

Romans 16 • Greetings and Final Exhortations

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · October 25, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

So we are in the final chapter of Romans. Even though, you know, the final chapters of Paul's letters are typically such that he'll spend a good amount of time just doing some greetings and final shots, there are some things that, I think important things, that we need to see in this chapter. But he begins by saying in verse one, I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Centuria, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. So we need to stop and talk about Phoebe for just a moment because there is some actually some interesting and even important things to learn about what Paul says here. He begins by telling us that she was from Centuria, which was a town, I guess you would almost kind of consider it a suburb of Corinth.

So Paul had obviously met her there and she is apparently, obviously traveling to Rome because he says, I want you to welcome this gal when she shows up and to receive her as a sister in the Lord and to help her with whatever might be needed. It is very possible that Phoebe was actually delivering Paul's letter to the Roman church. Can you imagine being the woman who's carrying that letter that you and I are gonna come to know as the book of Romans and she's got it in some kind of parchment form, I expect, and so Paul gives it to her and says, there you go, honey, you take that to Rome and make sure they get it, okay? Boy, am I glad. Am I glad that she was a faithful woman in that particular instance.

But there are two important words that Paul uses to describe Phoebe that I think you're going to need to learn. And the first one there in verse one is he says that Phoebe was a servant of the church in Centuria. Well, the Greek word for servant is diakonos. It is where we get the word deacon or in the case of a woman, deaconess. And again, the word just means servant, okay?

There are many people, including some commentators that I read who believe that a deacon or the role of deacon is an office in the church. And in fact, I don't know how many of you have a Baptist background, but those of you who may come from a Baptist background, you know that the leaders of the church are the deacons. They call it the deacon board or whatever it may be. No offense, I believe that

both of those conclusions that it is an office and it is a role of leadership, I think those are in error. The word deacon means servant.

It is a servant, someone who serves. And we have no evidence that the early church referred to or considered deacons anymore than servants. There's nothing in the Bible or even our understanding historically that they were considered anything else. In fact, you'll remember that when Paul was on his way to Jerusalem for the last time or what we believe was the last time in the book of Acts, he wanted to talk to the leaders of the church in Ephesus, but he didn't wanna go to Ephesus because he knew that if he went there, they'd make him stay. And he didn't wanna stay.

And he wanted to make it to Jerusalem before a particular feast. And so what he did is he went to a place called Miletus, which was nearby, and he called for the leaders of the church. Guess who he called? The elders, not the deacons, okay? I'm not telling you to write to your local Baptist church and tell them they're in error.

Just leave it alone. But the Bible says that the leaders of the church are elders. And by the way, you should know that the term elder, pastor, and overseer are all used interchangeably in the New Testament, okay? There's literally no difference. So there you go.

That's kind of an important thing to keep in mind. The next word that Paul uses about Phoebe, though, and this is very interesting. At the end of verse two, he says she's been a patron, a patron of many. And the Greek word here typically refers to a person of some means, meaning wealth, who is active in supporting individuals and causes. And so Phoebe was apparently a woman of some financial means, and she helped out.

Paul even said, she has been a patron to many, and even to me. So she helped Paul in his ministry as well. And I like that. Here's a woman who had been given resources, from the Lord, and she did not consider those resources her own. She felt that God has given me these resources, and I'm gonna give back to the kingdom of God.

I'm going to invest in the kingdom of God. And I think that's very, very cool. Next, Paul goes on to greet several people in this letter. In fact, interestingly enough, he greets more people in the book of Romans than he does any other book of the Bible, and he had never even been to Rome. He's writing to people that, in many cases, he had not met.

But obviously, there were many people that had traveled to Rome that were people that Paul knew, and so he asks for them to be greeted. He says in verse three, greet Prisca and Aquila. And by the way, Prisca

is the formal Greek version of the diminutive informal name Priscilla, which I prefer, frankly. But he says, they are my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. In fact, he says, they risk their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

So Priscilla and Aquila were well-known. The book of Acts records for us the first time that Paul met Priscilla and Aquila. Let me show you on the screen from Acts chapter 18. It says, after this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth, and he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked for they were tent makers by trade.

Now, one interesting note about this particular power couple is that, well, there's a couple of things. One is that it was very uncommon for a woman's name to be noted first before her husband. And yet Priscilla's name most often comes first, which could tell you that she was the more dominant personality. That happens in marriages sometime, right guys? And she may have been the one who was even more of a spokesman, perhaps even then her husband.

But here's the other thing. They're always mentioned together. They're never mentioned separately. Always together. So this is one of those husband-wife teams, you know, that was just inseparable, right?

Here's another interesting thing. Priscilla and Aquila were very instrumental in encouraging and instructing a man by the name of Apollos. Let me show you this on the screen also from Acts 18. It is verses 24 through 26. It says, now, a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus.

He was an eloquent man, competent in the scriptures. He'd been instructed in the way of the Lord and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. And what that means is he had never been instructed much about the Holy Spirit at all. He didn't really know that much about the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling, and he didn't know anything about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Because we find this out later in the book of Acts when Paul came to Ephesus, he says he found some believers.

And these are people who had come to Christ through Apollos' ministry, but Paul recognized that they had something missing in their understanding. And so he says, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said, we haven't even heard there is a Holy Spirit. So you see, Apollos was lacking in that information. And so, you know, Paul instructed and even laid hands.

But anyway, it goes on here, and it says, he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. In other words, they began to instruct him in the role and ministry of the Holy Spirit, because that was one area where he was lacking. And, okay, I'm gonna give you my opinion. So don't anybody take it as gospel fact, okay? I think Apollos wrote the book of Hebrews.

That's my guess, but it's only a guess. A lot of people think Paul wrote it, I don't think so. But the fact that Hebrews, you know, when I was teaching through Hebrews, it so beautifully brings the Old Testament into a New Testament understanding. of the fulfillment of Christ and all of the things related to the temple and sacrifices and such, and we're told that Apollos had this deep understanding of the Scriptures, and of course, the Scriptures at that time were the Hebrew Scriptures. There weren't any New Testament Scriptures yet in existence, so what he understood and had a handle on was the Old Testament, and that's one of the reasons that I believe that, but don't, you know, it's just my opinion, and so that and 50 cents will get you a cup of coffee where it's really cheap.

All right, verse 5, greet also the church in their house, and we know that's where the churches met in those days, greet my beloved Epenitus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia, and so that means that Epenitus was the very first convert in all of Achaia, which, by the way, I occasionally mispronounce as Achaia, but it is Achaia, and that is Corinth, the area of Corinth, and so this was the first man. Can you imagine having your name in the Bible? You go down in history as the first one in your entire region to accept Jesus, right? He goes on to say greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. Mary was a very common name.

We don't know anything about this particular woman. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. Greet Ampelatus, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.

Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. Greet my kinsmen Herodian. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. Greet those workers in the Lord, Traphena and Traphosa.

My guess is they're twin sisters. I don't know. That's just a guess. Wouldn't that sound about right, though? Anyway, greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord. Also his mother, who has been a mother to me. Greet Asencritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobus, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus,

and his sister, and Olympus, and all the saints who are with them. And then Paul says, greet one another with a holy kiss.

And of course, that was a very common form of greeting back in the—well, it's still used today in many cultures. Today, here in America, we have the popular air kiss, where you don't have to touch anybody. But they actually kissed you, you know, right on the cheek. And that's the way it went. So he says, all the churches of Christ greet you.

And then in the last verses, Paul gives some final instructions, but this is where we're going to probably be focusing here in our study. He says, I appeal to you brothers, first of all, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught. Here's the word concerning those people. Avoid them. Okay?

For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. And by smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the hearts of the naive. All right, I want to stop there for just a moment, because this is an important passage in the Bible for us to take note of, because there are four things that Paul says that these people are coming into the church to do. First of all, they're causing divisions, he says. He says, I want you to watch out for people who come in and cause divisions.

And the Greek word for divisions means to stand apart. And so there are people who do that. They come into the church, and they stand apart in the sense that they disagree with the direction of the church. But rather than just leaving, you know, and going somewhere where they're maybe in agreement, they decide to cause division. And, you know, it's really funny.

I was introduced to this sort of a spirit very early on in my ministry in Ontario, and we were very small. I think it was even the first year. And we were a very small church at that time. But there was a guy who showed up for a couple of Sundays. Big, tall guy, I remember.

I was even kind of afraid of him a little bit. He was a little intimidating. But he would, after the service, he would kind of start making his way around to some of the people and saying things like, so what do you think about what Pastor Paul taught today? And in such a ways to kind of, you know, begin to kind of create questions. And then he would invite them to his home to hear the real truth.

And I didn't have any, you know, we were so early as a church at that point, I didn't have any in-house leaders yet, because it takes time to raise up elders and people that you can trust. And I just, you know, there wasn't anybody, you know. I had some long-distance leaders. Do you know that one of my long-distance leaders was Chuck Lind, Pastor Chuck Lind. I've known him since the 90s.

And I invited him to be one of my elders at large, and he was for me. But, you know, he was in Olympia. And I used to put his address and phone number in our bulletin just so people could contact him if they ever had a question. But anyway, it was just me there. But I had a couple of guys come up to me after the service, and they said, have you seen what this guy's doing?

Well, I wasn't aware of it. Of course, I'm going to be the last one to hear about something like that. But I was really proud of the men in our fellowship, because when they caught on to what he was doing, they stuck to him after the service like glue and wouldn't allow him to talk to anybody. And they made sure they stuck with him until he got in his car and left. And this was men—these were men who had no leadership position in the church, but simply felt the need to protect the body from someone who stands apart, someone who is actively wanting to cause division.

And these are the kinds of things that Paul says, I want you to watch out for this kind of stuff. And I am so glad in the early stages of our church, 36 years ago, you know, that there were a couple of guys in our fellowship that were smart enough that remembered Paul's exhortation to watch out for these kind of people. You'll notice that Paul also says they create obstacles. And this is a very interesting Greek word, this word translated obstacles, because it refers to somebody who baits someone to lure them into a trap. It literally means somebody who puts a stumbling block in someone's way, right?

So he says, I want you to watch out for people who are trying to lure you in and bait you by doing what they're doing, whatever kind of divisive kind of things that they're saying or actions that they are portraying. I want you to be very careful about these kind of people. And then Paul tells us here, and this is the third thing about these people, this is a characteristic, he says they're serving their own desires. And what this means is they're not serving the Lord. They didn't show up to serve the Lord, they showed up to serve their own agenda.

And their agenda is to draw people after themselves, right? They want to draw you away from the fellowship where you are so that they can get you into their little group of people and convince you that everything you're hearing is wrong, and I've got the truth, and I'm just about the only person in this whole area who knows the real truth. And so if you stick with me, you know, and you'll notice that Paul says that these sorts of things can grab hold of people who are naive in their heart. There is a naivete that causes some people to have a propensity to follow after somebody who makes very fine-sounding arguments, and they're drawn away, but they're lured into a trap. And then the fourth thing that Paul says is a characteristic of these people is they use deceptive words.

They use words that are intended or meant to deceive, and the idea behind this is to seduce. That's what that word deceive in the Greek means. It means to seduce, and this is the attempt of these people to draw you into a belief, into something that is not right, that is contrary, you know, to the Scripture. Paul says, keep your distance, and you know, it's very disappointing when you find these sorts of things, and they happen today. It's still happening today, you know.

People invite you over after church, and we would love to have you guys over for dinner, only to find out when you get there that on the menu is roast pastor. All they want to do is tell you how rotten it is, you know, at the church that you're attending, and we're all gonna head somewhere else. You probably should come with us. Paul says, watch out for those kind of people. They're just throwing divisions.

They're putting stumbling blocks in your path. Just follow the Lord. Trust that the Lord's gonna lead you, and guide you, and direct you, you know. Keep your distance from those kind of people. people.

And you know this was such a big deal in the early church that we find several references to these warnings in what we call the pastoral epistles and that includes first and second Timothy and Titus. We call them the pastoral epistles because Paul wrote to these young men who were under him who were in a functional role of leadership pastoring and shepherding the church. And there were all kinds of things that these guys were encouraged to avoid. I want to show you some of these on the screen. First of all from the book of Titus chapter 3 it says, Paul writes to Titus and says, avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law.

He says all that stuff is completely unprofitable. In fact he says it's worthless. And as for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice have nothing to do with him knowing that such a person is warped and sinful. In fact he's even self-condemned Paul says. So people who come into the church with the intent of bringing division to draw people away after themselves.

Now second Timothy chapter 2 Paul says, do your best to present yourself to God as one approved a worker who has no need to be ashamed rightly handling the word of truth. But he says, but avoid irreverent babble for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness and their talk will spread like gangrene. He says there's a couple of guys that even got involved in this like Hymenaeus and Philetus. They just got lost in this irreverent babble that's talking about all these things that just don't matter. Have you ever talked to somebody who wants to discuss things of the Bible and you get halfway into it you're like this doesn't matter.

It might be interesting but you're kind of dancing on the head of a pin and these things in the long run simply don't matter. Does this affect your salvation? No. Is this even important? But a lot of people get high centered on things like that.

Then second Timothy chapter 2 Paul says have nothing to do with foolish or ignorant controversies. He says you know that all they're going to do is breed quarrels. They're just going to get people arguing and quarreling about things because they're foolish, they're ignorant, and it's just controversial subjects. Do we have controversial subjects today? Yes we do.

Lots of them. But is it worthwhile sitting and debating and talking endlessly about these things when we have the opportunity to talk about Jesus, following him, living for him, loving him, serving him? We get so distracted sometimes. And then finally 1 Timothy chapter 6 20 and 21 says, Oh Timothy guard the deposit entrusted to you, avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.

But yeah but here's a warning, here's a warning. There were things that were just in their infancy in the first century that began to make their way into the church. There was a belief that salvation was based on knowledge, the more you know. And these people that embraced this were eventually called Gnostics and it was taken from the word gnosis which means knowledge. And the idea was your salvation is predicated upon what you know and it wasn't a matter of faith any longer.

And so Paul talks here about what is falsely called knowledge and so we see that this was probably already getting a foothold in the early church and Paul tells Timothy to avoid all of these kinds of contradictions and irreverent speaking. Paul writes in verse 19, if you look at me in your Bible, for your obedience, and he's talking out of the whole church in Rome, for your obedience is known to all so that I rejoice over you. But I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. And this is a great exhortation for us today too because again people who cause divisions, people who bring false doctrines are still here, they're still doing their thing and so forth trying to draw people away. And Paul says, I want you to be so innocent so as not to deceive others and I want you to be wise enough that you won't be deceived.

So I want you to be innocent and I want you to be wise. It's really a very beautiful sentiment and he kind of prayed a very similar prayer for the believers in Philippi. Let me show you this on the screen from Philippians. He says, and it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge, and look at this, and all discernment so that you may approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless

for the day of Christ. Notice that Paul says, I want you to abound in your knowledge and understanding of what the Word says.

But I want you also to grow in discernment. And this is something that is greatly lacking, I have to be honest with you, in our culture today. One of the reasons is because the vast majority of Christians are biblically illiterate. And that's just the fact of the matter. I'm talking the vast majority of believers.

What we do here in the Calvary Chapel is teaching through the Bible chapter by chapter and verse by verse. This is incredibly rare. And you guys need to know that. The vast majority of churches preach topically. And what a Sunday to Sunday looks like is maybe this week we're in we take a couple of verses in Deuteronomy.

Next week, we're going to take a couple of verses in First Timothy. The week after that, we're going to take a couple of verses out of Revelation chapter one, then we're going to go to Genesis chapter five the next week. And if I get tired of doing that, a lot of times pastors will read a book. And I'm not talking about a book of the Bible, but they'll some author, you know, they'll catch it. And they'll, they do a series on that book, whether it's on serving the Lord, or and there's nothing wrong with the essence of what they're doing.

But they're not teaching the Bible. They're not going through the Word. They're not encouraging people to go through the Word. I have heard from so many people who will write and say, I was a Christian for 50 years before I realized I didn't know what the Bible said. And so I decided to start I was going to read through the Bible and study through the Bible.

And it's amazing how the Lord begins to open up insight and understanding when people just present themselves to the Word of God, you know. But like I said, guys, the vast majority of churches here in the United States of America, and around the world, do not teach the Bible at all. In many churches, I went to a church, Sue and I went to a church with my brother in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. It was a church he'd popped into a few times. We walked into that church with our Bibles.

Never once did the Bible get opened throughout the entire service. No one opened their Bible, including the pastor. He quoted a couple of fleeting passages without even opening a Bible and did nothing in the way of teaching. Zero. No instruction.

And it's sad. But listen, where does discernment come from? It comes from knowing the Word of God and having that Word activated through the Holy Spirit. As we consume the Word of God, as we understand what the Word says, and the Spirit takes and enlivens our hearts to lay hold of that Word, we

grow in our ability to discern truth from error. And you know, even people who are, their job is to spot counterfeit money.

They don't train them in how to look at how to find counterfeit. What they do is they train them in the real thing. They learn the real thing. And they learn it so well that when they see a counterfeit, they can tell. And that, I tell you, that will preach.

I mean, that's what we need to be doing with the Word of God. We need to know the Word so well that when we hear a counterfeit or somebody who is doing a little bit of twisting and turning with the truth that we can spot it right away. That's discernment. That's not right. There's something weird there, you know.

And obviously the Holy Spirit is going to help you there as well. And then finally, 1 Thessalonians, I want to show you this. Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica. He tells them, test everything. Hold fast to what is good.

Now when he says test everything, he's not telling them to be skeptical in a negative sort of a way. He's telling them to be smart and discerning. When you hear something, and this is another thing I get all the time. People will write and say, I heard someone say, and then they'll quote whatever this person said, and assuming it's like from the Bible, and they'll say to me, is that in the Bible? And I write them back and I say, did you ask the person to show you the passage?

No, why not? Do you know one of the most important things you can do when you hear something is say, hey, would you tell me where I can find that in the Bible so I can study it for myself? I wanna look at that verse, you quoted it, but I wanna know where it is. And if they can't do it, then red alert. You know, there might be something wrong here.

But you need to get in the habit of saying, where did you find that? Where is that in the Bible? I wanna know where that is. I wanna study that further. Test everything.

See if it measures up to the truth of God's word. And if it doesn't, you're under no obligation to accept it. Things need to jive with the word of God, you know? Test everything. Hold fast to what is good.

And then Paul makes this statement, verse 20. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Well, here's the question. Is Paul referring here when he says that God will soon crush Satan under your feet, is he referring to an immediate work of the Lord which the believers there in Rome were going to see?

And is he talking about these false teachers and people who divide and how God is gonna do a cleansing? I don't know, you know? Or is Paul talking about the ultimate work of Jesus to crush the head of Satan when he will be finally judged and vanquished forever? He doesn't say. We don't know for certain.

Paul is simply making a statement. One thing we do know is that there will be an ultimate vanquishing of the enemy. We know that. And that gives us great hope. And then some final greetings.

He says, Timothy, my fellow worker, verse 21, greets you. So do Lucius and Jason and Susipater, my kinsmen. I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. Now, that's an interesting comment, isn't it? First of all, his name simply means third, Tertius.

It's possible, we don't know. It's possible he was a slave and had been perhaps liberated. And maybe as a slave, they never even bothered to give him a name other than just three. It's possible. But it says, he says, I, Tertius, who wrote this letter.

Now, that doesn't mean he composed this letter. It means he wrote it down when Paul dictated it to him. The reason that Paul dictated letters was because he had a hard time writing. And he needed someone with a steady hand and good eyes. And we know that Paul didn't have good eyes.

In fact, at the end of his letters, he would write the very end in his own hand as a distinguishing mark of the authenticity of the letter. And in one of his letters, he even says, see what large letters I use as I write with my own hand. And I believe that was because of the disease he had with his eyes. You'll remember he told the Galatians, he told them in his letter, he says, you remember the reason I even came to you was because of a disease. He says, I was sick.

And then he goes on to say this. And I can testify that if you could have, you would have gouged out your own eyes and given them to me if you could have done that. So that gives us a very strong hint that Paul suffered from some kind of a disease of the eyes where his eyesight was failing. And so when he wrote these letters, he would dictate them to various people. And in the case of Romans, it was Tertius.

And he says, I'm greeting you personally. It goes on in verse 23 to say, Gaius who is host to me and to the whole church greets you. So Gaius was a man with whom Paul was staying there in Corinth, by the way, Paul was in Corinth. We mentioned that earlier when he wrote this letter and the church also met in the home of Gaius. And then he says, Erastus, middle of verse 23, the city treasurer and our brother Quartus greet you.

And then the final three verses of this chapter are what is called the doxology of Paul's Romans letter. And it's very tough to break the statements that he makes here in this doxology into individual phrases because if you read it through, it's one long run on sentence. And that was common for Paul, he did that a lot. So we're gonna read the whole section and then we'll come back and kind of look at it. He says, now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ, amen.

All right, I wanna look at this doxology because he makes some important statements here. He begins by saying to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel. So let me ask you, here's the first question. Who is able to strengthen believers? Well, it's the Lord and that's obvious.

So the Lord is the one who strengthens us, who strengthens us to stand, right? Jude, you'll remember in his doxology really kind of says the same thing. Let me put it on the screen for you from Jude verse 24. You'll remember there's only one chapter. It says, now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

So Jude says he's able to keep you from stumbling. How is he able to keep you from stumbling? Well, Paul talks about this. I don't have the scripture to put up, but you might remember in Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, he said that no temptation has seized you except what is common to man and God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear, but he will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it, right?

And so he's the one who keeps you from stumbling by providing a way out. I've had so many people ask me in the past, so Pastor Paul, I want to know what that way out is. You know, it's like, I don't know. You'll know it when you get it, I suppose. It might be different for different people, but the way out, you know, he's gonna always, he's faithful.

The Bible says he's faithful and he will provide a way out, you know, even though temptations come into our lives. So he is the one who's able to keep us from stumbling and ultimately, as Jude says, to present you blameless before his presence. Now, blameless doesn't mean perfect. You need to understand blameless is not the same thing as perfect. It just means not liable to blame, okay?

But he says he is able to present you before his presence, the presence of his glory with great joy. So the Lord strengthens and keeps us. Wonderful. But there's a little bit more to this because I run into people

all the time who've been influenced by Calvinism. And one of the elements of Calvinistic teaching is what they call the perseverance of the saints.

It's the P of the acrostic tulip, which the Calvinists, you know, hold to. The perseverance of the saints. And the idea behind the perseverance of the saints is that as a believer, you're going to be preserved. Any true believer is going to be preserved. In other words, what Calvinist teaching essentially tells you is a true believer is never going to ultimately fall away from the Lord, okay?

Well, there's problems with that. First of all, it's not biblical. The Bible gives many warnings to believers about falling away, okay? It happens. People do fall away.

We're going to learn about some of those as we go through 2 Corinthians. But, so first of all, but here's the deal. I do believe what Paul is saying and what Jude is saying here that he is able to strengthen you according to the gospel message that we've been given. He's able to strengthen you. And it is God who does the strengthening.

Here's what people forget. You are strengthened by faith. God strengthens you by faith. Listen, everything is by faith. Salvation is by faith.

Walking away from sin is by faith. Perseverance is by faith. Let me show you what Peter wrote in his first letter on the screen, 1 Peter 1, three through five. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." Look at this phrase coming up, who by God's power are being guarded through what? Through faith, for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. How are you guarded? By faith. Perseverance doesn't simply happen simply because you're a believer.

Perseverance is a work of faith through the power of God, and knowing that God is going to take care of you, trusting him, having your confidence in him. We don't put any confidence in ourselves, you guys. Here's the deal, I have zero confidence in myself that I'm going to persevere, but at the same time I've never lost a moment of sleep thinking that somehow I'm going to fall away. So what's the dynamic there? The dynamic is faith.

I trust God. I trust him. I trust him. By faith I know that he will give me the strength. He promised.

We see it here. So please understand that it's not a magical formula. Faith is required for the believer in every aspect of life and walking with the Lord. Everything. That's why the Bible says, the righteous shall live by faith, all right?

I know I stopped in the middle of a verse, so I'm gonna pick it up again in verse 27. To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ, amen, and yeah I guess I did finish that, didn't I? Yeah. I want to remind you here that Paul talks about the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret. In the Bible the word mystery doesn't mean what it means to you and me because in our culture a mystery is something that nobody knows the answer to, but the biblical definition of a mystery is something that was previously unrevealed but has now been revealed to the Saints.

And that's why Paul talks about the fact that the preaching of Jesus Christ was according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages. But he says, but now has been disclosed and through the prophetic writings which hinted at this mystery it's now been made known. What is the mystery? The mystery is the Jews and the Gentiles coming together, being one as one church. That's the mystery.

To the Jews that was an unthinkable idea. They thought the Gentiles were created by God to just simply keep the fires of hell burning. They literally didn't think a Gentile could be saved. The Jews considered themselves the only possible people eligible for salvation, and yet the mystery that God had withheld but then revealed through Jesus and the writings of the Apostles and so forth is the coming together of Jew and Gentile to make one man in the body of Christ. And notice the goal of what he said there at the end.

He said it was to bring about the obedience of faith. You know, we talked about this back in Romans chapter 1. I don't know how many of you remember our study back in April. We started in April with the book of Romans, and we talked about this. Check this out on the screen from Romans chapter 1.

Jesus Christ our Lord through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among the nations. Paul mentions this here in Romans chapter 1. He develops it in Romans chapter 6, and then he mentions it here at the very end of the book of Romans in chapter 16. He talks about the obedience of faith. Remember I told you how everything for a believer is about faith?

Everything? So is obedience. People say, I'm having such a hard time obeying God. What am I missing? Faith.

You're missing faith. Paul says the gospel teaches an obedience by faith, and this is something that people are really unprepared to hear. They were unprepared to hear it in Paul's day, too, because the Jews were accustomed to obedience through keeping the law. That's the way they defined obedience. If you obeyed God, you were a law keeper, right?

And you know, that sort of thing. Hey, I got to tell you something. That's still a very popular idea today. I don't think that obedience defined by keeping the law has gone away. It's still very much a part of many people's lives.

But here's my assessment. I believe the concept of obedience through faith is one of the least understood principles in all the Bible. When I talk about obedience through faith, people usually kind of cock their head, and they don't really understand what we're talking about. And we developed this when we got to Romans chapter 6, but it's worthy of just a moment of revisiting this idea. Because you see, when you talk to people about obeying Jesus, most of the time they interpret that as obedience through personal effort.

And when they sin, they'll often come to someone like me, a pastor, or Pastor Troy, and they'll say things like, I just need to try harder. And that betrays their understanding of how obedience is gained. They think it's all about trying harder. And you know, that's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible doesn't ever say, if you're struggling in your obedience, you just need to try harder.

You know, buck up. People also know about obedience through guilt. They understand what that's all about. When they sin, and we all do, people naturally feel guilty. That's a response of our own emotions.

And that can actually be a motivating element for a while. It'll wear off, trust me. But people have used guilt. In fact, some pastors have even used it from the pulpit to try to guilt people into obeying God, you know. And of course, obedience through fear, we know what that's all about.

Trying to, you know, strike some level or tone of fear in someone's heart so that they will obey God. And again, that's only going to last for so long. But the number of believers today who know and understand what it means to walk in obedience through faith, I believe, is extremely small. And Paul develops this, as I said, in Romans chapter 6. And he tells us there that you died to sin, so how can you live in it any longer?

And he tells you and me this, I want you to reckon yourselves dead to sin. I want you to believe that sin no longer has mastery over your life. You know what that's called? That's called faith. You can use the word reckon if you want.

It comes down to believing. I want you to believe that what Jesus did on the cross was not just to forgive you from your sins, but also to release you from the tyranny of the sinful nature. Because that is what he did. And we're probably not going to get that perfect, this side of glory. In fact, I shouldn't even say probably.

We're not going to get it perfect, this side of glory. But he did it nonetheless. And he wants you to believe it. And so you see, this is why Paul mentions it in Romans 1, he develops it in Romans 6, and he mentions it again in Romans 16 about the obedience of faith, trusting and believing that you have been released through the death of Jesus Christ by sharing in that death from the power and tyranny of sin to dominate your life. And when people come to me or to other pastors and they say things like, I just can't get rid of this sin, that you can tell their faith has been decimated.

They literally have embraced a lie as a believer. And they need to begin to grow in their faith and trust that what Jesus did on the cross was powerful to actually take away the dominance of sin in our lives. So that's where we end. That's Romans, the book of Romans. And I hope that it's been a blessing for you.

And as I said, I changed my mind. We're going to start 2 Corinthians in a few weeks. I'm not going to be here next Wednesday because I'm going to be up at a regional Calvary Chapel pastor's retreat. In fact, Pastor Troy's going to be up there for a couple of days. I think he's going to scoot back and cover next Wednesday, and then I think Sue and I are going to do a live question and answer time on the following Wednesday, and then we'll probably start 2 Corinthians the following week.

So that should be kind of fun. So anyway, let's close in prayer. Father, how do we begin to thank you for the book of Romans? We thank you, Lord, for the Apostle Paul. We thank you for the wisdom that you gave him.

We thank you that he was able to write down the things that he did. We thank you, Father, for Tertius, who wrote all these things on parchment. We thank you, Lord, for Phoebe, who probably delivered this letter to the church in Rome. And we thank you, Lord, most of all, that you preserved this letter for us these many years. Lord, when we begin to learn about documents of antiquity, and how many of those documents in the last 2,000 years have been lost to history, we are amazed at how you have supernaturally preserved the Word of God these many years, so that we might grow and gain a heart of understanding from it.

And so we thank you for that, Lord. We bless you for being the Lord who nurtures us and nourishes us through the Word of God. Continue, we pray, Lord, to strengthen us, fill us, guide us and direct us. We

look to you in all these things. Through the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and King, and all God's people said together, Amen.