude because a church is being blessed, rather than rejoicing that the kingdom of God is expanding. I believe that the Lord desires that we have the same vision of the whole kingdom of God, the whole church that He had. That we not separate or isolate ourselves in our minds to one little segment, one little part of which we are one little part of the church. But we shouldn’t in our minds sort of put ourselves in this one little part to the exclusion of the rest of the body. Maybe we are a finger of the whole body. All right, praise God, we are a finger. Let us rejoice that we are attached to a hand, otherwise, we would have difficulty doing anything because we are just out there by ourselves. And the hand is attached to the arm and you know you have a brain that is giving the orders and so forth to the whole thing. And you see the whole body of Christ. And that’s what Paul is exhorting the church in Rome to these things. That you with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷*Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.* Again, Christ our example. Receive one another even as Christ has received us to the glory of God. The Bible says we are accepted in the beloved. He has accepted us. Then let us also accept one another. Let’s not put up barriers, walls, by which we divide ourselves from the rest of the body. But let us, we sing it every year at the Harvest Crusade, “Let the walls fall down”. The walls that man have built up, by which he sort of defines his territory, this segment in which I live. Let’s leave it open for the whole body of Christ.

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,* Jesus came to the Jews. He was the promised Messiah of the Jews. God had promised over and over to send the Anointed One. He was that Anointed One that God had promised to the Jews and His ministry was to the Jews. He directed His disciples not to go into the cities of the Gentiles. When a woman from Syro Phenicia besought His help for her daughter, He said it isn’t right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the little puppies. She said that’s true, Lord, but the little puppies eat the crumbs that fall from the Master’s table. He was touched. He said, that’s tremendous faith, go your way, your daughter is well. But, His ministry was to the Jews. He came to minister to the circumcision, to the Jews in order that God might fulfill His promises to them. He was the fulfillment of the promises of God in sending the Messiah.

⁹*and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name."* Now, Jesus came to the Jews to fulfill the promises of God, but the blessings that He brought to them, overflowed from them. We are brought in, not by covenant, but by the mercies of God. Yet, the Gentile believers were also predicted in the Scriptures. And Paul is going to give a series of quotations here. First of all, these quotations demonstrate to us Paul’s tremendous working knowledge of the Scriptures. This fellow knew the Scriptures well. He had a tremendous working knowledge of the Scriptures. When you talk about the Gentiles becoming partakers, inheriting these glorious promises of God and being brought into the family of God, he immediately begins to quote Scriptures, but note that He quotes them from the law, from Deuteronomy, from the Psalms and from the prophets. He doesn’t, you know say, well somewhere there in the scroll there from Isaiah, here it is. No, from within his heart, he has a tremendous working knowledge of the Scriptures. It’s important that we develop a great working knowledge of the Scriptures. Notice this tremendous working knowledge, as he begins to quote them. As it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.” That of course is written in Psalm eighteen.

¹⁰*And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!"* That is written in Deuteronomy thirty-two.

¹¹*And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!"* Of course, we know that is in Psalm 117:1.

¹²*And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope."* That is Isaiah eleven, verses one and ten.

¹³*Now may the God of hope* Yes, the Gentiles are brought in. Jesus came to the Jews to fulfill the promises of God, but the blessings of salvation extended over to the Gentiles. But we are to be one! Now Paul takes us a little deeper into Ephesians, where he shows that Jesus Christ has broken down the wall that once existed between

Jew and Gentile, making us all one in Him. For in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, but Christ is all and in all. And it is wrong for us to build up walls that Jesus died to break down.

So 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*. Hope, it is looking forward to that which is desired and wonderful, the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, the hope of the kingdom of God, the hope of eternal life through Him. The Bible speaks about prisoners of hope. The Bible speaks about the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. That is the hope that keeps us going today. The hope that sustains us, the hope of the future that God has promised to us Gentiles, that we should be partakers, also with the Jews in the wonderful kingdom of God. That we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, the Blessed Hope, the God of all Hope, fill you. Hope should bring you joy, first of all. Oh, the future that God has planned for you! What joy it brings to our heart!

Then it brings peace, peace in a world that is filled with turmoil and strife. We look around at the world today and we see that, well as God said, there is no peace or rest for the wicked, saith the Lord. But they are like a troubled sea, tossed to and fro. But the beautiful, wonderful peace that we have through this hope, that we have in Christ Jesus for the future, and thus abounding in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now in this chapter, Paul is referring over and over again to the Lord Jesus Christ, to God the Father, and to the Holy Spirit. In reading this chapter, this should actually, if read with an open mind, should silence the Jehovah Witnesses once and for all, because the three persons of the Godhead are mentioned over and over again, in this one chapter.

It should silence the “Jesus only” people. There are three persons to the one God. It’s even demonstrated in the Old Testament. The name for God, generally used, “In the beginning, God”, Elohim, is the plural form of the word, God, singular in Hebrew. And in the *Shema*, “the Lord our God is One”, the word one there in the Hebrew is a compound unity, not an absolute unity. The Lord our God is One, like when a person is married, he and his wife become one, as a compound one. They are two, but yet they are one through the marriage. So, with the Godhead, the compound unity, “Yachaud, rather than the Yachee”. And thus the, “Let us (plural) make man in our image (plural) and after our likeness (plural pronouns used for the Godhead). Three persons yet one God.

Now you have it all the way through here in chapter fifteen. Just a plain reading of the Scripture would reveal that, but unfortunately in these groups there isn’t a plain reading of the Scripture but there is an interpreting and a twisting of the Scriptures, twisting the minds of these poor people. My heart goes out to them, when I see them vainly trying to work for their salvation by selling the magazine, going from door to door. I admire their zeal for God, but they are like what Paul described the Jew, I testify of them. They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. They have been deceived. They have been told by their leadership that the Bible says these things, or the Scriptures have been interpreted by their leadership to say things they really don’t say. And these people are honestly deceived. Some of them are extremely sincere. My heart breaks for them and goes out to them.

¹⁴*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.* Now Paul had never been to the church in Rome. He had heard about it. He had heard about its ministry. He had heard about many of the people within the church. In the next chapter, he is going to be greeting so many of the people within the church. And in hearing about them, Paul said, I am persuaded of your goodness. That you are filled knowledge, able also to admonish or teach one another.

¹⁵*Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God,* So I know that you have knowledge and you are able to admonish one another, but, I felt it was necessary because God has given to me a wonderful revelation of His grace. And so I wanted to write to you about this aspect of the character of God, this marvelous grace that was given to us by God.

¹⁶*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.* Now notice there. I’m a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles of the gospel of God, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The three persons of the godhead, right there together. A minister of Jesus Christ, the goodness of God, set apart by the Holy Spirit. Now Paul calls this grace. When you read the things that Paul endured, at the hands of the Gentiles, you wonder how much grace was involved in calling him to be the minister to the Gentiles. But he had a yearning, he had a burning desire to

take the gospel to people who had never heard about Jesus Christ. To see the light of God's truth break forth in their hearts and in their lives and seeing their lives transformed. This surely has to be one of the greatest, most thrilling experiences one could ever have, bringing God's truth to men in darkness, seeing the effect of God's truth in their lives.

Our young people who went on in to the Communist Eastern Europe after the Iron Curtain came down, were so driven and so motivated because these young people had never heard of Jesus Christ. They didn't know the gospel. They were just hungry to hear. Going on the streets and just starting to sing with the young people gathering and then fielding their questions and sharing with them about the truth of Jesus Christ and having them receive and seeing their lives transformed. Now those same young people are the pastors of our churches. Our young people are moving on to different churches, leaving these churches in the hands of young people who five years ago didn't know about Jesus Christ, but are now the ministers in the churches that we've established in these communities. And they want to move on. We've established the work. They are able to carry it on. Let's go on to uncharted territory. And that was the drive in the heart of Paul, to always go on to the uncharted territory. He had been given the grace of God that he could carry this glorious truth of God to the Gentiles.

¹⁷*Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God.* Paul was always ready to glory in Christ Jesus, not in himself, not in his accomplishments. You never really, well, Paul was forced a time or two to just sort of glory in some of the things that he suffered for Christ, but that was a forced issue, he was always glorying in what the Lord had done and in what the Lord was doing.

¹⁸*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--* ¹⁹*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.* Now Paul is saying here that the Lord worked with him, the power of the Holy Spirit. When he was writing to the Corinthian church, he said that his speech was not with enticing words of man's wisdom. Because he didn't want their faith to be established in the wisdom of man, his speech was the power and the demonstration of the Spirit of God. He wanted them to be established in the Word and in the Spirit, not seeking to just persuade them by the enticing words of man's wisdom. How different that is from so much that we hear today. Paul wanted to have his life and his ministry be a demonstration of the Spirit of God and the power of the Spirit. So there were mighty signs and wonders wrought through the power of the Holy Spirit. And that ranged all the way from Jerusalem around to Illyricum. He had fully preached, that is the full gospel! As he said to the elders of Ephesus, that for the space of three years, I taught you and I showed you. There in Ephesus the power of God was demonstrated. They would take Paul's sweat bands and lay them on sick people and they were healed, the demonstration and the power of the Spirit of God.

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,* Very commendable on the part of Paul. I don't want to build on another man's foundation. I want to go where He hasn't been heard.

²¹*but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; Go out where they have never heard about Him. The Lord will open their eyes that they might see.*

And those who have not heard shall understand."

²²*For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.* Now Paul expressed his desire to go to Rome. He had the desire in his heart to go and visit the church in Rome. He speaks about this desire back in the first chapter. And his desire was that he might impart to them some Spiritual gift that there might be a mutual benefit by his visiting to them. Some people were saying, Paul is just putting you on. Paul said no, that's not so. I have a real heart's desire to be there and to minister to you. But here he is telling the reason why he hasn't come, because he has been so busy taking the gospel to these uncharted territories. He had started in Jerusalem, had gone north through Syria, then Antioch, Assyria, going up into the areas of Pisidia, Pamphylia, and around to Galatia, around over to Ephesus, across over to Macedonia, on down to Corinth and all. So busy was he that he really didn't have time yet to get to Rome. And so he is explaining that, to them how that he was hindered up until this point from coming to them.

²³*But now no longer having a place in these parts,* (In other words, I've covered the territory. Isn't that wonderful? I don't have any uncharted territory in these parts. I've covered it.)

So that now that I have covered this part *and having a great desire these many years to come to you,*
²⁴*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.* So now he is telling about, (it is sort of a personal thing), you know, I really desire to come to you. I haven't been able to yet. I've been so busy over here taking the gospel to these uncharted territories, but now that I've covered the territories, I want to go to Spain. Yes, get out into the uncharted territories. And on my way I want to stop by Rome and visit with you and fellowship with you and all.

²⁵*But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.* ²⁶*For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.* We remember that in the early church, there was such excitement and such love that people were selling their properties and probably quitting their jobs, just to live together and fellowship and worship the Lord. It was an exciting time. But that can only last so long. So though it was a movement that was prompted by sincere love and perhaps a mistaken notion that the Lord is coming back within five or ten years, so let's sell everything and you know, let's get the gospel out. That ended, of course, in financial disaster. So Paul has been taking up offerings. He wrote to the Corinthian church about on the first day of the week when they gathered together to set aside, and he would come and collect from them their offering for the saints in Jerusalem. And now he is on his way to Jerusalem.

This is also on Paul's part sort of a seeking to mend bridges. The church in Jerusalem never really accepted Paul completely. He was a little too controversial for them. It seemed that Paul was so straight forward, so bold, and so knowledgeable in the Scriptures that these fellows had a difficulty handling him. It tells us about one trip to Jerusalem and when the church sort of sent him away and then the church had peace, it said. So, Paul is again trying to make peace by bringing them help financially from the Gentile churches. The church in Jerusalem was still a little skittish about the Gentile believers. They were willing to accept them, but...., you know. There was this bit of suspicion and all. Are they really up to par? Are they really okay? So Paul is desiring to mend these broken bridges by bringing the love gifts from the Gentile believers to those in Jerusalem who were going through financial difficulties.

So Paul declares that he is on his way to Jerusalem for ²⁷*It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors.* Now, we as Gentiles have a tremendous debt to the Jews. Unto them were committed the oracles of God. And they faithfully kept the oracles of God. Their faithful transcription of the Scriptures. They took it as a sacred trust that God had revealed His truth to them. They were diligent in transcribing that truth from one generation to another generation. They were diligent in the copying of the Scriptures, so that we today have the Scriptures intact as God delivered them to the prophets and to the early patriarchs. We owe them a debt. Paul said, debtors we are!

For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, (which indeed we have been.) their duty is also to minister to them in material (carnal) things. ²⁸*Therefore, when I have performed this (that is when I have taken the money to them in Jerusalem) and have sealed to them this fruit (or trust), I shall go by way of you to Spain.* ²⁹*But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.* That is in the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit, the blessings of the gospel of Christ, as he said back in chapter one, "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established."

³⁰*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,* Notice again, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, for the love of the Spirit, your prayer unto God, the three persons of the godhead. Paul is asking for them to strive with him in prayer for him because Paul is being warned. He is on his way to Jerusalem, but he is being warned everywhere he goes, that the trip to Jerusalem is going to be with some real problems. That he is going to be imprisoned when he gets there, bonds and imprisonment await me. He said, I don't know what this all entails, but I do know that everywhere I go, the Spirit is warning me that bonds and imprisonment are awaiting me there. And so Paul is asking them to strive together with him in their prayers for him. The word strive there is *agoinzo* or agonize. I

don't know if you have ever agonized in prayer. There is a depth of prayer, of intercession, that there is a true agonizing. And Paul is asking them for this agonizing, striving or *agonizo*, agonize in prayer with me together for me. Pray for me. Uncertainty and all await me, so agonize in prayer for me.

³¹*that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe*, That is, deliver me from those Jews that do not believe who do not believe in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, *and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints*, Pray that I'll be delivered. Pray that my ministry will be accepted.

Thirdly, ³²*that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you*. So these three things, he is asking them to agonize in prayer for, deliverance, acceptance of his ministry and his coming to them. It should be noted that all three prayers were fulfilled. Probably not exactly as Paul was praying. He went to Rome, not as a free man, but as a prisoner of Rome. But of course, that gave him free transportation. He was two years in prison in Caesarea before going to Rome. But he took advantage of that time and so after the shipwreck and all, he finally did arrive in Rome. So the prayers were answered.

Now he closes really the letter to the Romans with this sort of benediction, ³³*Now the God of peace* (He is the God of patience, the God of consolation, the God of hope, now the God of peace.) *be with you all. Amen*.

In the sixteenth chapter, Paul will there go into sort of personal greetings to those in Rome. Friends and those that he knew personally. Those that he knew by reputation and he will be greeting the various saints in the church in Rome in chapter sixteen. So we will finish off the Book of Romans next week. Then we will start the exciting Book of Corinthians, Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, in which we deal with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit in the early church. Exciting things ahead for us as we continue our journey through the Bible.

Thank You, Father, for Your Word, which You have given to us whereby we might be strong in the faith. And that we might gain in our knowledge and understanding of Your love and Your purposes for our lives. Lord, we ask that You would give us patience as we wait for You to accomplish Your purposes in and through our lives. May we be sustained by that hope and comfort from the Scriptures. May we be filled with joy, Lord, as we anticipate the hope of Your coming kingdom. And may the peace of Christ, which passes human understanding, keep our minds and our hearts steadfast in Him. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.