**Romans 16 – Without Excuse**

*Greetings and Warnings*

When you go to the movies, how many of you stick around for the closing credits?

Usually unless a person is a serious movie fans, or have some type of industry movie industry connection, they are up and out the door the minutes the 10-12 minutes of movie credits begin to role, at least after the lead roles are shown and it’s down to key grips, hair, make-up, caterers, and talent wranglers.

Sometimes however, there is a surprise reward at the end of the long credits, that make it worthwhile for those who sit through to the end, like previews, bloopers, deleted scenes, or something else.

This is definitely the case for Romans 16. Paul offers a litany of Thanks, and Greetings. He mentions many people we have never heard or and have no knowledge of, and gives us small glimpses of the details of some of the relationships he has with some of these people among the thanks, and greetings.

 He does give us a wonderful benediction at the end of the chapter, that is worth sticking around for, and all-in-all gives us a beautiful insight to the love, gratitude and respect he has for the people in his life. This is a wonderful example of how important it is to be surrounded by brothers and sisters in the Lord, who share your passion and burden for the gospel, and whom you can trust, rely on, help, and receive help from in your journey.

**Romans 16**

**16:1-2**I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconof the church in Cenchreae. **2**I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

The first of the over 34 names mentioned in this chapter is *Phoebe* (whose name means “bright and radiant” : ) *[do you know any “bright and radiant” Phoebes?].*

She is listed as a “Deacon”, which is a title of Leadership that means “servant”. She apparently serves in leadership at the church in Cenchrea which was a seaside town on the east coast of the Peloponnesian peninsula. This is where Paul would go when he left on his voyages from Greece, back to Syria or Jerusalem.

 **16:3-5**“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. **4**They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. **5**Greet also the church that meets at their house.”

Priscilla and Aquila are an extraordinary Christian couple from Rome, whom Paul met in Corinth and took with him to Ephesus and established the church in their home. They had a tent-making business, and Paul worked for them as this was his trade. They are always listed together, and they discipled Apollos who was a strong leader of the early church. They were initially kicked out of Rome by Emperor Claudius for being Jewish, but were apparently allowed to go back under Nero and established a house church.

**16:5b** …”Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.”

“The province of Asia”, includes Colossae, Ephesus, and the seven churches listed in Revelation 2 & 3. Paul did extensive missionary work there and apparently *Epenetus* was the first believer.

**6**Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

There were six Mary’s mentioned in the Bible. *(Mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, etc.)* This is one that we haven’t met yet “Mary of Rome”.

**7**Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding amongthe apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

These two people were Jewish believers before Paul was. They were apparently imprisoned for their faith with Paul. They may or may not be a married couple, or perhaps brother and sister. Much debate has taken place about “Junia”, which is a woman’s name being listed as an apostle along with Andronicus. Paul highly commends them both in this verse.

The next section of the chapter contains a litany of names that we know nothing about, some are Jews some are Greeks, but all play a significant part in Paul’s life.

**8**Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.

**9**Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

**10**Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

**11**Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew.

Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

This next section of names are all women, or include women. Paul is very respectful and grateful to the women who served alongside him in his ministry, and is gives special attention to each of their importance in his life.

**12**Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

**13**Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.

**14**Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them.

**15**Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord’s people who are with them.

**16**Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the churches of Christ send greetings.

These first 16 verses show us that Paul was willing to spend more than half of this final chapter showing us the importance of the relationships we have in our lives. He makes it a point to demonstrate how important it is to; Greet, commend, thank, acknowledge, (even kiss!) one another. This is because the relationships we have in the Lord are deeper, more meaningful, and in many ways more important than any relationships we have with people in the world.

Why is this? Because when we have fellowship with one another, we are connecting on a spiritual level in the Lord which is way deeper than the connections we have outside of the spirit of God.

That’s why Jesus said;

**Matt 18:20**For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

**Eph. 4:3-6** “**3**Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **4**There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; **5**one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **6**one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

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A FINAL WARNING:

As the chapter continues, he takes a moment to issue a warning regarding those who cause division, or place obstacles in their way.

**16:17-20**“I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. **18**For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. **19**Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. **20**The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”

This was obviously a problem in the early church, and still exists today. There are those who come in from time to tie whose motives are NOT to serve the Lord, but are determined to fulfill their own selfish ambitions. They prey upon those who are not grounded in the teaching of the Word of God, and by “talk and flattery” they deceive people into following them, or accepting their ideas that are contrary to the Word of God. They cause division, NOT unity.

Paul tells this young church to “Keep away from them”. This is good advice for us as well. Sometimes in our compassion and kindness we give open doors to those who are in reality adverse to our message and the teaching of the word of God. We hope that we will have an effect on them, and cause them to repent. Jesus even gave a parable in Matthew 13 about the “wheat and tares” where he said to let the viny weeds grow among the wheat. But he ended that parable with his real intent, which was to separate the tares from the wheat and destroy them.

**Matthew 13:30“**Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

The time of the Harvest is now. The Lord is our shepherd and we are part of His flock. That is why we need to care for one another, nurture, protect, and look out for one another. Paul is constantly reminding the church to preserve the unity and peace. He wrote in the previous chapters. He urges us to turn away from those who work against the unity and peace among the brethren.

Much of his writing to young Timothy addresses this same issue.

**1st Timothy 6:3-4,11** “**3**If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the soundwords of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, **4**he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people” **…**

**11**But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.”

Speaking of Timothy, Paul takes the opportunity to convey greetings him and from those who are with him in Corinth to the church in Rome.

**16:21“**Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.

**22**I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Tertius is obviously the scribe Paul used to write this letter. This was a common practice in those days. There were those who were trained in writing and would be hired or enlisted to write what an author dictated.

**23**Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.

Erastus, who is the city’s director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.“

Gaius (*not the centurion from the Chosen)* was one of only two people Paul baptized in Corinth, and Erastus was an important city official, but actually traveled with Paul on his missionary journey to Macedonia.

Final passage of Romans

**16:25“**Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, **26**but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith— **27**to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.” <>

Let’s look at this in parts;

***“25****Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ,”*

“My Gospel”, gospel means “good news”. This is the message that Paul is proclaiming about Jesus being the Messiah! (Christ means Messiah). This is his message.

*“in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,”*

“The Mystery” of who the Messiah is, had been prophesied about for “long ages past” (over a thousand years)…

***26 “****but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God,”*

Jesus, the Messiah who was talked about through the prophetic writings by the divine inspiration of the eternal God, is now revealed!

But He the Messiah has not just been revealed for Jewish people, He came for Gentiles as well;

*“so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith”*

The plan had always been that ALL people would come into relationship with God. The promise made to Abraham, was not just for his family, but…

**Gen. 12:3** “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed!”

This is the main message to the Roman church. That all the promises of God, including adoption, revelation, ingrafting, the promised Holy Spirit, and salvation by grace through Faith are theirs through *Jesus the Messiah.* That’s why he writes in the very beginning of his letter;

**Romans 1:16** “For I am not ashamed of *the gospel*, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the *Jew,* then to the *Gentile*.”

This is why I like to remind of us of our mission scripture. To bring the light of Messiah to ALL people. It was the promise made through the prophecy of the Hebrew Prophet Isaiah, that was fulfilled by Yeshua (Jesus) and given to all the world.

**Isa. 60:1-3** ”Arise, shine; (Kumi Ori)

For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people;

But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.

The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.”

Before Jesus, all of mankind was lost in darkness, but because of Jesus we have the opportunity to be reconciled with the Heavenly Father who wants all people to be saved.

This is why our signature New Testament verse talks about us being reconciled to God, and being given the ministry of reconciliation.

**2nd Corinthians 5:18** “**18**All this is from God, who *reconciled* us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of *reconciliation*”

The greater story of God is that He wants ALL PEOPLE to be saved.

**Romans 10:13** “*Everyone* who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Are you saved?

DO you call upon the name of the Lord? That means you call him Lord, Master, King of your Life. Do you submit to Him and trust him, by seeking His will above your own.

That’s what it means to call upon the name of the Lord.

Everyone who does this, will be saved.

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