

Romans 15:14-33

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 June 2019

[0 : 00] So if you are physically able and desire to do this, I'm going to ask you to join with me this morning as we stand together and we read the Word of God found in Romans 15, starting in verse 14 and going to the end of the chapter.

The Word of God says, And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another. But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again because of the grace that was given me from God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, in Christ Jesus, I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit, so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation, but as it is written, they who had no news of him shall see, and they also who have not heard shall understand.

[1 : 25] For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you, but now with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain, for I hope to see you in passing and to be helped on my way there by you when I have first enjoyed your company for a while, but now I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them, for if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints, so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God, and find refreshing rest in your company.

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. God, we thank you for the fathers as we've had an opportunity to celebrate.

[2 : 56] Lord, we thank you that you are our heavenly Father, who loves us beyond any man, any individual on the face of this earth ever could. We thank you, Lord, that you've given us this opportunity to come and to read your word.

And we now pray, Lord, that you would help us to understand it. Lord, that your word would penetrate our hearts and our minds. It would penetrate our distractions. It would penetrate any hindrance that may be present.

Lord, we pray that your word would have its complete work in each one of us, shaping and molding and conforming us more to your image for your glory. And we ask it all in the sweet name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. You may be seated. We have been looking through the book of Romans. And throughout the book of Romans, we have seen major doctrinal issues.

Really, we have seen it as the foundational doctrines of our faith. We have went through the foundational doctrines. We have looked at the historical illustrations.

[3 : 53] We have taken time from chapters 12, 13, and 14 in the first part of 15 to look out that present-day application. So not only is it something that we know to be true because the word of

God says so, we know that it is true because the history of God's people demonstrates it as so.

And we know that it is true because God has called his people to live presently as if it is so. And we have seen all of those things. And now we have come to kind of the closing remarks of the book of Romans.

It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is.

It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is.

It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is.

[5 : 00] It is. It is. pens this letter, there is not just one mega church, rather there are multiple churches throughout the city of Jerusalem. And he is writing to instruct them as to what they believe, why they believe it, and to encourage them and build them up in their faith. We have seen all of these things. And now Paul is wrapping it up, kind of bringing in his closing remarks.

And I want you to see this morning, the example Paul sets before the church in Rome and the example that Paul sets before us. The example of Paul before the people of God because of the salvation of God, that is a life lived out this doctrinal truth, a life lived out this historical reality, and a life lived out this present day application. What does that look like in flesh and bones? Because it's one thing to hear of some great news. It's one thing to hear of some great truth. It's one thing to hear of something theoretically, and it's something totally different. To see the gospel lived out before you. To see it lived out as an example. To see it not just lived out through Jesus Christ. God became flesh and dwelt among us, and we see him in his perfection.

But I mean, let's just be honest. We all have the tendency to look at Christ and say, yes, but he's God in the flesh. He's perfect. None of us are perfect. We understand that. I am so thankful that the Bible lifts up imperfect people to be examples of perfect obedience to a great, glorious, perfect gospel. Because Paul is an imperfect individual. He is. He is not to be put up on a pedestal. He is not to be exalted above anyone else. He refers to himself as the slave of Christ. He refers to himself as the chief of all sinners. And think about the sinners which he knew by the time he called himself that.

I mean, he knew of the sinners in the church at Corinth. And if it's been a long time, or if you've never read the book of Corinthians, 1 Corinthians, by all means, read 1 Corinthians and see the type of people hanging out in church in Corinth. And Paul tells them, I'm worse than you are. I am the chief of all sinners. And it's for this reason that I'm glad the gospel always lifts up the imperfect because of the perfection of Christ and of the call of the gospel. And we see this example of Paul before us of since these things are true, this is what my life is going to look like. Because truth without application is just useless knowledge. Truth without application is just useless knowledge. All of us possess, to some extent or another, what we like to call useless information. We know these needless facts and we know this useless information that really in the grand scheme of things doesn't amount to a hill of beans. It doesn't change the world around us. Sometimes it's good for quiz shows and sometimes it's good to come up with something. And, you know, some of the questions you may see in Jeopardy, I have no idea why you need to know those things, but people know them, right? We understand this thought of useless information. But friend, when you open up the gospel, it is never useless information. It is always given out for daily application. And we see here as Paul applies these truths in his life, how it is lifted up before us. And we see the example that Paul sets.

[8 : 26] We see it, number one, as an example of the believer's personal responsibility. I have four this morning. I want you to stay with me because each of these four take us along our progression of walk of faith in Christ. And we start out in that walk of faith as believers.

No one comes to faith in Jesus Christ, lest he what believe in Jesus Christ. And whosoever believes on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life, right? We understand that. That with the heart, we believe unto salvation. And with the mouth, we confess. All this thing, our walk of faith starts with belief. So Paul begins to set his example up as belief. We see the example of the believer's personal responsibility, which means this is even for the newborn believer. No one is exempt from this.

Look at what the Word of God says. And concerning you, my brethren, my brethren, that is the church, that is my brothers and sisters, those who are similar to me, not those who are different from me, but those which share a familial bond with me. And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness. Now, I don't know. Maybe you haven't been here with us through this whole series of the book of Romans. Maybe it was so long ago.

We're approaching about a year ago since we read Romans 1.1 and began there. Maybe I need to remind you that Paul took the first three chapters of this letter and told the brethren how bad they were. Paul took the first three chapters and told them of their faults, how every intention and every heart of man is desperately wicked, that there is none who does good. No, not one. There is none that are righteous. And he shows us who we are according to the law's standards. And as we read this now, they would have read it in one sitting, but we read it now many months, many weeks later. And we see what Paul says. He says, and concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness. What does it show us? Paul did not hold back the truth or did not throw out the truth to tear them down. Rather, he was truthful about them and about himself to build them up. Paul showed them the truth of who they were, not for the purpose of destruction, but really for the purpose of construction. You say, well, pastor, if you really think that everything's good about me, then you'll never tell me anything that I do is bad. No, that's not love. Pastor, if you really think that I'm full of goodness and all you'll tell me about is how good I am, how well I am, and you'll never bring about this thing of conviction, that's not love. The Bible says, he whom the Father loves, he also what? Chastises. He rebukes. He corrects. It is love. That shows us the truth of who we are because it knows what we have been called to be. Paul says, you are good. You are full of goodness. I know who you are in Christ and I want you to know who you are in Christ. And before you can know who you are in Christ, you need to know who you are in self.

[11 : 37] You need to know how much goodness Christ has given you. And the only way you'll ever know how good he makes you is to know how bad sin has stained you, right? You don't understand how dirty your car was until you take it through the car wash. That's why I don't ever wash my truck. I don't want to know.

I washed my truck one time since I've owned it. And that was only because I hit a deer on the front end in the body shop. I had to redo my whole front end and they didn't do anything with the back end. And I said, man, that doesn't match. So I washed the back end so I could get it all dirty at the same time again, right? You don't want to know how dirty something is. And we don't want to know how dirty something is. But until we know how messed up our lives are, we will not know how good Christ has made us. We will not know the goodness of Jesus Christ inside of us. And Paul says, in spite of all these truths about you, in spite of all these realities concerning you, I am convinced of your goodness. Now we're looking at the believer's personal responsibility. Now look at this. I am also convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge. Who is he writing to? The brethren, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another. What is Paul saying here? Friend, I want you to hear me out. If you don't hear the next three points, that's fine because I need you to hear this one. Paul says, I'm writing this letter showing you doctrinal truths. I'm writing this letter hoping to put you on the right path scripturally. I'm writing this letter so that you have the main things, the main things. But Paul says, but I want you to know what I know. I know that in Christ, you already know all you need to know. I know that in Christ, you already have all the knowledge you will ever need. And I know that in Christ, you have the spirit of Christ and the mind of Christ dwelling inside of you. Paul wrote that to his letters, right? Paul says, I know that in Christ, you don't need a man to instruct you because I know that in Christ, he will instruct you. And I know that in Christ, you are also able to instruct one another. What is the believer's personal responsibility?

[13 : 49] It is your responsibility and my responsibility to be in the business of growing our fellow believers. Let me say that again. It is your responsibility and my responsibility to be growing and maturing the believers beside us. You say, no, pastor, that's wrong. That's why we hired you. That's why we pay you. That's why we called you. Well, Ephesians 4.12, it is the pastor's responsibility to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. And the work of the ministry is to encourage one another. Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Pastor Tony Evans, what a wonderful church Oak Cliff is. If you ever have an opportunity, you're in Dallas, Texas, go to Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. You will walk in the door at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship and you will probably be met by about 10 church members before you even get into the sanctuary. One of the friendliest, nicest churches I've ever walked into. As you walk into the main entrance, you will walk past a bookstore that has probably 15 people working inside that bookstore. If you do a little research on Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, you will also know that they have somewhere around 20 job opportunities as a church. You say, well, sure, it's situated on the suburbs of Dallas, Texas. Right. But you know also something about Oak Cliff

Bible Fellowship. You cannot be a member of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship until you are already serving in Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. Membership is dependent upon servanthood. Anybody that applies for membership in that church must already demonstrate to that church how they are already serving the members of that church. And anyone that asks for financial help from that church, there is one question they are asked. What ministry are you currently serving in? And if they say none, then the pastors, they say, we're sorry, we're not here just to be Burger King where you can have it your way. We're here to minister to the kingdom. And until you are serving, because it doesn't cost anything to serve, right? Until you serve, we're not serving you. You say, wow. Yes. Now, do we need to go into the impact that Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship has? Change their community. Change the school system in the county they planted. Why? It's because the members understand it is their responsibility to serve one another. Christ didn't call you, and I know this is hard, but listen, Paul says, I am convinced that you are full of all goodness. You possess all knowledge, and you are able to admonish one another.

Friend, listen to me. You can disciple someone else. You say, well, I don't know enough of the Bible. Join the crew. Neither do I. There's so much more I want to know. Every time I open it, I learn.

Every time I open it, I go, wow, I've never seen that. But until you open it, you'll never say, wow, I've never seen that. And when I see that, now all of a sudden, I am responsible to share that with someone. It is the believer, the newborn, the mature, the very primary walk of the life of faith. It is the believer's responsibility to be admonishing others. That is to build up. I want to ask you a quick question. Here's the conviction. Here's where Robert Hisser wrote. Who are you building up in the faith today? Here's another one. Who is building you up? You need those two people.

[17:17] You need someone speaking into your life, and you need to be speaking into someone else's life. As a pastor, I fell in that. I often speak into, but I don't open myself up to let others speak into me. That is just a conviction. That is me being honest with you, right? This is not something that I'm pointing at you and saying you need to do this. Something I'm pointing at us and saying we need to do this, okay? Who are you speaking into, and who are you allowing to speak into you?

That is the believer's personal responsibility. Number two, we'll make our way quick. Some of you need to get to Cracker Barrel, and others, well, you're going to do what Brother Ronnie said you was going to do, okay? We're not going to go there. Number two, we not only see the believers, that's an instrumental part of the very foundational issue, personal responsibility. Number two, the followers proper rejoicing. The followers proper rejoicing. So now you've moved from believing to following. You're going to trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey, right? Now you're going to follow him. You're going to do what he wants to say, and we see his proper rejoicing. He says here in verse 15, but I have written very boldly to you on some points as to remind you again because of the grace that was given me from God. Now Paul, you know, I've looked at this. I just got to stop right here and said, I've tried to figure this out, but one thing I have figured out with Paul, Paul gets so caught up in the moment.

There's another man like that. I'm kind of that way. He gets so caught up in the moment, he never finishes really what he was starting to say, right? He says, but I have written to you so as to remind you. And then he gets caught up. He doesn't ever say what he was reminding them of. He kind of gets carried away. And it's okay to get a little carried away in Christ, but look, because of the grace, he got to talking about grace and he got carried away because of the grace that was given to me from God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest of the gospel of God so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in Christ Jesus, I have found reason, here it is, for boasting in the things pertaining to God. Wow. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit. What does he say? Paul never says what he was going to remind them of because he gets to talking about what he gets to do. And we see here the followers proper rejoicing.

Paul says, I have found reason to boast. I have found reason to brag. I have found reason to get excited. Paul says, if anyone could boast in the flesh, it would be me. I am a Pharisee of the Pharisees. I am from the right tribe of the nation of Israel. As to the law, blameless, perfect according to the religious stature. I am of the right tribe. I am of the right people.

[19 : 59] I am of the right belief. I am of the right religion. I not only have a Jewish citizenship, I am also a born citizen of Rome. That means he had worldly privilege. Listen, Paul had all things in the flesh. But he says, but these things I count as rubbish because he says here, for this reason, I will boast because of what Christ Jesus has done through me. Here we see the followers proper rejoicing. He says, I'm going to rejoice not in who I am, not in what I can do, but in what he has done through me. I am a minister to the Gentiles. And because he is doing it through me, all of a sudden, the Gentiles are becoming obedient to the faith. And how do we know they're obedient to the faith?

Because they're not only saying it in word and what? And deed. They are also doing it. Not only are they saying, amen, preacher, amen, preacher, they're walking outside the door and they're living it out. And they are doing it in the power and the giftedness and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Very quickly, Paul says, my proper rejoicing is in everything. As a follower of Jesus Christ, he is doing through me. And as I see him doing works, and as I see him bringing about his word, and as I see him producing fruit through the spirit, then I get excited and I can't quit talking about it. I can't quit bragging about it. I can't quit boasting about it. Not all boasting is bad, by the way, because Paul says, I will boast about everything Jesus is doing. And he boasts not only to the common man, he boasts to the kings. Remember, to the end of the book of Acts, as he's put before all these rulers, what does Paul do? Let me tell you what Jesus did. He met me on Damascus Road. Why do we hear Paul's conversion story five times in scripture? It's because every time given the opportunity, Paul brags about how he came to Christ on Damascus Road, right? And he's always increasing the story, right? And he always talks about Ananias and him coming and laying his hand on him. And he talks about the fruit of the spirit. And he talks about all the work of Christ and how he calls those in darkness to live in new light. What a joy it is. Paul says, I am rejoicing in what Christ is doing through me. Which brings us to this point, as a follower of Christ, the only proper area we have to rejoice in is not the fact that we are following, because that's what we've been called to do.

It is in what he is doing because of our following. So I'm going to ask you, when you get on your brag session and you begin to boast, what do you boast of? What do you boast of? What do you talk about?

What is it you can't wait to tell someone? What is it you can't wait to share? What is it that is so good that you have seen Jesus do through you simply because you said, yes, Lord, I'll follow you.

[22 : 48] What is it you cannot wait to share? That's what you have to brag about. And that's when the gospel begins to take feet and go out into the streets and to rejoice.

Hey, there's something I want to introduce to you pretty soon. It's called Who's Your One? If you ever want to know what the North American Mission Board is doing, it's Who's Your One? You know, Who's Your One person you're praying about that doesn't know Jesus Christ? We're going to do it.

There's some information back there on the table, on the missions table. I have my one. I'm not going to tell you his name right now. You don't know him. I dare say, I mean, you may, some of you may know him, but I dare say none of you know him, but I'm so glad. But you know what? My one who I know doesn't know the gospel. I had opportunity this past week to brag about something God was doing in my life through obedience to that unbeliever. That's not boasting. I had prayed, God, give me an opportunity to share. God, give me an opportunity to share. This man started a conversation with me. I said, well, let me tell you what God's doing in my life. I mean, I got to brag on God, right? There's nothing wrong with boasting in the work of Jesus Christ. Nothing at all. Because as a follower, that's the things we ought to see. It is the follower's proper rejoicing. Number three, we see the servant. Now we go from being a believer to a follower, now a servant. And I'm making my way quickly. The servant's perpetual readiness. Paul referred to himself as a slave of Christ. The word used there is *doulos*. That means to be a lower servant, a lower slave. He saw himself as being one who was given to the gospel. He didn't see himself just as a follower who could pick and choose when he went. Rather, he saw himself as a slave who must do what he was commanded to do. And here we see the servant's perpetual readiness.

Paul says, I'm going to brag about what God is doing. Verse 20, he says here, and thus, because of the grace given to me, God, Paul did not see God's grace as a reason or something to rejoice in. Rather, he saw God's grace as something to motivate something to, or motivate someone to. Look at what he says, and thus, I aspire to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so

that I would not build on another man's foundation. But as it is written, they who had no news of him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand. Paul was one that would preach in a different pulpit every Sunday, and that's okay. God has called people to that. But Paul says, as a slave of Christ, this has been my aspiration. This has been something that I have pointed my heart to. I have aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation. Paul says, it has been my ambition to continuously push the gospel forward, to continuously take the gospel into unreached, unknown areas. And he gives an illustration there where he says that he has went from, and I'm not even going to try to sound it again, Jerusalem, all the way to that other crazy city name. If you can pronounce it, it'd be great. We'll talk about it later. Starts with an I, ends with an

M, okay? But we see this. He went, that is a circuit, by the way, of some 1,400 miles, okay? 1,400 plus miles. Paul could absolutely say he had taken the gospel, those 1,400 miles. He said, well, that's not far.

[25 : 59] It is by foot. It may not be far by car, but it sure is by foot, right? Over 1,400 miles. And he said, and why have I been ready to do this? Because they don't know the gospel. They don't know the gospel.

They don't know the gospel. And then he goes on, for this reason, I have often been prevented from coming to you. Paul wanted to get to Rome. He had a desire to be in Rome. Paul longed to be in Rome, but he said, the only thing that'll keep me from coming to Rome is there are more people here who've never heard the gospel. It is a perpetual readiness. I was ready to come, but I was more ready to share the news with those who did not have the news. I was more ready to take the gospel where it had not been. And I was more ready to obey what Christ had commanded me to do because I am his servant.

And Jesus said he would be a light to the Gentiles, right? And we see here in verse 23, but now with no further place for me in these regions, he said, everybody here, not that every individual has heard, but every individual has the opportunity to hear. There are gospel churches there. He says, now everyone here in these regions. And since I have had for so many years, a longing to come to you, whenever I go to Spain, now we're introduced to something in church history that we know nothing of. Paul never made it to Spain historically. Now there are some church traditions that said he went to Spain, went on to Europe and things of that nature. The book of Acts leaves him in Rome imprisoned where he would eventually die. We have also seen that church history has a way of twisting itself a little bit to make it conform to man's interpretation, but we don't know.

We're just uncertain. At that point, we'll have to be silent where the Bible is silent. But as far as we can biblically see, Paul never made it to Spain. But the question is not whether Paul made it to Spain.

The question is, was Paul ready to go if he had the opportunity? And Paul says, I won't be content to stay in Rome because there's already churches in Rome. As J.D.

[27 : 51] Greer said at our Southern Baptist Convention this past week, Pastor J.D. Greer Summit Church in North Carolina, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. He's great. He's a summit life. Look it up. He does great. He's our president at Southern Baptist Convention. Paul says, J.D. says, by the time Paul got to Rome, Paul shows up thinking he would start a church and all the brethren met him and said, hey, Paul, about time you got here, we've been having church a long time.

And Paul says, you know what? I'm not content to stay in Rome. I'm going to take it to Spain because Spain doesn't know yet. It is a perpetual readiness. The slave of Christ is always ready to obey the command of Christ and to go further for the name of Christ. Now, four, finally, and I'll be done. Then it is the faithful, because you can't be an unfaithful slave, right? Jesus shares parables of unfaithful servants, but now the faithful, the faithful's powerful reassurance.

This one's quickly. The faithful's powerful reassurance. Paul says, whenever I go to Spain, for I hope to see you in passing. He says, I wasn't going to hang out there. And to be helped on my way there by you. What was he saying? Since you're a thriving church, you can support me and send me on. That's what he means by helping me on my way there by you. When I have first enjoyed your company for a while, but now I'm going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

We read this in the other letters of Paul. There had been a famine in Jerusalem. Those who were really suffering from the famine in Jerusalem were the believers, the church, because they had been ostracized from their community. So people would not share with them. They wouldn't buy from them.

They wouldn't do business with them. The Jews wouldn't do business with the church in Jerusalem. So the church was struggling financially in Jerusalem, but it was thriving in other parts of the world. So Paul had went from other parts, other churches to the Gentile churches and taken up a collection.

[29 : 35] This is how we know to take up offerings on the first day of the week. Paul says, set aside some of your surplus on the first day of the week, or set aside a first part of your surplus on the first day of the week so that when I come, it will be ready. Right? We see this. And now he's taking that offering back. We read this in the book of Acts. He is taking it back to be a minister. It says, for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so. And they were indebted to them. What does he say?

They wanted to do it and they should have done it. They were indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them in their material things. Therefore, this is what Paul is saying. We're talking about his reassurance. When I have finished this and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go by way of you to Spain. For I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. You say, well, see, Paul's reassurance was wrong. Paul never made it to Spain. Right. But Paul was sure that he would make it to Rome. And he knew when he made it to Rome, he would make it in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. Now understand this. When Paul is writing these letters, we have to read it along with his other letters. And I don't have time to go there. We have to read it along with the book of Acts because we know that as Paul is on his way to Jerusalem to give this offering in the book of Acts, we know that he stops. And there are church members in the city in which he stops. It says, Paul, don't go to Jerusalem. We have been told by the spirit that you will be bound in Jerusalem.

And Paul says, I am not only ready to be bound, but also to die for the faith in Jerusalem. And Paul tells that church, you will never see my face again because when I get to Jerusalem, I'm going to be bound. Paul knew. But Paul also knew that wherever he went, whether free or bound, he would go into blessing of Christ. He may not have made it to Spain, but he made it to Rome, right? And he had this assurance. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit to strive together with me in your prayers to God, that I may be rescued from those who were disobedient in Judea and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company. Now the God of peace be with you all. That prayer, my friend, may not have been answered literally, but he came there rested. He had a layover on the island of Malta. He came there in the fullness of God's presence. How? How do the faithful, how do the faithful slaves of Christ have this powerful reassurance? Paul says, I urge you to strive with me in prayer. That's not just a prayer that is kind of flippantly given. It is a striving. Really the word picture there is a wrestler tied up in a knot, giving every bit of their effort in prayer. And the servant of Christ who is faithfully obeying

Christ, who is striving with the devil in prayers because of the presence of Christ, will always walk in a powerful reassurance of the presence of Christ in their life. The question is, where does the assurance of Christ, what things do you know as you follow Christ? I mean, what do you know? Paul says, I know this. And assurance is always shown in the things we know Christ is doing. Here is the example that Paul sets before us. An example that takes the truth of our glorious salvation and lives it out in faithful obedience before a watching world. He has some issues. He's going to close up in chapter 16. He'll admonish a couple of sisters in the church. He'll encourage the church.

[33 : 40] But here we see his call to the churches, follow my example. Paul had the boldness and the audacity to say, be imitators of me as I imitate Christ. Believe. Follow. Be a slave of Christ. Be faithful all the way.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you again for this day. God, we thank you for every opportunity we have to open your word. Lord, now we come to a time where we pray your word would open us. Lord, that it would search our hearts, search our minds, a time of response. Lord, a time of investigation, self-examination.

Lord, asking that you would show us, Lord, what it is you would have us to do in response to your word. Show us our dependence upon you for every bit of goodness that you've poured out in our life.

And show us how to live faithfully before you so this world may see your glory. We ask it all in
Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
[36 : 27] Amen. Amen.
Thank you.