

Article 1: Introduction and Romans 12:1-2

Paul wrote about one's life choice in chapters 1-11. You are either in Christ and acknowledging him as the Lord of your life, or you are outside his purview and it is either you yourself or your desires that assumes lordship. If you submit to the Holy Spirit, you will be offering up every part of yourself and being a servant of righteousness. Otherwise, you will be a slave of your desires and death will be the outcome.

Needless to mention, for one who comes from a strong Jewish background, the understanding of worship (the act of 'offering up' to God) will invariably be based on the sacrificial rites conducted in the temple(s). Paul was alluding to such scenarios when he exhorted the Roman Christians to offer themselves up as living sacrifices. They were not to offer up animals but themselves to God, as Christ is none other than the Lord of each and every one of us. Hence, to present our entire self is a reasonable service pleasing to God, it is also an expression of total submission unto him.

In chapters 9-11, Paul reminded his recipients that both Jews and Gentiles were not to boast [about having the privilege to offer up acceptable worship]. Jews should not boast that they are the only chosen race, for the Gentiles are now coming to faith in God; and God is even using the phenomena to 'shock' them, provoking them towards repentance. As for Gentiles who were grafted onto the olive tree through grace and had become a part of it, they should likewise not boast, for if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he might not spare them either. Both Jews and Gentiles are after all under grace. Hence, Paul said, "Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God."

To be sure, Paul knew that worship was to be offered up 'in Christ'. Worship is obeying the Holy Spirit, acknowledging God (as God), and the offering up of all of one's faculties – including mental activities and all that one puts his or her hands toward. All that a person does unto the Lord constitutes the worship offered up to the Creator of heaven and earth, which is also the 'service' rendered.

In the second verse, Paul went on to advise us not to be conformed to this present world, a phrase which employs the language found in Jewish apocalypses - "present world" and "coming age". "Present world" refers to "this age" (1 Cor 3:19; 5:10), "this world's present path" (Eph 2:2, NET), which is in contrast to the "coming age" (Eph 1:21; 2:7). Having grasped the way in which Paul described "this present world", believers should then begin to discern activities at the workplace or within the community that bear such a nature and not take part in them.

The next phrase, "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind", underscores firstly, that transformation and renewal stems from that which God has accomplished in Christ (come and join the course on The Gospel conducted by LED to learn more). Secondly, believers are to adhere to the Leading of God, so that transformation and renewal may take place in every one of our faculties, including our thoughts, perspectives and value system. And since it is Christ who has accomplished for us the salvific work, let us therefore abide in him in order to experience daily this transformation and renewal, and become people who offer ourselves up daily, as like the Apostle Paul (the scripture passages selected for subsequent cell group discussions will point us to the various life situations in which this basic understanding applies).

Lastly, in order to "test and approve what is the will of God", we as believers need to comprehend the scripture and the spiritual truths that it seeks to communicate. In the case of the Apostle Paul, the task involves knowing the entire Old Testament. Furthermore, as an apostle of the early church, he saw the need for baptised believers to have a good understanding of the Jesus whom the apostles bore witness to, including His works and speech. It was Jesus who tasked the apostles to proclaim Him and the good news (Matt 28:18). One way in which Paul did so was to have his version of the gospel message – the very message which made his life totally anew – delineated in Roman 1-11.

Discussion Questions:

1. Contemporary city churches often find members who are caught up in busyness. How are we to "test and approve what is the will of God – what is good and well-pleasing and perfect" having read Paul's exposition of the gospel message followed by his exhortation to the church? Let us put on our thinking caps and each contribute a suggestion on how to translate the exhortation into practical step(s).
2. "Do not be conformed to this present world". What would you reckon as belonging to "this present world" when you look back to the life you lived in days passed. Cell group leaders to encourage contributions of at least 3 answers (without repetition) from each member.

分享 1: 罗马书简介与 12: 1-2

在前面 1-11 章保罗提到人生里的选择：你或在基督里，让基督做王，或者不在基督的范畴里，让自己或你的私欲来做王。如果顺着圣灵，你献上身体的各个肢体，做义的奴仆。反之，你顺着私欲，结果就是死。

有深厚犹太背景的人，对于敬拜的理解，当然是来自圣殿里的献祭。保罗借用这样的图像，他劝罗马信徒要把自己的‘身体’带来献给上帝，不是带动物为祭牲，而是带自己。因为我们的生命本应让基督做王，献上自己全人。这是合理的事奉，是一个对上帝的完全顺从，也是神所喜悦的。

而且保罗也在 9-11 章才跟信徒说了，无论他们是犹太人或者非犹太人，其实都没有可夸的。犹太人不好自夸自己是被拣选的唯一族类，因为上帝要用那些外邦人的归信，让他们受到‘刺激’，以至于赶紧悔改。对于非犹太人，他们既然蒙恩典，得以接上，成为橄榄枝的一部分，千万不可夸。因为上帝如果不爱惜天然的枝子，也可以不爱惜他们。因此无论是犹太人或者非犹太人，其实都在恩典之中。因此保罗说‘我以上帝的怜悯来激励你们’。

保罗知道敬拜是在基督里，顺从圣灵，以上帝为上帝，每天把自己的肢体（从脑袋到手脚能做的一切）都是献给。你为主而做这一切，构成你献给造天地的上帝的敬拜，这一切就是你的服侍。

保罗劝人不要与现今的世界同流（2 节）。这里涉及犹太教的启示文学：‘今世’和‘来世’。‘今世’就是‘这世界’（林前三 19，五 10），‘今世的风俗’（弗二 2）与‘来世’（弗一 21，二 7）成为对比。明白了保罗在书信中曾经如何述及‘现今的世界’，信徒就能开始分辨在自己工作岗位或者社区当中，有什么是属于‘今世’的，不要去随众。

‘而要心意更新改造’，这里让我们意识到，第一，这改造与更新是来自上帝在基督里已经完成的事情（来上 LED 的福音课吧！）。第二，信徒需要配合，好让这样的改造与更新能发生在身体（包括意识，观念与价值观）上。既然基督已经为我们完成了，故我们靠着联系于他，每天来经历这个更新与改造。以至于我们像保罗一样，每天把自己献上。在接下来在小组讨论的经文，也会逐步让我们看见，这能实践于什么场景之中。

作为信徒，要察验神的旨意，必然需要理解‘经文’与其精神——对保罗来说，这包括旧约的全部经文；而作为初期教会的使徒，他明白受洗归入基督的信徒必然需要熟悉使徒见证的耶稣——他的行事、说话，而耶稣也托付了使徒来执行这一切。同时保罗也把那让他生命翻转过来的福音，写在 1-11 章。

讨论问题：

1. 近代城市教会都面对信徒忙碌。但是理解了上帝的福音之后，对教会的真挚劝告之后，我们要如何‘察验神的旨意，就是那善良、完全、十分可悦的旨意’？请大家每个人给一个点子，是在这个小组里可以实践的。

2. ‘不要与现今的世界同流’，在你过去的圈子里，有什么是你如今看清楚，那是属于‘现今的世界’的？组长带小组分享提出至少 3 方面不同。

Article 2: Romans 12:3-8

The contents of the subsequent verses are in fact referring to Paul's intended meaning and usage when he said, "to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will". Paul himself was someone who had offered his body as a living sacrifice, to live for God. He saw himself as someone who had been blessed by grace, and he saw God as a grace giving God! "God's grace" appears in the book of Romans multiple times, repeatedly from chapters 1 to 16. Of course, God was able to use Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to bring man back to God and to become holy, showing his grace through this process.

It is entirely through God's love and grace that believers can come to know Jesus and a community can come to believe in Jesus. Receiving God's forgiveness and receiving God's spirit (and also Christ's spirit) originates entirely from the mercy of God the father, the faithfulness of His son Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit!

Paul pointed out that believers have died and resurrected together with Jesus, and together live for God the father. Believers have also received the Holy Spirit and so belong to God, becoming a holy community where the Holy Spirit dwells. This work of grace transforms the believers' entire lives and their reason for living. At the same time, it implies that everyone, before God, lives in different circumstances, with new orientation and meaning! Henceforth, a believer would look at all things with this new value system (otherwise, it will be conforming to the world and not being transformed by the renewing of the mind)! Firstly, with careful consideration according to the new value system, a believer would have a more accurate and appropriate view of the people around him and his community. He should not continue to view matters with the value system he had when he was conforming to the world. At the instance of receiving God's grace, God does not differentiate among Jews or non-Jews, everyone in Christ receives God's grace and belongs to God.

Not only so, all who have received God's grace by the Holy Spirit belong to one body in Jesus. Although the believers are different, they all belong to one body (Jesus), becoming fellow body parts! We do not arrive at this understanding based on the world's perceptions of things but through seeing the effects of God's grace in action. As a result, believers treat one another with an attitude that is different from the world. (belief / theological understanding motivates acts of faith).

As sinners who have received God's mercy, there should not be a need to feel superior to others. All of us have received the one spirit, and are bound together with Christ; God has also bestowed different gifts to everyone. In conclusion, there is no need to compete to see who is better; God's spirit is present amongst the community of believers to manifest the life of Christ and its power. Each believer should fully utilize the gifts each has been given, each doing their best, partnering each other, to allow the community of believers to be a model of Christ's life that is displayed for all men! No wonder Paul says, "If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully." Amen!

Questions:

1. In the position that you are serving, how do you interpret "single-mindedness" as found in verses 7, 8?
2. Discuss in detail "grace" and its effect on you.
3. Give a few examples of how a church is able to have "each member belongs to all the others" (verse 5).

分享 2: 罗马书 12: 3-8

接下来整段的内容其实就是保罗所谓的“心意更新而变化，查验何为神善良存全的旨意”之意义和应用。保罗本身就是一个完全将身体献上当活祭，向神而活的人。他看到自己是个蒙神恩典的人！也看到神是赐恩的神。“神的恩”在罗马书出现多次，从第 1 章到 16 章都不断出现。当然，神借耶稣基督，透过圣灵，使人因此可以属于神，而圣洁更是神向人所完成的恩。

信徒之所以能成为信耶稣的人，一群人会成为信耶稣的群体，完全出自上帝的爱和恩典。蒙神赦免又领受神的灵（也是基督的灵），这完全是出自父上帝的慈悲，圣子耶稣基督的信实，及圣灵的交通感动而成！

保罗指出信徒是与主耶稣同死同复活，一同向父上帝而活的人。信徒也是领受圣灵，而因此属神，并成为圣灵居住的圣洁群体。神这些的恩改变了信徒整个的生命和存活意义，同时意味着大家彼此在神面前是一种新的存活状况，有着新的生命定位和意义！从今以后，信徒当要以这种全新的价值观来看一切（否则就是效法世界，没有心意更新变化）！首先，按全新的价值观慎思明辨之后，信徒会对自己以及群体中的他人有更正确和恰当的看法。他应该不再效法世界的价值看待这件事。就以蒙恩的事而言，神都不分犹太人和非犹太人。大家在基督里都是蒙神恩典属于神。

不但如此，大家也是一同蒙神的恩典，借圣灵而属于同一个耶稣的身体。虽然信徒都不一样，但却是同属一个身体（耶稣），并且成为了肢体！这种了解不再是按世界的看法，而是按神行动之恩所促成的果效而定义。即然如此，信徒就有异于世界的态度对待彼此（信仰/神学意义就带动信仰行为）。

即然都是同样蒙恩的罪人，因此不当自觉自己比他人高。大家都是同领一圣灵，并联于基督。神也分赐大家不同的恩赐。结论是不必比较高低或轻重。神的灵在信徒当中，是要使信仰群体彰显基督生命的功能。信徒因此就按所领受的，尽情发挥，各尽其职，互相配搭，让信仰群体在人当中彰显基督的生命样式！所以保罗说：“若恩赐是说预言，就当照着信心的程度说预言；或是服事，就当服事；或是教导，就当教导；是劝勉，就当劝勉；若是捐献，就当诚实；若是治理，就当殷勤；若是怜悯，就当乐意。”阿门！

讨论问题：

- 1 请谈谈在你的服侍岗位上，你如何诠释什么是“专一”（7, 8 节）。
- 2 请深入的谈，“恩典”对你个人的影响。
- 3 请举例说明一个教会里面“互相联络作肢体”的方式。

Article 3: Romans 12:9-21

When we, like Paul, look at God our father and the work of grace achieved by our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, the life of Jesus Christ – living his whole life for God, persisting to the end, even under the threat of death – appears before our eyes. Moreover, Jesus faced all evil with good and received God's righteousness – this is something Paul understood and experienced. (The resurrected Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and changed Paul (from Saul)!) Since believers are one with Jesus, living for God henceforth like how Christ Jesus lived is the model for how believers' lives should be! Let's compare how Christ lived on earth with Paul's exhortation here (this is to test what is God's will), with at least 3 points:

1. The life of Christ living for God was not smooth sailing and popular. In contrast, passive indifference, cynicism, humiliation, being wronged, being framed, distortion of facts, manipulation and other injustice were imposed on Jesus, indicting him unto death. However, Jesus faced all this, just like Paul's words of exhortations for the disciples, and emerged victorious. I believe that in the person of Jesus, we see that he was able to:
 - Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction
 - Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
 - Not repay anyone evil for evil.
 - Not take revenge, but to leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:
 - "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."
 - Not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good
2. Jesus came to earth to become man, creating a new way of life for man. It was not by magical trickery or special formulae, but he accomplished it as a human being. Jesus was equal with God but became man, experiencing life with us, completely being identified as man. He did not live as God, but humbled himself, becoming one of us! This is why Paul was able to request believers to treat others as follows:
 - Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.
 - Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.
3. Besides these, the overall defining feature of Jesus' life is in verses 9-11 as Paul exhorted:
 - "9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good." and "11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." The whole of Jesus' life was to do good (The only, God the father is good), not compromising or agreeing with evil (whether it is Satan, or anyone or any evil intention opposing the will of God). From beginning to end, Jesus had God's heart daily, faithfully and earnestly serving people without discouragement or discontentment.
 - "10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves." In serving people, although he is the creator of heaven and earth, Jesus gave people the feeling that he actively sought to love people deeply, intimately, with respect and he cherished people!

As Paul was recounting the gospel earlier (Romans chapters 1-11), recognizing God's work in the past, "merciful", "pure", "benevolent" etc. are impressions that naturally arise. The images of the life of Jesus serving and his examples were so vivid and real! Since Christ offered himself as such to God the Father, believers of Jesus (and the gospel) should naturally also follow his example and live for God. Paul was able to appreciate God's intention in all that He had shown and the work he had completed, this is the basis of Paul's appeals and exhortations to us!

Discussion Questions:

1. Provide a story of Jesus that most influences your behaviour.
2. Share an experience of "overcome evil with good".

分享 3: 罗马书 12: 9-21

当我们像保罗一样审视父上帝，主耶稣基督和圣灵向人所作及所成就的恩，耶稣基督一生向神而活，始终坚持到底，以致于死都不放弃的生命样式，即刻活现眼前。除此之外，基督始终以善面对各样的恶，并最终得到神的称义，更是保罗所明白和经验的事（复活的耶稣在大马色路上向扫罗显现而促成了保（扫）罗！）。即然信徒是与耶稣联合，与基督一样，从此向上帝活的人，基督存活的样式也就是信徒生活的样式！让我们把基督在世生活的样式，对比保罗这里的劝勉（这就是察验何为神的旨意），至少归纳三点：

1. 在基督一生向上帝而活的过程中，并非一帆风顺，到处受人欢迎。相反的，冷眼旁观，冷嘲热讽，被买受辱，误蔑陷害，颠倒是非，借刀杀人等不公不义的事，都加诸在耶稣身上，并致他于死地。但是，耶稣以保罗向门徒所作的劝勉，面对而胜过这一切。相信我们会同意，在耶稣身上我们看到：

- 在指望中喜乐，在患难中忍耐；祷告恒切。
- 逼迫的，给他们祝福；只祝福，不咒诅。
- 不以恶报恶。
- 不自己伸冤，宁可让步，听凭主怒。因为经上记着：“主说：‘伸冤在我，我必报应。’”
- 仇敌若饿了，就给他吃；若渴了，就给他喝。因为你这样行，就是把炭火堆在他的头上。”
- 不为恶所胜，反以善胜恶。

2. 耶稣降世为人，为人开创出一种新的生命方式。不是以什么神奇招数或特效方法完成。他乃是以人的样式完成。耶稣虽然与神同等，但却成为人，与我们身看同受，完全与人认同。不以神自居，卑微俯就成为我们当中的一份子！相信这是保罗能说出以下信徒如何对待“他者”的原因：

- 与喜乐的人同乐；与哀哭的人同哭。
 - 彼此同心，不要志气高大，倒俯就卑微的人。不自以为聪明。
3. 除此之外，总的来说，耶稣的生命特征就如 9-11 节保罗对信徒的呼吁：
- 9, 11: “爱人不可虚假；恶要厌恶，善要亲近”和“殷勤不可懒惰。要心里火热，常常服事主”。因为耶稣基督一生就只近善，亲善（唯一的善父上帝），不与恶妥协或认同（不论是撒旦或任何与神心意相抵触的“恶意”和人）。耶稣从开始到末了，每天心存神的委托，热心殷勤的服侍人，从不气馁消沉。
 - 10 “爱弟兄，要彼此亲热；恭敬人，要彼此推让。”因为在耶稣的服侍中，让人感受到他虽是天地的主，却主动深切的爱人，亲近人，尊重和珍惜人！

当保罗在前面（1-11 章）述说福音时，看到神整个过去的作为。“慈悲”，“纯全”，“善良”等印象就自然浮现。而耶稣一身的服侍身影和样式，更是历历在目，如此之真实和具体！即然基督是如此地向父神献上而活，信耶稣（福音）也就自然与他一样向上帝而活。查验到神这一切神所流露及完成的心意，保罗因此作如是的呼吁和劝勉！

问题讨论：

- 1 请提出一个影响你行为最深的其中一个耶稣的故事。
- 2 请分享一个“以善胜恶”的经验。

Article 4: Romans 13: 1-7

(The topic of Public Theology is immense and controversial. Hence the Church will leave this particular article as optional for each cell group to decide if it is suitable for cell discussion. In light of this, this article will go beyond the usual exegetical 'explaining-the-text' style for a more holistic view of this particular topic.)

Addressing the topic:

There are good reasons to steer clear of this particular passage:

- It can be easily abused by tyrants to oppress their people, demanding blind submission in lieu of judgment, wrath and taxes. This had indeed been so for some monarchs of the medieval Christian world.
- It makes little or no mention of Christ or the Christian faith.
- It breaks a good flowing argument on Love from the second half of chapter 12 and from 13:8 onwards.

However, as a Christian, the practice of our faith goes beyond just "religious matters". Our faith should have an impact in every aspect of our lives, including politics and our civic responsibilities. So even though this is neither a simple topic nor easy passage to handle, it is a necessary reflection to distil certain principles to guide our lives as members of a society and citizens of a state.

Understanding the text:

This is the easy part. Paul is amply clear in his message.

- This passage is an extension of an earlier advice in 12:18: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people." By being submissive to governing authorities and being law-abiding (such as paying taxes), Christians live in harmony with others within a state.
- It is also an elaboration of the principle in 12:21, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Through good exemplary citizenship, Christians can overcome false accusations and be protected by the governing authorities.
- The key theology here is: governing authorities are God's servants for governing. This is standard OT understanding of God's sovereignty over all rulers of the earth. See Proverbs 8:15-16; 21:1; Jeremiah 27:5-7; Dan 2:21; 4:17, 25, 32. Even the terrible ones like Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17) and Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 42:10).

Therefore, such submission allows for a proper order of relationships (husband and wives, workers and masters), which eventually leads to God as authority over all. God is the final judgment.

Applying the text:

This is the tough part. How should such a clear and direct passage be used?

By starting and ending with words such as "every person" and "everyone", Paul intended for this to be understood as a general principle meant for all, and not just the immediate readers.

Many attempts to contextualize the passage had been inconclusive. Some of the more convincing ones:

- Paul's good experience with some of the Roman authorities.
- The early years of Nero's rule were quite peaceful.
- Paul may be trying to distance himself from non-tax-paying Jewish nationalists.

However, if this passage is literally interpreted and blindly followed, it fails to be consistent either with reality (there are rulers who punish even good-doers) or with justified causes (revolutions against oppression, slavery, genocide etc.) Exodus itself is a clear counter-example. (Perhaps Esther too.) This passage simply has to be applied contextually, bearing in mind the justice of God and the common good of fellowmen.

But the greatest danger comes from human pride. Those who are pro-government would use such a passage to demand submission, whereas those who are anti-government would insist on their unique context to disregard such a passage. In short, the Bible is just a tool to justify continuing their viewpoint and ensuing actions. The way to properly apply this passage is to see it as a challenge instead. To those who are pro-government: are you really administering justice as God's servants? To those who are anti-government: are you really paying ALL your due diligence to the government (taxes, respect, honour, etc.)?

Discussion Questions:

1. How much do you believe in this statement: "Do you desire not to fear authority? Do good and you will receive its commendation."?
2. How do you personally decide the boundary for submission to governing authorities?
3. How would you describe Jesus' relationship and behaviour with the governing authorities of his time?

分享 4: 罗马书 13: 1-7

公共神学是一个很大且附争论的课题。教会因此让小组各自定夺此文章之适切性，并决定采用与否。基于同样的原因，此文章的内容将超越一贯的范畴(即：解经)，而更全面地探讨所针对的课题。

分解课题：

选择避开或不谈论这段经文的考量：

- 暴君可轻易曲解这段经文，并以其理解对人民施压迫：命令民众对其判断，怒火及所指定的税收，作出一种盲目的服从。中古时期信基督的国度里便曾有这样的君王。
- 这段经文极少，甚至没有提及基督和基督信仰。
- 经文打断一个流畅的论点。保罗在 12 章的后半章谈论‘爱’，并直至 13 章 8 节才重新进入同样的课题。

但身为基督徒，落实信仰应该是超出所谓“关乎信仰的事”。我们的信仰应该对生活的每个环节有所影响，包括在政治方面的参与，和去负起公民的责任等方面。故此，即便这并非一个容易处理的课题，或一段容易诠释的经文，但它却是一段必需有的反思。它有助于理出一些我们身为社会的一分子和国家的国民该持守的生活原则。

理解经文：

这是容易处理的部分。保罗的信息十分清晰。

- 这段经文延续在 12 章 18 节的劝告“若是能行，总要尽力与众人和睦”，重点是通过顺服政府和守法(有如按时缴税)，基督徒能与国人和谐共处。
- 经文同时也是阐述 12 章 21 节所提及的原则，“你不可为恶所胜，反要以善胜恶。”身为良好的公民，基督徒能在遭诬告的情况下胜出，并得到掌权者的保护。
- 此处主要的神学理念：掌权者是上帝为国家的治理而设立的仆人。旧约圣经便是基于此神学观去理解上帝在地上的众君王当中持主权一事(参：箴 8:15-16; 21:1; 耶 27:5-7; 但 2:21; 4:17, 25, 32; 甚至包括一些负面的例子如埃及的法老(罗 9:17)和尼布甲尼撒王(耶 42:10))。

如此的顺服营造一种在关系里头应有的秩序(丈夫与妻子、雇工与雇主之间)，从而引申至上帝是最终的掌权者及审判者。

应用经文：

我们来到了难处理的部分。我们该如何应用这段如此清楚且直接的经文？

保罗以类似“人人”和“凡人”等词汇作经文的起始和结尾意味着其写作对象乃众人，而非单单当日的收信人及读者。换言之，保罗所交代的是属一般性而非特殊性的原则。

多个将经文处境化的尝试皆无法达致定论。较具说服力的论点如下：

- 保罗在接触当时政府的过程中拥有好的经历。
- 人民在尼禄王执政的初期过着相当平安的生活。
- 保罗可能在尝试疏离不缴税的犹太籍民族主义者。

然而，直接地诠释，应用及盲目地跟随经文的劝勉，却不符合某些实况(因为的确有暴君贪官惩好市民的个案)，也抵触所谓的‘正当事’(比如起义对抗暴政的压迫，奴隶制度，种族灭绝事件等)。出埃及记(甚至以斯帖记)便是一个明显与此处经文走相反路线的例子。简言之，为避免滥用，经文绝对必须基于处境适当地去应用，以符合上帝的公义并顾及公共利益。

但最大的危险产自人性的骄傲。支持政府的人会借类似此处的经文命令人民要顺服。而反政府的人则只看重自身的情况和需要，而忽视这类的经文。简言之，圣经已被当成是支持其立场和所作所为的工具。我们应该将经文视为一项挑战，方能正确地应用其教导。拥护政府一方的人，我们是否以上帝仆人的身份和心肠去施行公义？反政府的人，是否竭尽所能去尽自己的本分(如缴税，给予掌权者应得的尊敬与荣誉等等)？

问题：

1. 你认为以下这句话的可靠性到哪里，“你愿意不惧怕掌权的吗？你只要有善行，就可得他的称赞。”？
2. 你个人如何决定在顺服政府一事上要做到什么地步？
3. 你将如何形容耶稣本人与当时的政府的关系？你又会如何形容他对待(或回应)他们的方式？

Article 5: Romans 13:8-10

Paul in 12:1-13:10, 14:1-15:13 offered advice directed specifically at a number of phenomena in churches, here in 13:8-14, a more principle-based advice emerged. From Paul's 'anything,' 'fulfilled,' 'summed up,' etc., these type of encompassing wordings refer to the character which believers should possess. This is a way of life, a type of mindset with which to treat others. In other words, Paul was asking: How should Christians conduct themselves? What principles should this conduct be based upon? Why?

As Jews, we believe that Paul inherited the deep-rooted traditions underlying the Jewish belief in this respect! Let us attempt to trace the origin of Paul's words and evidence, so as to understand his meaning. In verse 9, Paul cited the fourth of the Ten Commandments, and the 'love' as explained in Leviticus 19:18! And 'love' is the principle underlying Christians' conduct! What is love? Let us first begin with the law! The law refers to the core question for discussion in the Jewish belief, and is the indispensable doctrine of existence which makes the Jews who they are. In Paul's time, 'what is the law?' 'how to obey the law?' were what the Jewish race was most concerned about and to want to put into practice! If they were to be disjointed from the law, then Jews would no longer be regarded as Jews. Therefore, Jews have a deep commitment to the deciphering of the definition of the law, and obeying the law is the eminent demonstration of this behavior! Even though we would never really know how the law was regarded amongst the Jews in Paul's days, but it certainly was something which could not be done without!

Since Paul cited the law from the Five Books of Moses (the entire book of Romans is related to the discussion of the law), we will explore the significance of the law from these five books. The law was in fact the instructions for living bestowed by God on His people after He made the covenant with them. God helped the people to learn from the law how to live as people under the covenant! In other words, those are the intentions and instructions of living which God wanted to express to His people.

In the five books, each time after God instructed His people as to how to look upon and worship Him, the instructions as to how to treat one another while His people lived on the Promised Land would follow. From these commands, whether it was an incident or a principle, there was a thread of common value: do not deprive others of the right to live, there should not be a loss to the 'condition' for man's survival! Letting everyone live was the grace which God wanted to grant and cared about, because God is a creating and also a redeeming God!

Since the Roman church was a group saved by God, this group would also have to be one which reflected the God of creation and redemption. Since the saving grace of Jesus Christ allowed people to re-identify with God and to belong to God again, as was the case when the Israelites saved by God departed from Egypt, and belonged to God again, and thereafter followed God's will (the law) to live, the church should also live according to God's will! God's will is reflected in the law, and the heart of the law is to preserve one's right to live. 'Love your neighbour as yourself,' 'love one another' was completely lived out in practice by Jesus. People who believe in Jesus and belong to Jesus therefore 'love'.

A more important practical matter is that the actions that arose out of Jesus' 'love' fulfilled the ideal manner with which God wanted people to live through the law! Therefore, Paul could say 'love is the fulfillment of the law', the real definition of the law and the key meaning of obeying the law was displayed in the 'love' in Jesus' life! With this understanding, we would agree [1] with what Paul said: 'Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandments there are, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbour as yourself' Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

[1] Paul in 3:14 articulated the same principle with believers needing to be clothed with Christ: how Christ was, believers should identify with Christ in the same manner; believers see that to live is to share and live Christ's way of life!

Discussion questions:

1 Did your concept of 'the law' change slowly with time? Please discuss.

2 Did your concept of 'love' change slowly with time? Please discuss.

3 'How should Christians live?' What is your answer?

分享 5: 罗马书 13: 8-10

保罗在 12:1-13:10, 14:1-15:13 具体针对一些教会中的现象提出劝导。这里 13:8-14 出现一段比较是原则性的劝导。从保罗的“凡事”，“完全了”，“都包在”等这类涵盖性的用语，是指信徒为人当有的风格。这是一种生命样式，一种对待他人的心态！换句话说，保罗是在问说：基督徒当如何为人？基督徒为人是以什么为原则？为什么？

身为犹太人，相信保罗继承了本身犹太信仰在这方面深厚的传统！让我们尝试追溯保罗说话的渊源和根据，以了解他的意思。保罗在第 9 节引用了旧约十诫中的四诫和利未记 19:18 节，说明何为“爱”！而“爱”就是信徒为人的原则！什么是爱？

让我们先从律法说起！律法指的是犹太人信仰中的核心课题，也是犹太人之所以是犹太人所不可缺的生存之道。来到保罗的时代，何谓律法？如何守律法？这些问题都是犹太民族最关心和实践的事！若与律法脱节，犹太人也不再被看为犹太人。因此，对律法的定义和解读成为了犹太人最热衷的事。而行律法更是最崇高的行为表现！我们虽然无法真正知道律法在保罗时期的犹太人当中是一种怎样的面貌，但肯定是一件绝对不能缺的事！

保罗既然在这里是引用摩西五经中的律法（罗马书全书都涉及律法的论述），我们就从五经中看律法的意义。律法原来是上帝与百姓立约后赐给百姓的存活指示。神帮助百姓从律法中知道怎样活出约的子民的生命样式！换句话说，那也是上帝要百姓表达如何在世存活为人的心意和指示。

在五经里，每当神吩咐百姓当如何看待神及敬拜神之后，接下来的吩咐就是百姓在应许地上存活时，当如何对待彼此。从这类吩咐，不论是个案式的，或是原则式的，都有一共同的价值观：不要剥夺他人的存活权益，人的生存“条件”都不应受亏损！让人人得以存活是上帝要赐的恩及所关心的事，因为上帝是创造也是救赎的神！

既然罗马教会是上帝所救赎的群体，这群体就要是一个反映神是创造和救赎主的群体。耶稣基督的救赎之恩既然是使人重新认回及属于上帝，正如当年出埃及蒙神拯救的以色列民重新属于神而后，要按神的心意（律法）存活，教会也当按神的心意而活！神的心意反映在律法，而律法的中心就是保全他人的存活权益。“爱人如己”，“彼此相爱”更是由耶稣完全的活出来。信仰耶稣及属于耶稣的人也因此“爱”。

更重要的实是，耶稣的“爱”之行动完成了神在律法中所要达到的‘人应当如何存活’的理想！因此，保罗可以说“爱成全了律法”，耶稣一生的“爱”之生命表彰是‘真正定义律法和遵守律法’的核心意义之所在！有了这样的了解，我们会同意 [1] 保罗说：“凡事都不可亏欠人，惟有彼此相爱，要常以为亏欠，因为爱人的就完全了律法。象那“不可奸淫”，“不可杀人”，“不可偷盗”，“不可贪婪”，或有别的诫命，都包在“爱人如己”这一句话之内了。爱是不加害与人的，所以爱就完全了律法。阿门！

[1] 保罗在 3:14 节以信徒要披戴基督说明同样的道理：基督是如何，信徒就与基督认同而如何，信徒看自己的存活就是分享和参与基督的生命样式！

问题讨论：

- 1 你对‘律法’的观念有随着时间慢慢改变吗？请讨论。
- 2 你对‘爱’的观念有随着时间慢慢改变吗？请讨论。
- 3 ‘基督徒当如何为人？’你的答案是什么？

Article 6: Romans 13:11-14

In verse 11, Paul highlighted that 'salvation'* was nearer now than when we first believed (NIV), the use of 'present time' or 'time' allowed us to see the element of time, but did not specify what time it was. Paul used 'the night is nearly over,' 'the day is almost here' to express that, it is time to come to consciousness, time to wake up from one's sleep. From the moment Jesus came into this world, it also marked the beginning of the end of times, Paul mentioned that salvation was nearer than was first believed, implying that the ultimate salvation after believing in God would draw closer and closer, in Romans 8:18-25 it explained that the creation eagerly looked forward to breaking away from corrupted control, waiting to receive the status of the son, which is the redemption of our bodies, this is our hope of salvation, we must patiently await!

Since time was pressing, it was time to wake up from one's sleep, to shed 'the deeds of darkness,' 'the deeds of darkness' cited by Paul encompassed 'not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.' Paul reminded the believers to put on 'the armour of light' to combat against the deeds of darkness, to 'clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ,' which is capable of warding off evil elements/forces, allowing them to be anchored. In the Old Testament, when the Israelites were faced with enemies, when they relied on the Lord to fight the battle, the Lord was their shield, the power which helped them to win wars (Psalm 115:9-11). Paul had also encouraged believers to be firm and unyielding in Ephesians, and in order to withstand enemies, one must dress in the full set of armour granted by God, and to rely on the steadfast faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul's strong words of advice were like alarm bells, reminding the believers in Romans not to live muddled lives, he cited 'clothe' with Christ (as was putting on army uniforms) to express the fact that we who belong to Jesus Christ need to have checks and controls in our words and actions, to remember that our behaviours represent Christ (do we belong to Christ or are we servants of sin?), as believers of Jesus, we represent Christ, as uniformed soldiers must uphold regulations, then we who belong to Christ must prudently upkeep this noble status, living lives as Christ did, and not 'gratify the desires of the sinful nature.' As believers in Rome, the church at that time was in an embryonic stage and a lot of people looked upon this handful of believers with suspicion, as such the faith was tested. The resources of the imperial capital were vast; some believers perhaps came from the upper class, with mansions to entertain guests, and decisions on whether to follow the trend, to engage in drunkenness and to allow for orgies at these banquets, led to strife and jealousy. Just as Paul in Chapter 12 cautioned the Roman believers to transform and renew themselves, and not follow worldly trends, this passage reminds believers that time was pressing, since it was time to wake up from one's sleep, one should shed the deeds of darkness, to put on Jesus Christ as an army uniform, so as not to be disappointed in the final days of redemption!

Discussion questions:

1. In the early days, a lot of people heard the contents of the gospel as saying that upon believing in God, our souls would be saved and we could go to heaven. Having listened to sermons in church and after studying the bible, what is your view of 'salvation' now?
2. When and how would it be possible for us to fall into 'the deeds of darkness,' 'to gratify the desires of the sinful nature,' 'since no one sees it, therefore it is okay, everyone does it anyway and is okay, so why not?'(note for example, the temptation of the internet etc.)
3. How do we 'put on the armour of light' and 'clothe with the Lord Jesus Christ'? Explain with examples.

*Explanatory note: What did Paul mean by 'to be saved' here? From different translated versions, what Paul referred to was 'salvation'. In many parts of his epistles Paul mentioned 'salvation,' integrating what the Jews regarded as 'salvation' from God's deliverance of the Israelites with God's healing, God's deliverance of the people from sin; to be redeemed, to be saved and atonement all have identical meanings. 'Salvation' not only refers to the future, but also this life, from current difficult situations, the release from sinful conditions. To the Jews, as God's people, it is important to be saved by God in this life, whether from sin, disease or difficult predicaments, to immediately receive God's salvation and be saved is something they are most concerned about.

分享 6: 罗马书 13: 11-14

保罗在这 11 节提到“得救” [1]比初信时候更近了（和合本），“你们知道这时机已是多么危急了。。。因为“救恩”、现今比我们初信时、更接近于我们了”（吕振中译本）。“时候”或“时机”都让我们看到时间的因素，并没有讲明是什么时间，什么时候。保罗引用“黑夜已深”“白昼将近”，表达是时候醒来，该从睡眠醒来的时候了。从主耶稣来到世上开始，就是末世的开始，保罗所提到‘得救比初信更近了’，这也意味着信主后离那将来最终的救赎是越来越近了。在罗 8 章 18-25 讲到受造之物切望等候脱离腐败的辖制，等候得儿子名分，就是我们身体得赎。这是我们得救的盼望，我们必须耐心等待！

既然时机这么急，是该从睡眠中醒起的时候，就当脱去“黑暗之行为”。在保罗所提到的“黑暗之行为”就包括“不是在荒宴醉酒中，不是在好房事邪荡中，也不是在纷争妒忌中”。保罗提醒信徒要如何抗衡黑暗之行为，就是得穿上“亮光军装”。“总要穿上主耶稣基督为军装”，就能抵挡恶势力，让他们不致动摇。在旧约，以色列人在面临敌人时，当他们依靠耶和華為他们打仗时，耶和華就是他们的盾牌，是帮助他们打胜战的力量（诗 115:9-11）。保罗也曾在以弗所书里激励信徒要作刚强的人。若要抵挡仇敌，就要穿戴神所赐的全副军装，靠着主基督站稳信仰的立场。

保罗的劝诫有如敲警钟，提醒罗马信徒不可混沌过日子。他引用“穿戴”基督（如穿戴军服）来表达我们这些已经属于耶稣基督的，需要在言行有所节制，要想到我们的言行代表基督。（我们是属基督或是罪的奴仆？）身为信耶稣的信徒、是代表基督。既然军人穿戴着军服时，有当守的准则，那么我们身为属基督的，就当谨慎守住这尊贵身份、行事为人活像基督。不为“肉体筹谋、去放纵私欲了”。身为在罗马的信徒，那时教会还在萌芽阶段。许多人以怀疑眼光看他们这一小撮人。因此信仰备受考验。帝国首都之资源丰裕，有些信徒可能来自上层社会。有豪宅可以宴客时，是否随着潮流，荒宴醉酒，许可好色邪荡发生在宴会中，引起争竞嫉妒。就如保罗在 12 章劝诫罗马信徒，要心意更新改变，不要效法世界的潮流。这段经文提醒信徒，时机是那么急了。既是该睡醒的时候，就当脱去黑暗之行为，穿上主耶稣基督为军装，好让自己在最终得赎的日子不致失落！

讨论问题：

1. 早期许多人听到的福音内容，讲我们信主后，灵魂会得救，将来可以到天堂。来教会听道、看圣经后，如今你对“得救”的想法又是什么？
2. 我们在什么景况或什么时候有可能掉进：“暗昧的行为”、“为肉体安排去放纵私欲”，没人看到，人家那么做都没事，这又何妨？（网络陷阱等）
3. 我们当如何“穿上亮光之军装”和“披戴主耶稣基督”？举例说明。

[1] 注释：保罗在这里提的“得救”是什么意思？若从不同译本，尤其英文圣经和吕振中译本，在罗 13:11，保罗讲的比较是指“救恩”，保罗在他书信中多处讲到“救恩”，综合他所讲的对犹太人而言“救恩”关系到上帝拯救以色列子民，上帝医治疾病，上帝使子民从罪中得释放，得救赎与得救和救恩的意思相同，而“救恩”不单是指将来，更是在今世，从现今的困境、罪况得着释放，对犹太人而言，身为上帝子民，在今生得上帝的救赎是重要的，不管是从罪况或是疾病或是困境，在当下蒙上帝救赎和拯救是最关切的事。

Article 7: Romans 14:1-12

Though our faith is primarily about belonging to God, the practice of this faith would inevitably manifest in various forms of religious observances and traditions. In this context, Jewish believers are distinctive in their kosher food laws and Sabbath and Passover observances; and the Gentile believers would probably have their own ones as well. Though such observances and traditions, whether today or in biblical times, may stem from meaningful spiritual intentions, Christians often quarrel over differing degrees of adherences and contrasting opinions on their importance. As Paul admitted in verse 5, "Each must be fully convinced in his own mind."

By differentiating the two camps as "weak" and "strong", Paul did put a value judgment on the theological depth of their understanding. Those who are "weak in the faith" are not as theologically rigorous as those in the "strong" camp. Those who are "strong" understand the flexibility and freedom we have over practices and observances. There is nothing wrong with staying vegetarian or keeping the Sabbath religiously. However, those who are "weak" are giving such religious observances and traditions a greater emphasis than needed, such as using them as a value judgment on others. Theological clarity should inform us that our faith is primary, whereas these things should remain secondary. But if secondary matters lead us to judge those with different preferences for secondary matters, then we are putting them in a bigger priority than faith.

However, Paul in addressing the strong camp, asked them to 'receive' or welcome those "weak in the faith". The instruction is NOT to dispute with them, and certainly NOT to despise them. Interestingly, Paul's arguments all rested on one key concept: We belong to our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are strong should be even more mindful of this. The primary importance should always be faith in our relationship with God. Paul expressed this key concept of belonging in a few ways.

One, a servant can only be judged by his own master. Those who are strong have no right to judge the weak since only the Lord Jesus is their master. Theological superiority doesn't give you judgment rights over the weak. Two, the fervour over the religious observances and traditions is 'for the Lord'. On one hand, we are to recognize the pious intentions behind the fervour. On the other hand, it is also a reminder that the value of such fervour is not up to us to judge.

Three, such ownership and Lordship over the faithful is sealed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul ultimately wants both the strong and the weak to accept one another because all judging and despising over religious observations and traditions are horribly misguided. Lest one forgets, aren't our bodies and especially our tongues meant for the purpose of praise to God instead? It is normal to be deeply passionate about our particular leanings on such matters. Theological "weakness" may irk those who are more enlightened. Or some may feel wronged by those who fail to appreciate God's grace in different forms. Paul's answer to all these grievances and unhappiness is simple. God will be the final judge.

Discussion questions:

1. What are certain religious observances or traditions you feel strongly about?
2. Describe a scenario you find yourself "judging" or "despising" another person's weaker theology or lax religious practices.
3. How does the ownership of God challenge your thoughts on such matters?

分享 7: 罗马书 14: 1-12

虽然信仰主要是关于我们归属上帝的事，但来到实践信仰的时候，总会有不同的宗教和传统上的表达方式。这段经文里涉及犹太信徒的食物条例、守安息日和逾越节等。而外邦信徒也免不了有他们重视的节期和做法。虽然这一切的规律和传统，无论在昔日或在今日，都有他们本身的属灵意义，但是，基督徒总免不了会有所争执。争执究竟要做到多少，以及要看重那些部分。保罗在第 5 节便说‘各人心里要毫无疑问’。

当保罗把双方阵营说为‘软弱’和‘坚固’的人，他的确是根据他们之神学深度，做了一个价值的判断。那些‘信心软弱’的人，在神学的认识上确实不如那些‘坚固’的人。那些‘坚固’的人能够明白，我们在做法和规则上，有着可松可紧的自由度。单只吃菜的人，或者坚守安息日的人，本身并没有什么错。但是那些‘软弱’的人就给予这些条例和传统超过应有的关注和重视，然后以此来评断别人。神学上我们可以理清楚，信仰是最重要的。至于这些细节，是属于次要的。但是如果次要的事情令我们去评断别人，那么我们就是把次要的细节看为比信仰更为重要了。

保罗对那些‘坚固’阵营的人说话，请他们要接纳那些‘信心软弱’的弟兄。他的吩咐是‘不要辩论’，更是‘不可轻看’这些弟兄。保罗其实只根据一个观念：我们都是属于耶稣基督的！那些在‘坚固’阵营的人更需要紧记得这一点。最重要的仍旧还是信仰和我们归属上帝的事，保罗用以下几方面来澄清这个概念：

第一，仆人只应该被他自己的主人来评断他。那些‘坚固’的，没有权力去评断那些‘软弱’的，因为他们的主人是主耶稣。神学上比较有知识的人，不等于拥有权力去评断那些软弱的。

第二，那些宗教上的条例和传统，都是‘为了主’。我们一方面要认识到做这一切事情的人怀着敬虔的心，另一方面我们也要被保罗提醒，轮不到我们来评断‘守条例的热忱’的价值。

第三，那些信徒的主人，乃是耶稣基督，有耶稣基督为他们死，也为他们复活。

最终保罗提醒坚固的和软弱的人要互相接纳，因为这一切的评断与轻看宗教的条例和传统，实在是没有必要的争执。保罗大力来提醒——难道我们的身体，尤其是我们的舌头，不是为了颂赞上帝而造的？我们在自己认同的事上觉得再重要不过，乃是人之常情。神学上的‘软弱’可能会被那些坚固的人所不屑，或者有些人觉得别人怎么都看不见上帝诸般方式的恩典，或觉得被冤枉。无论是前者或者后者，保罗对那些感到受委屈、不愉快的人说，审判权属于上帝，就让他（而不是我们）来做最后的定夺。

讨论问题：

1. 你在哪些宗教条例或者传统上有自己的坚持？
2. 试回想和叙述一个场景，当时你怎么会‘评断’或者‘轻看’另外一个人比较‘软弱’的神学，又或者你的场景是你觉得某某人在宗教条例上怎么这么不严谨？说说看，讨论一下。
3. 当你想到上帝是所有人的主人，这又怎么挑战你原有的想法？

Article 8: Romans 14: 13-23

The key question to this passage is this: How does a Christian who is “strong” cause a brother or sister who is “weak” to “stumble”? The answer lies in verse 23. This was the scenario: The “weak” refers to those who think that certain foods are considered unclean, either because of the Jewish food laws, or certain foods that are related to pagan cultic practices. The “strong”, like Paul, understand that “there is nothing unclean in itself”. This enlightened perspective could be due to Jesus’ direct teaching. Jesus said in Mark 7:18 He said to them, “Are you so foolish? Don’t you understand that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him?19 For it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and then goes out into the sewer.” (This means all foods are clean.)20 He said, “What comes out of a person defiles him. This perspective could also be inferred from our freedom from the Law because of the redemption of Jesus Christ. Therefore, “the strong” is free to eat all types of food.

But when “the weak” sees “the strong” eating those foods he or she considers unclean, “the weak” might not understand or agree with this perspective. Nonetheless, whether out of peer pressure or embarrassment to appear just as “free”, or succumbing to “temptation” out of gluttony, “the weak” might eat those foods without the faith and conviction that they are no longer unclean. Trouble is “it is unclean to the one who considers it unclean”. The eating now becomes an act of deliberate “disobedience” and deviation from God’s will (albeit a wrongly presumed one). It is not the eating itself that is sin, but the intentional breaking of the covenantal faith that is sin. Therefore, to prevent this from happening, Paul advised “the strong” not to eat those foods for the sake of “the weak”.

“Is Paul giving “the weak” veto power over the freedom of “the strong”? Is he urging “the strong” to sacrifice their freedom based on their correct knowledge? No! He is urging them to exercise their freedom – here, as the freedom to forego victory over “the weak.” Only those who know they are free to eat anything, are also (those who are) free not to eat anything, for their relation to God does not ride on matters of ‘food and drink.’” (Leander E. Keck, “Romans” Abingdon NT Commentaries)

As followers of the Truth, we often think that being right is more important than anything else. It is not. When Paul said “let us pursue what makes for peace and for building up one another”, the spiritual well-being of the fellow believer becomes far more important. By exercising our freedom for the sake of “the weak”, we abide with a greater Truth: that the kingdom of God consists of “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Note that these words such as “righteousness” should be understood within Paul’s framework as expounded in Romans 1-11.) As Paul had expressed in the passage, these spiritual elements of God’s kingdom are achieved in these ways:

One, we walk in love, mindful of our brothers and sisters.

Two, we cherish them as how Christ cherishes them.

Three, we project a healthy image of our faith.

Last and most importantly, we put the needs and considerations of others before our own.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some foods considered unclean by other Christians?
2. What about certain activities considered unclean by other Christians?
(Note to leaders: questions 1 and 2 are intended for further discussions by identifying “strong and weak” as well as practices that might lead to “stumbling the weak”.)
3. Describe the relationships found in a community with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

分享 8：罗马书 14：13-23

这段经文的关键问题是：“坚固”的基督徒何以使“软弱”的兄弟姐妹“跌倒”？答案就在第 23 节。情形是这样的：“软弱”的肢体是指那些认为某些食物不洁净的人。这种观念或出于犹太食物教规，或由于某些食物同异教做法相关（例如祭拜过的食物）。像保罗一样的“坚固”人认识到“凡物本来没有不洁净的”。这种开明的观念应源自耶稣的直接教导。耶稣在马可福音 7 章 18-20 节说：7:18 耶稣对他们说、你们也是这样不明白么。岂不晓得凡从外面进入的、不能污秽人。7:19 因为不是入他的心、乃是入他的肚腹、又落到茅厕里。这是说、各样的食物、都是洁净的。7:20 又说、从人里面出来的、那才能污秽人。这种观点也可以这样来引申：由于耶稣基督的救赎，我们从律法（的辖制）中得到了自由。因此，“坚固”的人可以吃任何食物。

但是当“软弱”的人看到“坚固”的人吃他们认为不洁净的食物时，“软弱”的人可能不明白或不认同以上所提出的观点。然而或出于周围人的压力，或出于表现自由行事，亦或是屈服于暴饮暴食的诱惑，“软弱”的人在还未明白这些食物为何不再是不洁净之前，他们去食用这些‘自以为不洁净的’食物。麻烦在于“人以为不洁净的，在他就不洁净了”。如此吃法，却变成了故意背叛或违背神旨意的行为。在这里，吃食物本身并不是罪，但是故意违背圣约信仰却是罪。因此，为了避免此事，保罗劝勉“坚固”人为了“软弱”人的缘故，不要食用那些食物。

保罗如此做，是给予“软弱”人权利来限制“坚固”人的自由吗？他是在敦促“坚固”人不顾他们的正确观念而（盲目）牺牲他们的自由吗？不是的！他其实是在鼓励“坚固”人行使他们的自由。而行使自由的方式，就是自由自在地放弃胜过“软弱”者的错误神学。只有那些知道他们其实可吃任何食物的，才是真正可以自由自在地不吃某些食物的人，因为他们与神的关系不拘泥于吃喝的事物上（Lender E. Keck, “罗马书” Abingdon 新约评述）。

作为真理的追随者，我们常常认为做正确的事才是最重要的。然而事情不是如此。当保罗说：“我们要追求和睦的事和彼此造就的事”时，（很显然）信众在灵命上的成长是更为重要的。通过为了“软弱”者而操练自由意志，我们实际上是遵守了更大的真理：就是神的国度是由“公义，和平与圣灵中的喜乐”所组成的（注释：诸如“公义”等词汇应该在保罗《罗马书》1-11 章的阐述中来理解）。

正如保罗在经节中所述，神的国度中这些灵命要素可通过如下方式来实现：

1. 我们要行在爱中，关心（主内）兄弟姐妹。
2. 珍视兄弟姐妹，如同基督珍视他们。
3. 为我们的信仰做健全的表率。
4. 最后，也是最重要的，我们要把对别人的需要和关怀放在我们自己之前。

讨论问题：

1. 哪些食物是其他基督徒认为不洁净的？
2. 哪些特定行为是其他基督徒认为不洁净的？（组长注意：问题 1 和 2 旨在进一步讨论如何定义“强壮者和软弱者”，以及可能导致使“软弱者跌倒”的行为）。
3. 描述在公义，和平与圣灵中的喜乐的团体生活中，大家彼此的关系。

Article 9: Romans 15:1-6

Romans 14, discussed in the previous 2 articles, urges “the strong” to receive and welcome “the weak”. Here, Paul goes even further, to state the task as the responsibility and obligation of “the strong”, which is to bear the burdens of “the weak”. To put the exhortation more positively, this bearing is for the purpose of building up one another. And that is a communal effort. But perhaps it still needs to be asked, why should we put the interests and spiritual needs of our neighbour before our own? This is the point where Paul teaches the fundamental principle which supports all his exhortations thus far: It is based on the model of Jesus Christ. The life and ultimate sacrifice of Jesus epitomize what it means to “not please oneself”, but instead to “please his neighbour for his good.”

Side note on the significance of Psalm 69: This is one of the psalms that is repeatedly referenced by the New Testament writers. Besides the obvious parallels in the form of physical suffering between the psalmist and the Passion of Jesus, the social rejection and mockery of detractors are significant corresponding imageries too. In referencing Psalm 69, these writers associate certain concepts along with the suffering:

One, the suffering is for God’s sake. (v.7) This concept is included in Paul’s quote of verse 9b.

Two, the accusations are unjust. (v.4)

Three, the accused continues to trust in God. (v.16)

Four, God will eventually vindicate the righteous. (v.36)

Therefore, in incorporating Psalm 69 to substantiate the model of Jesus, Paul is putting all suffering or personal sacrifices of “the strong” within the context of God’s greater purpose. Just as how Jesus fulfils God’s will through his suffering, “the strong” must bear this burden of building up one another as a community. In doing so, through the mindset of “pleasing others before self”, the community can be blessed with unity. It is not always possible to find agreement in the multiple aspects of religion, from spiritual disciplines to theological understanding. But with the right attitude towards one another, just as how Jesus sees himself as the servant of God’s will, we can have harmony that makes us a good witness for God.

Another side note on Verse 4: When Paul refers to “the scriptures”, he is referring to the Old Testament. Christ is a living example of how the scriptures, such as the Psalms, can be an encouragement to his mission. It is never easy to sacrifice our interests for the sake of others. This is even more so, when we feel ‘we are right’, or ‘our theological thinking is superior’. But when we read the scriptures, whether the laments of the ancient prophets or the psalmists, we are encouraged by them. That enables us to endure for the greater purposes of God, for the sake of his people. This becomes our hope that one day, we will indeed glorify God as one.

Discussion Questions:

1. Fun Icebreaker: Break into pairs and read different sections of Psalm 69. In what way do you think the verses you have read were mirrored in the life of Jesus?
2. Throughout the life of Jesus, can you think of one instance where Jesus chose not to “please himself” for the good of others?
3. Do you think it is important to glorify God with “one voice” (v.6)? Why?

分享 9：罗马书 15：1-6

在前 2 篇讨论的罗马书 14 章，敦促“坚固”的人接纳欢迎“软弱”的人。在这里，保罗更进一步说明，承受“软弱”者的负担，乃是“坚固”人的责任与义务。此教训更为正面积极的意义是，这种承担是为了彼此造就的目的。这也是大家共同的努力。或许有人还会问：为什么要把邻舍的利益和灵命的需要放在我们自己之前？这是保罗在此刻就阐述了他教训中一贯的一个基本原则：这一切都是基于耶稣基督的榜样。耶稣的一生和最后的牺牲充分概括了“不求自己的喜悦”，而是“要叫邻舍喜悦，使他得益处”的含义。

先在这里岔开来看诗篇 69 的重要意义：这篇诗篇经常被新约作者反复引用。很明显的，诗人遭受肉体上的痛楚，与耶稣的受难是平行的经验。另外，诗人遭受社会上的撇弃，与被人诽谤和蔑视，都是极其相似的图象。在引用诗篇 69 的当儿，作者灌入了以下与受苦有关的概念：

1. 这受苦是因为上帝的缘故（69：7），保罗也引用了 69：9 节后半部
2. 那些控诉是不公正的（69：4）
3. 遭控诉的人继续的信靠上帝（69：16）
4. 上帝至终必然为义人平反（69：36）

因此在引述诗篇 69 来以证明耶稣的榜样之际，保罗是把所有的受苦、或说‘坚固’者的个人牺牲，都放在上帝更美的旨意之处境中来说话。正如耶稣如何透过他的受苦来完成上帝的旨意，那么‘坚固’的人也要承担在群体中建立他人的担子。当他们这么去做的时候，怀着‘叫邻舍喜悦’的心意，整个群体就能够得到合一的祝福。我们也晓得在宗教的范畴里非常广泛，从属灵操练到神学的理解，不易来到一致的见解。然而，如果能怀着正确的态度来对待他人，正如耶稣看自己是上帝的仆人去完成上帝的旨意，那么我们也可以享有群体中的和谐，使得我们能见证上帝。

再来看第 4 节，当保罗提到‘圣经’，他指的是旧约部分。基督是一个活生生的例子，让我们看到圣经，譬如诗篇，能够在他的服事上带来鼓励。说实话，要为别人牺牲自己的利益是很不容易。更何况有时候我们觉得自己是对的，我们的神学见解更加的有深度。。。但是当我们读圣经的时候，无论是先知的哀歌或者诗人的诗篇，我们读着读着就得到莫大的鼓励。这使得我们能够承受更多，好让上帝更高的旨意得以完成。这也成为我们的盼望，期待有一天我们能一致一体地来荣耀上帝。

问题讨论

1. 破冰游戏（有趣的）：把小组里的人配对，分配来看诗篇 69 的不同部分。读完之后你想哪些经文后来发生在耶稣生命当中？
2. 在耶稣的人生历程中，你能够想起有什么时候耶稣选择不要取悦自己，而是为了他人的好处？
3. 你觉得要用‘一心一口’（v. 6）来荣耀上帝，这重要吗？为什么？

Article 10: Romans 15: 7-13

This passage is the conclusion of the matter of “the strong” and “the weak” from Romans 14. Paul had advised mutual acceptance to both camps. The principle is that we don’t live to please ourselves, but rather to build one another up. Now, Paul further states that this mutual acceptance of one another (NOT acceptance of the theological differences) would bring about God’s glory. This is a compelling conclusion because it states a higher purpose for the mutual acceptance. It is not just sweeping things under the carpet. Nor is it about compromising personal convictions. Certainly, it is not just to keep up a harmonious front. How can anything be glorifying with grudges or grievances? There is a greater purpose. This acceptance, whether from Jews or Gentiles, must be motivated primarily by the desire to glorify God. In another words, the sacrificial way of living with one another and serving one another, is their praise and worship to God.

Once again, Christ leads the way as a model. On behalf of God’s truthfulness, so that God’s promises can be fulfilled, Jesus came to serve the Jews as a Jew. On behalf of God’s mercy, so that God can be glorified for his act of salvation, Jesus served the Gentiles as Saviour. The primary purpose in Jesus’ servitude is so that God’s will be done. What then is God’s ultimate will? It is united worship from both Jews and Gentiles. This is substantiated by the four scriptural quotations, each containing the key word “Gentiles”. In each of these quotes, imagine Jesus making it his life mission to fulfil those words.

Notes on the 4 quotations:

Psalm 18:49 – “I will confess you”. Jesus fulfilled this when the Gentiles learn of God’s act of salvation for them.

Deuteronomy 32:43 – “Rejoice, with his people”. Jesus fulfilled this when both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God and welcome to worship God.

Psalm 117:1 – The significance of this verse is “all”, which extends Christ’s work universally.

Isaiah 11:10 – Jesus’ roots did stem from the Jewish Davidic lineage. But “rises to rule” would infer his resurrection and ascension to rule over the Kingdom of heaven. And this rule includes both Jews and Gentiles.

Just as how Jesus made it his life mission to bring the world, Jews and Gentiles into united worship, this must be our goal as well. The work is already accomplished in Jesus Christ, but its eventual fulfilment lies in our hope towards the future. It is notable that when speaking of the faith of God’s people, the Holy Spirit is mentioned again, just as it was in Romans 14: 17 For the kingdom of God does not consist of food and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is to continue the mission, to enable the Church, until the Kingdom is fully restored. (Acts 1:8) This work of reconciliation, whether with one another or people to God, is never easy. But with Christ as our foundation of faith, and the Spirit that enables us, God’s glory will be shown.

Discussion Questions:

1. Whether in Philippians 2, or using the foot washing example in John 13, describe the challenge from Jesus’ own servitude to our treatment of one another.
2. How does knowing God’s ultimate will of united worship, or knowing what glorifies him, change how we behave?
3. Describe an instance where the power of the Holy Spirit gave you hope in your Christian mission.

分享 10: 罗马书 15: 7-13

这段经文总结了罗马书 14 章的论战‘坚固者’与‘软弱者’。保罗寄语双方，要求彼此能接纳。他的原则是：我们不为取悦自己而活，而是为了建立别人而活。如今保罗进一步提出这种互相接纳（而不是认同彼此的神学分歧），将会归荣耀给上帝。这就让这个彼此接纳带来更崇高的理由。保罗不是闭眼不看有分歧，然后把所有的不同扫到地毯之下。也不是要求任何一方妥协信念。也更不是以和为贵，让一切的申辩化掉。试问，当双方怀着怨气或怒气的时候，何来荣耀？保罗之劝告，是为了一个更高的诉求。他指出来自犹太人阵营或者外邦人阵营的接纳，必须是出自一个意愿：就是要荣耀神。换句话说，当他们共存的时候，那种牺牲或者服事，表达出来的就是他们对上帝的赞美与敬拜。

保罗再一次提醒我们，让基督成为一个效法的模式！为了彰显上帝的信实，让上帝对列祖的应许得以成就，耶稣是以犹太人的身份来服事犹太人。他出于上帝的怜悯，好让上帝能因他救恩的作为得荣耀，耶稣以救主的身份服事外邦人。耶稣仆人式的服事，基本的用意是让上帝的旨意得以成就。那么，什么是上帝最终的旨意？那就是让犹太人和外邦人能够联合在一起来敬拜。跟着保罗引用了四句旧约的经文，每一句都有‘外邦’这钥字。当你阅读这四句的时候，想像基督的一生是怎么让这一切来实现！

- 诗篇 18:49，当外邦人认识到上帝为他们带来的救恩时，耶稣就成就了这句话中的“我要称谢你”
- 申命记 32:43，当犹太人和外邦人一同与上帝和好时，他们被呼召进来敬拜上主，耶稣就成就了“你们外邦人，当与主的百姓一同欢呼”
- 诗篇 117:1 这里的钥字是‘都’，从这里我们看到基督的工作是为着全人类
- 以赛亚书 11:10 耶稣的根源可以追溯自大卫（耶西的根）。可是‘兴起来治理’就指着他的复活、升天，统管天国的子民，包括犹太人和外邦人。

既然基督是以‘将犹太人和外邦人纳入联合敬拜’，作为他一生要完成的事，这也当成为我们的目标。这工作虽在耶稣基督里已经完成，可是仍有我们毕生可以参与的部分。当说到上帝子民的信的时候，保罗又提到圣灵了，正如在 14:17 提到‘神的国不在乎吃喝，只在乎公义、和平、并圣灵中的喜乐。’是的，圣灵的工作使得宣教工作延续，让教会能继续宣教，直到上帝的国完全得复苏。这里提到的和好工作，无论是人与人之间的和好，或者使得族群与上帝和好，都不是轻而易举的工作。但是我们以基督为信心的基石，有圣灵赐下力量给我们，总有一天上帝的荣耀就要彰显出来！

讨论问题：

1. 从腓立比书 2 章，或者约翰福音 13 章的洗脚，请讨论耶稣仆人式的服事，如何挑战我们对彼此的态度？
2. 如今我们知道上帝最终愿意见到犹太人和外邦人联合敬拜，以及知道什么得以荣耀神，这会怎么改变我们的行为？
3. 请你叙述圣灵的大能如何让你在宣教的事情上得到盼望。

Article II: Romans 15:14-22

Paul opened his letter by focusing on the recipients, his ministry and his travel plans. His focus however quickly switched to a presentation and explanation of the gospel, which spans from 1:16-15:13. Having made clear the central and important message, Paul then returned to the initial focus of his letter.

He began by praising the recipients with these words, "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another". In the verse that follows, he admitted to writing boldly to remind them of the truths that they already know. A juxtaposition of the two verses surface the following: the former statement can come across as flattery, the latter contradicts to some extent the former statement.

A less critical and more contextually sensitive reading goes to suggest otherwise. Paul's words are not flattery. Instead of focusing microscopically on individual areas of weaknesses, he was praising the church as a whole, knowing that it is the gospel – "God's power for salvation" (Rom 1:16), God's transforming power – that forms its core. In other words, he praised them because the gospel had effected them; he praised them seeing that the gospel which continues to effect was in them. In verse 15, we see his words of reminder, a rather standard component of the early church teaching and preaching. The boldly written words were the discharging of his calling as a minister to the Gentiles by the grace of God.

Paul as a minister to the Gentiles rendered his service to God as like a priest, in which the goal was to present the Gentiles Christians as sacrifices unto God (cf. Isa 66:18-20). This he had accomplished, or much more correctly, the feat had been accomplished through him by Christ and the Spirit of God, a divine accomplishment that he boasted about readily (vs. 17-19). Then, whether it is in the Old Testament where the term 'sacrifice' usually carries a literal sense, or herein, a figurative sense, sacrifices made to God are to be sanctified or set apart for Him. In 1 Samuel 15, King Saul's life would have been altogether different had he grasped a necessary distinction, namely, that the value of a sacrifice lies first and foremost not in the sacrifice itself nor the act of making one, but the characteristic of the sacrifice. In short, it takes sanctified sacrifices to please God.

Sanctified sacrifices, in the Christian sense, refers to an inclination (volitional in nature) to obey God (cf. 1 Sam 15:22, Rom 1:5; 15:17). Was it not Jesus who insisted that: "The person who has my commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will reveal myself to him (John 14:21)." Jesus' words send a clear message: genuine faith (the one who loves Jesus) is obedience (has my commandments and obeys them). Moderns often equate faith to the ability to sing and pray with plenty of verve or the resoluteness to hound after God for souls or stocks, or otherwise. Yet, if believers possess all such good aspects of faith but are flippant as far as the call to obey is concerned, these brothers and sisters would do well to pause and reflect on the definition on faith given by Jesus and echoed herein by Paul.

Obedience involves demonstrations, actions and practices, but notice that the apostle lays stress on none of these but the power of the Spirit of God when he mentions "the obedience of the Gentile". And it is this power - and the result brought about by such a power - that he boasts. In sum, to be sanctified sacrifices is to obey God, and to obey is to experience his saving and transforming power.

Discussion Questions:

1. In the passage, Paul was 'quite a Barnabas' in the way he affirmed the Roman church (by looking at it as a whole with the gospel and its salvific power forming the core). How 'Paul-like' are we when it comes to our outlook toward (our) church? What are the thought patterns and actions that such 'Paul-likeness' would translate into?
2. Has the Spirit of God been nudging you to be 'sanctified sacrifices' in some areas of your life?
3. Paul connected Christian obedience with the power of God. What does such a connection say to us about holiness, forgiveness and spiritual growth?

分享 11: 罗马书 15: 14-22

保罗信里的开场白专注于收信人，他的事工与行程计划。但焦点很快就转向呈现与讲解福音，从 1: 16—15: 13。讲解清楚主要信息后，保罗如今回到信里起初的关注点。

他赞扬收信人“满有良善，充满了诸般的知识，也能彼此教导”。接着，保罗又坦诚他将稍微放胆在真理的几点上提醒他们。两句话相映成趣，前者貌似奉承，后者某种程度反驳前者。

一个比较不苛刻而更看中上下文的解读则不是如此。保罗并非奉承。相反的，当他如此细微地纠正各个范围的缺陷，他其实是在整体性地赞扬这个教会，知道福音（也就是神救赎的大能与神改变人的力量）已经成为了他们的信仰核心。换句话说，他赞扬他们是因为福音影响了他们；他称赞他们是因为看到福音继续在他们身上动工。15 节是他的提醒，也是初期教会教导与讲道的基本元素。这些放胆的话是他凭着神的恩典，来履行作为外邦人的使徒的呼召的职责。

保罗为外邦人的使徒，作神福音的祭司，目的是叫外邦人成为可悦纳的奉献。这个他已成就了。更准确地说，这壮举是基督与圣灵以他成就了。是他在 17 到 19 节夸耀的属灵成就。接着，不论是旧约里面比较字面性的献祭，还是这里比较比喻性的，献给神的祭物就是表达‘分别为圣’。撒母耳记上 15 章，扫罗王若是能掌握这个基要的区别，他的生命也许会迥然不同。祭物的价值不在于祭物本身或献祭的举动，而是献祭的特质。神喜悦的祭物是分别为圣的祭物。

基督徒而言，分别为圣的祭物指的是顺服神的倾向(cf. 撒上 15:22, 罗 1:5; 15:17)。耶稣不是如此坚持吗？“有了我的命令又遵守的，这人就是爱我的；爱我的，必蒙我父爱他，我也要爱他，并且要向他显示我自己。”（约翰 14:21）。耶稣传达了清楚的信息：真正的信心（爱耶稣的人）是顺服（有了我的命令又遵守的）。现今许多人把信心当作唱诗祷告的热忱，或为了灵魂或事业而对神纠缠不放的心。但信徒如果是信仰个个层面都好，但遵守命令却很随便，这些兄弟姐妹还是好好反省耶稣给予信心的定义，也是保罗这里所表达的。

顺服虽保函了展现、行动、与操练，但保罗却不强调这些。反而是在提到外邦人‘因着圣灵成为圣洁’时，强调是圣灵的力量，这个，以及所完成的，成为了保罗的夸耀。总而言之，成为分别为圣的祭物就是顺服神，而顺服就是经历神救赎改变的大能。

讨论问题：

1. 保罗象巴拿巴一样坚定罗马教会。他以福音与救赎的力量来整体性地看待教会。我们看待教会是否如此。如果我们能像保罗一样会带来什么样的思想模式与行动？
2. 圣灵是否在你生命中的某某层面在提醒你，这某某层面要成为分别为圣的祭物？
3. 保罗把信徒顺服与神的力量接连。这样的联系针对圣洁、饶恕、与属灵成长告诉了我们什么？

Article 12: Romans 15:23-33

This point in the epistle reveals one of Paul's long awaited moments in life, or the long prayed for season in his ministerial journey to say the least. With representative churches founded and functioning in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, he believed that he had completed the task as a pioneer missionary in that region and was ready to move on to Spain, through Rome.

Paul's purpose of visiting Rome was spelled out much more fully in the present passage. Apart from the proclamation of the good news (Rom 1:15), he hoped to be refreshed amongst the Roman Christians and to solicit support in the area of finance, prayers and possibly manpower for his Spanish mission. One finds here a main reason for the writing of this most theologically loaded epistle in the New Testament. Paul, who had yet to meet the Roman Christians face to face, was delineating his version of the gospel, in hope that at their end, an understanding of what he preached would lead to the rendering of the support needed, and helping to quell the critics.

The trip however would not commence till another 'critical comprehension' had been communicated and embraced. For Paul, the way to accomplish this was through making a collection and having it delivered to Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. A famine hit the Palestinian region in C.E. 46-48, which left many Jews financially stranded. The collection was hence much needed and appropriate from a common-sense point of view. However, it is uncertain whether the original elects would find it reasonable, or more aptly, find it theologically sound and accept the help offered.

To Paul, the acceptance by the Jewish Christians should have been something altogether reasonable, for the contributions of monetary gifts by Gentiles were already prophesied in the Old Testament (Isa 61:6; cf. Isa 2:2-3=Mic 4:1-2; Isa 45:14). Paul might have even hoped that the collection, which symbolised the inclusion of Gentiles as the people of God, would provoke jealousy amongst the unbelieving Jews and in turn lead to their conversions (cf. Rom 10-11). Gentile Christians likewise found it reasonable to make a contribution as it was a practical way in which they expressed unity and intimacy with the saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:3-5). Furthermore, Paul must have helped them to appreciate that they were morally indebted to their "mother church" in Israel.

Albeit the above, it remained an unknown at that point in time as to whether the Jewish Christians would return an amiable response. Paul's concerns and requests for prayers pertaining to unbelieving Jews and the acceptance of the collection by Jewish Christians was no knee jerk reaction, for he indeed nearly lost his life in the Jerusalem temple (Acts 21:26-36). The New Testament gives us the impression that the collection was after all well received (Acts 21:17), but Paul's concern ran deeper. "[S]afely delivered this bounty to them" (v.28) is variously rendered as "sealing to them the fruit" or "put a seal on this fruit for them" by biblical scholars, who understand the idea of sealing the fruit to mean not only the collection being safely delivered but received with proper comprehension. On top of the reasons given above, the critical comprehension that Paul needed the Jews to grasp was that since a new page has been added to salvation history, as the Gentiles are now explicitly included into the Kingdom, they would do well to 'move on' from any old paradigm which reckoned that God's people were restricted mainly to ethnic Jews. Their comprehension and acceptance would demonstrate in real life the solidarity already wrought in God.

Jesus said that the wind blows wherever it will (John 3:8). In our multicultural society, where we cross paths with people of the same faith but different backgrounds (ethnic, geographical, different generation, etc.), the need to 'move on' with God appears to be something critical, said Paul once upon a 'grace time'.

Discussion:

1. To visit Rome and to move on from there to Spain can be said as "a long awaited moment in life" for Paul. Do we take to such a 'dream' personally?
2. Paul in wanting to visit Spain was only being consistent, as in "not to build on another person's foundation" (Rom 15:20). What is our outlook toward Christian missions, especially concerning taking the gospel to where it is waiting to be heard?
3. Share our experiences and struggles about 'moving on' (as used in the article) with God.

分享 12: 罗马书 15: 23-33

信中这里透露了保罗一个生命中期待的时刻，也是保罗服侍旅途中常常祷告的事。罗马帝国东部都有代表性的教会被建立而运作中，他相信他已完成这些地区的开荒宣教工作，如今已经准备好，可以经过罗马，迈向西班牙。

保罗探访罗马的目的在这段经文里面更加深入地阐述。除了宣告福音（1: 15），他希望得见他们，享受与他们的交往，然后蒙他们钱财、祷告、人力相助起行。这也是写这封神学扎实的信的主要原因。保罗在还未面对面见到罗马信徒之前，在表述他福音的版本。希望他们对他所传讲的认知与明白，能够带来所须的支助。甚至可以止住敌对者的声音。

不过，此行程还不能开展，直到另一个‘关键的认知’已经被传达与接受。对保罗而言，达成的方式就是募款并送达耶路撒冷的犹太信徒。公元 46—48 年，饥荒袭击巴勒斯坦地带，使许多犹太人陷入经济困境。此募捐是必须而贴切的。但不肯定的是原来的选民（犹太人）是否觉得接受帮忙是合理或神学上可以接受的。

对保罗而言，犹太信徒接受募捐是合理的。毕竟外邦人的礼物在旧约已经有预言（赛 61:6; cf. 赛 2:2-3=弥 4:1-2; 赛 45:14）。保罗可能还希望此募款象征神的子民如今包括了外邦人的加入，会引起非信徒的犹太人的嫉妒而导致他们的坚信（罗 10—11）。外邦人信徒同样觉得供给很合理，那是表达与耶路撒冷信徒合一与亲密的实际方式（林后 8: 3—5）。更何况，保罗一定也帮助他们体会他们对于以色列“母会”的恩情。

纵然如此，犹太人信徒的回应还是未知数。保罗关于非信犹太人的关心点和代祷的祈求，并犹太信徒能接受募款绝不是杞人忧天。毕竟他本身在耶路撒冷圣殿就差点丢了命（使 21:26-36）。新约给的印象是募款被欣然接受（使 21:17），但保罗关切的更加深入。‘等我办完了这事’（28 节）学者们也以‘印证果子’来诠释。这代表了这募捐不单是被安全送达，也以正确的了解来接受。基于这一切，保罗需要犹太人明白，意识到救恩历史已经进入新的篇章。外邦人已明显地融入了神的国。而犹太人也该从神的子民单属犹太民族的旧观念与思想往前迈进。犹太人的了解与接纳就是以实际行动来展示神所已经完成的彼此合一。

耶稣说‘风随着意思吹’（翰 3: 8）。在我们的多元社会，我们与许多同样信仰但不同背景（民族、地区、时代等）的信徒交错。保罗认为，在这个恩典的时刻，随着神的步伐，从而思想前进是关键的。

讨论：

- 1 探访罗马，前进到西班牙是保罗满心期待的时刻。我们也有这样的梦想吗？
- 2 保罗的西班牙之行与他一贯的原则‘免得建造在别人的根基上’（15: 20）是吻合的。我们的宣教看法又是什么，特别针对还未听见福音的地方？
- 3 彼此分享我们个人对于与神一起‘思想迈进’的经历与挣扎。

Article 13: Romans 16: 1-16; 21-23

Although Paul had never been to the church in Rome, we can surmise from his greetings that he had many contacts in Rome. Through Paul's greetings and appraisal, we can understand the early Roman church members' social structures, the church members' lives before accepting Christ, and their lives and work for Christ after believing in the Gospel and having their lives transformed. Their life testimonies not only showed the transformational work of the Gospel in the early church, but also encouraged the lives and work of many church members.

In v1, Paul first recommended to the Roman church a female deacon, Phoebe from the church in Cenchrea. Phoebe was a person with status and wealth who was willing to use her position, resources and time to help travelling believers such as Paul. Thereafter, Paul then spoke at length, greeting 26 people, 2 families and 3 family churches (referred to as "churches that meet at their house").

Among the 26, there were:

- Missionary couples, e.g. v3: Priscilla and Aquila, builders of tents and well to do, who risked their lives before to save Paul and also helped in the development of several churches. v7: Andronicus and Junia who were once incarcerated together with Paul.
- Slaves and Freed Men (men who were no longer slaves), e.g. v5: Epaphroditus, a slave who was referred to as "my beloved" and was "the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ". Aquila and his wife brought him to Christ and then later brought him to Rome. v8: Amplias who was also "my beloved"; v9: Urbanus was a "fellow worker"; and v12: Tryphena and Tryphosa were sisters who were either slaves or freed people and who had "laboured in the Lord".
- Freed men who previously served in homes of important politicians, e.g. v11 Herodion, a freed man who served one of the King Herod. Narcissus was a well-known freed man who previously served the Emperor Claudius.
- Believers who had undergone trials, e.g. v10 Apelles whose faith was tested and was looked well upon.
- Believers with close relationships with Paul, e.g. v13 Rufus, whose father was Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus carry His cross. It was emphasised that he was "chosen in the Lord". His mother who previously looked after and showed hospitality to Paul was also referred to as "his mother and mine".

The 2 families were:

V10b: the household of Aristobulus. Aristobulus was the brother of Herod Agrippa I who passed away around A.D.48 or 49. Paul greeted the family of Aristobulus and specifically asked after the slaves in the household.

V11b: Paul greeted those in the household of Narcissus (who had already took his own life) who were in the Lord.

The 3 family churches were:

v5: After greeting Priscilla and Aquina, Paul "greeted the church that is in their house";

v14: Paul greeted several people and then greeted the rest of the brethren who were in the same family church; and

v15: Philologus and Julia were married and their children were Nereus and his sister. Paul also greeted "all the saints who are with them".

Thereafter Paul gave a consolidated greeting: in v16 "greet one another with a holy kiss" and "all the churches of Christ send greetings". Paul said this as a reminder to the Roman church members that the church was one entity and all members should be united as one. He therefore included the Roman churches into the group of churches, and to show support to his mission work as one body. This also reflected Paul's deep understanding of church mission work.

Finally, in verses 21-23, Paul ends off with greetings on behalf of his co-workers – Timothy, his relatives, his scribe, leaders of the Corinthian church and the treasurer of the city.

Discussion Questions:

1. Would you support a missionary like Paul? How do you think you can get involved in the support of mission work?
2. From Paul's greeting list, he was obviously not a "lone ranger" but had his own network of co-workers. Discuss Paul's deep understanding of church mission work, and what the Jubilee Church mission ministry can draw from it.
3. Paul mentioned 9 women in his greeting. What key roles can women play in the Church?

分享 13: 罗马书 16: 1-16;21-23

保罗虽然没有去过罗马教会，但从罗马书信结尾的问安部分，我们知道他已有一些“线人”在那里。通过保罗对他们的称呼和评价，我们大致了解到早期罗马教会会友的组成结构，信主前的背景，以及因信福音生命改变后为主奔波劳苦的情形。他们的生命见证，不仅有力地见证了福音在初期教会转化生命的能力，也激励了众教会信徒的生命和事奉。

1 节保罗先向罗马教会举荐一位来自坚革哩教会的女执事非比，非比是有一定的社会地位的富人，愿意以她的地位，资源和时间服侍像保罗一样的过往信徒。接着，保罗大篇幅地向罗马教会 26 位个人，2 个“家庭”，3 个“家庭教会”问安。

26 位个人中：

- 有夫妻宣教的，如：3 节百基拉和亚居拉，相当富有，以制造帐棚为业，他们冒着生命危险救过保罗，并帮助许多教会开展事工。7 节安多尼古和犹尼亚，曾与保罗同患难坐过监牢。
- 有奴隶或自由人，如：5 节以拜尼士，称他为“我所亲爱的”，是“亚细亚归基督初结的果子”，由亚居拉夫妇带领信主，并带他来罗马。8 节暗伯利安也是“所亲爱的”。9 节耳巴奴是“同工的”。12 节土非拿氏和土富撒氏是姐妹，同为女奴或自由人，“为主劳苦”。
- 有曾在政要家中服侍过的自由人，如：11 节希罗天安是服侍于某位希律王的自由人。拿其数是一个众所周知的自由人，曾服侍克劳狄斯皇帝 (Claudius)。
- 有经过试炼的信徒，如：10 节 a 亚比利经过信仰试炼，受人尊重。
- 有与保罗有亲密关系的信徒，如：13 节鲁孚是替耶稣背十字架的古利奈西门的儿子。强调他是“在主蒙拣选的”。他的母亲曾热情款待和照顾过保罗，称“他的母亲就是我的母亲。”

2 个“家庭”有：

- 10 节 b 亚利多布，是希律王亚基帕王一世的兄弟，已于公元 48 或 49 去世，所以保罗向他的家眷问候，特别是向家里的奴隶问候。
- 11 节 b 保罗向已自杀的拿其数家在主里的人问安。

3 个“家庭教会”有：

- 5 节问百基拉和亚居拉安后，“又问在他们家中的教会安。”
- 14 节保罗问候了几个人，并问候与他们同在一个家庭教会里的其他弟兄们。
- 15 节非罗罗古和犹利亚是夫妻，尼利亚和他姊妹是孩子。保罗问候“与他们同在一处的众圣徒安”。

之后，保罗统一问安：16 节“你们亲嘴问安，彼此务要圣洁。”接着“基督的众教会都问你们安。”保罗藉此提醒罗马教会信徒，教会作为一个整体，所有的支持者都应合而为一，因而把罗马教会也纳入众教会中，一起支持他的宣教事工，这是保罗更深层的教会宣教观。

最后，21-23 节，保罗代表同工提摩太、亲属、文书、哥林多教会的领袖、财政做最后的问安。

讨论问题：

1. 你愿意支持像保罗一样的宣教士吗？你有怎样的资源或以怎样的方式投入到宣教支持中呢？
2. 从保罗的问安名单，看出保罗在宣教中不是“独行侠”，而是有其“同工联络网”，请讨论保罗深层的教会宣教观，并探讨禧年堂宣教事工应如何从中借鉴？
3. 保罗的问安名单中提到 9 个女人的名字，探讨女人在教会可扮演哪些重要的角色？

Article 14: Romans 16: 17-20; 25-27

In his greetings, Paul gave advice on guarding against false teachers. Who are the false teachers? We may not know who they are, but from the text, Paul seemed to already know of the existence of false teachers in other churches who spread skewed teachings that were not congruent with the gospels. Hence Paul described the characteristics of these false teachers and reminded the Roman churches to guard themselves against them. These false teachers use “smooth talk and flattery” to teach what is contrary to the gospels, in order to sow discord among brothers in Christ, and to cause followers to fall and divisions to form in the church. Hence, Paul warned the Roman church to “keep away from them” (v17).

He then pointed out reasons to avoid the false teachers. One, as they serve not the Lord Christ, but their own appetites (v18), and two, as they use the followers’ obedience against them. With regard to the followers’ obedience, Paul was “full of joy” over them (v19). ‘Obedience’ is a good virtue, but without reason and discernment, this obedience could be taken advantage of by the false teachers with their flattery to lead the members to eventually leave the faith. Paul implored the members to be “wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil” (v19), to have the wisdom to discern between truth and falsehood, and to approach obedience with sensibility. This is similar to what is described in Matthew 10:16: to be “gentle as doves” and “shrewd like serpents”. In other words, church members should not just obey but also act with wisdom.

Paul then pointed out in v20 that “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet”. This is related to his previous verses on the false teachers, to explain that Satan, the driving force behind these false teachers, would eventually come under God’s judgement in the end times and the people of God would attain victory. Thereafter, Paul ended off with “the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” as a prayer-like blessing.

Finally in verses 25-27, with the structure formed by the “gospel”, “proclamation” and “revelation”, the “mystery” of God’s grace can be revealed: the “mystery” is “revealed and made known” (v26) through Jesus Christ; our faith is lived out through being rooted in the life of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Through Him, we continue to have “obedience to the faith” (v26), and to give glory to God (v27). A church that follows these principles would not be susceptible to the deceit of the false teachers and turn to follow them. And this is the core of our faith that is expressed in the book of Romans.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the unique characteristics of false teachers that were raised in this epistle? Have you ever met false teachers in the church or in your lives? What was your response to them?
2. Paul reminded the Roman church members “to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil”. How do you apply this in your life? Give an example.
3. Reflect on your faith: is it rooted upon one life – the life of Jesus Christ? How do you stay rooted in Him, and live out the life of Christ? Discuss this in the context of your daily life.

分享 14: 罗马书 16: 17-20; 25-27

保罗在信末问安中，插入这段提防“假教师”的劝告。这些“假教师”是谁？我们无从知道。但从圣经文本看出，保罗的心中似乎已经知道有一群“假教师”已在其他教会传播不同于基督福音的异端教义。因此他在此描述了这些“假教师”的特征，提醒罗马教会的会友要警戒他们。这些“假教师”的特征是：用花言巧语教导与福音相悖的信息，目的是离间弟兄，叫会友跌倒，使教会分裂。所以，保罗劝慰罗马会友【要留意躲避他们】（17节）。

并指出留意躲避他们的原因：第一，是因为他们只服侍他们的肚腹（18节），而不事奉我们的主基督。第二，利用会友的“顺服”来诱惑他们。罗马会友向来“顺服”，保罗说【我为你们欢喜】（19节）。

“顺服”是好的，但若不会明智地分辨教义，也会被假教师所利用，来顺服他们的花言巧语的异端教义，最终导致会友离经叛道，离开基督信仰。保罗劝勉罗马会友【我愿意你们在善上聪明，在恶上愚拙】（19节），也就是说，会友要有智慧分辨真理和谬误，不要头脑简单，善恶都一味顺服，囫圇吞枣。正如马太福音 10: 16 所讲，【你们要驯良如鸽子】，也要【灵巧像蛇】。也就是会友不仅要顺服，也要明智行事。

保罗紧接着指出【赐平安的神，快要将撒旦践踏在你们脚下】（20节），与前面的假教师有关联。指出假教师背后的撒旦将会受到末后审判，最终主的子民必会得胜。接下来保罗以【愿我主耶稣基督的恩常和你们同在！】做祷告式的祝愿。

最后在 25-27 节，以【福音】、【讲道】、【启示】的三层结构，把上帝救恩的【奥秘】重申出来：【奥秘】的核心是藉着耶稣基督【显明出来】（26节）；我们的信仰是植根于这一个生命活出来，就是上帝的儿子，耶稣基督；我们正是透过祂来不断地【信服真道】（26节），并归荣耀给神（27节）。因此既然教会有这真道，就不要受任何假教师的迷惑转而随从他们。这也是整本罗马书所传达的核心信仰。

讨论问题：

1、保罗在信末所提的“假教师”的特征是什么？你在教会或生活中遇到过“假教师”吗？你是如何应对的？

2、保罗劝勉罗马会友【在善上聪明，在恶上愚拙】，如何实践在你的生活中？请举一例说明。

3、请反思你的信仰是植根于一个生命——耶稣基督的生命吗？你的生活如何植根于祂，活出祂的生命？请反省你每日的生活谈谈。