

ROMANS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Romans chapter 16 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we finish this powerful letter that Paul wrote to the church in Rome.

I hope you have been blessed as we have gone through this letter over the last few months.

As I have said before, if this was the only book of the Bible, the only letter we had, it would be enough to show us our condition and our need for a Savior. It truly is an amazing letter.

As we have seen, from Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20 Paul moved into his first main division of his letter, a section dealing with *condemnation*, showing us that the whole world is guilty before God.

And Paul makes this powerful point by looking at various groups of people and showing us that they are all guilty before God.

Paul first looked at the *unrighteous heathen* who are condemned by creation itself in Romans 1:18-32.

Then Paul moves to the *self-righteous moralist* who is condemned by his conscience in Romans 2:1-16.

Then Paul shows us the *super religious person* who is condemned by the commandments of God in Romans 2:17-29.

And, if for some reason you don't fit into any of those categories, Paul tells us in Romans 3:1-20 that *all are guilty before God*.

You see, it doesn't matter how good you think you are, you miss the mark of perfection and if we are honest with ourselves, we miss this mark by a lot! That means we are guilty before God!

Not too encouraging, but Paul does not leave us in that condition! But we first must understand that we are sinners and our sin has separated us from God before we will see our need for a Savior, for Jesus!

And that is what Paul does next, he brings us to Jesus. We see that in Romans 3:21 through Romans 5:21 as Paul moves into his second main division of this letter, a section dealing *justification*.

Yes, sin has separated us from God but now the righteousness of God apart from the Law has been revealed to us from heaven, that we are saved by grace through faith and not by the Law through works!

Jesus did the work, He finished the work by paying in full the penalty for our sins and now, that gift is extended to us, but we must receive it by faith!

Now, once we are saved by grace through faith, Paul moves into his third main division of his letter to the Romans, a section dealing with *sanctification* that covers Romans chapter 6 through Romans chapter 8.

Paul shows us that by the power of God's Spirit we can live lives that are pleasing to God as He molds and shapes our lives.

Then Paul moves into his fourth main division of his letter to the Romans, a section dealing with *election* that covers Romans chapter 9 through Romans chapter 11.

In this section Paul shows us that God is faithful to His promises He made to the Jews, they will come to pass.

To show us this Paul speaks of *Israel's past election by God* in Romans chapter 9.

Then he shows us *Israel's present rejection of the Messiah*, of Jesus, in Romans chapter 10.

And lastly, Paul shows us *Israel's final restoration to the Messiah*, to Jesus in Romans chapter 11.

Thus, just as God is faithful to His promises He made to the Jews, He is faithful to fulfill His promises He has made to us! We are secure in Him and His promises to us!

It is after all that, all that God has done for us that Paul moves into the fifth and final main division of his letter to the Romans, a section dealing with *application* and it is all based upon surrendering your life to the Lord, consecrating your life to Him as a living sacrifice and this section is covered in Romans chapter 12 through Romans 15:13.

Last time we began Paul's conclusion of his letter to the Romans, which covers Romans 15:14 through Romans 16:24.

In the section that we covered last time, in Romans 15:14-21, *Paul spoke of his ministry*.

Then in Romans 15:22-33 *Paul spoke of his future plans for service*.

Tonight, in Romans 16:1-24 we are going to be dealing with *Paul's personal greetings to the brethren in Rome* as well as the greetings of others to the brethren in Rome.

In this section Paul mentions 33 names, 24 of them were in Rome, 17 men and 7 women.

Lastly, Paul will conclude his letter with a closing *benediction* in Romans 16:25-27.

We can break this chapter down like this,

In Romans 16:1-16 we see Paul's *PERSONAL GREETINGS*.

Then, in Romans 16:17-20 we see Paul give *STERN WARNINGS*.

And then Paul will conclude this chapter and this letter in Romans 16:21-27 with a ***CLOSING BLESSING***.

Now I know for some of you this may be difficult in that, why is this even important to us?

For instance, we don't know these people, so why do we even have to spend a whole study on Paul's ***PERSONAL GREETINGS?***

First of all, the Holy Spirit thought it was important enough to include this for us and secondly, it shows us the heart of Paul. He was not just some high tower theologian that was not involved with people. He was involved with people and he remembered them and acknowledged the work they were doing.

Listen to what James Montgomery Boice said regarding this chapter. He wrote,

The last chapter of Romans contains the names of many people in Rome, to whom Paul was writing, as well as those who were in Corinth with Paul and who joined him in sending greetings - thirty-three names in all.

Twenty-four of these people were in Rome. Nine were in Corinth. But there are also two unnamed women and an unspecified number of unnamed men. Far from being an uninteresting listing, this chapter is actually one of the most fascinating of the New Testament.

One fascinating thing about Romans 16 is what it reveals about Paul. Some have the idea that people who are interested in ideas - in this case those who study Christian theology - are not interested in people. They are supposed to immerse themselves in books. They are not "relational," as we say.

There are people like this, of course. But Paul is a refutation of the idea that those who are interested in doctrine cannot be interested in those for whom the doctrine has been given. No one could be more interested in the great truths of God than Paul. The entire Epistle to the Romans has been an unfolding of them. But here we see that Paul was also intensely interested in people. In fact, to judge by this chapter, Paul can be said to show more interest in people than anyone else in the Bible except Jesus.

Another lesson from this chapter is brought out by Leon Morris in his commentary:

[Romans] was not written to professional theologians (though through the centuries scholars have found the epistle a happy hunting ground). As we consider the weighty matters Paul deals with, we are apt to overlook the fact that it was addressed to people like Ampliatus and Tryphena and Rufus. Clearly Paul expected this kind of person to be helped by what he wrote, a fact which modern experts sometimes overlook. And it is fitting that this letter, which has given us so much solid doctrinal teaching, should end with this emphasis on persons, on love, and on a reminder that humble servants of God perform all sorts of active ministry.

- James Montgomery Boice, Romans Volume 4, pp. 1911-1912

Thus, I truly believe this is an important section for us to study as Paul lists these men and women who assisted him in the work of God, encouraging them and giving them solid ground to stand upon as they minister to the people of God. It was a stamp of approval by Paul!

And it does truly show us that Paul was not only concerned with doctrine, he was not only concerned with soul winning, but he was also concerned about making friends with the brethren and seeing them grow in the Lord.

He was not a Christian Lone Ranger, he did not try to live an isolated life, but he had friends and it seems that he made them wherever he traveled. What an example to us.

With that said, let's begin reading in Romans chapter 16, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we continue our study through Paul's letter to the church in Rome and we finish this letter tonight! And keep in mind that we will be looking at Paul's *PERSONAL GREETINGS* in Romans 16:1-16.

ROMANS 16

VERSES 1-2

The first person mentioned here is Phoebe. And her name means, "*bright, radiant*" and it is the feminine form of a title given to the pagan god Apollo!

Now some, when they hear that, freak out. "Why didn't she change her name? How can she still be associated with this false god?"

The reason she didn't change her name is simple. Her life had changed, and it didn't matter what her name was, she now shined brightly as she served the Lord and the people knew it!

We are told that Phoebe served the Lord as a deaconess in the church at Cenchrea, a city that was a few miles east of Corinth, on the seacoast.

Not only that, but Phoebe was going to Rome, maybe a businesswoman, and Paul is probably sending this letter with her and he wants the brethren in Rome to welcome her and assist her in anything she needs.

Now some of you may be wondering, “Hey, wait a minute. A woman deacon in the church, that is not kosher!”

We don’t know if this was an official title for Phoebe or that just by her actions she was ministering as a deacon.

Make no mistake about it, women did play an important role in the church.

In Acts 21:8-9 we are told, **“On the next day we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.”**

The daughters of Philip were prophetess in the church in Caesarea.

And here we see Phoebe as a deaconess who cared for the sick believers; took care of the poor, the strangers, the impoverished; baptizing and disciplining women converts and instructing women and children in the faith.

And here we see Paul say that she has helped him greatly in the work of the Lord. And folks, women still do play an important role in the church, may we never lose sight of that!

Yes, the Scriptures tell us that women are not to be pastors, but we never see the Scriptures tell us that they can’t serve in the church, as we see here with Phoebe!

VERSES 3-5a

Paul met Priscilla and her husband Aquila on his second missionary journey in Corinth, (Acts 18:2).

This couple fled Rome when the decree of Claudius was issued for all Jews to leave Rome and they ended up in Corinth.

When Paul left Corinth, they traveled with him until they reached Ephesus, and they remained there as Paul moved on.

In Ephesus they ministered to Apollos and wherever they went, their home was opened up to be a place to worship God for the people of that community. After the death of Claudius this couple did return to Rome.

Also, Paul and this couple were tent makers, so they had that in common.

But more importantly, they had Christ in common which united them together.

Now we don't know how Priscilla and Aquila risked their lives for Paul, helped him out in a difficult situation, the Scriptures don't tell us.

But Paul thanks them for placing their lives on the line for him.

You can read of this couple in Acts 18:1-3, 18:24-26, I Corinthians 16:9 and here in Romans chapter 16.

One more thing before we move on. Listen to how Spurgeon compares two different couples in the New Testament and the testimony each of them left behind. He said, "When two loving hearts pull together they accomplish wonders. What different associations cluster around the names of 'Priscilla and Aquila' from those which are awakened by the words 'Ananias and Sapphira'! There we have a husband and a wife conspiring in hypocrisy, and here a wife and a husband united in sincere devotion." Very interesting!

VERSE 5b

Achaia was the region where Corinth was located, and Paul remembers his first convert in this area, Epaenetus.

Not only does Paul remember his name but you see his heart for this man, that he still cares for him. Paul does not look at those he has led to the Lord as another notch in his belt, but dear people whom he prays for and loves. What a great lesson for us to learn.

VERSES 6-7

Paul speaks of Mary who worked hard, to the point of being fatigued for the work of Christ and assisting Paul.

I am not sure where Christians got the idea that if you have to work hard, then it is not of the Lord.

That is so crazy to me and as you look at the Scriptures, you see that believers worked hard, to the point of exhaustion. In fact, listen to what we are told of one believer in Philippians 2:25-30, **“Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.”**

As he served the Lord, it almost cost him his life. And this is some kind of sickness that he had and yet, he served the Lord until he couldn't. Then, when he got better, he is back serving. That is the heart of a servant of God!

Yes, the work is hard, but the blessings are amazing if we would only look for them. I see some who miss out because they are not involved and that is sad.

Also, Paul speaks of Andronicus and Junia, apparently both Jews, and both were in prison at one time for their faith in Christ, for preaching the Gospel message just as Paul was.

These two, maybe husband and wife for Junia is a feminine name, were saved before Paul was, maybe some 25 years before this letter was written.

Now here is where some get confused, as Paul calls them apostles. Please understand that they are not part of the 12 apostles, the strict sense of that word. But in the broader sense, they were sent out with the Gospel message, they were ambassadors for Christ, just as we are. The office of apostles and prophets has passed off the scene today as they have laid the foundation for the church to be built upon!

VERSES 8-12

Amplias was a common name given slaves and thus, he still could have been a slave in Rome but free in Christ!

Archeological evidence shows that there is a tomb that dates back to the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century in the earliest Christian catacombs in Rome that has the name Amplias on it. It could be this man, but again it was a common name for a slave.

Next Paul greets Urbanus, a Roman name and probably a Roman citizen, and Stachys that is a Greek name.

We know nothing of Apelles except that his life was outstanding in Christ; he was approved in Christ. What a great testimony to have!

The word “**approved**” carries with it the idea of being tested, such as gold and silver passing the test for purity, that wine was not watered down or impure, that is Apelles.

In Romans 16:10 I want you to notice that Paul doesn’t greet Aristobulus but his household, which could imply that he was not saved but his family was.

According to J. B. Lightfoot, he suggests that this man was the grandson of Herod the Great, the one who had the children in Bethlehem slaughtered after the birth of Jesus.

Then we are told of Herodion, a Jew, and related to the family of Herod but now he belonged to the family of God.

Also, Narcissus, who some believe was the secretary to Emperor Claudius, having contact with everyone who was to see the Emperor, which made him very prosperous. Again, it does not say that he was saved, but his household.

And in Romans 16:12 we see Tryphena and Tryphosa who are two women, possibly twin sisters, whose names mean “delicate” and “dainty.”

They too labored in the Lord to the point of exhaustion.

And Persis, another woman, who is also a laborer in the Lord, but Paul speaks of this being in the past tense in the Greek, some of your Bibles speak of it that way and I believe it is correct.

This may mean, unlike the two women mentioned above, she was older and no longer is able to labor as she once had for the Lord, but she is still a vital part of the body of Christ. May we never forget the wisdom, the lessons that older Christians have and can share with us. We tend to put them aside but they are vital to the health and betterment of the church!

VERSE 13

Now is this the Rufus that is mentioned in Mark 15:21, where we are told, **“Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross.”**

Rufus is the son of Simon the Cyrenian, who was from North Africa and who carried the cross for Jesus to Calvary. Simon went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and he ended up meeting the Passover Lamb, Jesus, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world, and now he and his family are saved!

And so, many feel that this is the same man who was mentioned here, but we are not sure.

But for me, I tend to lean in that direction, that this Rufus is the same one mentioned by Mark. Do I have any proof of that?

First of all, why even mention Rufus and Alexander in Mark? The reason may be as simple as they were well known and thus, by mentioning their names, people would understand who they were and the influence they had.

Secondly, Mark was writing to the Romans in his gospel and thus, because of their influence in the church in Rome, he mentions their names and so does Paul.

In fact, his name means, “eminent” and thus, it was a name of distinction!

Can I be certain? Of course not, but this I can say, they were servants of the living God!

Now, why didn’t Paul mention Alexander here along with Rufus?

Either he was dead at this time or he was not living in Rome as Rufus was.

It could be just that simple!

Also, don't come to the wrong conclusion and think that their mother was Paul's mother, that is not what he is saying here. What Paul is saying is that their mother treated him like a son, that he was a recipient of her motherly love! That is Rufus and his mother!

VERSES 14-16

Here in Romans 16:14 we see Paul mention these four men who may have been the leaders of one of the churches in Rome.

Keep in mind that there were many churches, many assemblies there and then he extends his greetings to all the believers of this assembly.

Then, in Romans 16:15 we see another group of names, and here again Paul may be addressing another assembly in Rome, its leaders and all the brethren.

Think about this for a minute. Why did we and why did Paul spend so much time mentioning all these names?

Keep in mind this was a letter to the church in Rome and thus, Paul made it personal, it showed them he cared for these people, he knew these people and he was encouraging them to continue on in the faith.

This was not a letter to theologians but common people who loved the Lord and were serving the Lord.

It is as Spurgeon said, “They were like the most of us, commonplace individuals; but they loved the Lord, and therefore as Paul recollected [remembered] their names he sent them a message of love which has become embalmed in the Holy Scriptures. Do not let us think of the distinguished Christians exclusively so as to forget the rank and file of the Lord’s army. Do not let the eye rest exclusively upon the front rank, but let us love all whom Christ loves; let us value all Christ’s servants. It is better to be God’s dog than to be the devil’s darling.”

Here is something that we need to be careful about. Our lack of care for others. This is a growing problem in America today. You see, Americans today have become cold, insensitive to others, they are self-seeking for the most part and if you can’t do anything for them, then you are not worth their time.

If you think I am overreacting, listen carefully. Charles Reich, in his book *The Greening of America* puts it this way,

America is one vast terrifying anticomunity. The great organizations to which most people give their working day, and the apartments and suburbs to which they return at night, are equally places of loneliness and alienation . . . Protocol, competition, hostility and fear have replaced the warmth of the circle of affection which might sustain man against a hostile universe.

- Charles Reich, *The Greening of America*

In another article, we are told,

As a society, we appear to have lost the instinct for kindness and the willingness to extend the hand of friendship. Our responses to children, to older people, to strangers, are all conditioned by a concern not to offend and a fear of getting involved.

Our recent public consultation into the social evils of today highlights a real concern for the way in which society increasingly values people for their economic contribution, at the expense of kindness and compassion.

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/joe-public/2009/jun/11/society-spirit-joseph-rowntree-foundation>

I am not saying this to put us down but to make us aware, so we can take a look at our own hearts and see if we need to make changes.

May we, as the body of Christ, not be cold and insensitive to people. May we be like Paul, concerned for others, affectionate towards others, having the mind of Christ, which then overflows into our actions. May we show those around us we care!

That closes the section on *PERSONAL GREETINGS* that covered Romans 16:1-16.

And now we will move into a section where we see Paul give *STERN WARNINGS* and that will cover Romans 16:17-20.

VERSES 17-20

We find two thoughts here regarding the minds of people, those who cause division among God's people, and those that deceive God's people, and both are dangerous.

Early on in church history this was a problem and Paul is urging them to pay attention, to be on guard, to be aware of these people.

Today, Paul's message to us is the same, there are still those out there who want to cause division with their false doctrine and deceive those in the body of Christ with their lies and we need to be on guard, we need to be alert!

Jude warns us when he tells us, **“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Jude 3-4.

The problem is as Newell tells us, “Mad dogs are shot; infectious diseases are quarantined; but evil teachers who would divide to their destruction and draw away the saints with teaching contrary to the doctrine of Christ and His Apostles are everywhere tolerated!”

Remember Paul, in Acts 20:27-32, as he was meeting with the Ephesian elders before he went to Jerusalem, said, **“For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”**

We need to be on the alert because deception is just that, and we need to know what we believe so that we won't be deceived.

Look at the Jehovah Witnesses and how they confuse so many Christians with their false doctrine.

Look at the Mormons, who also think they are Christians and want to be called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and yet they are not Christian, and they pervert the Gospel message with their false doctrine and some Christians believe it!

Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement and how they deceive by telling you that as you follow the Law of God you are drawing closer to God and He loves you more. It is even worse as some will say that salvation is not in Jesus or believing in Him, but Jesus is the Torah, so you must believe in the Torah to be saved! Very dangerous!

Thus, learn what is good, what is truth, the Word of God and you won't be deceived!

The word "**simple**" or "**innocent**" in verse 19 is the Greek word AKERAIOS (ak-er'-ah-yos) and it speaks of being unmixed, simple, pure.

In other words, don't become polluted with the false doctrine that is out there but hold onto that which is good, God's Word! Don't mix truth with error, not even a little because it doesn't make it more truthful, but it weakens the truth!

Now here's the thing. As we stand up for God with His truth, Satan and his followers are crushed.

Yes, ultimately God will crush Satan completely as we see the fulfillment of Genesis 3:14-15, "**So the LORD God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.'**" come to pass in Revelation 20:10, "**The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**"

And here's the thing. Don't give Satan a foothold with his false doctrine, because it will destroy you!

My pastor summed it up like this in regard to what Paul is saying here. He wrote,

Instead of preaching the truth, these men spread their own religious propaganda, using deceit and clever speeches. We have the same problem today, and Christians must beware of false teachers. They come to your front door with magazines, books, and tapes, trying to convince you that they are teaching the truth. Paul gives two instructions: mark them (identify them), and avoid them.

It is a matter of obedience to the Lord and testimony to others. The issue is not making or keeping friends, but pleasing the Lord and maintaining a consistent testimony. Romans 16:20 suggests that these false teachers really come from Satan, and one day even he shall be completely defeated.

- Pastor Phil Ballmaier, Romans 16

I agree!

So we have seen in Romans 16:1-16 Paul's ***PERSONAL GREETINGS***.

Then, in Romans 16:17-20 we saw Paul give ***STERN WARNINGS***.

And now, Paul will conclude this chapter and this letter in Romans 16:21-27 with a ***CLOSING BLESSING***.

VERSES 21-24

Frist of all we see Paul mention Timothy and Timothy was like a son to Paul, a son in the Lord. Listen to what Paul says of Timothy in Philippians 2:19-22, **“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.”**

How special and important it is to have people who can work with you side-by-side!

Next, we see Lucius, who some believe is the man who commissioned Paul and Barnabas from Antioch for their missionary journey, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, in Acts 13:1-3. Others feel this is just another form of the name Luke, the beloved physician and only Gentile writer of the New Testament.

Jason and Sosipater were probably fellow Jews and that is why it seems probable that Lucius was Luke, for Paul does not speak of him being a kinsman, a fellow Jew.

Gaius was probably a leader in the church in Corinth; he housed Paul and the brethren of believers meet in his house. He is probably Titus Justus from Acts 18:7 and whose full name was Gaius Titus Justus, the man whose house was next to the synagogue in Corinth.

Erastus was the treasurer in the city of Corinth.

Lastly, Quartus could be the biological brother of Erastus but most likely he was a brother in the Lord. What a heart Paul had for people!

And then Paul speaks of Tertius, who was Paul’s stenographer, he wrote this letter down for Paul as Paul dictated it to him.

The thing I want you to notice once again is the love that Paul has for people as he called them by name; spoke highly of them to others, which must have made them feel special. That is the heart of God seen in Paul, for our God makes us feel special by His love for us. He even numbers the hairs on our head, He knows us that intimately, down to the tiniest detail!

We talked a little about this already, but in his book on Romans, R. Kent Hughes has this to say regarding the coldness of America and what people are longing for. He tells us,

We live in a heartless world. The recent United States census missed at least 5.7 million people who were anonymous even to the census takers. Every year thousands of unidentified and even unidentifiable bodies are found across North America. And only one out of twenty such bodies ever has a name attached to it! Our society has become a breeding ground for lonely people. Life in today's world is very much like the unwritten rule in elevators: "No talking, smiling, or eye contact allowed without written consent of the management."

A survey was taken recently in a suburban area of Houston to find out what had motivated people to choose the particular church where they were members. Some surprising answers were given: 12 percent chose their church because of prior denominational affiliation, 8 percent on the basis of the architectural beauty of the structure, 3 percent because of the person in the pulpit, 18 percent because of convenience of location, 21 percent because people in the congregation whom they respected. But a whopping 37 percent were influenced by the fact that friends and neighbors took an interest in them and invited them. Take Paul's heart to heart. It can make all the difference in the world – and for eternity.

- R. Kent Hughes, Romans, p. 301

If we want to win people to Christ, we have to reach out to them, we have to show them we care. If we want to encourage the brethren, we have to reach out to them, we have to show them we care and that is exactly what Paul did here in Romans chapter 16!

VERSES 25-27

Now Paul closes this letter out, which it seems he has been trying to do for a while, but he loves the Lord and them so much, it is hard to say good-bye!

This letter closes with a benediction or a short praise unto God.

Paul just spoke of the dangers out there from the dividers and the deceivers, but he gives them words of encouragement; that God will establish, strengthen them and us in the faith that is found in Jesus Christ!

And notice, it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that establishes men. And when Paul speaks of “my gospel” he is not saying that he has developed his own gospel or good news. He is saying that this is the Gospel message that has been given to him by the Lord and he is sharing that with others. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is now the Gospel of Paul.

That is what Paul tells us in Galatians 1:11-12, “**But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.**” The one who persecuted the church and had a disdain for the Gospel, is now embracing it, it is his!

And like I said, it is the Gospel message that establishes us, makes us stable and thus, it is God who has sufficient power, He is more than able to establish us, to make us firm. In fact, as God establishes us, it does not cost Him any loss of His power, He is God!

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 9:8, “**And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.**”

Even when things are difficult, God is in control and He will keep us. That is what Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 1:12, “**For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.**”

You see, God can establish us, protect us. He is in total control.

Now, here in Romans 16:25, this word “**mystery**” is not like our English word, but it speaks of something that was hidden in former times but now has been revealed to us or specifically to Paul.

And Paul is speaking of those things that were hidden in the Old Testament, for example, the coming together of Jews and Gentiles into one body in Christ, they are now revealed to us in the New Testament and for believers in those days, in these letters and through word of mouth as Paul shared these things as well as the other writers of the New Testament.

Paul spoke of this in Ephesians 2:11-22, **“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh - who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands - that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”**

Jews and Gentiles united together in one body in Christ Jesus – what a debt we owe to Him that we might be partakers of the heavenly glory!

Not only that, but the mystery of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us, something that was hidden, you might say, in the Old Testament, but now has been revealed to us in the New Testament!

Make no mistake about it, this plan of God, seen in the work of Jesus, is beyond the wisdom of any man, and yet God brought it forth and thus, He gets the glory.

This letter has been called, *The Gospel According to Grace* because that is Paul's point throughout this letter as Paul said, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”** Romans 1:16-17.

You see, the goal of this **“revelation of the mystery”** is that people of all nations might believe and obey Christ! Paul had a heart to see the Gospel of Christ spread throughout the world but the only way this would happen, the way that God has chosen is that the faithful saints would be willing to go out into the world and share the good news with the lost and this would only be accomplished through the power of God!

Again, I hope you have been blessed by this book. And, what a powerful book if we learn these lessons and apply them to our lives.

And now, as Paul said as he concluded this letter, let me leave you with his words, **“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith - to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.”** Romans 16:25-27.