

# SESSION 11

Topic: “God’s Sovereign Mercy”

## INTRO

As Paul transitions into chapters 9–11, he opens his heart in one of the most emotional moments of the entire letter. After celebrating the unbreakable love of God in Romans 8, Paul turns to address a painful question: What about Israel? If God’s promises are trustworthy, why have so many of His own people rejected Jesus?

Paul expresses deep sorrow for his fellow Israelites, then explains that God’s saving promises were never based on ethnicity, effort, or human achievement. From the beginning, God’s plan has always been rooted in His mercy, His calling, and His sovereign purpose. Salvation is not something we earn or inherit. It is something God freely gives.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Romans: chapter 9, vs 1–13 NLT

1With Christ as my witness, I speak with utter truthfulness. My conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm it.

2My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief

3for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ—if that would save them.

4They are 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.

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

6Well then, has God failed to keep his promise to Israel? No, for not all who are born into the nation of Israel are truly members of God’s people!

7Being 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.”

8This 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.

9For God had promised, “I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

10This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he married Rebekah, she gave birth to twins.

11But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes;

12he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, “Your older son will serve your younger son.”

13In the words of the Scriptures, “I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau.”

## OVERVIEW - PT 1

- Paul begins with deep grief for Israel and expresses his willingness to sacrifice himself if it meant their salvation. (vs1–3)
- He reminds readers of Israel's unique privileges and history with God. (vs4–5)
- Paul clarifies that God's promise has not failed—because God's promise was never based on physical lineage alone. (vs6–8)
- Using Isaac, Jacob, and Esau, Paul shows that God's choosing has always been based on His purpose, not human effort or merit. (vs9–13)

## NOTES:

# OPENING QUESTION

Have you ever deeply wanted something for someone else—something they didn't seem to want for themselves?

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## CONVERSATION - VS 1-13

Watch segment 1 from the podcast: “Children of the Promise”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verses 1–3, Paul expresses intense sorrow for people he loves who don't know Jesus. What does this reveal about Paul's heart—and how does it challenge the way we think about people far from God?

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In verses 6–8, Paul says that not all physical descendants of Abraham are children of the promise. What does this teach us about the difference between religious background and genuine faith?

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In verses 11–13, Paul emphasizes that God's choice was made before Jacob and Esau had done anything good or bad. Why do you think it's important to understand that God's grace is not earned?

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## SCRIPTURE READING PT 2

Romans: chapter 9:14–29 NLT

14Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not! 15For God said to Moses, "I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose." 16So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it. 17For 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." 18So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen. 19Well then, you might say, "Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven't they simply done what he makes them do?"

20No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? 21When 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?

22In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction. 23He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory.

Continued...

24And we are among those whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles. 25Concerning 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.” 26And, “Then, at the place where they were told, ‘You are not my people, there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’” 27And 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. 28For the LORD will carry out his sentence upon the earth quickly and with finality.” 29And as Isaiah said earlier, “If the LORD of Heaven’s Armies had not spared a few of our children, we would have been wiped out like Sodom, destroyed like Gomorrah.”

## OVERVIEW - PT 2

- Paul confronts the question of God’s fairness and firmly states that God’s mercy is His to give. (vs14–16)
- He uses Pharaoh as an example of how God’s power and purpose are displayed in human history. (vs17–18)
- Paul reminds readers that God is the Creator, and we are the creation—He has authority over His plan. (vs19–21)
- God’s patience reveals His mercy, even toward those who resist Him. (vs22–23)
- Paul shows that God’s plan has always included Gentiles and a faithful remnant of Israel. (vs24–29)

## CONVERSATION - VS 14-29

Watch segment 2 from the podcast: “Mercy That We Don’t Earn”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 16, Paul says mercy does not depend on human desire or effort. How does that truth bring freedom—and how might it challenge our pride?

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Paul uses the image of a potter and clay in verses 20–21. Why is it sometimes hard for us to accept God’s authority over our lives?

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In verses 25–26, Paul shows that people once far from God are now called His children. How does this shape the way we view our own story—and the stories of others?

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## **ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

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## **RECAP**

In today’s study, Paul revealed his deep love and sorrow for Israel while reminding us that God’s promises have never failed. We learned that God’s saving plan has always been based on His mercy and purpose—not human effort, family background, or religious performance. Paul showed us that God is sovereign, patient, and faithful, and that His mercy extends to both Jews and Gentiles. Ultimately, this chapter invites us to respond not with pride or confusion, but with humility, trust, and gratitude for the mercy we’ve received.

## RESPONSES

1. I struggle with understanding God's sovereignty, but I want to trust His wisdom even when I don't fully understand.
2. I'm grateful that God's mercy isn't based on my performance. I want to live from gratitude, not guilt.
3. This study reminds me to pray for people I love who are far from God, trusting Him with their hearts.

Based on your response, you may want to talk with someone. We encourage you to speak with your group leader or reach out to us. You can either send us a message on the OLV website or call the ministry phone number: 346.370.3642

## APPLICATION

What is one way this week you can respond to God's mercy—either by trusting Him more fully or extending grace to someone else?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,  
Thank You for Your mercy that we did not earn and could never deserve. Help us to trust Your wisdom and sovereignty, even when we don't understand Your ways. Give us hearts like Paul's—full of compassion for those who don't yet know You. Teach us to walk humbly, gratefully, and faithfully as recipients of Your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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# SESSION 12

Topic: “Righteousness by Faith”

## INTRO

After addressing God’s sovereign mercy in Romans 9:1–29, Paul now turns to a question that hits much closer to home: If salvation is by God’s mercy, where does human responsibility fit in?

Paul explains that Israel’s struggle was not a lack of effort or passion, but a misunderstanding of how righteousness is received. They pursued right standing with God through obedience to the law instead of faith. Meanwhile, the Gentiles—who weren’t even searching for righteousness—received it by simply trusting in Jesus.

Paul then makes one of the clearest Gospel invitations in all of Scripture: salvation is available to everyone who believes, calls on Jesus, and confesses Him as Lord. Faith comes by hearing—and that truth places responsibility on both the hearer and the messenger.

## SCRIPTURE READING - PT 1

Romans: chapter 9:30 – 10:4 NLT

30 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 get 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 trusting 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 trusts in him will never be disgraced.”

10:1 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. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.

## OVERVIEW - PT 1

- Paul contrasts two paths to righteousness: faith versus works. (9:30–31)
- Gentiles received righteousness by faith, while Israel pursued it through the law. (9:30–32)
- Israel stumbled over Jesus because they tried to earn what could only be received. (9:32–33)
- Paul expresses his deep desire for Israel's salvation. (10:1)
- Zeal without understanding led them to reject God's way. (10:2–3)
- Jesus fulfilled the law and became the source of righteousness for everyone who believes. (10:4)

## NOTES:

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## OPENING QUESTION

Have you ever worked really hard for something, only to realize later that there was an easier or better way?

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## CONVERSATION - VS 9:30-10:4

Watch segment 1 from the podcast: “Trying vs Trusting”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In 9:30–31, Paul says the Gentiles received righteousness even though they weren't pursuing it, while Israel missed it despite their effort. What does this teach us about effort versus faith?

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In 10:2, Paul says Israel had zeal but lacked understanding. Why do you think sincerity alone is not enough when it comes to faith?

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In verse 4, Paul says Christ fulfilled the purpose of the law. How does this truth free us from trying to earn God's approval?

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## SCRIPTURE READING - PT 2

Romans: chapter 10:5–13 NLT

5For Moses writes that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands. 6But 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). 7And don't say, 'Who will go down to the place of the dead?' (to bring Christ back to life again)." 8In fact, it says, "The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart." And that message is the very message about faith that we preach. 9If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.

11As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." 12Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him.

13For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."

## OVERVIEW - PT 2

- Paul contrasts righteousness through the law with righteousness through faith. (vs5–8)
- Salvation is not distant or complicated—it is near and accessible. (vs8)
- Faith involves believing in the heart and confessing with the mouth. (vs9–10)
- God makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile. (vs11–12)
- Salvation is available to everyone who calls on the name of the Lord. (vs13)

## NOTES:

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## CONVERSATION - VS 5-13

Watch segment 2 from the podcast: “The Simplicity of the Gospel”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 9, Paul lays out a clear response to the Gospel. Why do you think belief and confession are both important?

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Paul says the message of salvation is “close at hand.” Why do people still struggle to receive something so simple?

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Verse 13 says “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How does this shape the way we view who the Gospel is for?

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## SCRIPTURE READING - PT 3

### Romans: chapter 10:14–21 NLT

14But 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? 15And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!” 16But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, “LORD, who has believed our message?”

17So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. 18But I ask, have the people of Israel actually heard the message? Yes, they have: “The message has gone throughout the earth, and the words to all the world.” 19But I ask, did the people of Israel understand? Yes, they did, for even in the time of Moses, God said, “I will rouse your jealousy through people who are not even a nation. I will provoke your anger through the foolish Gentiles.” 20And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God, saying, “I was found by people who were not looking for me. I showed myself to those who were not asking for me.” 21But regarding Israel, God said, “All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious.”

## OVERVIEW - PT 3

- Paul explains the chain of responsibility in sharing the Gospel. (vs14–15)
- Faith comes from hearing the message about Christ. (vs16–17)
- Israel heard the message but resisted it. (vs18–19)
- Gentiles responded to God even though they were not seeking Him. (vs20)
- God’s heart toward Israel remains open, patient, and longing. (vs21)

## NOTES:

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# CONVERSATION - VS 14-21

Watch segment 3 from the podcast: “Faith Comes by Hearing”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verses 14–15, Paul outlines how people come to faith. What role do we play in that process?

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Verse 17 says faith comes by hearing the message about Christ. Who played a role in sharing the Gospel with you?

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In verse 21, God says He has held out His arms all day long. What does this tell us about God’s heart toward those who resist Him?

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## ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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## RECAP

In today’s study, Paul showed us that righteousness is not earned through effort, obedience, or religious passion—it is received through faith in Jesus. Israel’s mistake was trying to achieve what God freely offers. We learned that salvation is simple, accessible, and available to everyone who believes and calls on Jesus. Finally, Paul reminded us that faith comes by hearing, and that God invites us to be part of sharing the Good News with a world that desperately needs it.

## RESPONSES

1. I've been trying to earn God's approval instead of trusting what Jesus already did for me.
2. I believe in Jesus, but I want to grow in confidently sharing my faith with others.
3. This study reminds me that God's invitation is open to everyone—including people I've written off.

Based on your response, you may want to talk with someone. We encourage you to speak with your group leader or reach out to us. You can either send us a message on the OLV website or call the ministry phone number: 346.370.3642

## APPLICATION

What is one way you can respond this week—by trusting Jesus more deeply or by helping someone else hear the Good News?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,  
Thank You for making salvation clear and accessible through faith in Jesus.  
Forgive us for the times we've tried to earn what You freely give. Help us to  
trust You fully, and give us boldness to share the Good News with others. Open  
our hearts to Your grace and use our lives to point people toward You. In Jesus'  
name, Amen.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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# SESSION 13

Topic: “Grafted In by Grace”

## INTRO

After addressing Israel’s rejection of the Gospel in chapters 9 and 10, Paul now confronts a question many readers would be asking: Has God rejected His people entirely?

Paul’s answer is a firm no. God has not abandoned Israel. Instead, Paul explains that God has preserved a faithful remnant, just as He has done throughout history. At the same time, God has used Israel’s rejection to open the door for the Gentiles.

Using the powerful image of an olive tree, Paul shows how Gentile believers have been graciously “grafted in” to God’s family—not because they earned it, but because of God’s mercy. This passage is both a reassurance of God’s faithfulness and a warning against pride, reminding believers to remain humble, grateful, and dependent on God.

## SCRIPTURE READING PT 1

Romans: Chapter 11:1–10 (NLT)

1I ask, then, has God rejected his own people, the nation of Israel? Of course not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2No, God has not rejected his own people, whom he chose from the very beginning. Do you realize what the Scriptures say about Elijah? How he pleaded with God against 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.” 4And do you remember God’s reply? He said, “No, I have 7,000 others who have never bowed down to Baal!” 5It is the same today, for a few of the people of Israel have remained faithful because of God’s grace—his undeserved kindness in choosing them. 6And since it is through God’s kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God’s grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved. 7So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they were looking for so earnestly. A few have—the ones God has chosen—but the hearts of the rest were hardened. 8As the Scriptures say,

“God has put them into a deep sleep.

To this day he has shut their eyes so they do not see,  
and closed their ears so they do not hear.”

9Likewise, 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.

10Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see,  
and let their backs be bent forever.”

# OVERVIEW

- Paul asks if God has rejected Israel and immediately answers no. (vs1–2)
- He uses himself and the prophet Elijah as evidence that God always preserves a faithful remnant. (vs1–4)
- God's remnant exists because of grace, not works. (vs5–6)
- While some received God's favor, others were hardened due to unbelief. (vs7–10)

## NOTES:

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## OPENING QUESTION

Have you ever felt like you were the only one still trying to do what's right?

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## CONVERSATION - VS 1-10

Watch segment 1 from the podcast: "A Faithful Remnant"

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verses 1–2, Paul insists that God has not rejected Israel. Why is it important to know that God remains faithful even when people are unfaithful?

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Paul references Elijah's despair in verses 3–4. Why do you think God reminded Elijah that he wasn't alone—and how does that apply to us today?

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In verses 5–6, Paul emphasizes that God's grace cannot be earned. Why do we still struggle to accept that salvation is truly a free gift?

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## SCRIPTURE READING PT 2

Romans: chapter 11:11–16 NLT

11Did God's people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But he wanted his own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves. 12Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the people of Israel turned down God's offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when they finally accept it.

13I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I stress this,

14for I want somehow to make the people of Israel jealous of what you Gentiles have, so I might save some of them.

15For since their rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful. It will be life for those who were dead!

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

# OVERVIEW

- Israel's rejection was not final or irreversible. (vs11)
- God used Israel's stumble to bring salvation to the Gentiles. (vs11–12)
- Paul's ministry to the Gentiles was also meant to provoke Israel to faith. (vs13–14)
- Israel's future acceptance will bring even greater blessing. (vs15)
- Paul introduces the image of roots and branches to describe God's covenant faithfulness. (vs16)

## CONVERSATION - VS 11-16

Watch segment 2 from the podcast: "God's Bigger Redemptive Plan"

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 11, Paul says Israel's stumble was not beyond recovery. Why is that hopeful for people who feel far from God?

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Paul says God used Israel's rejection to bring salvation to the Gentiles. What does this teach us about how God works through broken situations?

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In verse 15, Paul says Israel's future acceptance will be "life from the dead." What does that phrase suggest about restoration and renewal?

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# SCRIPTURE READING PT 3

## Romans: chapter 11:17–24 NLT

17But some of the 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. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God's special olive tree.

18But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root.

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

20Yes, 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.

21For if God did not spare the original branches, he won't spare you either.

22Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind toward you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off.

23And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree.

24You, by nature a branch from a wild olive tree, were grafted in to a cultivated tree. So if God was willing to do something contrary to nature by grafting wild branches into his cultivated tree, he will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree where they belong.

## OVERVIEW

- Paul introduces the olive tree illustration to explain God's plan. (vs17)
- Gentile believers are grafted in by faith, not superiority. (vs18–20)
- Paul warns Gentiles against pride and spiritual arrogance. (vs18–21)
- God's kindness leads to life, but unbelief leads to separation. (vs22)
- God is fully able—and eager—to restore Israel if they turn back to Him. (vs23–24)

## CONVERSATION - VS 17-24

Watch segment 3 from the podcast: "Grafted In by Grace"

## NOTES:

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verses 18–20, Paul warns Gentiles not to become proud. Why is pride such a danger in spiritual growth?

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Paul says we stand by faith, not by superiority. How does that truth affect the way we view other believers—or those who don't yet believe?

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In verses 23–24, Paul emphasizes God's desire to restore what was broken. How does this shape the way you view God's heart toward people who have walked away?

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## ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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## RECAP

In today's study, Paul reassured us that God has not rejected His people and that His promises still stand. We learned that God always preserves a faithful remnant and that salvation—whether for Jews or Gentiles—is rooted in grace alone. Through the image of the olive tree, Paul reminded Gentile believers that they were grafted in by faith, not merit, and warned against pride. Finally, we saw God's heart for restoration and His power to bring people back into relationship with Him.

## RESPONSES

1. I'm grateful that God hasn't given up on me, even when I've struggled with faith.
2. I recognize pride in my own heart and want to grow in humility and gratitude.
3. This study gives me hope for people I love who feel far from God.

Based on your response, you may want to talk with someone. We encourage you to speak with your group leader or reach out to us. You can either send us a message on the OLV website or call the ministry phone number: 346.370.3642

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## APPLICATION

What is one way you can walk in humility and gratitude this week, remembering that you stand by grace alone?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your faithfulness and grace. Thank You for grafting us into Your family, not because of who we are, but because of who You are. Guard our hearts from pride and help us to remain humble, grateful, and trusting in You. Give us hope for restoration—both in our own lives and in the lives of those we love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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# SESSION 14

Topic: “The Mystery and Mercy of God”

## INTRO

After carefully walking through God’s sovereignty, human responsibility, Israel’s rejection, and the inclusion of the Gentiles, Paul now pulls back the curtain on what he calls a mystery—not something hidden forever, but something God is now revealing.

Paul explains that Israel’s hardening is partial and temporary, and that God is still working toward a future restoration. God’s plan has never failed, never changed, and never excluded mercy. In fact, Paul shows that God has allowed everyone to experience disobedience so that everyone might experience mercy. Overwhelmed by the wisdom, depth, and faithfulness of God’s plan, Paul ends not with an argument—but with worship. Romans 11 closes with one of the most beautiful doxologies in all of Scripture, reminding us that everything begins with God, flows through God, and ultimately returns to God.

## SCRIPTURE READING PT 1

Romans: chapter 11:25–27 NLT

25I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ.

26And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say,

“The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem,  
and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness.

27And this is my covenant with them,  
that I will take away their sins.”

## OVERVIEW - PT 1

- Paul reveals a “mystery” to prevent pride among Gentile believers. (vs25)
- Israel’s hardening is partial and temporary, not total or permanent. (vs25)
- God is still working toward the salvation of Israel. (vs26)
- God’s covenant promise includes forgiveness and restoration. (vs26–27)

## NOTES:

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## OPENING QUESTION

Have you ever misunderstood a situation because you didn't see the full picture?

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## CONVERSATION - VS 25-27

Watch segment 1 from the podcast: "A Mystery Revealed"

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 25, Paul says this truth is revealed so believers won't become proud. Why is understanding God's bigger plan a safeguard against pride?

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Paul says Israel's hardening is only temporary. How does this challenge the idea that God gives up on people or breaks His promises?

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In verse 27, God promises to take away their sins. What does this reveal about the heart of God toward restoration?

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## SCRIPTURE READING PT 2

### Romans: chapter 11:28–32 NLT

28Many of the people of Israel are now enemies of the Good News, and this benefits you Gentiles. Yet they are still the people he loves because he chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

29For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn.

30Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the people of Israel rebelled against him, God was merciful to you instead.

31Now they are the rebels, and God's mercy has come to you so that they, too, will share in God's mercy.

32For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone.

## OVERVIEW

- Israel's current rejection of the Gospel has opened the door for Gentiles. (vs28–30)
- God's love for Israel remains because of His covenant promises. (vs28)
- God's gifts and calling are irrevocable. (vs29)
- God's ultimate goal is mercy for all people. (vs30–32)

## NOTES:

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## CONVERSATION - VS 28-32

Watch segment 2 from the podcast: “Mercy for All”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Verse 29 says God's gifts and calling can never be withdrawn. Why is this truth so important when we struggle with guilt, failure, or doubt?

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Paul explains that God allowed both Jews and Gentiles to experience disobedience. How does that level the ground for everyone?

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In verse 32, Paul says God's ultimate purpose is mercy. How does this reshape the way you view God's character?

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## ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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## SCRIPTURE READING PT 3

### Romans: chapter 11:33–36 NLT

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

34For who can know the LORD's thoughts?  
Who knows enough to give him advice?  
35And who has given him so much  
that he needs to pay it back?

36For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory.  
All glory to him forever! Amen.

## OVERVIEW

- Paul responds to God's plan with worship, not explanation. (vs33)
- God's wisdom and knowledge are beyond human understanding. (vs33–34)
- God owes nothing to anyone; everything is a gift of grace. (vs35)
- All things come from God, exist through God, and return to God's glory. (vs36)

## CONVERSATION - VS 33-36

Watch segment 3 from the podcast: “From Theology to Worship”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Paul ends this section of Romans in worship instead of debate. Why is it important to know when to trust God instead of trying to fully understand Him?

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Verse 36 says everything comes from God and exists for His glory. How does that perspective change the way you view your life and purpose?

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What does it look like for theology to lead us to humility and worship rather than pride or arguments?

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## **ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

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## **RECAP**

In today's study, Paul revealed that God's plan for Israel and the Gentiles is far bigger than anyone imagined. We learned that Israel's hardening is temporary, God's promises are unbreakable, and His ultimate purpose is mercy for all. Paul reminded us that God's gifts and calling cannot be taken back, and that no one earns His grace. The chapter ends with a powerful reminder that when we reach the limits of our understanding, the proper response is worship—because everything comes from God, exists through Him, and is for His glory.

## RESPONSES

1. I struggle with trusting God when I don't understand what He's doing, but I want to grow in faith.
2. I'm grateful for God's mercy in my life and want to live with more humility and worship.
3. This study gives me hope that God is still working—even when things seem confusing or broken.

Based on your response, you may want to talk with someone. We encourage you to speak with your group leader or reach out to us. You can either send us a message on the OLV website or call the ministry phone number: 346.370.3642

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## APPLICATION

What is one way you can respond this week in worship—by trusting God more deeply, showing mercy to others, or living intentionally for His glory?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,  
We stand in awe of Your wisdom, mercy, and faithfulness. When Your ways are beyond our understanding, help us to trust Your heart. Thank You for Your mercy that reaches us in our disobedience and restores us by grace. May our lives reflect gratitude, humility, and worship as we live for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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# SESSION 15

Topic: “Love That Looks Like Jesus”

## INTRO

Romans 12 begins with one of the most important words in the entire letter: “Therefore.” With that single word, Paul turns the corner. For eleven chapters, Paul has carefully explained what God has done for us—our sin, God’s grace, justification by faith, freedom from condemnation, the work of the Spirit, God’s mercy toward Jews and Gentiles, and His unshakable faithfulness. Now, Paul asks a natural question: If this is what God has done for us... how should we live? Paul makes it clear that the Christian life is not just about what we believe, but how those beliefs transform the way we think, live, and respond to God. The Gospel does not simply save us—it reshapes us.

Paul now describes what that transformation actually looks like in daily relationships. Paul paints a picture of a community that reflects Jesus: people who love genuinely, serve faithfully, endure hardship with hope, and respond to evil not with retaliation, but with grace.

## SCRIPTURE READING PT 1

Romans: chapter 12:1–13 NLT

1And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

2Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

3Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don’t think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. 4Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, 5so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

6In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. 7If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. 8If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. 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.

9Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. 10Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. 11Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. 12Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. 13When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

# OVERVIEW

- Paul challenges believers to surrender their lives and how they live to God. (vs1-2)
- Paul asks believers to evaluate themselves with honest consideration. (vs 3)
- He uses our physical body to draw a relationship with the body of Christ. (vs4-5)
- God gives different gifts to each believer by His grace. (vs6)
- Gifts are meant to be used faithfully and enthusiastically. (vs6-8)
- Love must be sincere, not performative. (vs9)
- Believers are called to honor one another above themselves. (vs10)
- Faith is expressed through perseverance, prayer, generosity, and hospitality. (vs11-13)

## NOTES:

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## OPENING QUESTION

Which comes more naturally for you—serving behind the scenes or being recognized for what you do?

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# CONVERSATION - VS 1-13

Watch segment 1 from the podcast: “True Worship”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 1–2 Paul connects laying down our own desires with knowing and understanding God’s will. Why do you think choosing our own way clouds our understanding of God’s will?

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In verses 6–8, Paul lists several gifts. Why do you think God values both visible and behind-the-scenes gifts equally?

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In verses 11–13, Paul connects service with perseverance and prayer. Why do you think spiritual endurance is necessary for loving well?

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# SCRIPTURE READING PT 2

## Romans: chapter 12:14–21 NLT

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

15Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep.

16Live 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!

17Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.

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

19Dear 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.

20Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them.

If they are thirsty, give them something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."

21Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

## OVERVIEW

- Believers are called to bless, not curse, those who oppose them. (vs14)
- Empathy and humility are essential to Christian community. (vs15–16)
- Followers of Jesus respond to evil with integrity and peace. (vs17–18)
- Vengeance belongs to God, not us. (vs19)
- Evil is overcome through intentional acts of goodness. (vs20–21)

## CONVERSATION – VS 14–21

Watch segment 2 from the podcast: "Overcoming Evil with Good"

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Verse 14 calls us to bless those who persecute us. Why is this one of the most difficult commands of Jesus to live out?

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In verses 17–19, Paul tells believers to resist revenge. What makes trusting God with justice so hard?

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Verse 21 says evil is overcome with good. What is one practical way this could change how you respond to conflict?

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## **ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

## RECAP

In today's study, Paul showed us what a transformed life truly looks like. We learned that our gifts are given by grace and meant to serve others with love. We saw that genuine love is active—it honors others, perseveres through hardship, practices generosity, and responds to opposition with grace. Paul reminds us that followers of Jesus are not called to mirror the world's reactions, but to reflect Christ by overcoming evil with good.

# RESPONSES

1. I want to better understand and faithfully use the gifts God has given me.
2. I struggle to love sincerely in difficult relationships and want God's help to grow.
3. I tend to respond defensively or seek revenge, and I want to learn how to trust God with justice.

Based on your response, you may want to talk with someone. We encourage you to speak with your group leader or reach out to us. You can either send us a message on the OLV website or call the ministry phone number: 346.370.3642

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## APPLICATION

What is one intentional way you can practice genuine love this week—through service, generosity, empathy, or forgiveness?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the grace You've given us through Jesus. Help us to use our gifts humbly, love sincerely, and respond to others the way Christ has responded to us. Teach us to trust You with justice and to overcome evil with good. Shape our lives so they reflect Your love in every relationship. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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# SESSION 16

Topic: “Living as People of the Light”

## INTRO

In Romans 13, Paul turns our attention to what transformed lives look like in the public square. Following Jesus doesn’t just affect our personal spirituality—it shapes how we interact with authority, how we treat others, and how we live in a broken world.

Paul addresses three major areas of daily life: our relationship to governing authorities, our responsibility to love others, and our urgency to live differently because of the time we’re living in.

At the heart of this chapter is a simple truth: love is the fulfillment of the law, and followers of Jesus are called to live awake, alert, and clothed in the character of Christ.

## SCRIPTURE READING PT 1

Romans: chapter 13:1–7 NLT

1Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. 2So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. 3For the 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. 4The authorities are God’s servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God’s servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. 5So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience. 6Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid. They are serving God in what they do. 7Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor to those who are in authority.

## OVERVIEW

- Paul teaches that governing authority ultimately comes from God. (vs1)
- Resisting authority is resisting God’s established order. (vs2)
- Authorities exist to promote good and restrain evil. (vs3–4)
- Submission is motivated by conscience, not just fear of punishment. (vs5)
- Believers are called to live honorably, responsibly, and respectfully in society. (vs6–7)

## **NOTES:**

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## **OPENING QUESTION**

Why do you think authority—rules, leadership, or accountability—is often difficult for people to accept?

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## **CONVERSATION - VS 1-7**

Watch segment 1 from the podcast: “Faith and Authority”

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Paul says all authority is established by God. How does that challenge the way we view leadership we disagree with?

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In verse 5, Paul says submission is about maintaining a clear conscience. What does it look like to honor God even when obedience feels difficult?

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How can believers live respectfully under authority without compromising their faith or convictions?

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## SCRIPTURE READING PT 2

Romans: chapter 13:8–10 NLT

8Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law.

9For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet." These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

10Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law.

## OVERVIEW

- The only ongoing “debt” believers should carry is love. (vs8)
- Love fulfills the law by guiding our actions toward others. (vs8–9)
- True love avoids harm and seeks the good of others. (vs10)

## CONVERSATION - VS 8-10

Watch segment 2 from the podcast: “Love Fulfills the Law”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Paul says love is our ongoing responsibility. Why is love harder to live out than simply following rules?

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How does viewing love as an obligation—not a feeling—change the way we treat people?

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In what ways can love guide our decisions when Scripture doesn't give a clear rule?

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## SCRIPTURE READING PT 3

Romans: chapter 13:11–14 NLT

11 This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

12 The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.

13 Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy.

14 Instead, clothe yourselves with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.

## OVERVIEW

- Paul urges believers to live with urgency and awareness. (vs11)
- Followers of Jesus are called to live as people of the light. (vs12–13)
- Old patterns of darkness are to be put away. (vs13)
- Believers are to “put on” the character and presence of Jesus daily. (vs14)

# CONVERSATION - VS 11-14

Watch segment 3 from the podcast: “Clothed in Christ”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Paul says it's time to “wake up.” What does spiritual sleepiness look like today?

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In verse 14, Paul says to clothe ourselves with Christ. What practical habits help us do that daily?

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Why do you think Paul connects urgency with holiness and self-control?

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## RECAP

In today's study, Paul showed us that transformed lives are visible lives. We learned that following Jesus shapes how we relate to authority, how we love others, and how we live with urgency and purpose. Paul reminded us that love fulfills the law and that believers are called to live awake, alert, and clothed in Christ. As people of the light, our lives should point others toward the hope and transformation found in Jesus.

## RESPONSES

1. I struggle with honoring authority, and I want God to help me grow in humility and trust.
2. I realize there are relationships where I need to love more intentionally.
3. I've been spiritually distracted or complacent, and I want to wake up and live differently.

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## APPLICATION

What is one practical way you can live as a person of the light this week—through love, integrity, or obedience?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,  
Thank You for calling us out of darkness and into the light. Help us to live lives that honor You—in how we submit, how we love, and how we walk each day. Wake us up from spiritual complacency and clothe us with the character of Jesus, so our lives reflect Your grace and truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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# SESSION 17

Topic: “Walking in Love and Unity”

## INTRO

As Paul continues describing what transformed lives look like, he now turns his focus inward—toward relationships within the church. Romans 14 addresses an issue that was very real for the Roman believers and is still relevant today: What do we do when sincere followers of Jesus disagree?

Paul speaks to tensions between believers over personal convictions—what foods are acceptable to eat, which days are sacred, and how faith should be practiced in everyday life. Instead of giving a list of rules, Paul points believers back to love, humility, and responsibility. His message is clear: unity matters more than winning arguments, and love should guide how we treat one another.

## SCRIPTURE READING PT 1

Romans: chapter 14:1–12 NLT

1Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. 2For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. 3Those 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 accepted them.

4Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive his approval. 5In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. You should each be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable. 6Those 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. 7For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. 8If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead. 10So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

11For the Scriptures say,

“As surely as I live,” says the LORD,  
“every knee will bend to me,  
and every tongue will declare allegiance to God.”

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

# OVERVIEW

- Paul calls believers to accept one another without arguing over opinions. (vs1)
- Differences in conscience should not lead to judgment or contempt. (vs2–3)
- God alone is the judge of His servants. (vs4)
- Personal convictions should be practiced with sincerity and gratitude to God. (vs5–6)
- Every believer belongs to the Lord and lives to honor Him. (vs7–9)
- Each person will give an account of their own life to God. (vs10–12)

## NOTES:

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## OPENING QUESTION

Why do disagreements between Christians sometimes feel more intense than disagreements with people outside the church?

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## CONVERSATION - VS 1-12

Watch segment 1 from the podcast: “Matters of Conscience”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verses 1–3, Paul warns against judging others over personal convictions. Why is it tempting to measure someone's faith by whether they agree with us?

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In verse 4, Paul reminds us that believers answer to God, not to each other. How does this truth change the way we approach disagreements?

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Verses 7–9 say that whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. How does remembering this help bring unity in areas of difference?

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## SCRIPTURE READING PT 2

Romans: chapter 14:13–18 NLT

13 So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer 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. Don't let your eating ruin someone for whom Christ died.

16 Then you will not be criticized for doing something you believe is good.

17 For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too.

# OVERVIEW

- Paul urges believers to prioritize others over personal freedom. (vs13)
- Love sometimes means limiting freedom for the sake of another's faith. (vs14–15)
- The Kingdom of God is about righteousness, peace, and joy—not rules. (vs16–17)
- Living this way honors Christ and strengthens community. (vs18)

## CONVERSATION - VS 13-18

Watch segment 2 from the podcast: “Freedom Guided by Love”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 15, Paul says love should guide how we use our freedom. Why is love sometimes more costly than simply being right?

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Verse 17 reminds us what truly matters in God's Kingdom. How do we keep secondary issues from becoming primary ones?

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How can choosing peace and joy over personal preference strengthen relationships in the church?

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# SCRIPTURE READING PT 3

## Romans: chapter 14:19–23 NLT

19So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

20Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble.

21It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble.

22You may believe there's nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God.

Blessed are those who don't feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right.

23But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead and do it. For you are not following your convictions. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.

## OVERVIEW

Believers are called to pursue peace and mutual growth. (vs19)

Personal freedom should never destroy God's work in others. (vs20)

Sometimes love means restraint for the sake of unity. (vs21)

Acting against conscience leads to guilt and spiritual harm. (vs22–23)

## CONVERSATION - VS 19-23

Watch segment 3 from the podcast: “Building, Not Breaking”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 19, Paul says we should aim for harmony. What makes unity so difficult in practice?

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Paul encourages believers to keep certain convictions between themselves and God. Why is wisdom needed in how openly we express our freedoms?

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In verse 23, Paul says acting against conscience is sin. Why is listening to your conscience important for spiritual growth?

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## **ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

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## **RECAP**

In today's study, Paul reminded us that unity in the church matters deeply to God. We learned that differences in personal convictions should never lead to judgment or division. Instead, love should guide how we live, speak, and use our freedom. Paul showed us that the Kingdom of God is not about winning arguments or enforcing preferences, but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. When believers choose humility and love, the church becomes a place where faith can grow and flourish.

## RESPONSES

I tend to judge others when their convictions differ from mine, and I want to grow in grace and humility.

I need to be more mindful of how my choices affect others' faith.

I want to pursue peace and unity instead of proving I'm right.

4. Other...

Based on your response, you may want to talk with someone. We encourage you to speak with your group leader or reach out to us. You can either send us a message on the OLV website or call the ministry phone number: 346.370.3642

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## APPLICATION

What is one practical way you can pursue peace and build others up this week—especially in areas where opinions differ?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for welcoming us with grace. Help us to extend that same grace to others, especially when we disagree. Teach us to use our freedom wisely, guided by love, humility, and concern for one another. May our lives build up the body of Christ and reflect Your heart for unity. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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# SESSION 18

Topic: “United in Hope”

## INTRO

After addressing disagreements and matters of conscience in Romans 14, Paul now lifts his eyes to the bigger picture: a united church that reflects the heart of Christ.

Paul calls stronger believers to carry the burdens of others, reminding the church that Christian maturity is not about asserting freedom, but about serving in love. He points to Jesus as the ultimate example of selflessness and endurance. Then, drawing from the Old Testament, Paul shows that God’s plan has always been to unite Jews and Gentiles in worship and hope.

Romans 15:1–13 reminds us that the church is strongest when it is shaped by humility, encouragement, Scripture, and hope—so that together we might bring glory to God with one voice.

## SCRIPTURE READING PT 1

Romans: chapter 15:1–6 NLT

1We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. 2We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord.

3For even Christ didn’t live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, “The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me.” 4Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God’s promises to be fulfilled.

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

## OVERVIEW

- Stronger believers are called to bear with and support the weak. (vs1)
- The goal of strength is building others up, not pleasing ourselves. (vs2)
- Jesus is the ultimate example of selfless love. (vs3)
- Scripture provides endurance, encouragement, and hope. (vs4)
- God desires unity so the church can glorify Him together. (vs5–6)

## NOTES:

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## OPENING QUESTION

Who has helped carry you through a difficult season of faith?

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## CONVERSATION - VS 1-6

Watch segment 1 from the podcast: “Bearing One Another’s Burdens”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 1, Paul says the strong should support the weak. How does this redefine what spiritual maturity looks like?

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Paul points to Jesus as our example in verse 3. Why is it sometimes difficult to follow Christ's example of selflessness?

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Verse 4 highlights the role of Scripture in giving hope and endurance. How has God's Word encouraged you during hard seasons?

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## SCRIPTURE READING PT 2

Romans: chapter 15:7–13 NLT

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

8Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. 9He also came so that the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the psalms mean when they say,

“For this I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing praises to your name.”

10And in another place it is written, “Rejoice with his people, you Gentiles.”

11And yet again, “Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles. Praise him, all you people of the earth.”

12And 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.”

13I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## OVERVIEW

- Believers are called to accept one another as Christ accepted them. (vs7)
- Jesus fulfilled God's promises to Israel and extended mercy to the Gentiles. (vs8–9)
- Scripture shows God's long-standing plan for unity in worship. (vs9–12)
- God fills His people with joy, peace, and hope through the Holy Spirit. (vs13)

# CONVERSATION - VS 7-13

Watch segment 2 from the podcast: “A People of Hope”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 7, Paul connects acceptance with God’s glory. Why does unity in the church point people toward God?

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Paul quotes multiple Old Testament passages to show God’s plan for Jews and Gentiles. How does this strengthen our confidence in God’s faithfulness?

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Verse 13 describes a life overflowing with hope. What does it mean to live with joy and peace rooted in trust in God?

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## ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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## RECAP

In today's study, Paul reminded us that a healthy church is marked by humility, patience, and love. We learned that spiritual strength is meant to serve others, not ourselves, and that Jesus is our ultimate example of sacrificial love. Paul showed us how Scripture fuels endurance and hope, and how God's plan has always been to unite people from every background in worship. Finally, we were reminded that true joy, peace, and hope come from trusting God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## RESPONSES

1. I need to grow in patience and learn to put others' needs before my own.
2. I struggle with accepting people who are different from me, and I want God to change my heart.
3. I want to live with greater joy and hope, trusting God more fully.
4. Other...

Based on your response, you may want to talk with someone. We encourage you to speak with your group leader or reach out to us. You can either send us a message on the OLV website or call the ministry phone number: 346.370.3642

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## APPLICATION

What is one practical way you can help build unity and encouragement in your community this week?

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## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for accepting us through Christ. Help us to reflect that same grace toward others. Teach us to live in unity, to encourage one another, and to carry each other's burdens with love. Fill us with joy and peace as we trust You, and let our lives overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

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# SESSION 19

Topic: “A Life Sent on Mission”

## INTRO

As Paul moves toward the close of his letter, Romans becomes deeply personal. After unpacking theology, unity, and hope, Paul now shares his own heart—his calling, his mission, and his dependence on God and the church.

In this section, Paul reminds the Roman believers that the Gospel is meant to move outward. God’s grace doesn’t stop with understanding or agreement; it compels us into obedience, service, and mission. Paul also models humility, explaining that everything he has accomplished is the result of Christ working through him. Finally, he invites the church into partnership through prayer, showing that mission is never meant to be carried out alone.

## SCRIPTURE READING PT 1

Romans: chapter 15:14–21 NLT

14I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach others all about them.

15Even 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,

16I am a special messenger from Christ Jesus to you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News so that you might become an acceptable offering to God, made holy by the Holy Spirit.

17So I have reason to be enthusiastic about all Christ Jesus has done through me in my service to God.

18Yet I dare not boast about anything except what Christ has done through me, bringing the Gentiles to God by my message and by the way I worked among them.

19They were convinced by the power of miraculous signs and wonders and by the power of God’s Spirit. In this way, I have fully presented the Good News of Christ from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum.

20My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard, rather than where a church has already been started by someone else.

21I 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.”

## OVERVIEW

- Paul affirms the spiritual maturity and goodness of the Roman believers. (vs14)
- He explains his boldness as a reminder, rooted in God's grace. (vs15–16)
- Paul gives credit to Christ alone for the fruit of his ministry. (vs17–18)
- The Gospel advanced through both words and the power of the Spirit. (vs19)
- Paul's calling was to reach those who had never heard the name of Jesus. (vs20–21)

## NOTES:

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## OPENING QUESTION

How have you seen generosity strengthen relationships or unity within the church?

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## CONVERSATION - VS 14-21

Watch segment 1 from the podcast: "Called and Sent"

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 14, Paul affirms the Romans before correcting or instructing them. Why is encouragement important in spiritual leadership?

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Paul repeatedly refuses to boast in himself. Why is humility essential for anyone serving God?

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In verses 20–21, Paul describes his ambition to reach unreached people. What might obedience to God's calling look like in your own life?

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## SCRIPTURE READING PT 2

Romans: chapter 15:22–29 NLT

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

23But now I have finished my work in these regions, and after all these long years of waiting, I am eager to visit you. 24I 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.

25But before I come, I must go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the believers there. 26For you see, the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have eagerly taken up an offering for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem.

27They were glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the spiritual blessings of the Good News from the believers in Jerusalem, they feel the least they can do is help them financially.

28As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will go on to Spain, stopping in Rome along the way. 29And I am sure that when I come, Christ will richly bless our time together.

# OVERVIEW

- Paul explains why he has not yet visited Rome. (vs22–23)
- He shares his future plans, including his desire to partner with the Roman church. (vs24)
- Paul highlights generosity and unity between Gentile and Jewish believers. (vs25–27)
- Financial generosity is portrayed as a response to spiritual blessing. (vs27)
- Paul expresses confidence that Christ will bless their time together. (vs28–29)

## CONVERSATION - VS 22-29

Watch segment 2 from the podcast: “Partners in the Gospel”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Paul’s plans were shaped by God’s mission, not personal comfort. How does that challenge the way we make decisions?

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Why do you think Paul emphasizes generosity between churches from different backgrounds?

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How does viewing giving as a response to God’s blessing change our attitude toward generosity?

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# SCRIPTURE READING PT 3

## Romans: chapter 15:30–33 NLT

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 because of your love for me, given to you by the Holy Spirit.

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 God's will, I will be able to come to you with a joyful heart and enjoy my time with you.

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

## OVERVIEW

- Paul invites the church into spiritual partnership through prayer. (vs30)
- He asks for protection, wisdom, and unity. (vs31)
- Paul desires fellowship that flows from God's will. (vs32)
- The passage closes with a blessing of peace. (vs33)

## CONVERSATION – VS 30-33

Watch segment 3 from the podcast: “Striving Together in Prayer”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Paul asks believers to “join in my struggle” through prayer. Why is prayer essential to mission?

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What does Paul's request reveal about his humility and dependence on others?

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How can praying for leaders and missionaries strengthen the church today?

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## RECAP

In today's study, Paul opened his heart and shared his calling, his plans, and his need for partnership. We learned that the Gospel propels believers outward in mission, that true ministry depends on Christ's power—not human ability—and that generosity and prayer unite the church across cultures and distances. Paul reminds us that no one carries God's mission alone; we are called to serve, give, and pray together as one body.

## RESPONSES

1. I want to better understand God's calling on my life and how I can serve His mission.
2. I realize I need to grow in humility and give Christ credit for the work He does through me.
3. I want to be more intentional about praying for leaders, missionaries, and the church.
4. Other...

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# APPLICATION

What is one way to apply what you've learned, either in your own life or how you interact with others?

# CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for calling us into Your mission. Help us to walk humbly, depend fully on Your Spirit, and faithfully partner with others through generosity and prayer. Show us where You are sending us—whether across the world or across the street—and give us courage to obey. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# PRAYER REQUESTS

# SESSION 20

Topic: “A Gospel Lived in Community”

## INTRO

As Paul closes his letter to the Romans, he does something unexpected. After some of the richest theology in all of Scripture, he ends not with abstract ideas—but with names.

Romans 16 reminds us that the Gospel is not just a message to be believed; it is a life to be lived in community. Paul honors men and women who served faithfully, worked sacrificially, and stood firm in the truth. He also offers a sober warning about those who cause division, urging believers to stay alert and grounded. Finally, Paul ends where he began—with praise to God, whose wisdom and power are revealed through Jesus Christ.

This chapter shows us that faith is personal, but never private. The story of the Gospel continues through ordinary people who live it out together.

## SCRIPTURE READING PT 1

Romans: chapter 16:1-16 NLT

1I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea.

2Welcome 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.

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

4In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches.

5Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home.

Give my greetings to Epaenetus, my dear friend, who was the first person from the province of Asia to become a follower of Christ.

6Give my greetings to Mary, who has worked so hard for your benefit.

7Greet 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.

8Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.

9Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

10Greet Apelles, a good man whom Christ approves.

Give my greetings to the believers from the household of Aristobulus.

Cont...

11Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew.

Greet the Lord's people from the household of Narcissus.

12Give my greetings to Tryphena and Tryphosa, the Lord's workers, and to my dear friend Persis, who has worked so hard for the Lord.

13Greet Rufus, whom the Lord picked out to be special, and also his dear mother, who has been a mother to me.

14Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters who meet with them.

15Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the believers who meet with them.

16Greet each other in Christian love. All the churches of Christ send you their greetings.

## OVERVIEW

- Paul honors individuals who faithfully served the church. (vs1–7)
- Women and men are recognized as essential partners in ministry. (vs1–7, 12–13)
- The Gospel spreads through relationships, homes, and shared sacrifice. (vs5, 14–15)
- Paul values encouragement, gratitude, and personal connection. (vs3–16)

## OPENING QUESTION

Why do you think personal encouragement and recognition matter so much in spiritual community?

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# CONVERSATION - VS 1-16

Watch segment 1 from the podcast: “Faithful People, Faithful God”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Paul takes time to name and honor many individuals. What does this tell us about how God views faithfulness?

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Many of these believers served behind the scenes. Why is unseen faithfulness just as valuable as public leadership?

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How can intentionally affirming others strengthen unity and perseverance in the church?

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## SCRIPTURE READING PT 2

### Romans: chapter 16:17-27 NLT

17And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them.

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

21Timothy, 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.

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

25Now all glory to God, who is able to make you strong, just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has revealed his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. 26But 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 obey him. 27All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.

## OVERVIEW

- Paul begins his final instructions with, “watch out for people who cause divisions” (vs17)
- People like this are serving their own interests, not God's. (vs18)
- You are obedient, so be wise. God will soon crush Satan. (vs19–20)
- Greetings from Paul's co-workers. (vs21–23)
- All glory to God who has revealed His plan of salvation, Amen! (vs25–27)

## CONVERSATION - VS 17-27

Watch segment 2 from the podcast: “Final Instructions”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In verse 17–18, Paul warns us about people who cause divisions. What are some ways that you have seen people destroy relations or families because they were serving their own interests?

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Paul ends Romans by pointing us back to the Gospel—the mystery once hidden but now revealed—and to a God who is able to strengthen us. After everything we've studied in this letter, how has your understanding of the Gospel deepened, and in what specific ways do you sense God calling you to live differently because of it?

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## RECAP

In today's study, we saw that the Gospel is not just a message to be believed—it is a life to be lived in community. Paul closed his letter to the Romans by honoring faithful men and women who served, sacrificed, and partnered together in the work of the Gospel. Their names remind us that God works through ordinary people who live with obedience and devotion.

Paul also gave a clear warning to remain discerning and to guard the unity of the church by staying rooted in truth. Finally, he ended Romans the same way it began—with the power and wisdom of God revealed through Jesus Christ. As Paul's words turned into worship, we were reminded that right belief leads to right living, and right living ultimately leads to praise.

Romans 16 invites us to live out the Gospel faithfully, love others deeply, stay anchored in truth, and give all glory to God—together.

## RESPONSES

1. I see that following Jesus is meant to be lived out in community, not in isolation. I want to be more intentional about encouraging others and faithfully serving where God has placed me.
2. This chapter reminds me that God values faithfulness, even when it feels unseen. I want to continue serving with humility, trusting that God sees and honors obedience.
3. I see areas where I've become disconnected from Christian community, and I want to take steps toward deeper relationships and shared faith.
4. Other...

Based on your response, you may want to talk with someone. We encourage you to speak with your group leader or reach out to us. You can either send us a message on the OLV website or call the ministry phone number: 346.370.3642

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## APPLICATION

This week, identify one person in your faith community and intentionally encourage them—through a note, a message, or a conversation—affirming how you see God working in their life.

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,  
Thank You for this letter that Paul wrote to share the message of the gospel and encourage your church. We are so grateful for all the wisdom and the lessons we have learned through this letter. You are a good and gracious God. Help us to live this gospel well. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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