

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

Final Exhortations

Romans 16:17-27

Introduction: Amen. Well let's continue in worship, Harvest Decatur, with the reading of God's Word. I would like for us to read this final section of Romans together as a church. And we'll do it as responsive reading. So here's how we'll do it. I'm going to read the white portions of the text on the screen. And I want you to read the yellow portions. Okay. Pastor Ryan will help you. Let's read Romans 16:17-27 together.

¹⁷ I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

¹⁸ For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

²¹ Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. ²² I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. ²³ Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages

²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—

²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Amen. You may be seated.

So here we are this morning, finishing up the Book of Romans. I counted it up this week. I've preached 53 sermons on Romans in the last two years. 12 sermons in the series "Wholly Unholy." 17 sermons in the series "Wholly Redeemed." And this is the 24th sermon in the series "Wholly Transformed." And I know God has done a lot in our lives throughout these last two years. It's exciting to think about how Paul's letter to the Romans has been changing lives for 2000 years, and we get to be part of that great work.

The Puritan preacher Thomas Draxe called Romans, "The quintessence and perfection of saving doctrine."¹ Martin Luther called Romans the "purest Gospel."² Grant Osborne, one of my professors at Trinity and one of my favorite Bible commentators, calls Romans, "The greatest book ever penned in human history."³ The poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, says similarly, "I think that the Epistle to the Romans is the most profound work in existence."⁴ I mentioned that two of the greatest Christian thinkers in church history were converted through their reading of Romans: Augustine and Martin Luther. The Protestant Reformation was fueled by Luther's reading of Romans. And here we are in Decatur, Illinois, sharing in those great experiences.

**So here we go, Harvest Decatur. One final message from the Book of Romans. I'll give you...
Five Final Exhortations from Romans:**

¹ Quoted in Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 1.

² Ibid. Luther also said, "This epistle [Romans] is really the chief part of the New Testament and the purest gospel, which is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but also that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or contemplated too much and too well. And the more it's dealt with, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes. Quoted in Philip D. W. Krey et al., eds., *Romans 9–16: New Testament*, vol. VIII, RCS (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), 260.

³ Grant R. Osborne, *Romans: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2017), 1.

⁴ Cited by John Piper in his sermon, "The Author of the Greatest Letter Ever Written" on Romans 1:1, preached April 26, 1998 at Bethlehem Baptist, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-author-of-the-greatest-letter-ever-written>

Here's the first. Paul wants the church in Rome... Paul wants us in Decatur...the Holy Spirit wants us here in Decatur... to...

1. **False Teachers (16:17-18)**

Paul says in verse 17,

¹⁷ *I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.*

The word for “watch out” in Greek is σκοπέω.⁵ We get our English word “scope” from this word. **This is a good word picture for us. Put trouble makers in your sights, church. Keep an eye on them, and avoid them.** The word “avoid” in Greek is the word ἐκκλίνω.⁶ It means to steer clear or to keep away from.⁷ Don't dicker around with false teachers or false doctrines. Stay away from them.

“Why? Why Pastor Tony?” Here's why. Look at verse 18,

¹⁸ *For such persons [these trouble makers who cause division and oppose sound doctrine] do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

Now this might feel like kind of an afterthought from Paul.⁸ He hasn't mentioned false teachers in this book before. But he has mentioned divisiveness (**Rom 14:1-15:13**).⁹ And he has taught sound doctrine. So this is Paul's way of saying, **“Whoever doesn't abide by what I've told you in this letter, avoid that person! They aren't interested in the Lord's work. They are interested in feeding their own appetites. They are interested in deceiving naïve people.”**¹⁰ Paul writes in other places in the NT about Judaizers¹¹ and antinomians and proto-Gnostics who come into churches and try to break up the church or teach false doctrines. I don't know who he's referencing in this passage. He's probably warning them about all of the above.¹² Paul says elsewhere in **Galatians 1:8**, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.”

Paul knows that false teachers are coming to Rome eventually, because they come to every place where the gospel is being preached. **When I was at Moody, I had a professor named Dr. Newell, who had planted churches throughout Indonesia. And he had seen people in primitive tribes turn from animism and godlessness to faith in Christ. He had some great stories about that. And he used to tell us about how the cults (the Mormons, the JW's, etc.) would come to these villages in Indonesia where he planted churches almost immediately after they received the gospel. He called these groups parasitic religions. They are parasitic, because they don't survive on their own. They attach to real Christian churches and suck the gospel out of them. That's not a new phenomenon. That was happening way back when Paul was planting churches. The Reformers used to teach that wherever Christ builds his church the devil builds a cathedral beside it.**¹³ In other words, the devil is going to go after those places where the gospel is being truly preached. And that's what Paul is warning the church and Rome about here. **“You're a good church. Watch out now. The devil has noticed. And he's going to come after you with counterfeits.”**

And by the way, how do you know if something is counterfeit or not? How do you know if something is fake? You don't just study the fakes, so that you recognize the genuine article, instead you

⁵ Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 775: “The words “look out” ([σκοπέω]) instead of “watch out” ([βλέπω]) demonstrate that the danger is already present, since Paul uses “watch out” ([βλέπω]) when opponents are absent (cf. Phil. 3:2).”

⁶ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995) 278n63: “The present active imperative (ἐκκλίνετε) may be translated “keep turning away [from them].”

⁷ “ἐκκλίνω” ① William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [BDAG] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 304. Chrysostom states the obvious when he says, “[Paul] did not say, ‘Attack them and settle the matter with fists, fighting hand to hand,’ but rather ‘avoid them.’” Quoted by David Pareus in Krey et al., eds., *Romans 9–16*, RCS, 251.

⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, second edition, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 775: “The severe warning against interlopers appears suddenly and without any intimation that it was forthcoming... Paul envisions a potential danger threatening the Roman churches, a danger that exists until Satan is crushed under the feet of believers forever (v. 20).”

⁹ Chrysostom connects “divisiveness” to “false doctrine” in the church: “Division is the subversion of the church. Turning things upside down like this is the devil's weapon. As long as the body is united he has no way of getting in, but harm comes from division. And where does division come from? From doctrines which are contrary to the teaching of the apostles.” Quoted in Gerald Bray, ed., *Romans (Revised)*, ACCS (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 363.

¹⁰ Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, 278: “In every group there seems to be those intent on bringing it down. Paul urged his Christian friends at Rome to be on the watch for those who stirred up dissensions.”

¹¹ Maybe even the “Judaizers” who have already emphasized diet and days in the Roman church. Is Paul concerned that this divisive group in Rome might be radicalized by others more stringent Judaizers from other places? Possibly. F. F. Bruce, *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, TNTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 277 seems to point to this possibility: “Such persons ... serve ... their own appetites. Literally, ‘their own belly’ (*koilia*); cf. Philippians 3:19, ‘their god is the belly.’ If this implies (among other things) laying down the law about food, Paul's earlier words would be apposite: ‘Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God’ (14:20).”

¹² Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, 279: “Paul may have had several such groups in mind. Trouble is never far away where people are concerned.”

¹³ Krey et al., eds., *Romans 9–16*, RCS, 250.

become so acquainted... you become so familiar with the genuine article that you can smell a fake a mile away. When I worked at Soldierfield many years ago, we used to count thousands of dollars' worth of cash at the end of the football games. And we would put these big wads of cash through a machine, and that machine would tell us when there was a counterfeit twenty dollar bill or hundred dollar bill. That machine was mostly accurate. But I had these coworkers who worked at banks, and these coworkers of mine were really adept at finding the counterfeits even better than the machines. They knew the look and the feel of the original. They knew how to spot a fake.

Similarly how do you spot gospel fakes? How do you spot doctrinal fallacies? You get to know the truth so intimately, and so clearly, that you can scope out the fakes a mile away. You get to a place where you can smell prosperity gospel foolishness. You get to a place where you can sniff out people who aren't interested in the truth,¹⁴ they are just interested in feeding their own appetites and deceiving the hearts of the naïve.¹⁵ Paul's saying here, "Don't be naïve, Harvest Decatur. Don't get bamboozled by divisive, gospel-counterfeiters who want to lead you astray."¹⁶ When they come to you house, or when they come to our church with their smooth talk and their deceitful ways, you need to send them packing. Beware of False Teachers.

Write this down as well as a second exhortation. Avoid False Teachers and also...

2. **Pursue** wisdom and goodness (16:19)

I'll be quick with this one. Paul says in verse 19.

¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you,

In other words, "everyone knows how obedient you are to the truth, church in Rome. So don't screw that up by listening to false teachers and tolerating false gospels."¹⁷

¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

That sounds like Jesus, doesn't it? Jesus told us to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Matt 10:16).¹⁸ Similarly, Paul says here, "I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil."

How do we do that, Paul? How do we do that? Well, you study God's word and obey it! You walk by the Spirit. When the Spirit tell you, "don't do that," You say, "sir, yes sir." You offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him. You don't conform yourself to the world, but you allow yourself to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. You go to church. You confess your sins. You study your Bible. You pray with your family. You put to death the deeds of your flesh. You pray and cry out to God like your life depends on it. You stop fighting with people at church over trivial matters. You stop fighting of social media with people who don't listen. You are quick to listen and slow to speak. You love people, and you help people when you can. That's how you become wise as to what is good. You do these things for about 50 years, and you will become "wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil."

And let me say this too. If you spend more time watching the trash that comes out of Hollywood these days... if you spend more being influenced by movies or music or media or social media than God and his Word, you will never become "wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil." There is a battle going on right now for our hearts. It's a moral battle. And if you think you can just sit around all day and be influenced by the world and not be tainted, you are wrong. Pursue wisdom, church. Pursue goodness.

¹⁴ Osborne, *Romans: Verse By Verse*, 509-10 pleads, "We need Bible studies in our churches to help our people treasure the truths of God and recognize when they are being twisted. We need groups that make studying the Bible exciting and interesting. We need preachers who proclaim the word of God and its meaning and relevance for our lives. Then people will know when it is being misused, and will be less susceptible to 'smooth talk and flattery.'"

¹⁵ JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS: "Paul teaches to distinguish between true and false apostles. True apostles seek the glory of Christ, whom they serve with all ministers of God; false apostles do not make great the glory of Christ. True apostles seek what is profitable for others; pseudo-apostles are slaves to their own bellies. True apostles teach the Word of God; false apostles, however, smooth talk and flattery, not at all concerned with the Word of God, which they are not afraid to distort." Quoted in Krey et al., eds., *Romans 9-16*, RCS, 251.

¹⁶ Osborne, *Romans: Verse By Verse*, 510: "There is a play on words, with near synonyms between 'naïve' in verse 18 and 'innocent' in verse 19: be innocent about things, especially teaching that is evil, but do not descend to naïveté or simple-minded gullibility to those false ideas. Learn how to discern good from evil, not only with respect to ethical conduct but also with respect to theological truth."

¹⁷ Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 778: "Perhaps the idea is that the Romans must be on their guard precisely because news of their obedience has reached the entire world. Thus opponents will be anxious to subvert the good that has been accomplished."

¹⁸ Also 1 Corinthians 14:20: "Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature."

Paul says elsewhere... this is good advice for us in our comprised day... “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil 4:8, NIV).

Here’s a third exhortation. Write this down as #3.

3. **Recognize** Satan’s demise (16:20)

Paul says in verse 20,¹⁹

²⁰ *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*²⁰

You might say, **“But it’s so hard to pursue wisdom and goodness in this world, Pastor Tony. Satan never stops. Satan keeps scoring points. Satan keeps exercising influence over our world. Satan keeps tempting me to sin. Satan keeps winning!”**

Listen, hear me on this. Satan’s days are numbered. They are. “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” You need to recognize Satan’s ultimate demise and realize that “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world” (1 Jn 4:4, KJV).

Now here’s the big issue with this verse. This is what theologians debate. When Paul says, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” Is Paul talking about at Christ’s return when Satan gets crushed? Or is Paul talking about the here and now, where Satan is crushed?²¹ Do we have victory over Satan now? Or do we only have victory over Satan at the coming of Christ?

Here’s my answer to that. This victory, just like our sanctification, is already, not yet.²² In other words, yes, we can have victory over Satan in the here and now, because the Holy Spirit resides within us and helps us. But that victory is incomplete. It’s already/not-yet.²³ That victory is inaugurated, but it’s not consummated. Final victory still awaits Christ’s return.

By the way, when Paul says the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet, what’s he alluding to there, do you know? He’s alluding to **Genesis 3:15**, and what’s called the *protoevangelium* (the “first gospel”). After Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden, and they sinned, God prophesied over them. And God said to the Serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”²⁴

Remember that opening scene from The Passion of the Christ when Jesus crushes the head of the serpent. That was a great scene in the movie, but it was anachronistic. Because Christ hadn’t even been crucified yet, let alone risen from the dead. And what Paul alludes to here is that “the crushing of Satan” isn’t complete yet. It’s coming. It’s a sure thing. It’s going to happen. It’s already in motion. But the finality of it awaits Christ’s return.

So in the meantime, Harvest Decatur. We fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12). We resist the Devil and submit to God (Jas 4:7). And we recognize that Satan’s days are numbered, and soon the Lord will utterly and completely crush him for eternity. And he will cast him into the Lake of Fire for eternity (Rev 20:10).

And to that, you might say, **“Pastor Tony, I’m tired of fighting the good fight. I’m tired of resisting the Devil. It’s too hard. It’s too difficult to submit to God and resist Satan.” Listen, hear me on this. We are in a war right now, and you can’t quit on this. You’ve got to keep fighting. And we can help you. That’s why God gave us the church. That’s why God has given us this “community of**

¹⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 566: “Romans 16:20 suggests that these false teachers [16:17-18] really come from Satan, and one day even he shall be completely defeated.”

²⁰ The juxtaposition of these two statements in verse 20 is significant. Grace is paired with peace. And Satan’s defeat is parallel to the grace we receive from Christ Jesus. THEODORET OF CYR: “After revealing the enemy, Paul points to the Savior. Those who receive God’s grace will never be defeated.” Quoted in Bray, ed., *Romans (Revised)*, ACCS, 364.

²¹ Bruce, *Romans*, TNTC, 276 is characteristic of those who see fulfillment of this passage in the here and now and connects it to the divisive false teachers in Rom 16:17-18: “Discord was the work of Satan, and these men were servants of Satan (2 Cor. 11:14); but if the Roman Christians kept them and their teaching at a distance, God, who is the God of peace, not of discord (cf. 1 Cor. 14:33), would give them the victory over Satan and all his works.” Similarly Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 778: “The linkage of deceit with Satan suggest that Paul discerns Satan working through the attractive and compelling speech of the adversaries. The Romans must be on guard because the opponents are urbane, witty, and sophisticated. They will not be unattractive bores.”

²² See Osborne, *Romans: Verse By Verse*, 511.

²³ Timothy Keller, *Romans 8-16 For You* (The Good Book Company, 2015), 180: “[Satan] has been, is being and will be defeated.”

²⁴ It is intriguing that Paul says Satan will be crushed under *your* feet. Why the Romans’ feet and not Jesus’s feet? Craig S. Keener, *IVPBBCNT* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Ro 16:20 explains: “Some texts seem to have understood Eve’s “seed” as Israel, others (perhaps including the LXX of Gen 3:15) as the Messiah; but here Paul applies it more broadly to the Messiah’s followers as well. His point is that they should persevere to the end, and their opposition will be defeated.”

faith.” That’s why we have small groups here at church to pray for each other and help each other. Don’t give up on this. Satan’s days are numbered, yes, but in the meantime we’ve got to keep fighting, keep praying, keep seeking God and resisting the Devil.

And speaking of the community of faith, write this down as #4:

4) Cherish the brotherhood of believers (16:21-23)²⁵

If you remember, Paul has already greeted the Christians in Rome at the beginning of **Romans 16**. Remember that list of names, that only George Bennett can pronounce. Now Paul sends greetings from believers that are with him in Corinth where he wrote this letter.²⁶

Paul says in **verse 24**:

²¹ Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.²⁷

You know it was fun having Tyler here last week, because we got to connect with another likeminded church in Indiana: Gospel City Church in Granger, Indiana. There’s something encouraging about doing that. Paul does that here. He references Timothy and Lucius²⁸ and Jason and Sosipater from the Corinthian church giving greetings to the church in Rome.

²² I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Don’t be confused by that statement. Paul authored the letter to **Romans**, but Tertius actually did the writing. He’s what’s called an amanuensis.²⁹ Paul dictated, and Tertius wrote. And this verse is Tertius peaking behind the camera and saying, “hi” to the audience.

I said a few weeks ago, Paul always had fellow workers with him. Paul never did things in isolation, or lived in isolation. Paul was a people-person. He worked alongside other people as he served the Lord.

²³ Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

The church in Rome met in a home: Aquila and Priscilla’s home. The church in Corinth met in a home too: Gaius’s home. Christians back then knew the value of hospitality. It’s a lost art in many Christian circles. **Maybe we can rediscover that lost art in a few months when we have a group of Christians come and visit us from Turkey. Maybe we can open up our homes and welcome them into our lives, and not live solitary, isolated, and individualistic lives.**

And can I just say something about this? I don’t think we do that here at Harvest Decatur. We have some really hospitable people in this church. And we have a wonderful brotherhood of believers here. And can I just say, that is a rare thing in our world right now! I hope you cherish that. I hope you realize what a gift you’ve been given in this church.

Yeah, we’re not a perfect church. I know that. We’re not a perfect church, because we’re made up of imperfect people. Charles Spurgeon said once that if he ever found a perfect church, he wouldn’t join it. Because as soon as he joined it, he would spoil it and make it an imperfect church.³⁰ There’s no such thing as a perfect church. And I hope that you, despite our imperfections, are able to be thankful for and cherish the church that you are part of.

And that requires some work on your part. You have to forgive. You have to repent when you hurt someone else. You have to agree to disagree on some stuff, and not let that be a divisive thing for

²⁵ Romans 16:24 is not found in the better Greek manuscripts. The KJV has the following verse based upon the *Textus Receptus*: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” This is a reiteration of Romans 16:20b. For textual analysis, see the note on 16:24 in Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 783.

²⁶ Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Ro 16:21–24: “Although this is a basic list of greetings, it may have also served the purpose of attestation of witnesses, which also came at the end of documents.”

²⁷ Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater are all mentioned here as Paul’s Jewish “kinsmen.” Jason is probably the same Jason from Thessalonica in Acts 17:5-9, although there is debate as to whether a Jewish person could have assuaged an angry mob and the authorities in Thessalonica. Jason is often used as a Greek equivalent to the Hebrew name Joshua. Sosipater is probably to be identified with the Sopater from Berea in Acts 20:4. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 781 says, “By naming Jewish colleagues, Paul assures the readers that Jewish colleagues agreed with his gospel, allaying the concern that Paul was teaching a deviant gospel.”

²⁸ This is probably not Luke the physician, for Luke was most likely a Gentile. And this Lucius is referred to as one of Paul’s kinsmen (Greek: συγγενής; i.e. a fellow Jew). Also, as stated in Bruce, *Romans*, TNTC, 278: “There is evidence that Lucas was used as an equivalent of Lucius, but Paul elsewhere refers to the physician as Luke (Gk. *Loukas*, Lat. *Lucas*); why should he change his usage and call him Lucius?”

²⁹ This should not alter in any way our understanding of the dual-authorship of Scripture (see 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:21). Tertius and the other amanuenses did not editorialize or take license with what Paul dictated to them. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 782: “Paul probably dictated the letter word for word and Tertius took down the dictation... even if the secretary couldn’t always keep up with what Paul said the first time... Paul could correct, add, and adjust as he reviewed what were presumably several drafts of such an important letter. Such a scenario is not surprising, particularly because long letters like Romans were unusual.”

³⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, “The Best Donation,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 37 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1891), 633. The exact quote is as follows: “Give yourself to the church. You that are members of the church have not found it perfect, and I hope that you feel almost glad that you have not. If I had never joined a church till I had found one that was perfect, I should never have joined one at all; and the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect church after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us.”

you or for the church. It's easy to leave a church and go somewhere else. Some people do that their whole lives. They go here, and they go there. Every 6-18 months they're looking to start over somewhere else. It's easy to leave a church or to become a churchless Christian, if there is even such a thing. Long-term relationships take time and energy and forgiveness and commitment.

Let me ask you a question: Do you think Timothy ever got peeved at the Apostle Paul? Do you think Paul ever had to forgive Timothy some stuff? I bet they did. I bet Jason and Lucius and Timothy got into it from time to time. And they had to learn to love each other, forgive each other, and live with each other. It's worth it. It's worth it to do that.

Finally. Write this down as #5.³¹

- 1) **Avoid** False Teachers (16:17-18)
- 2) **Pursue** wisdom and goodness (16:19)
- 3) **Recognize** Satan's demise (16:20)
- 4) **Cherish** the brotherhood of believers (16:21-23)

And one more thing...

- 5) **Praise** the God of Salvation (16:25-27)

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you

Who's the "him" in verse 25? It's God. And probably, more specifically it's God the Father. So let me put that in there.

²⁵ Now to [God the Father] who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ,

In other words, there is no "Jesus-Gospel" and then a "Paul-Gospel."³² That's not how this works. People like to say all the time, "I like what Jesus says; I just don't like what the rest of the Bible says. I like Jesus, but I don't like Paul." Nope, you can't do that. That's a false dichotomy. Paul's gospel is Jesus's gospel, and Jesus's gospel is Paul's gospel.

And also, Paul says that his gospel was the OT's gospel kept secret for long ages:

²⁵ Now to [God the Father] who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings [i.e. the OT] has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ!

In other words, may God be praised for bringing salvation to the world!³³ God's plan all along was to bring Gentiles into salvation through Christ. And God's timing is perfect. And God's plan is glorious and gracious, and we should thank God for it. Paul praises God for it here!

Thomas Schreiner writes about this passage: "God did not desire the gentiles be saved on a large scale before the coming of Jesus Christ. It was his plan that gentiles experience the obedience of faith as a result of hearing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, who lived, died, and was raised and exalted on their behalf. If a flood of gentiles were being saved before the coming of Christ, it would lessen the glory of his person and his work. Gentiles are saved through a conscious knowledge of Jesus Christ and his work on their behalf in accord with the Pauline gospel (note 'my gospel' in vs. 25)."³⁴

May God be praise for bringing the gospel to all the nations! Not just the Israelites, although it started with the Israelites. The gospel was for the Jew first and then the Gentile (Rom 1:16). But now the secret is out. **The cat is out of the bag.** The mystery is revealed. Augustine said, "The OT is the NT

³¹ Paul closes the book of Romans with a doxology. This is unusual even for Paul. Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Ro 16:25–27: "The conclusions of Greco-Roman letters varied considerably but often ended with a wish for the recipient's health and then "Farewell." Synagogues, however, closed prayers, readings and services with benedictions, and Paul anticipates that his letter would be publicly read in house churches' worship services." Many scholars recognize the thematic connections between Romans 1:1-7 and 16:25-27. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 784-5: "What we have here is a carefully formulated and syntactically complicated conclusion that is redolent of the central themes of Romans. In particular, the topics that received emphasis in 1:1-7 are summoned to the readers' attention again. Romans 1:1-7 and 16:25-27 therefore function as an *inclusio* for the contents of the letter."

³² JUAN DE VALDÉS: "By saying 'according to my gospel' I understand St. Paul to mean, "God is able to strengthen you in concord with what is preached and affirmed in the gospel that I preach." The expressions 'the preaching of Jesus Christ' and 'my gospel' are synonymous." Quoted in Krey et al., eds., *Romans 9–16*, RCS, 257.

³³ HEINRICH BULLINGER: Now Paul concludes his epistle with a wonderful epilogue, simultaneously weaving together the sum of the gospel and singing the praise of God." Quoted in Krey et al., eds., *Romans 9–16*, RCS, 256.

³⁴ Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 789.

concealed. The NT is the OT revealed.”³⁵ Now the mystery of the Christ, the Messiah, is revealed. And the obedience of faith leads to salvation.

God did that. God made that possible. God made it possible for this room full of foolish Gentiles to enter into his kingdom as part of the family of God. And we can even cry out, “Abba, Father” to God.

²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.³⁶

Amen!

Let me close with this, and then we will take communion. In 1534, the great Bible scholar and reformer, William Tyndale wrote an exhortation about Romans. William Tyndale, you might not know this, was actually put to death by corrupt officials in the church. And why was he put to death? Because he translated the Scriptures into a pagan, vulgar language for the common people, the language of English! How dare he!

A clergyman once told Tyndale that only the clergy were qualified to read correctly interpret Scripture. That’s why the Scripture should stay in Latin. And Tyndale replied to him, “If God spares my life, then I will cause a simple plowboy to know more of the Scripture than you do.”³⁷

Well William Tyndale wrote a statement about the book of Romans. Tyndale said the following after reading through the book of Romans... take this to heart, Harvest Decatur: “Now go, reader, and follow the order of Paul’s writing. First, behold yourself diligently in the law of God, and see there your just condemnation. Second, turn your eyes to Christ, and see in him the great mercy of your very kind and loving Father. Third, remember that Christ did not make atonement that you should anger God again, nor did he cleanse you that you should return (as a swine) to your old puddle again. He wants you to be a new creation and to live a new life, following the will of God and not the sinful nature.”³⁸

Harvest Decatur, today ends our journey through the book of Romans. Now, go and follow the order of Paul’s writing. Turn from yourself and put your faith in Christ for salvation. And then live like you believe Christ. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus. Let’s live like that. Pray with me and then we can take communion together.

³⁵ Augustine of Hippo, “On the Catechising of the Uninstructed,” in *St. Augustine: On the Holy Trinity Doctrinal Treatises Moral Treatises*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. S. D. F. Salmond, vol. 3, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 287. See also William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), 128

³⁶ Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, 283: The ascription of glory to God is, according to the shorter Westminster catechism, the “chief end of man.” In the coming ages the songs of the redeemed will ring throughout the courts of heaven. Redemption will be complete. The eternal purposes of God will reach their fulfillment. God will be forever praised. Amen.”

³⁷ Adapted from the quote in P.M. Bechtel and P.W. Comfort, “Tyndale, William,” ed. J.D. Douglas and Philip W. Comfort, *Who’s Who in Christian History* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1992), 684.

³⁸ Quoted in Jack Kuhatschek, *Romans: Becoming New in Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 72.