

Romans: Transformed by Grace

(Romans 16:1-16)

Greeting card? B-day; anniversary; What's in a name? The sweetest sound =our name
Words matter; actions matter more 😊

In this passage, we are reminded that not only is the book of Romans a divine piece of Sacred Scripture, but a personal letter from Paul to the many known Christians at Rome. **READ Romans 16:1-16** – This section is a GREETING list of those Rome = a big HOWDY
“I recommend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a ^[a]servant of the church which is at Cenchrea, ² that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the ^[b]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, ^[c]and of myself as well. ³ Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who risked their own necks for my life, 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. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from ^[d]Asia. ⁶ Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. ⁷ Greet Andronicus and ^[e]Junia, my kinsfolk and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding in the view of the apostles, who also ^[f]were in Christ before me. ⁸ Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹ Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. ¹⁰ Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the *household* of Aristobulus. ¹¹ Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the *household* of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. ¹² Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³ Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. ¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers *and sisters* with them. ¹⁵ Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the ^[g]saints who are with them. ¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.” =BIG Family. Extended Church Family. =Important part of letter to Rome; the personal touch, the heartfelt greeting and blessing to his sp. family!!

-**People matter.** Paul remembered that he was in the “people business”

-Paul suffered much in the ministry (in many towns) in order to win one precious soul to Christ. In this last part of his personal letter to the Christians at Rome, Paul mentions 24 people by name: Precious friends, people he led to faith in Christ; people he personally disciplined in Corinth or Ephesus. These were his co-workers; co-laborers; his friends, biblical family!

***Some people of note:**

1. Why would Paul start with **Phoebe**, a woman in the first Century, and commend her to the Church at Rome?

Vs. 1-2: “I recommend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a **servant** of the church which is at Cenchrea, (port city next to Corinth) ² that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the ^[b]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, ^[c]and of myself as well. It is believed that Phoebe actually carried this letter to Rome on behalf of Paul. Think about the weight of that? **Jeweler carrying \$\$ in plain briefcase**

-What do we notice in this commendation?

-**Phoebe** was entrusted with the most important letter in the New Testament = she was (reliable/dependable) and her being a woman didn't matter (HUGE)!

-Paul called her a Servant of the Church at Cenchrea – a church plant next to Corinth. The word servant is the word *diakonos* – minister/servant/deacon. She played a part of the ministry in the early church and earned great respect from Paul.

-Paul indicates that Phoebe had been generous in her own support of the local church and a supporter of Paul (financially or through her generosity as a hostess etc.) - **for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.** Phoebe used her spiritual gift of service, her talent, her money, her home, her business, her opportunity for God's glory & help of Church!!!

-Paul asked the Church in Rome to show her godly hospitality; to treat her as a sister in Christ (i.e. part of the family of God) = it means something to be a Christian in faithful biblical community. She was one of them; they were to receive her in a manner worthy of the saints (the holy ones of the Church), worthy of those who have been set apart for eternal business & eternal glory!

-Last, Paul instructed that the Church of Rome help Phoebe with whatever other business she may have had in Rome (the reason she was traveling to Rome in the first place -wealthy businesswomen). ****This is a big deal.** Paul memorializes Phoebe (as a true saint)/special *"Phoebe was emblematic of those countless women of God who He has used and honored with great distinction in the first century within the framework of His divine plan."* -MacArthur

****Takeaway? -God used men and women to advance His Church & build His Kingdom** (in a patriarchal, male-dominated society, Jesus was the great equalizer among the sexes; Jesus uplifted the status & role of women in His New Testament Church) **no longer 2nd class citizens**

-People are the business of the Church; we are called to divine hospitality; spiritual & physical care; and ministry to the soul, mind (emotions), and body.

-James 2:14-17 **"What use is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith also, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself."** =How are we doing at caring ministry? Serving?

*How are we doing in our hospitality as a church? How are we doing welcoming new people?

-People of color? People of other nations? People of alternative lifestyles? People of all socio-economic backgrounds? Do YOU feel welcome here? **ARE you welcoming to others? commanded**

-Rom. 15:7 **"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."**

*The WELL should be known as a local church where everyone is welcome & shown great hospitality & Christ's love = where they get to hear GOD's WORD preached to their hearts!

2. Also of note is Paul's greeting to **Priscilla and Aquila.**

Vs. 3: Greet Prisca [Priscilla] and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who risked their own necks for my life, 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.

This incredible lay ministry couple is mentioned **6** times in the New Testament. They got around!! Corinth, Ephesus, & Rome: (originally from Rome, Paul met them after they & all Jews

were expelled from Rome from the Emperor Claudius in 41AD); Priscilla & Aquila were a working couple (tentmakers) like Paul and he met them in the Corinthian Synagogue. He led them to faith, disciplined them, and they began to help him build the church at Corinth. Famously, this couple later disciplined Apollos in Ephesus who became a great preacher himself. Notice how this couple served the Lord:

- They sacrificed their place of residence & stability to help Paul build his ministry in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. =They gave of themselves in order to build up the new church
- Paul called them his fellow workers. They served along side of Paul, doing the needed tasks of mundane and everyday ministry. They were faithful and consistent in their ministry.
- They put themselves at risk (in danger) in order to cover for Paul and help hide or serve other Christians in need or on the run from the enemy. They took their discipleship and fellowship of Jesus seriously. Even at great risk to their own life. They knew what mattered!
- Luke 9:23 “**And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”**
- Rev. 12:11 “**and they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life *even* when faced with death.”**
- Last, they used their own resources to bless the Church at Rome. They were faithful hosts to the believers in Rome and showed great selflessness, hospitality, & a heavenly perspective of all their resources. **⁵ also *greet the church that is in their house***

3. Last of note is **Epaenetus**, Paul’s very first convert from Asia Minor. **Vs. 5: *Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.***

- How cool that Paul has been able to keep up with the first young man he led to Christ after all these years in ministry (without cell phones, geotracking, internet); Paul was intentional and wanted to bless and mention this man who was now living and serving the Church at Rome.
- Paul called Epaenetus his “Beloved” – someone very dear to his heart.
- Paul used the phrase “aparché” Greek for “first fruit” – since Epaenetus was Paul’s first convert in Asia Minor and was still going strong for the Lord.

-Takeaway: -Who have you led to the Lord? Who has accepted Christ because of your witness and intentionality to pray for and share the gospel to? Who is serving Christ bc of your love? -Where is that person now? Are they still walking with the Lord? Are they still serving Jesus?

*More importantly, perhaps, WHO led you to the Lord? When was the last time you called them and thanked them for sharing the gospel with you? You have a new identity, hope, power, and eternity because of them. The least you could do is reach out and bless them; thank them!

& Pass it on. SHARE the gospel with others. **Who’s your one?**

- We love the Lord bc He first loved us; We are transformed bc of Christ’s grace; and we serve the Lord and Love others, welcome others, and disciple others BC of what Christ has done for us. This is our joy and the overflow of our lives!!
- What has Christ done for you? Welcomed you into His family Now He wants to use us...

APPLICATION

-100 years from now who will remember you? What will you have done that is noteworthy?

-In what are you investing now that outlive you? Spiritually? WHO?

-Think about the fact that we are still talking about these precious 24 people 2000 years after they have died; ordinary people; not famous, not wealthy, not powerful, just ordinary common, everyday people who mattered to Paul. They are mentioned b/c they knew & loved Paul. ***Who will you love that will outlast you?** Who will you disciple/pour into?

-More so, this is God's Word – God made sure that we would have these names recorded for all of history. Would you be so honored if your name was recorded in Scripture?

-It's a big deal. Perhaps one could even see it as a reward for their faithfulness to the Lord?

-But what about all those people who didn't make the cut? Does the Lord love them less? Remember them less?

***What will you do with your life that will outlast your time on earth?**