

35:23

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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Introduction

If a pastor was asked to go and preach at a conference or another church, it's guaranteed one of the chapters that he would not choose to preach on would be Romans chapter 16. If you were asked to lead a Bible study or do a devotion for somebody, guaranteed you wouldn't turn to Romans chapter 16. Why? Well, because it looks like it's just a chapter that's filled with a long list of names, name after name, and lots of greetings to these people who are listed there. But while it is that -- this is a very rich chapter, because there's a lot to learn from these 27 verses. Yes, it's the final greeting of Paul to the church at Rome. And you might read this, and you might think, "boring." Or you might ask, what can we learn from this chapter? Well, my desire for us tonight is that by the time we are done studying this chapter, my desire for you is that you've learned something from this and you're able then to take that and apply it to your own life and live it out for God's glory.

Now, we must understand that although we might look at a chapter like this, and think that it is boring, we must remember that this chapter is inspired scripture. It's inspired by God. This is the very Word of God. And therefore, it's necessary for us to know, because God put it in there for a reason. It's there for us to know. So, we must study it, we must know it, and we must apply it to our lives. This is not a boring chapter. This is an exciting chapter because God's Word is not boring, right? God's Word is always exciting.

Now, if you remember from last week, the context in which Paul is writing is he wants to show his heart for this church. As we've studied Romans, there's a lot of things that Paul has written, that are very bold, very bold, and are even a little hard to swallow sometimes. But he wants this church to know of his love for them. He loves this church. He has a pastoral heart, and He cares dearly for this church. And listen, Paul knows that hard preaching produces soft hearts. But soft preaching produces hard hearts. He wants these believers here in Rome, to have soft hearts.

And that's why he gives them hard truths. Because he loves them. And he wants them to love Christ above all else, and then to love one another, as they live out their love for Christ. And so he writes some things that are very bold. And he reminds them of his ministry, and his heart as we saw last time, was to build the church, and to serve the church and then to partner alongside the church. That was his heart. He loves the church of God. But now he gets even more personal with the Romans. And he turns his attention, not upon himself and his own ministry, but he turns his attention on them. And he wants to show them, his heart for them, and He loves them. So tonight, we're going to look at this wonderful chapter, and we're going to break it down into three points.

- Point number one is Paul's Commendation and Personal Greeting, Paul's Commendation and Personal Greeting.
- Point number two will be Paul's Caution, and God's Grace, Paul's Caution and God's Grace.
- And then finally, point number three will be Paul's Conclusion and God's Glory. Paul's Conclusion in God's Glory.

1. Paul's Commendation and Personal Greeting.

So, let's look at our first point here tonight, Paul's Commendation and Personal Greeting, and look at verse one. "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; 2 that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well." (Romans 16:1)

Notice Paul begins here with this commendation. Why does Paul need to commend Phoebe to this church? Well, if you remember, Paul is writing this letter from Corinth. That's where he's writing it from. He's on his third missionary journey. But if you remember from last week, Paul has to go back to Jerusalem. Remember that he's going to go back to Jerusalem from Corinth because he's got to take the financial gift back to the church at Jerusalem. And so, he's going to go to Jerusalem before he makes his way over to Rome, making a pitstop.

So, as he heads off to Jerusalem, he sends this letter with Phoebe, over to Rome. It's her job to take this letter to the church at Rome. Think about that. I don't even think she understood and knew what she was holding in her hand, right? As she's delivering this letter to the church at Rome...these rich truths that are going to be passed down from generation to generation. And it was her job to take this letter and deliver it over to the church in Rome.

But when Phoebe arrives in Rome, what is going to be the response of the church to her? How are they going to respond to her? Well, Paul wants to make sure that the church receives her and takes care of her. That's their duty. That's their job is to take care of her. Now, why did she need a commendation from Paul? Well, two reasons.

- Number one, he wanted them to know that she's not some imposter who's coming in to take advantage of the Christians and their generosity. Imposters would do that they would come into the church, and they would take advantage of them. It's what false teachers do. And Paul wants them to know that that's not Phoebe. That's not what she's doing here.
- And number two, he wanted to make sure that she was protected and taken care of. Recommendations were well known in these days, because when a believer came into town, if that believer had to stay in an inn, the inn was not a safe place for them to be and these were not safe places to stay. I remember going to a motel one time and staying at a motel on a trip. And I got up at two in the morning and I just kept driving. Because it was not a safe place to be. Inns were not safe places to be. There was a lot of looting and stealing that would go on at these places. And so, a commendation from another church would be given when a visiting brother or sister came into town. They would give the commendation from the church to the church that they were visiting, letting them know that they are a fellow brother or sister and that that church then needed to take care of them. Paul wanted to make sure that Phoebe was safe and well taken care of.

Notice how Paul describes Phoebe. First, he says that she is our sister. Phoebe is our sister, not in the physical sense, but spiritually. She's a sister in Christ. She has family. And the church needs to make sure that she is not left on her own, but that she is well taken care of. MacArthur says this, *"Anyone who comes naming the name of Christ and belonging to his family is family to us as well."* Their family to us. And Paul wanted to make sure that she was treated as family. He wasn't there to personally let them know. But he puts it in this letter to let them know that she's family. She's a sister in Christ.

Paul continues to describe her in verse 1 and says, *"she's a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea."* That word "servant" there and the Greek is the word *diaconos*, so I'm going to get a little nerdy with you with some Greek here, *diaconos*. And it is a broad word that simply means servant. In a broad sense, it means servant. We get our word *deacon*. We have elders and deacons in the church. We get our word "deacon" from this word, *diaconos*. We see it in 1 Timothy 3, where Paul uses it in an official sense, speaking of an office within the church. You have elders, the office of elder, and you have deacons. The office of deacon, Paul uses it there in an official sense, but this word is used most of the time in a broad sense, meaning anyone who serves. And it's in this context that Paul uses this word, not in the technical sense of it being an office, but in a broad sense of her being a servant.

The NET Bible offers a footnote on this, and it says this, *"in the New Testament, some who are called diaconos are related to a particular church. Yet the scholarly consensus is that such individuals are not deacons but are servants or ministers."* They're simply servants or ministers. For example, Epaphras is associated with the church in Colossians and is called a *diaconos* in [Colossians 1:7](#) but no contemporary translation regards him as a deacon. So even though he's called a *diaconos*, no translation even translates it as the office of deacon. In fact, what's interesting is, in [1 Timothy 4:6](#), Paul calls Timothy a *diaconos*. Timothy was associated with the church in Ephesus, but he obviously was not a deacon there. What was he? The pastor. He was

the pastor of the church there, not the deacon. And so, you can see how this word diaconos, is used in a broad sense, meaning "one who serves."

And so, Paul is not giving her an official title and the church here, but it's just describing her as a faithful servant of the church at Cenchrea, which was just a few miles east of Corinth, where Paul is writing this letter from. So, he tells the church at Rome, "[receive her](#)" and help her and whatever matter she may have meet up with, which would be the basics of food, water, and housing. That is... they were to show her hospitality. You need to show hospitality to her. They were to take care of her as a fellow sister in Christ. So, she's a sister, she's a servant.

- And third, Paul describes her as a helper. Notice there at the end of verse 2, "[for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.](#)" (Rom 16:2) They need to help her just as she has helped other believers, including Paul himself. That word "helper" there in the Greek, means "a patron" or "a benefactor", meaning she was most likely a woman of great wealth, who used her financial means to give to those in the church and serve them that way. She did that with Paul as well. She served him with her great financial wealth.

Now after this commendation of Phoebe, notice in verse 3, Paul now turns to his greeting, "[Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; 5 also greet the church that is in their house.](#)" (Rom 16:3)

We remember Prisca or Priscilla, and Aquila, when Paul first met them in Corinth. Remember that? In Corinth on his second missionary journey... this couple, they were originally from Rome. ([See Paul's missionary Journeys](#)) That's where they're originally from, originally from Rome. But they had to leave Rome because of Claudius has decreed that all Jews needed to get out of Rome. You need to leave Rome. And so, Priscilla and Aquila, they headed then to Corinth, which is where they met Paul.

They headed to Corinth -- they had a great ministry alongside Paul. They then ministered in Ephesus, where they ministered to Apollos. Do you remember that? Where they taught Apollos? But they eventually made their way back to Rome, after Claudius had died. They make their way back. They were fellow workers of Paul for many years. And notice... they even risked their own life for Paul. They risked their own life for Paul, making sure that Paul was safe.

Notice what they did when they returned to Rome. Notice what they did. They started a church in their own home, they had a house church. Which tells us that Paul wrote this letter to the church at Rome, but there were actually more than one church in Rome, who probably all met in different homes within the city there. But Paul wrote to the believers who were all there at Rome in these churches, which we could call the church at Rome. And they pass this letter, then around to all the different churches, these different house churches. But what's amazing about Priscilla and Aquila, is that -- listen, listen -- they were faithful to serve wherever God had them. Wherever God took them, what did they do? They serve the church. They loved the church, and they served, and they served and they said, "*do you want to meet in our house? Here's our home, come and meet.*" They loved the church, and they were faithful servants.

Next, we see at the end of verse 5, Epaphroditus. "Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who was the first convert to Christ from Asia." (Rom 16:5) What do we know about this man, two things.

- First, he was a dear friend of Paul's. Notice Paul calls him "my beloved", my beloved. Literally, the one loved by me. I love this man. Although he is only mentioned here, he was near to Paul's heart, he was a close and dear friend of Paul.
- Second, Epaphroditus was the first convert in Asia. On Paul's second missionary journey, he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go to Asia (Acts 16:6) forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go and preach the gospel in Asia, although Paul desired that, the Holy Spirit said, "No, you're not going there." But on his third missionary journey, he finally reaches Asia. And Epaphroditus was the first convert there. The first one to put his faith in Christ, which is possibly why Epaphroditus was so near and dear to his heart. He remembers him. He's the first one to receive the gospel in Asia. And then think about what he did. Now he's a partner with Paul and what's he going to go do? Preach the gospel, spread it throughout Asia. He's the first convert there.

Next, we read about Mary. Notice verse 6 here, "Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you." (Rom 16:6) What's interesting here is the way that this verse reads. It is possible that Paul did not know Mary personally. But he was told about her by other believers who had been to Rome. They had gone to Rome, they visited Rome, they met this woman named Mary. How do they know about Mary? Because she worked hard. She was a hard worker in the church. He doesn't personally know her, but she is known for her hard work. And notice this, look at this. Look at verse 6. Her name is written forever in Scripture, because of her hard work in serving the church... forever. There's Mary, for all of eternity, her name is written in God's Word, because of her faithfulness, and her hard work and serving the church.

Next is Andronicus and Junias in verse 7. "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding amongst the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." (Rom 16:7) Now, the difference between the masculine Junias and the feminine Junia, that name there, is one accent in the Greek. One little accent that's there. Many of the ancient commentators take Andronicus and Junia to be a married couple, just as Priscilla and Aquila were. So Junia, then would obviously be Andronicus' wife, this is his wife.

But notice how Paul describes them. They are his "kinsmen", his kinsmen. This could mean possibly that they're related to him. But more likely, it refers to them as being fellow Jews, as fellow kinsmen, as fellow Jews. But notice what other things they have in common with Paul. Notice what he says there, "They are his fellow prisoners", fellow prisoners, meaning they were possibly in prison with Paul at some point, which we don't know exactly when that would be. Or it means that they have been to prison for the gospel, just as Paul was. A fellow prisoner. You've been to prison for the gospel. So have I -- fellow prisoner. But notice what it says there, "that they were outstanding amongst the apostles." Now, this does not mean that they were apostles. That's not what he's saying here. He's not saying that they were apostles, but that they were outstanding among the apostles, meaning they were known by the apostles, possibly because of their imprisonment for Christ. We've seen this in our modern day, right? Anybody know who James Coates is? Well-known amongst the churches, why? Imprisonment for Christ, standing up for the gospel. That was this couple. They were outstanding among the apostles. They were well-known in the church, in the early church, because of their imprisonment. And notice

this, Paul says they were also "in Christ before me." And if they were known to the apostles, then that means they were possibly saved in Jerusalem, some 25 years earlier. And listen to this, who would have been attacking the church and throwing people in prison back then? Paul, the apostle Paul, it's possible that he was the one who threw them in prison. But they prayed for him. Now they've been reconciled. And they are fellow prisoners with him. We can't be dogmatic about this. But these are possibilities. But we do know that this couple here is near and dear to Paul, because they were willing to suffer imprisonment for the sake of the gospel. They loved Christ. They loved his gospel, and they were willing to go to prison for it.

In verses 8 & 9 we see Ampliatus, a dear friend of Paul's, where he says, "[my beloved in the Lord](#)". ([Rom 16:8](#)) And then "[Urbanus, our fellow worker in the Lord, and Stachys](#)" ([Rom 16:9](#)) his dear friend. And then in verse 10, is "Apelles" and then "[those of the household of Aristobulus](#)" ([Rom 16:10](#)). But notice he doesn't say to greet Aristobulus, most likely because Aristobulus was not a believer. He wasn't a believer, along with Narcissus, in verse 11. ([Rom 16:10-11](#)) One commentator says that historical records show us that Aristobulus was possibly the grandson of Herod the Great. Which would mean that these people were part of the imperial family. He had reached the top. But he had never put his faith in Christ. But his family did. His family did -- those in his household -- they did they put their faith in Christ, and they became believers.

Then in verse 12, we have three hard-working women. Three women there. "[Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.](#)" ([Rom 16:12](#)). Then in verse 13, we see Rufus and his mother, the son and wife of Simon of Cyrene. Remember, we talked about them in Mark chapter 15. Notice that in verse 13, "[Greet Rufus a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.](#)" ([Rom 16:13](#)) Rufus's mother treated Paul like a son at some point in his ministry, as she cared for him.

Then he has a whole list of other names there, you can read them for yourself in verse 14. Then in verse 15, another couple, "[Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.](#)" ([Rom 16:15](#))

And then verse 16, "[Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.](#)" ([Rom 16:16](#)) Now, this holy kiss here, this is not in some romantic way. It's not what he's talking about here. But this practice was primarily for relatives and close friends. Now think about this. Many believers have lost what? Relatives and close friends. Why? Because of their faith in Christ. Notice what he says here, greet one another with a holy kiss. Their new family and friends are those who are brothers and sisters in Christ. And now you treat them as family. They are your new family. We as family are to treat each other in this manner...that we're to care for one another, welcome each other and love one another.

2. Paul's Caution and God's Grace

Let's look at our second point here, Paul's Caution and God's Grace. Remember, Paul loves this church. And one of the ways that a shepherd shows his love for the sheep is to warn them. He must

warn them. And Paul cautions them here with this warning in verse 17. "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances, contrary to the teaching what you learned and turn away from them." (Rom 16:17) Now, you might look at this and you go, "that doesn't sound like Christian love. I mean, is that really a loving thing to do? Turn away from them?" It is. It is Christian love. It is the loving thing to do. These people come in to cause dissensions and hindrances within the church. They are spiritual enemies of Christ. And God says we need to stay away from them. Stay away from false teachers. Why? What is their goal? False teachers don't want to turn you to Christ. What do they want to do? Turn you away from Christ. They want to deceive you with their own teaching, and they want to take you away from Christ.

In verse 18, "For such men are slaves, not of our Lord cry or not of our Lord Christ, but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting." (Rom 16:18) These are wolves, wolves in sheep's clothing, who tried to come into the sheep fold. They use smooth and flattering speech to draw people away from Christ. But we are to turn away from them. Don't listen to them, turn away from them!

Warning about false teachers

And that is why I warn you about false teachers. Stay away from them. They are dangerous, and they will lead you away from Christ. Why do I do that? Because I love you. And I want the best for you. Our elders love you; we want the best for you. And so, we will warn you and tell you stay away from them. Don't listen to false teachers. And if you see a fellow brother or sister begin to be led astray by a false teacher, your job -- listen -- your job is to go to them and tell them to come back. Tell them to stop listening to the false teachers, warn them out of a heart of love. That's what we are to do within the church.

Now Paul doesn't want them to think that they're all naive and being led astray. But so he continues on and he encourages them by helping them see how they can be protected from false teachers. Look at what he says in verse 19. "For the report of your obedience is reached all therefore I'm rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent and what is evil." (Rom 16:19) Paul affirms their obedience to Christ. The best way that you can be protected from the enemy is to focus upon your obedience to Christ and His Word. That's the best way you can be guarded. Don't get caught up in all the things that the false teachers are teaching. Don't read their books and don't listen to their podcasts or their messages. Don't do it. Stay away from them. When you realize and recognize that that person is a false teacher, stop listening to them. Don't read their books. Don't get caught up in all of their false teachings. But focus on the truth. "Be wise in what is good," Paul says "and be innocent and what is evil" (Rom 16:19) meaning all that is evil, the evil world around us, both worldly matters and what false teachers are promoting. Be innocent in these things. Don't get caught up in worldly matters.

So, what should we be focused on then? Be focused on the truth. And listen, the more that you know the truth, the easier it is to spot evil and false teaching. Know the truth. Now, this means that the Christian life is a battle, right? It's a battle for us. Good versus evil. But look at what Paul says in verse 20. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

(Rom 16:20) There will be a day when the battle is over. That's our hope. Right? As believers that's our hope... this battle will be over one day, and it'll be when Satan is crushed. And we will stand with Christ, in victory...that's our future! And it's not because of anything that we have done, but because of what Christ has done for us by His grace. Notice Paul's short benediction there, "the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." (Rom 16:20) That is what we need in order to overcome, we need God's grace.

3. The Conclusion and God's Glory

Finally, let's look at our third point here, the Conclusion and God's Glory. We now get personal greetings from Paul's associates. First Timothy... "Timothy, my fellow worker greets you." (Rom 16:21) So do these other men. Then we see Tertius, who's Paul secretary... "I Tertius, who write this letter greet you in the Lord." (Rom 16:22) He was one who penned this letter while Paul dictated it. Then we have Gaius. Gaius was a man who hosted Paul in Corinth, and he had a home church meeting there in his own house. This Gaius is most likely the Gaius in 1 Corinthians 1:14 that Paul actually baptized. Then there's Erastus, who had a high position in the city of Corinth as a city treasurer, and then he ends with Quartus, who was another brother in Christ in Corinth. (Rom 16:23)

And then Paul ends with his final doxology a final praise to God for what God has done. Notice verse 25. "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ." (Rom 16:25) Paul's first praise here is for God establishing believers through the gospel. That is how we are established -- through the gospel. Remember Romans 1:16? Paul said that he's "not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that leads to salvation for all who believe." (Rom 1:16) That's the gospel. Well, this church here has heard the gospel. The church at Rome has heard the Gospel that Paul has preached. Notice, Paul says it was a mystery in the past, but it's now been revealed... that it was hidden in the Old Testament, but it's been revealed in the New Testament, as the prophet spoke of the Messiah. (Rom 16:25-26)

They didn't know who He was, but now we know who the Messiah is. It's Jesus, Jesus Christ, Jesus the Messiah. What has specifically been revealed? That God has provided salvation for both Gentiles and Jews. He's provided salvation for all. Paul tells us this in Ephesians, 3:4-6, which is what he says in verse 26, "but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;" (Rom 16:26)

It is now revealed that all the nations -- Jews and Gentiles -- can be saved by God. You see Jews, they took the promises of God, and what did the Jews do? They applied it only to themselves. But they were established to be a light unto the Gentiles. But they failed in that... they failed in their mission to go and take the good news out to the Gentiles. They held it to themselves. But God's plan all along has been to save both Jew and Gentile. And we see that now fulfilled in the Gospel.

Even what the prophets wrote in the Old Testament has now been revealed in the new. And why has all this been revealed? What's the purpose of this great salvation? Answer: Are you ready for this? The

Glory of God. It's all for His glory, which is what he says in verse 27. "To the only wise God through Jesus Christ be the glory forever. Amen." (Rom 16:27)

Notice He is the only wise God, the God of the Jews and the Gentiles. And in His perfect wisdom, He has revealed the plan of salvation, He has established the plan of salvation, and He has accomplished the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, for all who believe. God has done it all.

And why has He done it? He did it all for His eternal glory, His glory that will never run out. Its eternal, eternal glory. Because that's why God does all that he does, right? It's all for His glory. And all of God's people said, Amen!

Father, thank You for a wonderful time in the book of Romans. How amazing this book is. Father, I pray that we would take these truths and apply these to our lives... that we would grow in our knowledge and understanding of You and Your Word. And then we would live them out for your glory. Lord, that's what this is all about, to do all things, not for our own glory, but Your glory alone... the only wise God. We thank You for our time that we've had in Romans. We pray all this in Christ's name, Amen.