

PLAIN SENSE PARAPHRASE

ROMANS

1-3-09 / 3-9-14 / 4-20-17

CHAPTER ONE

This letter is from Paul, a voluntary servant - for life - of Christ Jesus. I was chosen by God to be an apostle, and commissioned by Him to tell others His Good News.

2 God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets, in the holy Scriptures. 3 The Good News is about his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. He was born into King David's family line, so he was a 'son' of David, 4 but he was also the Son of God, which was manifested when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.

5 Jesus has given us apostles the ability and the authority in his name to invite people everywhere to receive this Good News.

6 And you are among those who have received this Good News, having been called by God to belong to Jesus Christ.

7 This letter is to all Christians in Rome; you are loved by God - His own holy people by His specific calling.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

8 First, let me say that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world. 9 God knows that day

and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God - whom I serve with all my heart in spreading the Good News about his Son.

10 One of my prayer requests is for the opportunity, God willing, to visit you before long. 11 For I long to see you so I can impart to you some spiritual gift that will help strengthen you in the Lord; 12 in fact, I look forward to the encouragement we will be to each other in our mutual faith.

13 I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I have been prevented from doing so, so far. I want to minister among you and see spiritual fruit develop, just as I have seen among other Gentiles. 14 For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world, to the educated and uneducated alike. 15 So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to proclaim the Good News.

16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ, for it is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes it — first proclaimed to the Jews but, now, also, to the Gentiles. 17 This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight: — *by faith*, from start to finish. As the Scriptures say, “Those who are righteous become so and live so, only *by faith*.”

18 But God in heaven reveals his anger against all sinful, wicked people who, in their wickedness, refuse to let the truth surface in their lives or in their world. 19 They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. 20 For ever since the world was created, God’s invisible qualities —such as his infinite power and His

divine character - have been plainly visible in every part of Creation, so they have no excuse for not believing in Him.

21 Long ago, people believed in God, but they refused to worship him as their God or be grateful to Him for all He had given them. And, instead of being content to believe in Him as He was - an invisible spirit, they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, they lost the spiritual light they originally had, and their minds became dark and confused. 22 Thinking themselves to be so wise, they instead became utter fools, 23 and they exchanged God's glorious perfection for idols that they made, themselves — fashioned to look like mere mortal man, and, from there, even to loathsome things like birds, animals, and reptiles.

24 So, God let them do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and dishonorable things with each other's bodies — 25 a natural consequence of changing the truth about God into a lie. They abandoned God to worship and serve contemptible animals God had created, instead of the Creator himself — who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

26 So, God abandoned them to their shameful desires. The women even turned against normal sexual relations with men and, instead, engaged in sex with each other! 27 And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other — men doing shameful things with other men! As a result, men and women suffer the physical and mental consequences this kind of perverted behavior deserves.

28 Since they had no desire to keep their minds elevated to the true knowledge of God, he abandoned them to degenerate thinking and let them decline to doing things that should never be done. 29 Their lives became full of every kind of unrighteousness: immorality, wickedness, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior. They are gossipers, 30 backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to their parents, 31 and unreasonable; they break their promises, they lack natural affection for their children, are unappeasable, and merciless.

32 They know that God's justice requires that those who behave like this deserve to die, yet they do these things, anyway. Worse yet, this is the kind of society they prefer.

ROMANS 2

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, — and you have no excuse! When you say those who do such things are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for though you judge others for this behavior, you act the very same way, 2 and we know that God, being just, will punish *anyone* who does such things. 3 Since you judge others for doing these things, what makes you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things?

4 Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness in holding off the punishment for your wrong behavior is intended to turn you from your sin? 5 The terrible punishment for your stubbornness and refusal to turn from your sin is building

up. For The Day of Wrath is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 He will render to everyone according to what they have done. 7 He will give eternal life to those who show they are in pursuit of the glory and honor and immortality He promised. 8 But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who argue against, and refuse to submit to, the truth, and instead live lives of wickedness. 9 There will be trouble and anguish for everyone who keeps on rejecting the Gospel and living a sinful life —for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. 10 But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who believe in Christ and live a godly life — for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. 11 For God treats everyone the same.

12 When the Gentiles - who were not given the Old Testament law - die unsaved, they will be judged apart from the law. And when the Jews - who do have God's law - die unsaved, they will be judged by that law

13 (For merely *hearing* the law doesn't make us right with God - as many people think. It is *obeying* the law that makes us right in his sight. 14 Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. 15 They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.)

16 . . . in the day when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's relationship to Christ - according to the Gospel I proclaim.

17 You who call yourselves Jews are trusting in God's law; you boast about your special relationship with him;

18 you know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law; 19 you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness; 20 you think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God, for you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

21 Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal?

22 You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you have idols? 23 You are so proud of knowing the law, but do you dishonor God by breaking it?

24 No wonder the Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you."

25 The Jewish ceremony of circumcision - which identifies you as being God's own people - has value only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. 26 And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God declare *them* to be his own people? 27 In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God's law but don't obey it.

28 For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. 29 No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Holy Spirit. And a person with a changed heart lives to please God, not Jewish laws.

ROMANS 3

“Then what’s the advantage of being a Jew?”, you ask.
“What good is it to be a Jew?” 2 There are great benefits!

First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God. 3 True, some of them didn’t believe it; but just because they didn’t believe it, does that mean God’s Word is unreliable? 4 By no means! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say about him,

“You will be proved right in what you say,
and you will win your case in court.”

5 Some of you who have heard the Good News of the grace of God might be thinking, “But, our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it highlights God’s grace. Isn’t it unfair, then, for God to punish us?” (I’m just trying to think like some of you do.) 6 Banish the thought! If God were not absolutely fair, how would he be qualified to judge the world?

7 “But,” someone might still argue, “how can God condemn me as a sinner if my sinfulness highlights his righteousness and brings him more glory?” 8 (Some people slander us by claiming that we say, “The more we sin, the more we show God’s grace!”) Those who believe such things are, justly, condemned.

9 Well then, should we, instead, conclude that we Jews are *better* than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are guilty of sin and under its condemnation. 10 As the Scriptures underscore repeatedly:

“No one is righteous — not even one.

11 No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God.

12 All have turned away; all have become useless.

No one does good, not a single one.”

13 “Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave.

Their tongues are filled with lies.”

“Snake venom drips from their lips.”

14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

15 “They rush to commit murder.

16 Destruction and misery always follow them.

17 They don’t know where to find peace.”

18 “They have no fear of God at all.”

19 Now, the fact is that the Law was given so nobody could claim to deserve Heaven by their ability to keep the Law, and to cause everyone in the world to see that they are guilty before God. 20 For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the Law commands - because nobody is able to perfectly obey the Law. The law simply shows us how holy God is and how sinful we are.

21 ***But now*** God has shown us a way to be made right with him in a way that has nothing to do with obeying the Law, and this new way was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets, long ago. 22 **We are made right with God by believing in Jesus Christ.**

And this applies to *everyone* who **believes**, no matter who they are.

23 For *everyone* has sinned; we *all* fall short of God's glorious standard of perfection as revealed in the Law. 24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight - declares us innocent. He did this through Christ Jesus when Christ freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for our sin. Therefore, people are made right with God when they **believe that Jesus shed his blood and sacrificed his life for our sins.**

This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26 for he was looking ahead and including them in what he was planning to do at a later time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they **believe in Jesus.**

27 Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on our obeying the Law. It is based on **believing** in what Jesus did for us on the cross. 28 So **we are made right with God through faith**, and not by obeying the Law.

29 After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is. 30 There is only one God, and God **makes all people right with himself only by faith** - no matter whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

31 Well then, does this emphasis on **faith** mean that the Law is a bad thing? No at all! In fact, it was the law that brought us to **faith**.

ROMANS 4

Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? 2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. 3 For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham **believed** God, and **God counted him as righteous because of his faith.**"

4 When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. 5 But **people are counted as righteous — saved, not because of their work, but because of their faith** in God who forgives sinners. 6 David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are **declared righteous, or saved, without working for it:**

7 "Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sins are put out of sight!

8 Yes, what joy for those
whose record the Lord has cleared of sin!"

9 Now, is salvation only for the Jews, or is it also for uncircumcised Gentiles? Well, we have been saying that Abraham was counted as righteous by God **because of his faith**. 10 But when did this happen? Was he counted as righteous after, or before he was circumcised as a

Jew? Clearly, God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised!

11 Circumcision was a sign that Abraham **already had faith** and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised.

So Abraham is the spiritual father of the Gentiles who believe in Jesus as their Savior. **They are saved because of their faith.** 12 And Abraham is also the spiritual father of the Jews, but only those who **believe in Jesus for salvation**, not in their good works - in the same way that Abraham **believed** *before* he obeyed God by being circumcised.

13 Clearly, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God's Law, but on **a right relationship with God that comes by faith.** 14 If God's promise of salvation is only for those who obey the Law, then **faith in Jesus** is not necessary for salvation, and it is pointless for God to promise **salvation through faith.** 15 Besides, the Law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it, because the only way to avoid breaking the Law is to have no law to break!

16 So, **salvation is received by faith, so that it can be a free gift of God's grace.** In this way, both Jews and Gentiles are all certain to receive it, if we simply **believe** like Abraham did. For Abraham is the father of all who **believe.** 17 That is what the Scriptures were pointing to when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations."

God made Abraham the father of many nations because Abraham **believed** in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing. 18 Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—**believing** that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!” 19 And Abraham’s **faith** stayed strong, even though, at about 100 years of age, he knew his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb.

20 Abraham never wavered in **believing** God’s promise. He stayed, strongly, in **faith**, and in this he brought glory to God. 21 He was fully convinced that God was able to do whatever He promised. 22 And because of Abraham’s **faith**, God counted him as righteous.

23 And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded 24 for our benefit, too, assuring us that **God will also count us righteous if we believe in him**, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 For Jesus was handed over to those who hated him, to die as the atonement for our sins, and he was raised to life, showing that his payment was sufficient and accepted by God, to make all who believe in Jesus as their Savior right with God.

ROMANS 5

So, now that we have been made right in God’s sight **by faith**, we have peace with God — all **because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us**.

2 Simply because of our **faith**, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand,

and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory for all eternity.

3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance in our **faith**. 4 And the more we grow in endurance in our **faith**, the more we grow in spiritual maturity, and the more mature we grow in Christ, **the stronger our confident hope of salvation becomes**. 5 And this hope will not let us down in the end, because we know how dearly God loves us, because he has filled our hearts with an assurance of His love, through the Holy Spirit Who indwells us.

6 At a time when we were utterly helpless to save ourselves, Christ came, right on schedule, and died for us sinners. 7 Now, most people would not even be willing to die for a *godly* person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially godly. 8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still *ungodly*!

9 And since we have now been made right in God's sight by the death of Christ, the living Christ will certainly save us from God's future wrath and Hell. 10 Since, when we were His *enemies*, our relationship to God was restored when He gave His beloved Son to *die* for us, now that we are members of God's *family*, we can certainly have confidence in our relationship to God since, Christ now *lives* for us.

11 So now, not only can we relax concerning God's forgiveness, but we can also rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God.

12 It was when Adam sinned that sin first entered the world, and death always accompanies sin, so death spread through Adam to everyone else, as is evident, in that everyone sins.

13 People sinned even before the Law was given, but it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any Law to break. 14 Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did.

Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. 15 But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of one man, Adam, brought death to many. But God's great grace, through one man - Jesus, gives salvation to many.

16 And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our reconciliation with God, even though we are guilty of many sins.

17 And the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness through this one man, Jesus Christ - for **all who receive them** will reign triumphantly in life over sin and defeat.

18 Yes, Adam's one sin brought condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings the opportunity of a restored relationship with God and new life to everyone.

19 Because one person *disobeyed* God, people became sinners. But because another person *obeyed* God, many people will be made righteous.

20 God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But no matter how great the sin of people is, God's wonderful grace is always much greater.

21 Under the Law, sin ruled over everybody and brought them to death, but now, in Christ, God's grace rules instead, and brings us to righteousness, **resulting in eternal life.**

ROMANS 6

1. So, what, then? Shall we go ahead and enjoy all the sin we want to, so that we can experience even more of God's grace?

2. Perish the thought! Through Christ, we have died to sin! We have no business having anything more to do with it!

3. Don't you know that when you were baptized in Jesus' name you were demonstrating that you had died in Him?

4. When He was buried, we were buried. And just as God raised Christ from death, so we, too, have been raised to a new life.

5. If it's true that we have *died* to sin through Him, it is equally true that we've been *raised* to a new sinless life through Him.

6. The fact is that our old sin-loving nature was crucified with Him, so that it would no longer have any power over us and we would be free from obeying it, from now on.

7. And, also, obviously, once a person dies, sin has no more power over him.

8. And, since we were united to Christ in His *death*, we are also united to Him in His *life*. 9. So, just as death has no more power over *Him*, death has no more power over *us*!

10. His *death* marked the end of sin's influence on Him; His new *life* marks the beginning of an eternity of holy living unto God. 11. Just like Jesus, you should see yourselves as truly dead to sin and truly alive unto God through your identification with Christ.

12. So, from now on, do not let sin control you so that you obey its lusts. 13. Don't give yourselves to be tools of sin, but instead, now that you have died to sin and are alive unto righteousness, give yourselves to be tools of God.

14. Sin no longer has any control over me because I am no longer under the Law - (trying my best to keep a zillion laws I can't keep), but, instead, I am under grace - (free to follow the Law of the Holy Spirit, of having Christ live His life through me — the Law of Love).

15. "So", you ask again, "Is it OK for me to go on sinning since I'm now "under grace" "? Obviously not!

16. Don't forget that you become the slave of whatever you yield to: whether you yield to Sin which just brings you *death*, or whether you yield to God which produces His righteous *life* in you.

17. Thank God that, though you once were slaves of Sin, you have embraced the truth you were taught;

18. and, having been freed from Sin's rule over you, you have become willing slaves of Righteousness!

19. Continuing to use the illustration of slaves and masters, because it is easy for you to understand . . . Just as you once gave yourselves as slaves to increasing sinfulness, so now give yourselves as slaves to increasing godliness.

20. When you were Sin's concubines, and were not married to Righteousness, 21 what kind of offspring did that union - of which you are now ashamed - produce? The only offspring Sin can ever produce is death.

22. But now, having been made free from your union to Sin, and having become joined to God through Christ, you are producing the offspring of holiness, **which will culminate in eternal life.**

23. For the wage Sin pays is always death; but the gift God gives is eternal life, because of our union to Jesus Christ, our new master.

ROMANS 7

December 29, 2009 / 3-9-2014/4-23-17

1. I'm sure you know, friends, (for you are familiar with The Law) that The Law has authority over us only as long as we're alive.

2. For example, a wife is bound by The Law to her husband as long as he is alive; but when her husband dies, she is free from The Law as it concerns her husband.

3. She would commit adultery to have sexual relations with another man while her husband still lived; but after his death, she is free to marry another man.

4. So, we too, my friends, by Christ's death on our behalf, have died to The Law so that we could marry a new master - Christ, (who has conquered death, so our union with Him will last forever) - and bear new life, spiritual fruit, unto Him.

5. In our former relationship, the seeds of our sinful nature - fertilized by the very Law prohibiting them - grew in our bodies to bring forth death, as their fruit.

6. But now, having been released from The Law's authority - (our old sinful nature which was married to The Law having been put to death through Christ on the cross) - we are free to yield ourselves to God's Spirit in our new, spiritual nature - something we could never do in the old carnal nature, which could never keep His Law, anyway.

7. So, what then? Does the fact that The Law aroused our sinful passions mean that The Law was bad? Not at all! The fact is that if it hadn't been for The Law, I would not have known which things were sinful! For instance, I wouldn't have known that lust was sinful except that The Law revealed it to me by saying, "Thou shalt not covet."

8. But my sinful nature, fertilized by the law against coveting, created within me all kinds of evil desires. For until The Law came and told me what I shouldn't do, I wasn't even aware of sin.

9. I used to enjoy life when I was ignorant of The Law! but when I had intercourse with The Law, it made me

pregnant with sin, and when sin was born through me, it brought me nothing but death.

10. The Law which was given to me by God to engender life, became, instead, the sire of death,

11. because my sinful nature tricked me by using The Law to produce my own death sentence!

12. But, just the same, The Law itself is good, and its commands are holy and just and right.

13. But you ask, "Wasn't it the Law that brought death to me?" Absolutely not! The Law simply revealed sin to me - it spotlighted the wickedness of my sinful nature - and my *sinful nature* produced sin which, through The Law, sentenced me to death!

14. You see, the problem is that The Law is a spiritual thing, but I am of the flesh - married to a sinful nature and, therefore, the slave of sin.

15. My behavior disturbs me! I don't do the things I wish I would do; and instead, I do the very things I hate to be doing!

16. So, finding myself going against my conscience in doing the very things The Law says I shouldn't be doing forces me to consent that The Law is good and right.

17. But this also shows that it is not I who is disobeying The Law, but it is the old sinful nature my flesh is married to that is breaking The Law,

18. and since I know that my sinful nature has no ability to do right, the result is that I have the desire to do right but not the capability!

19. So, instead of doing the right things my mind and spirit desire to do, I do the wrong things I don't want to do!

20. Now, if I am doing things I don't want to be doing, it is not my will I'm following but the will of the sinful nature I'm married to.

21. This points up a *spiritual* marriage law: That though I, myself, very much desire to do right, I'm married to a sin-loving nature!

22. My new nature - my regenerated mind and spirit married to Jesus Christ - delights in obeying His laws;

23. But there's this other nature within me — the old sinful nature to which my flesh is married, always fighting against my new nature, and making me a captive to its authority.

24. Oh, how miserable this arrangement makes me! Who shall ever free me from this death-producing union?!

25. Praise God: Jesus Christ, our Lord, will!

So here's the way it works: My new nature is married to Christ and submits only to His authority, but my old sinful nature continues to submit to sin's authority.

ROMANS 8

1. This being the case, those who are married to Christ and who no longer submit to their old sinful nature but, instead, submit to the Holy Spirit, cannot be condemned for adultery against their former master.

2. For the spiritual law regarding our marriage to Christ Jesus frees us from the law concerning our former marriage to our sinful nature with it's offspring: death.

3. The Law was unable to produce life in us because our fallen nature was totally incapable of ever birthing life.

But God sent His own Son to become one of us and to take our punishment, so that we, through His death on the cross as our representative, could die to the authority of our old sinful nature,

4. so that the righteousness of God's Law can now be produced in us who are no longer married to the sinful nature, but to the life-giving Spirit.

5. Those who are married to the old nature want to please the old nature, but those who are married to the Spirit want to please the Spirit.

6. Pleasing the old sin nature produces death; but pleasing the Holy Spirit produces life and peace.

7. The sinful nature hates God: it does not submit to God's authority and, in fact, it can't. 8. So, clearly, it's impossible to please God by submitting to the sinful nature.

9. But you are no longer subject to the sinful nature but to the Holy Spirit — if you are indeed married to the Holy Spirit; and if a person is not married to the Spirit of Christ, he is not a Christian.

10. Since you are now married to Christ, even though your body has had the sentence of death passed upon it because of sin, your new nature is alive because it is perfectly righteous.

11. You are now married to the Holy Spirit Who raised Christ's body from the dead! The same Holy Spirit Who raised Christ from the dead now lives in you! And He shall one day give life to your mortal bodies, too!

12. These things being true, friends, we have an obligation — not to submit any longer to the old sin nature;

13. for submitting to our sinful nature always results in death — but our obligation is to put to death, through the Spirit, the deeds of the sinful nature so we can truly live.

14. Whoever is led by the Spirit of God is a child of God.

15. And God does not want us to feel toward Him like cowering slaves; instead, He wants us to be like adopted children - calling him "dear Father".

16. The Holy Spirit confirms deep within our hearts that we are, indeed, His children.

17. And, since we are God's children, we are God's heirs! We are heirs of God; joint-heirs with Christ — even though, if we're going to share His glory, we may also have to share His suffering.

18. But I reckon that any sufferings we may experience in this life because we are Christians cannot possibly compare to the incredible splendor that will be ours someday.

19. The entire creation eagerly awaits that day when God will give His children their full inheritance.

20. Against its will, everything on earth was subjected by God to sin's curse, until

21. the day comes when all creation will join the children of God in experiencing glorious liberty from the chains of decay and death.

22. The whole creation groans and travails - as in birth pains, awaiting that day.

23. And not only the creation, but we ourselves also - who through the Spirit have had a foretaste of some of the riches of our future inheritance - we, too, inwardly groan to be released from pain and suffering. We too, wait anxiously for that day — the Rapture — when God will give us our full rights as His adopted children, including the new bodies He has promised us.

24. We were saved in hope of these things.

Now, there's no need of hope when we already have what we've been hoping for.

25. But when we are hoping for something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently for it.

26. And the Holy Spirit helps us during these difficult times of waiting, because we are unable to express these deep longings; so the Holy Spirit, within us, prays on our behalf, with groans far beyond our ability to express.

27. But God, Who knows the innermost thoughts of all hearts, knows what the Spirit is saying within us and listens to Him because the Spirit always prays for the saints in harmony with God's will.

28. So, we rest in the knowledge that, no matter what we may suffer as Christians, God will bring it all to the proper conclusion (of eternal life in Heaven with Him), for those who truly love Him, because He chose them, in the first place, for this purpose.

29. He foreknew in eternity past that we would trust in Him for salvation, and at that time, He predestined us to become just like His Son, so that Jesus might be the first of many sons and daughters.

30. What's more . . . those He predestined for this purpose, He also called out of humanity to be saved; and those He called out, He also acquitted of all their sins; and those He acquitted, He also glorified.

31. What can we say to these amazing and wonderful things? With God being so obviously on our side, whom or what do we have to worry about?!

32. Since God didn't withhold from us His own precious Son, but chose to give Him to us as a gift - to be crucified for our salvation, we can be confident that it is His great pleasure to give us as a free gift anything and everything else we ever need!

33. Who can accuse us of anything? God - the Righteous Judge - has declared us "Not guilty!" from every sin we ever have done or will do!

34. Who can condemn us? Christ has taken our place and our punishment; He paid for our sins! More than that, He rose from the dead and is presently and continually interceding for us at God's right hand!

35. What shall ever make Christ stop loving us?

Does it mean He doesn't love us when He allows us to go through trials or calamities, or when we suffer persecution, or go hungry, or go without proper clothing, or are facing danger or death?

36. As the OT says: "For Your sake, we are killed all day long; we are accounted as nothing more than sheep for the slaughter."

37. But, no! Even though we may experience these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ Who loved us.

38. And I am absolutely certain that, no matter what we go through, nothing will ever separate us from His love. No kind of death we may suffer can. Nothing in this life can. Angels won't. Satan's demons can't. So, we have nothing to fear in the present, and nothing to worry about in the future.

39. No matter where we are - far out in space or far below the surface of the earth or sea - nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from God's love which we have through our union with Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 9

With Christ as my witness, what I am about to say is true. My conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm it.

2 My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief
3 for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters.

I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them. 4 I'm talking about the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children.

God revealed his glory to them.

He made covenants with them and gave them his law.

He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises.

5 Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned, but he is, also, God — the one who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

6 Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to Israel? No, for not all Israelites are truly God's people! 7 And being descendants of Abraham doesn't make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted," though Abraham had other children, too. 8 This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. Only the children of the promise are considered to be Abraham's children. 9 For God had promised, "I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

10 This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he married Rebekah, she gave birth to twins. 11 But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This pre-birth message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes; 12 he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, "Your older son will serve your younger son." 13 In the words of the Scriptures, "I have chosen to love Jacob, but I have chosen to reject Esau."

14 Does this mean that God was unfair? Not at all! 15 For God said to Moses,

“It is entirely up to me to whom I show mercy,

and it is entirely up to me to whom I show compassion.”

16 So it is entirely up to God to decide to whom to show mercy. It doesn't depend on what we want, or what we do.

17 For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, “I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth.” 18 So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen.

19 Well then, you might say, “Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven't they simply done what he makes them do?”

20 No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, “Why have you made me like this?” 21 When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into?

22 It is no business of ours if God created Pharaoh and the Egyptians for destruction, even though He was very patient with them, in order to better display his anger and his power. 23 And it is no business of ours which pieces of pottery he mercifully uses to display the riches of his glory on, or that He created them in advance for

this purpose, 24 — even though, amazingly, it includes us, who are among those whom he selected for this very purpose, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.

25 Concerning the Gentiles, God says in the prophecy of Hosea,

"Those who were not my people, I will now call my people. And I will love those whom I did not love before."

26 And,

"Then, at the place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'children of the living God.'"

27 And concerning Israel, Isaiah the prophet cried out,

"Though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand of the seashore, only a remnant will be saved. 28 For the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth quickly and with finality."

29 And Isaiah said the same thing in another place:

"If the Lord of Heaven's Armies had not spared a few of our children, we would have been wiped out like Sodom, and destroyed like Gomorrah."

30 You ask, "What does all this mean?"

Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God's standards, they were made right with God. And it was **by faith** that this took place. 31 But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to be right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. 32 Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of

by **believing** in him. They stumbled over the great rock in their path.

33 God warned them of this in the Scriptures when he said,

"I am placing a stone in Jerusalem that makes people stumble, a rock that makes them fall. But anyone who believes in him will never be disgraced."

ROMANS 10

Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved.

2 I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. 3 For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. 4 For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given — making people righteous. As a result, all who **believe** in him as their substitute and Savior are made right with God.

5 For Moses writes that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands.

6 But **faith's** way of getting right with God says, "Don't say in your heart, 'Who will go up to heaven?' (to bring Christ down to earth to be our Savior). 7 And don't say, 'Who will go down to the place of the dead?' (to bring Christ back to life again to be our Savior)."

8 In fact, the Bible says,

"The key to salvation is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart."

And the key it is talking about is **FAITH** - the very message that we preach:

9 If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and **believe** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is by **believing** in your heart that you are made right with God; it is by openly declaring your **faith** that you are saved.

11 And the Scriptures go on to tell us that, *"Anyone who **believes** in him will be accepted."* 12 This applies to Jew and Gentile, alike. They have the same Lord, and He gives generously to anybody who calls upon him. 13 So, whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

14 But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? 15 And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent?

The Scriptures say, *"How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"*

16 But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, *"Lord, who has believed our message?"*

17 So **faith** starts by hearing the truths about God - from His Word, and hearing them over and over again until they sink in.

18 But I ask, have the people of Israel actually heard the message? Yes, they have:

"The messengers have gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world."

19 But I ask, did the people of Israel really understand?

Yes, they did, for even in the time of Moses, God said to them,

"I will rouse your jealousy through people who are not even a nation. I will provoke your anger through the foolish Gentiles."

20 And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God, saying,

"I was found by people who were not even looking for me. I showed myself to those who were not even asking for me."

21 But regarding Israel, God said,

"All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious."

ROMANS 11

I ask, then, has God rejected his own people, the nation of Israel? By no means!

I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 No, God has not rejected his own people, whom he chose from the very beginning.

Do you remember the story in the Bible that refers to this? Elijah the prophet complained to God about the

people of Israel and said, 3 *"Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."*

4 And do you remember God's reply? He said, *"No, I have 7,000 others who have never bowed down to Baal!"*

5 It is the same today, for God has chosen a few of the people of Israel to remain faithful to him. 6 And since they were chosen through God's grace, then it was not by their good works. For in that case, God's grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved.

7 So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have—the ones God has chosen—but the hearts of the rest were hardened. 8 As the Scriptures say,

"God has put them into a deep spiritual sleep. To this day he has shut their eyes so they do not see, and closed their ears so they do not hear."

9 Likewise, David said,

"Let their bountiful table become a snare, a trap that makes them think all is well. Let their blessings cause them to stumble, and let them get what they deserve (for turning from You). 10 Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see (that they need You), and let them be perpetual slaves."

11 When the Jews stumbled over Christ, did they fall beyond recovery?

Not at all! When they rejected Christ, God made salvation available to the Gentiles, because God wanted his own

people, the Jews, to become jealous and want to be saved, themselves.

12 Now if the Jews rejection of Christ brought such a blessing to the world, think how much greater the world will be blessed when the Jews accept Christ, and are overflowing with the riches of salvation!

13 I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles, because I have been appointed by God to be "The Apostle to the Gentiles". *[I stress my title 14 because I hope to make the Jews jealous of what God is doing through me for you Gentiles, so some of them might want what they are missing, and be saved.]* 15 For since their rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful — it will be the resurrection of an entire nation from the dead!

16 Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, and, someday, their descendants will also be holy—just as the entire batch of dough is holy because the portion given as an offering is holy. The roots of the tree were holy, so, someday, the branches will be, too.

17 For the present, some of these branches from Abraham's tree—some of the people of Israel—have been broken off, and you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. This enables you, presently, to receive the blessing God promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God's special olive tree.

18 But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. The branches aren't nearly as important as the root.

19 "Well," you may say, "those branches were broken off to make room for me."

20 Yes, but remember—those branches were broken off because they didn't **believe** in Christ, and you are there because you do **believe**. **So don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen.** 21 For if God did not spare the original branches, he won't spare you either, if you stop **believing**.

22 Notice that God is both kind and severe. **He was severe toward those who stopped believing in Him, but kind to you - if you continue to believe in Him. But if you stop believing, you will be cut off, too.**

23 And it is equally true that, if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted back in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree of salvation. 24 Since you were a branch cut from a wild olive tree, and were grafted into his cultivated tree - where you didn't belong, he will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree - where they do belong.

25 I want to explain a previously unknown spiritual truth to you, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves being saved when so many Jews are unsaved.

Some of the people of Israel are spiritually blind toward Christ, but this will last only until the final Gentile ordained by God to be saved comes to Christ. 26 When

that happens, the entire nation of Israel will turn to Christ for salvation.

As the Scriptures say,

"The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn all Israel away from ungodliness. 27 And this is my covenant with them, that I will take away their sins."

28 Many of the people of Israel are now antagonistic toward the Good News, and this benefits you Gentiles. But they are still the people God loves because he chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 29 For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn.

30 Once, you Gentiles were unbelieving rebels against God, but since the people of Israel refused to accept His blessing of salvation, God is blessing you with salvation, instead.

31 Presently, they are in unbelief. But, just as God brought salvation to you in your unbelief, so He will bring salvation to them in their unbelief. 32 For it is God's plan to put everyone in unbelief so he can bring salvation to everyone.

33 Oh, how great are the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!

34 For who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? 35 And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? 36 For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory.

All glory to him forever! Amen.

ROMANS 12

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I earnestly urge you to give your bodies to God as a living sacrifice — holy, the only kind of sacrifice he can accept. This total dedication to Him is only reasonable, in light of all he has done for you.

2 Do not let this world force you into its mold, but let God transform you (as in metamorphosis) into a new person, by changing the way you think — aligning your thinking with God's Word. Then you will come to experience God's will for you, which is always good and satisfying and perfect.

3 As your spiritual teacher I give this piece of advice to all of you: Work together in the home group - the Body of Christ. Don't think you are better than you really are. Stay humble and be who God made you to be. 4 For, just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, 5 so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

6 In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well.

So if God has given you the ability to proclaim his Word, do it to the best of your ability.

7 If your gift is serving others, serve them well.

If you are a teacher, teach well.

8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging.

If it is giving, give discreetly.

If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously.

And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

9 Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them.

Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good.

10 Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.

11 Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.

12 Stay cheerfully in faith; patiently endure trials; and stay close to God in prayer.

13 When God's people are in need, be ready to help them with your finances and with hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them.

15 Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with each other.

Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all.

17 Never pay back evil with more evil.

Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.

18 Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

“I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord.

20 Instead,

“If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In this way, you will certainly be showing them the grace of God.”

21 Don't let bad things get the victory over your peace and joy. Instead, get the victory over bad things by maintaining a faith perspective.

ROMANS 13

All of us must submit to our authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. 2 So anyone who rebels against authority ordained by God is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. 3 For the God-ordained and God-honoring authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. 4 The authorities are God's servants, for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the authority to punish you. They are God's servants, for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. 5 So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience.

6 Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid. They are serving God in what they do. 7 So, give to every authority whatever they are due, whether taxes and government fees, or respect and honor.

8 For that matter, don't be in debt to anyone — except for the debt we have to love one another. When we love one another, we fulfill the requirements of God's law. 9 For His law says, "Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not covet." But these—and all other such laws—are summed up in this one law: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills all the requirements of God's law.

11 It is all the more urgent to live like this, knowing how little time is left. It is way past time for us to be wide awake, for we are much closer to seeing Christ's return now than when we first believed. 12 The dark night of sin and death on this earth is almost over; the day of our salvation will soon be here. So, rise and shine! Throw off any sinful behavior as you would do with sweaty night clothes, and dress yourself in the shining armor of godly living. 13 We are God's children of the light, so let us live godly lives for all to see. Let us not participate in the deeds of darkness, like wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, be clothed from head to foot with the life of our Master, Jesus Christ, so there will be no opportunity to indulge the sinful desires of your old nature.

ROMANS 14

Make immature believers welcome in your house church, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. 2 For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. 3 Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has welcomed both of them into His household. 4 So, they are, both, the Lord's servants - not yours. It is His business to tell them whether they are right or wrong, and He is perfectly capable of correcting them if they need it.

5 For another example, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. Everyone is welcome to their own convictions. 6 Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him. Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God.

7 For, as Christians, our lives — or deaths — are not about us. 8 If we live, it is to honor the Lord. And if we die, it is to honor the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 That is why Christ died and rose again — so He could be the Lord of believers who have died and believers who are still alive.

10 So don't condemn another believer, and don't look down on another believer. Remember, someday, every one of us will stand before the judgment seat of God.

11 For the Scriptures say,

" 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow to my authority, and every tongue will give an account to God.' "

12 Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God.

13 So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause one of these believers we've been talking about to stumble and fall.

14 I know and am convinced on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat. But if someone believes it is wrong, then for that person it is wrong. 15 And if another believer is distressed by what you eat, you are not acting in love if you eat it in their presence. Be willing to give up your dietary preferences for those for whom Christ gave up His life. 16 By showing deference to weaker brethren, you will not draw criticism against yourself, even though you know that what you are doing is right.

17 For, authentic Christianity is not about filling our stomachs, but is about the righteousness, peace, and joy that comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit.

18 If you keep this loving attitude toward your brothers and sisters in the Lord, you will please God and everybody else.

19 Our main objective is to aim for harmony in the church body and do our best to build each other up in Christ.

20 For sure, we don't want to destroy the koinonia of God's people over food! There's no doubt that we are free in Christ to eat anything we want, but it is wrong to eat

something if it is going to disturb another believer. 21 The best thing to do is to refrain from eating anything — meat, wine, or anything else that might cause another believer to stumble. 22 You may believe there's nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep your conviction between yourself and God. Good for you if you don't feel guilty for doing something you have decided is right. 23 But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead and eat it, for you are gambling with being wrong, and you are, also, acting inconsiderately toward weaker brothers and sisters. It is wrong to do anything we are not sure is right. [It is being careless toward God to do anything we are not sure He approves.]

ROMANS 15

As more mature Christians, we need to be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like these, and not just do as we please. 2 Instead, we should seek to please others for their good to build them up in the Lord. 3 For even Christ didn't live to please himself. As it says in the Old Testament, "*The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me.*" 4 In fact, all the stories in the Old Testament were written for our benefit, so that as we mix patient endurance with the examples of these Old Testament saints we can grow in our faith in God and in His promises.

5 May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. 6 Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 So, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you, so that God will be given glory.

8 Though it is true that Christ came to the Jews in fulfillment of the promises God had made to their ancestors, 9 it is also true that he came to bring salvation to the Gentiles. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote:

"This is why I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing praises to your name."

10 And in another place it is written,

"Rejoice with God's people, you Gentiles."

11 And yet again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles. Praise him, all you people of the earth."

12 And in another place Isaiah said,

"The heir to David's throne will come, and he will rule over the Gentiles. They will place their hope on him."

13 I pray that the God our hopes are built upon will totally fill you with joy and peace as you keep your faith in Him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

14 I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them. 15 Even so, I have been bold enough to write about some of these points, knowing that all you need is this reminder. For by God's grace, 16 I am a special messenger from Christ

Jesus to you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News so that I might present you as an acceptable offering to God, made holy by the Holy Spirit.

17 I have reason to be enthusiastic about all Christ Jesus has done through me in my service to God. 18 Yet I am not boasting about myself, but in what Christ has done through me, bringing the Gentiles to God by my message and by the way I worked among them. 19 They were convinced by the power of miraculous signs and wonders and by the power of God's Spirit. This is the way I have fully presented the Good News of Christ from Jerusalem all the way to Croatia.

20 My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard, rather than where a house church has already been started by someone else. 21 I have been following the plan spoken of in the Scriptures, where it says,

"Those who have never been told about him will see, and those who have never heard of him will understand."

22 In fact, it because I have been preaching in these far away places that my visit to you has been delayed so long.

23 But now I have finished my work in these regions, and after all these long years of waiting, I am eager to visit you. 24 I am planning to go to Spain, and when I do, I will stop off in Rome. And after I have enjoyed your fellowship for a little while, you can provide for my journey.

25 But before I come, I must go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the believers there. 26 For you see, the believers

in Yugoslavia and northern Greece have eagerly taken up an offering for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem. 27 They were glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since these Gentiles received the spiritual blessings of the Good News from the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, they feel the least they can do in return is to help them financially. 28 As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will come to see you on my way to Spain. 29 And I am sure that when I come, Christ will richly bless our time together.

30 Dear brothers and sisters, I urge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to join in my struggle by praying to God for me. Do this out of the love the Holy Spirit has given you for me. 31 Pray that I will be rescued from those in Judea who refuse to obey God. Pray also that the believers there will be willing to accept the donation I am taking to Jerusalem. 32 Then, by the will of God, I will be able to come to you with a joyful heart, and we will be an encouragement to each other.

33 And now may God, who gives us his peace, be with you all. Amen.

ROMANS 16

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant in the church in Cenchrea, Greece. 2 Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me.

3 Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. 4 In fact, they

once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches. 5 Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus. He was the first person from western Turkey, the province of Asia, to become a follower of Christ. 6 Give my greetings to Mary, who has worked so hard for your benefit. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

10 Greet Apelles, a good man whom Christ approves. And give my greetings to the believers from the household of Aristobulus. 11 Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet the Lord's people from the household of Narcissus. 12 Give my greetings to Tryphena and Tryphosa, the Lord's workers, and to dear Persis, who has worked so hard for the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, whom the Lord picked out to be his very own; and also his dear mother, who has been a mother to me.

14 Give my greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters in their house church. 15 Give my greetings to Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas and all the believers in their house church. 16 Greet each other with a sacred kiss. All the house churches of Christ send you their greetings.

17 And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and who upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to

what you have been taught. Stay away from them. 18 Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people. 19 But everyone knows that you are faithful to the Lord. This makes me very happy. I want you to be wise in doing right and to stay innocent of any wrong. 20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

21 Timothy, my fellow worker, sends you his greetings, as do Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.

22 I, Tertius, the one writing this letter for Paul, send my greetings, too, as one of the Lord's followers.

23 Gaius says hello to you. He is my host and also serves as host to the whole house church. Erastus, the city treasurer, sends you his greetings, and so does our brother Quartus.

25 Now all glory to God, who is able to make you strong in the Gospel I proclaim about Jesus Christ — the Good News that has been revealed to you Gentiles — a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. 26 But now, as the prophets foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and put their faith in him. 27 All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.