

Romans 16 - A call to all the nations in the name of Jesus

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

Date: 05 July 2026

Preacher: Steve Palframan

[0 : 00] Morning everyone. We are going to read Romans chapter 16. So that starts on page 1142. I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church of Sancria. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a benefactor of many people, including me.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risk their lives for me. Not only I, but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Eponetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. Greet Adronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, my fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apellus, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. Greet those who belong to the house of Aristobulus. Greet Herodian, my fellow Jew. Greet those in the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.

Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

[1 : 38] Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me too. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Petrobos, Hermas, and the other brothers and sisters with them.

Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympus, and all the Lord's people who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the churches of Christ send greetings. I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teachings you have learned.

Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people.

Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you. But I want you to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

[2 : 47] The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you. As to Lucius, Jason, and Sussipater, my fellow Jews.

I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, send you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Cortus, send you their greetings.

Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith, to the only wise God be glory forever, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

I saw Hannah on Monday and did a mean thing. I said, Hannah, would you read for us on Sunday morning? And she said, yeah, yeah, I'm happy to read on Sunday morning, that's fine. I said, great, it's a list of names.

She said, oh. So, yeah, when I ask you to read, you might want to look at the passage before you say yes, but thank you so much for reading for us, Hannah. Now let's pray and ask the Lord for his

help as we come to his word.

[4 : 12] Let's pray. Father, we are so very grateful that you condescend to speak to people like us who don't deserve it.

We're very conscious of our sin and our weakness, the unworthiness of our hearts, and yet, Lord, you speak words of grace and mercy and forgiveness and kindness.

And so we want to pray this morning that you'd make us good at listening, that you give us open hearts to hear your word this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Now, if you are just joining us for the first time this morning, you find us at the end of a series in the book of Romans. So you need to know that I haven't chosen Romans 16 this morning for any particular reason, other than that we've been going through Romans since September, and our conviction as a church is that it is best, church is at its best when God sets the agenda through his word and not us through our ideas.

I mean, it would be a terrible thing and a terrible place if church was mostly directed by my ideas or your ideas and our questions and our plans. That would be a futile gathering.

[5 : 31] We want to hear what God's questions are. We want to listen to his ideas and we want to hear his plans. And so because of that, the main thing that we do as a church when we gather together is we take books of the Bible, like Romans, and work our way through them and see what God has to say on his own terms.

And so this morning, having been working our way through this letter, we find ourselves in Romans 16 and this is what God has for us this morning. And as it was read, as well as thinking what an awesome job Hannah was doing of reading the names, you might have been thinking, what on earth has this got to do with me today?

This seems completely irrelevant. But I want to show you that it's not actually there's some really important truths in this chapter for us as he rounds off his letter and brings it all together.

Let me try and show you how the chapter works first. So keep your Bibles open, keep looking down at it. And let me show you that there are effectively three sign-offs in the chapter, three sign-offs. So there are three points in the chapter where it appears as if Paul is bringing the plane into land and finishing his letter.

Verse 16, all the churches of Christ send greetings. You might expect him to finish there. He doesn't. Verse 20 also sounds like an ending. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

[6 : 47] It's not the ending. Verse 27 then is the ending. To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ. Amen. Now those are three doxologies, if you want the fancy word for them.

And they really mark out what essentially are three sections in this chapter. So if you look down, verses 1 to 16 is largely this list of names of people that Paul knows and is connected with in Rome. Verses 17 to 20 is about a grave danger that the church faces. And then there's a sort of editorial note about who's writing down the letter and his circumstances at present.

And then in verses 25 to 27, it's all about the glory of God and how the gospel secures God's glory. And so what I want us to do is just spend our time in those three sections that has been laid out before us in the chapter.

And the first section, verses 1 to 16, I want you to see a diverse unity. Now, what at first might appear to be a list of names, I mean it is a list of names, but really is actually a fascinating description of what's going on in the church in Rome.

[7 : 53] And I want to show you, and this might sound a bit daunting, but I'm not going to spend long on them. I want to show you five surprises from the list. Five surprises from the list. The first surprise is the massive variety.

Really, this, I think, is the standout point from all the others. The thing that you are to notice as you read the list is, oh my goodness, what a huge range of people.

It starts with this woman, Phoebe, in verse 1. Phoebe is a Greek name. She's obviously a wealthy woman. She's called a benefactor or a patron of many people, including Paul.

This is the woman with the money. And it appears that she is the person charged with delivering the letter to Rome from probably Corinth. She may be traveling there already on business, and so she gets to take the letter with her.

Priscilla and Aquila are next, and Paul knows them from their time outside of Rome. We find out in Acts that Priscilla and Aquila are Jews, and they, along with all the other Jews, were kicked out of Rome by the emperor Claudius.

[8 : 56] Claudius decided he didn't want the Jews in Rome, so he turfed them all out. But now you find, Romans 16, that they have returned. Claudius is dead, and so the Jews have been allowed to return, and Paul greets them.

Alongside those Jewish background believers and Greek believers, you've got Roman names like Urbanus and Ampilatus and Rufus. And you've also got people in significant households, Herodian and Narcissus.

Narcissus was the chief secretary to the emperor Claudius. This is the top civil servant of the day. He himself, it turns out, is not in the church, but there are people in his household who are in the church. Others in the church are not so well connected. We just get their name, and we know nothing else about them.

Some people in the list have been Christians for a very long time. Andronicus and Junia were Christians before Paul was, and seemed to be connected with the apostles in Jerusalem.

[10 : 00] Eponetus was the first convert in Asia. Others, I think we're right to assume, were younger Christians. Now, just put all that together with me for a moment. What you can see is that the church in Rome is made up of people from massively different ethnic backgrounds.

Socioeconomically different backgrounds. You've got slaves and free, wealthy businesswomen traveling the empire. Others largely rooted in Rome. People from Jewish backgrounds who face persecution.

And you've got people who've been Christians for a really long time who are mature Christians who are teaching the faith. And others who are young Christians who've just believed in Jesus. Church in Rome, it was church for everybody.

Whoever you were, wherever you were from, there was no typical church profile. You know, they weren't wearing all the same clothes and all the same sandals. They looked different.

They sounded different. They were from different backgrounds. And that's the standout thing from the list. I think the second surprise is the number of prominent women. Phoebe is at the top of that list.

[11 : 05] And as well as being a wealthy benefactor, she's also a deacon from the church in Sensore, which is the port of Corinth. Priscilla is mentioned in verse 3.

Mary, she's in the book of Acts, a fellow worker with Paul and a theological educator along with her husband. She teaches Apollos to preach more clearly. Mary is next in verse 6.

And like lots of women in the list, she is commended for being a hard worker. Junior, in verse 7, is almost certainly a woman's name. And she is said to be outstanding among the apostles.

Literally, the word there is well known. Now, I don't think we can say that Paul is claiming that Junior is one of the capital A 12 apostles of Jesus Christ plus Paul.

No one thinks that, I don't think. Really, what's happening here is either Paul is using the word apostles or sent ones in a different sense from founding apostles. Or, and I think this is probably more likely, she has been working alongside and known to the apostles from the very beginning.

[12 : 09] She is one of the early Jewish believers. Triphena and Triphosa, probably sisters, because, you know, rhyming names, that works for sisters, are named together in verse 12.

They are also hard workers. Persis, at the end of verse 12, is another hardworking woman known to Paul. Rufus' mother, in verse 13, has been like a mother to Paul.

And Julia and the sister of Nereus get mentioned in verse 15. Now, if I've counted that correctly, that means 10 of the 29 names in the list are women.

And they're doing a wide variety of jobs, from sponsors to teachers to hospitality to hard work. And for Paul to call that out at the end of his letter is surprising, especially given the cultural attitudes to women at the time.

Now, I told you this was more interesting than you might have first thought, right? Paul isn't writing here to give you an agenda for the roles of men and women in the life of the church. Paul is just describing the people who he knows.

[13 : 11] He's not prescribing what should happen, but describing what is happening. Now, we don't have to have female benefactors in the church, for example. And that's obvious from the way it's written.

But still, in a world where lots of people, I think, assume that either the Bible as a whole, or certainly Paul in particular, is anti-women, it makes no sense of Romans 16.

People think that the Bible is degrading to women. And actually, Romans 16 describes a church which is the opposite of that. Because here in ancient Rome, contrary to much of the rest of the culture, women were an active force in the life of the church.

Now, that's really, really important for you to know and bear in mind, because it means that when you read the rest of the Bible and you find Paul teaching Timothy that the elders of the church should be men, something that you need to take seriously as a church, that we need to take seriously as a church, he's not saying that to undermine anything he's written in Romans 16, in a culture of female flourishing.

Rather, we should assume that he's writing to support it. He's so positive here about the role of women in the church. Perhaps you could put it this way.

[14:22] Romans 16 shows us that the male eldership in the church described later on is meant to enliven and empower women's ministry and not to squash it. Elders are to be like good husbands and good fathers who empower wives and children.

children and they should empower women in the church to serve fruitfully in accordance with their gifting. What's interesting here then is if you ditch the Bible's teaching on this, if you say, well, okay, we're just going to work out the roles of men and women and the difference between men and women from our culture, you end up with something very different to what's going on in the Bible. And if you did that here in present day London, you'd end up saying, well, there's absolutely no difference between men and women. And in the church or the home, we think there's no distinction. That's what our culture thinks. So that's what we should think in the church.

And that's what many churches have done. They've ditched what Paul teaches in the New Testament on the roles of men and women because, well, to be honest, it's just a bit too difficult in our culture. So let's just go with what our culture says.

In Victorian Britain, the cultural flow was in an opposite direction, wasn't it? It was hostile. And so women were treated appallingly and excluded from serving and flourishing and voting even.

[15:35] And that culture was dragged into the church and damaged the church's witness. And what's Paul's solution? Paul's solution is that don't just go with the cultural flow. Teach what the Bible says about men and women, and you will see men and women flourish in the church.

And so he teaches that both men and women are equal in dignity and standing before the Lord, but are complementary in role, made with differences given by God, who loves his creatures. And that creates the countercultural culture of Romans 16, where men and women are flourishing together in the life of the church with their differences and distinctions.

Third thing to notice, a movement of people or movement of people. I'll deal with this more quickly. But the big surprise here is just how many people are in the list.

29 people. You know from other places in the letter that Paul has never been to Rome. And despite never being there, he seems to know an awful lot of people there.

29 in total, perhaps others as well. And really that's because Paul's missionary activity arrives at a point in history where people are on the move geographically. Roman Empire means that people are now traveling freely between different places.

[16:53] And some of these people have been with Paul in Jerusalem. Some of them have been in prison with Paul, perhaps in Philippi or Ephesus. And again, Paul isn't saying that this movement is good or this movement is bad.

But what you can see is, can't you, that God has used the movement of people to establish his church in Rome. So that when people are on the move, God is on the move.

Taking the message of Jesus Christ to the nations. And that's what we're finding today. The fourth surprise is the prominence of house churches. This I think is fascinating.

We don't really have time to explore it fully. But it doesn't seem as if there is just one church in Rome. Really, this is a letter to the churches in Rome in a way. Notice there is a church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, which gets mentioned in verse 5.

Other house churches are hinted at in verse 10, 11, 14 and 15. Saying things like, all the Lord's people who are with them. Now again, remember, Paul is describing and he's not prescribing.

[17:58] So he's not saying that church has to meet in a house. But it is interesting to see, isn't it, that gospel preaching in Rome did not start a mega church.

But instead, lots of, if you like, minor churches, smaller churches. Now there's no doubt that in Rome that was safer for them. The church was heavily persecuted and it's about to get worse for

them under Nero.

But it does mean, doesn't it, that churches don't have to be big. And churches don't have to have buildings. And cities don't have to have cathedrals. And churches don't have to be mega to be meaningful.

And cities don't need mega churches in order to transform them. Rome ultimately was transformed by the gospel and Christianity. Not by the work of a mega church in the middle, but by lots of minor churches.

Sharing the good news of Jesus below the radar. Transforming it from the underneath. House churches. Fifth and finally, the affection for people. Now these people are in different household churches.

[19 : 04] They are brothers and sisters, yeah, and they know each other, don't they? And they are to greet one another with a holy kiss in verse 16. In other words, these friendships in the church and between the churches are not trivial.

They're to deeply care for one another and love one another. They're to enjoy time together and to support one another and encourage each other. Now I think if you put those five things together, so diversity, the flourishing of men and women, gospel on the move, small churches where you're known and loved, I suggest to you that's a really enticing view of a local church.

Perhaps you're a guest here this morning, and it's really brilliant you're here. I wonder whether you come to church with some preconceived ideas about what church should be like. You know, maybe you come with some preconceived bad ideas because of bad experiences.

And there are bad churches, so people do have bad experiences of church. And so perhaps you've come to a conclusion, do you know what? Church is not for people like me. It's maybe for others, but it's not for me.

Well, don't you look at this list in Romans and think, well, I'd like to be in that church. I'd like to be in a church like that. I'd love to be in a community where I'm known and loved and cared for and where the teaching on my role and my position is leading to my flourishing.

[20 : 28] I'd love to be in a place where the gospel is on the move. I'd love to be in a place where everybody is welcome, whatever their background. Well, that's the local church.

And church is for you, whoever you are, wherever you're from. Secondly, notice there's a serious warning. So there's diverse unity and then a serious warning in verses 17 to 20.

Look down at those verses. Let me read them to you again. Verse 17. I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you've learned.

Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people.

Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you. But I want you to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil. For the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

[21 : 33] Now, notice here that this community faces a great danger, a grave danger. And the danger is from those who would cause divisions and put obstacles in their way. Divisions and obstacles which are contrary to the teaching that they've learned and Paul has been giving in his letter.

Now, as you look down at it, the detail here is very limited. You're not told exactly what's been taught. You're not told who's teaching it. We're not told exactly what form it comes. And I think that's deliberate. It's deliberate so as a reader you don't think, oh, that's a Roman church problem.

It's not really our problem. Actually, you're taught it this way so that you are on your guard also for false teaching. Because the problem nearly, sorry, the problem never goes away.

And so notice the shape of the trouble. Look at verse 18. See, the trouble starts when people are driven by their own desires and not by serving the Lord. The word there for desires is literally the word for stomachs.

And so what's going on here is this is a passion to fill yourself up. This is a desire. This is where it goes wrong. It's the desire to use church for your own satisfaction and not for God's glory.

[22 : 45] So these teachers in the church, they are using the church as a platform for their own performance and their own achievements, rather than to encourage people to follow Jesus.

Maybe it's with novel teaching, perhaps, that puts obstacles in people's way, verse 17. Maybe suggesting that Gentile converts need to get circumcised, for example. That was going on at the time.

Or it could be to contradict the gospel or the teaching that they've learned. Or it could be the smooth talk and flattery in verse 18 that's aimed at deceiving people. Look, don't listen to them. Come and listen to me.

I'll tell you some nice things that you want to hear. Notice then the problem isn't just, oh, no, they're not teaching the truth. They could be teaching the truth.

The problem is they're teaching it for their own ends and their own satisfaction. And Paul points out to you this is the oldest playbook in the world because according to verse 20, it belongs to Satan, who in Genesis 3 persuades Eve and Adam to be more interested in their own glory than God's.

[23 : 48] And then in a repetition of Genesis 3.15, Paul reminds them that Satan will be crushed beneath the feet of the church of Jesus Christ. So perhaps you can see with me that this is a live warning for any church that's enjoying God's blessing.

Even churches in verse 19 where everyone has heard of our obedience. So that means it must be a warning for us. That as we experience the blessing of God, the danger for us is that we ruin it by self-interest.

And that goes for me. You know, Pastor Steve, you could ruin it by your own self-interest. Don't be more concerned with what people think of you than what they think of Jesus Christ.

Don't lead people to follow you. Lead them to follow Jesus. Do that by teaching them from God's words, not from your own head.

But it goes for the church leader as well, doesn't it? Who needs to watch out that they don't treat the church as a platform for their own importance. If you think you have to be a leader, if you can't imagine being in church without being a leader, then it's a warning, isn't it?

[24 : 56] Instead, you're to use the position that God has given you to defend the truth, to serve Christ and point away from yourself. It's a warning for every church member, isn't it? Watch out. Do not threaten the unity of the church by gossip or false accusations or assuming that because everything is not to your liking, it must be being run to someone else's liking.

Deliberately to frustrate you. Don't listen to those who speak like that. Keep away from them. I want to try and be really practical here, but we do need to see the dynamic first of what's going on.

Notice what Paul is saying here. He is saying that to the church, unity is given to the church as a gift of the gospel. Unity is not something they build. It's a precious gift that they are given and they are told not to ruin by their own self-interest.

So when it comes to unity, it's not something you are creating. It's something you're caring for in the life of the church, walking carefully not to damage it. And if I can be a bit bolder than the sort of general appeal this morning, let me try and talk about the specifics of our church situation.

And if you're a visitor this morning, you're very welcome here. Please just listen in. You know, if you're a member of the church, you'll know, won't you, that this summer is a season of change for us.

[26 : 11] We're moving from a joint leadership team that's overseen the merger of two different churches over the last 18 months to a team of elders and a team of deacons. Now, that's a model that we believe the New Testament teaches churches.

That's how we are to set up leadership in the church. But the truth is that neither of the churches actually had that up and running previously in a kind of functional way. So this is a time of change for us as a church.

And power and influence in the church is being redistributed over the next few months. And at a time like that, when something like that is happening in the church, there's going to be a voice in all of our ears that says something like this, this is a really good time to get exactly what you want. Maybe now's the time to get what you want. And so we need to be careful, don't we? We need to be especially careful at the moment. Careful about what we say about one another.

Careful about our own motives. Slow to judge the motives of others about what we can't see. I don't know whether this helps you this morning, but imagine it like an army battalion or troop.

[27 : 17] They're walking their way through a minefield. And someone has been there before, right? So they have put flags on top of all the mines so that you know where they are. But still, the job of every person, individual in the battalion is to tread through that minefield really carefully and not to tread on any of the mines.

And it's important not just for them individually, it's important for the whole battalion. Because if any one of them treads on the mine, they blow up the whole lot, right? And if you like, that's what's going on here in Romans 16.

Paul is putting flags in the landmines. Self-interest, avoid that one. Flattery, avoid that one. Smooth talk that just, you know, tries to make everything nice and pushes things under the carpet.

Avoid that one. False teaching, twisting the gospel. Flagging, don't do that. Deception, mm-mm, don't do that. Now, church, walk through that minefield.

And every individual one of us needs to watch out that we don't tread on any one of those. Because our collective life is in all of our hands.

[28 : 32] And we need to be aware, don't we, that Satan would love to divide the church. It's been his scheme all along. And he will one day be crushed.

But that day is not yet today. And so we need to fight to maintain the unity. So if you're in church and you find that you're church friends, right?

If you've got friends at church, I hope you've got friends at church, right? And you talk about church, yeah? And they always agree with everything you say, right? They say, oh yeah, that's really good. All your ideas are brilliant. I don't think you ever get anything wrong. Right? If they say that to you, you've found a smooth talker and a flatterer. And you need to avoid them. Or at least call them out on it.

Because the truth is that no one of us will get everything right. But it doesn't mean that we should gossip or moan either, does it? We need to be careful to speak up and speak to the leaders.

[29 : 30] We need to be even more careful to pray and to pray earnestly for the church. That all of us, and this is it, would act out of concern for the glory of God and not out of self-interest.

Thirdly, finally, all for God's glory, verses 25 to 27. This then is where the letter ends. And notice just how carefully Paul brings the plane into land.

If you look at these verses, you can see, let me try and show you at least, verse 25 could very easily just run into verse 27. Look down, let me read it to you like that. Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, skip to verse 27, to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ, amen.

Now that would work as a sentence. That works fine. But instead, Paul inserts more than that, doesn't he? He inserts verse 26 to give one final expansion of the gospel.

It's as if Paul can't really say, you know, I want to establish you in my gospel without actually then just going what the gospel is. So look at what he says. Notice how he expands on the gospel.

[30 : 41] Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, which is what? The message I proclaim about Jesus Christ. In other words, the gospel, he says, is the message about Jesus.

The gospel that makes the church, that's at the heart of the church, is not about you or me and what we do. It's about what Jesus has already done. Jesus is the message of the gospel.

And keep looking down. What is it that Jesus has done? Well, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past. In other words, Jesus' work was not meant to be, oh, that's a surprise.

Never saw that coming. Wow, I never thought that the Messiah would come and live and die and rise again. No, all of that was written down in long ages past, he says. It's been hidden, but there in the Old Testament.

And now since Jesus has been, verse 26, that message has been, look down at it, been revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God.

[31 : 44] So Jesus has made known the plan of God. So if you know Jesus, you can read the Bible and it will make sense. And without Jesus, it will make no sense to you at all.

Listen, this happens all the time, doesn't it? People read the Bible and they don't understand it because they don't see that Jesus is at the heart of it.

You know, people read, don't they? They read in the Old Testament, they read about the building of the temple in Jerusalem. And they think, oh, well, that's interesting, isn't it? Maybe we need another one. Maybe we need to repair that one.

But they don't see, do they, that actually the temple was intended to be a picture of Jesus. But where do you go to meet God? You don't go to a building, you go to Jesus Christ.

That's where you meet God. The gospel is Jesus Christ. And the temple is a picture of the sacred place that you go to meet with God. It's Jesus, God with us.

[32 : 46] If you read of sacrifices in the Old Testament, perhaps you presume we need those. Oh, you don't. Jesus is the sacrificial lamb. It's his blood that saves from the guilt of sin.

So that feeling that people have had all through history, every time they've done something wrong, that you have, that I have whenever I do anything wrong, which is that feeling of guilt and shame. It is not dealt with by any sacrifice of anything else other than the sacrifice of God's own son on the cross.

His blood in our place. Without Jesus, you read the story of Jonah and it may come up in a children's Bible that you read with your kids. And you'll see, that's a cute story, isn't it?

It's a guy who went to preach. He ended up in the belly of a fish. He was there for three days. He got puked up. He then went and preached and people kind of listened. What a cute story.

But if you see Jesus, you see that that story is about a resurrected preacher who was three days dead and then rose again and preached and the nations believed.

[33 : 52] It's Jesus. And what's the purpose of this message of Jesus Christ that's in the Bible from the beginning to end? Keep looking at verse 26. We're not quite at the end of it. So that all the Gentiles, literally the nations to ethnē, might come to the obedience that comes from faith.

Now, if you happen to be one of those rare people that is really super switched on, you might hear that sentence so that the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith.

And you're thinking, I've heard that before. I heard that in September 2025 when Steve preached Romans 1 verse 5.

If you're thinking that, please come and see me at the end because you're a genius, right? But Paul uses the same sentence at the beginning and the end of his letter. He's tying it all together and saying, listen, everything that comes between this sentence in chapter 1 verse 5 and this sentence in chapter 16 verse 26, all of that is so that the Gentile nations, all people of the world, might come to the obedience that comes from faith.

That people might trust in Jesus from wherever they're from and that they might follow Jesus.

Notice it's not that he wants to bring them through obedience to faith.

[35 : 20] Rather, he wants them to come to faith that brings obedience. So that as we trust in Christ, we also find we want to live for Christ, all for the glory of God. Let me try just in a few sentences to summarize everything that we've seen in Romans over the last 12 months or so.

Romans is saying, whoever you are this morning, wherever you're from, whatever your background, whether you've been to church a lot, whether you've not been before, Romans is saying there is good news for you.

The news is about Jesus. The news has been told from the beginning of the world right through to now. And it's news about how you can know God and live for his glory forever and ever and ever. And listen, there's nothing better than that. We're going to share in a brilliant barbecue. If you've never tasted Clifford's chicken before, it's a revelation.

But it's not as good as this. Here is a message for every single individual in the room that can unite you with the God who made you to live with him and for his glory forever and ever and ever.

[36 : 44] It can wash away your guilt and your sin so that you're not afraid to meet him when you do, when you die. Because you know he'll welcome you home through his son, the Lord Jesus.

There's nothing better than that. Because until you've found Jesus like that, you haven't found what your life is for or about. Because this is it.

And Paul's whole letter is about it. So that he might look you in the eye and say, this is for you this morning. The gospel is for you.

Let me pray as I close and then we'll sing. Heavenly Father, there is such great joy that there is a message for sinful, broken, fallen, wandering people like us to bring us home to you.

And the message isn't about what we do, but about what Christ has done. And so please, Lord, this morning we pray, might we listen? Maybe we've never trusted in Jesus Christ and we pray, please, Lord, that you would help us to do that even now in these moments, to say, Lord Jesus, I trust in you.

[38 : 00] Forgive me of my sin and bring me to glory. And maybe we've been Christians for years and Lord, we say, we're sorry. We trust in Jesus.

Bring us to glory. Refresh us, renew us, we ask. Bless us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.