

Romans 15:31-16:5

“I commend to you...”



Vs 30 cont. - “... *join Me in the struggle...*”

What motivation does Paul appeal to in getting us to join him in “*the struggle*”?

1 - Christ! ‘Nough said!

2 - The love of the Holy Spirit

Q: Is this a reference to our love *for* the Holy Spirit?

A: Actually, no. It is a reference to the key work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to bring about a genuine *love of people* and a compelling concern for either their salvation or for their growth in Christ!



[1 Jn. 4:16b-21] - Love is imparted by the Spirit of God who transforms our perspective and our inclinations toward people when we are truly following Jesus. An all-encompassing agape love for the people around us is a divinely wrought miracle that cannot be consistently achieved on our own. It is a daily death to our normal inclination with its negative view of others. and an acquiescence to the outward flow of the Spirit’s work.

Vs. 31 - Join Paul's team by praying for Paul. We are not called to be a Paul. Few could ever fill his shoes. But we are called to be ourselves - to become who the Spirit is making us to be and fulfilling what He has called us to do.

But we are all in this together, strongly connected by Christ and by the Spirit of God. It is our obligation to the God who so mercifully saved us to support our brothers and sisters, our co-laborers in Christ, in their quest to follow and serve the purposes of God! Our most fundamental level of support for other Christians is prayer. Paul couldn't take everyone with him on his journeys to promote Jesus to the nations, but he is asking them to continually keep him before the throne of God in prayer.

Can we rely upon each other for a commitment to pray for one another? Does it even cross your mind to pray that the person sitting next to you in church be faithful and ultimately successful in bringing others to Jesus? In living a life of Christ-centered love?



vs. 31 cont...

Prayer for our friends and colleagues in Christ, besides engaging the intervention of God, keeps our head in the game and always conscious of our place in God's purposes. Paul wanted pray-ers on his team, people that faithfully held up his work.



Vs. 31-Paul had two specific concerns.



1 – The threat to his life from Jewish authorities and from Jewish zealots was very real.

He was knowingly going into the lion's den and wanted them to pray for deliverance from all that was likely to happen if he showed up in Jerusalem.

2 – I think he was concerned about how he would be received by his Jewish brothers. He knew there were Judaizers in Jerusalem who would have been constantly trying to erode his reputation with the church leaders there. He could not be sure how he would be received. He needed prayer that he could continue to build bridges between the Jewish and gentile church. The substantial offering money he was bringing from largely gentile churches to the poverty stricken, constantly harassed, and poor Jerusalem church would help.

Paul needs something good to happen in Jerusalem. He seems a bit down from all the pressure, especially of his upcoming trip to Jerusalem. He believes God will intervene in favor of His own plan and purposes and do something that will silence Paul's many enemies and protect him from them. They were enemies gained during the course of Paul's many years of controversial ministry — a ministry that Christ Himself had called him to. Paul was certain that his enemies were also God's enemies! But, ultimately, he sensed the end was drawing near.



The only thing that could save him would be to stop promoting the gospel so aggressively, of course he could not do that. ***Could you?***

Paul did not come to Rome “*joyfully*”, because his freedom to go as he pleased and where had been taken from him in Rome as he awaited trial. But he was satisfied that things were as they should be.

While imprisoned under house arrest in Rome, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

~Ph’p 4:4-7 – “*Rejoice,.. always*”

~ ” 4:4:11-13 – “*...content whatever the circumstances*”



Was the Holy Spirit reserving this lesson for Paul and other spiritual giants? Is this for you and I, Joe and Jane average?

Before signing off, as was often the custom of the day in letter-writing, Paul commences to send his regards to the individuals of the Roman church.

16:1 – *“I comment to you... Phoebe”*

[Col. 4:13 - *“I vouch for him...”*]

Unknown Christian leaders had to be sponsored by known Christian leaders. There were so many charlatans/impostors going around seizing the opportunity to make money off of naïve and gullible Christians. Some things never change. We rarely have someone speak here that we do not know

*Merrill Womack - philanderer

*Peter Popov - con artist - the *“miracle spring water”*

*My experience in the Christian music industry

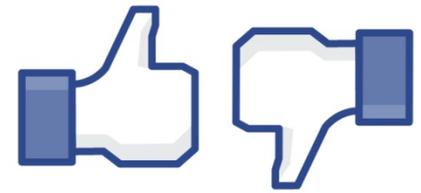


Phoebe is referred to as a **deacon** (Gk. *Diakonon* - servant) and a **patron** (Gk. *Prostatis* – a helper of many) in the church in Cenchrea – a city near Corinth, Greece. As a patron, undoubtedly wealthy and probably a widow. It is assumed that she was the one entrusted to carry this letter/epistle to the Roman church. This was a huge responsibility and a credit to the unusual qualities and resources of this woman, as well as her devotion to Christ, and loyalty to Paul.



16:2 – *“I ask you to receive her in the Lord, in a way worthy of the saints,..”*

When someone has years of faithfully serving Jesus, they deserve to be welcomed graciously by the church! But if someone hears of someone they think should be heard here at B.E. Free, I need to speak with someone that *I* know personally that knows *them* personally, and if I sense any hesitancy, it will not happen. If they have a miracle that they want to talk about for the cost of a freewill offering, it won't happen. I don't know them. They may seem as sincere as could possibly be. But if I don't know them or don't know someone I trust that knows them, who has seen them before and after, who can vouch for them, it won't happen. I'm not saying they are fake, but I'm saying that I don't know if they are fake! If they have an exciting new teaching – even if everyone is all excited about it - it still has to be run by me or the elder board first. If they have a list of references in their publicity brochure a foot long in size 12 font, it is if they have no references if there are no names there that I recognize and trust. That is the burden of leadership. A good shepherd protects the sheep from all prospective sources of danger. A good shepherd is always on alert. It is important to be careful so that we are not taken in by those that seek to exploit our normally trusting and open manner. But up-front ministry to the church has to be held to a different/higher standard. If we have someone in to speak to us, even if something unsavory is discovered after the fact, their reputation reflects upon our reputation and ultimately the reputation of Jesus! Exercising caution by using personal recommendation still works today as it did back then.



16:3 – Priscilla and Aquila were a married couple in the early church making up a powerful team of two serving the purposes of God in building churches in the gentile world. The trajectory of their lives had been greatly altered when the Roman Emperor Claudius banished all Jews from Rome.



They were back in Rome now at the time of this letter, but they had had to leave Rome years before, and in the providence of God, ended up in Corinth helping to establish that church. They also had traveled with Paul for a time on one of his missionary journeys. Evidently, along the way they had also risked their own lives for Paul's sake during one of his many precarious experiences. Paul had also stayed with them for a time working in the business of tent making, a vocation they shared. They had also disciplined the evangelist, Apollos. Apollos had evidently been a disciple of John the Baptist and was arguing in the synagogue that Jesus was the Messiah. The couple were impressed and had taken him in, schooling him properly in the life and teachings of Jesus.

Obviously they were not of the Judaism school, but were fully supportive of Paul's efforts to bring t/gospel to the gentile nations. These 2 were Jewish, but they were not part of the problem in the Roman Church. They were fully teamed w/Paul and his theology of salvation through grace alone!