

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 17TH - 18TH, 2021 // BOOK OF ROMANS

### DIVERSE (ROMANS 16:1-16)

#### A TRUE SHEPHERD IN THE CHURCH

Paul was not only a church planter, he also served the church and was a leader of leaders. Paul loved people and strived to create a diverse and tight culture within the Christian community.

- We see both diversity and genuine love and care for others in Paul's closing statements to the Romans.

### PHOEBE, A SERVANT OF THE CHURCH OF CENCHREAE

It's widely agreed that Phoebe was the carrier of Paul's letter and a very successful woman.

She was also a "servant" and deacon in a church on the eastern coast of Corinth.

- Phoebe being mentioned is important because we learn that **women had (and still have) a prominent role in the development of the church.**

### 28 DIVERSE PEOPLE MENTIONED IN CH. 16

- 17 men, 9 women
- 2 couples and 2 households
- 5 slaves
- Aristobulus, the grandson of Herod the Great
- Narcissus, an influencer to the emperor
- Rufus, the son of Simon the Cyrene
- 3 Jews, 2 witnesses of the resurrected Christ

### SO, WE MUST WORK TOWARD THIS

The church must intentionally build national, cultural, and ethnic diversity. We must also do this with integrity and sensitivity.

- **Diversity begins when we build relationships and ask questions. We have no reason to be offensive or be easily offended. We must learn to be empathetic and inquisitive.**

### DIVISION AND OBEDIENCE (ROMANS 16:17-24)

#### LOOKING OUT FOR WOLVES

Paul moves from the theme of unity (ch. 15) and diversity to their antithesis: division. Paul was a shepherd, and he knew the only way to deal with wolves is to identify and remove them.

- **Our main weapon against division is the Word. When sins like gossip, slander, or bad theology creep in, it must be swiftly and sternly dealt with.**

#### "AVOID THEM"

We have a tendency to flirt with people and situations that we are clearly told to not be close to.

**When people come in the name of Christ but "create divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching [we have] learned," they are to be avoided.**

- We are to pray and keep the door open for a heart change while protecting the "flock."

#### IT SOUNDS SO HARSH!

We must keep a distance from divisive people because they "deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words." Divisiveness is very different than one simply living in sin.

- **We must choose where we go and who influences us with wisdom and discernment from the Word and the Spirit.**
- **1 Corinthians 15:33**

### HOPE IN THE MIDDLE OF CONCERN

Though Paul is warning the church about potential predators and division, he also mentions that the good reputation of the Roman church was world renowned.

- The church in Rome was strong and had a good rapport because of their **obedience, "wisdom to what is good," and "innocence about what is evil."**

### THESE THINGS WILL "SOON CRUSH SATAN"

Paul encourages us to hold on. Though at times it looks bleak and this world is currently under the spell of the Devil, there will come a time when Jesus will permanently put an end to evil.

- **It is so easy to get distracted and disheartened, but we must lean on Jesus, trust the Word (it works!), and remember His faithfulness in our lives.**

### FRIENDS FROM CORINTH

Paul is writing from Corinth to Rome, and after greeting the Romans, he sends greetings from his friends that helped in his mission.

- History records very little about the men and women of the early church, but they sacrificed it all because they knew **a book more important than any history books contained their name and their deeds.**

### HIM ALONE (ROMANS 16:25-27)

#### KNOWING WHO PAUL WAS

Paul was a former radical Pharisee that persecuted Christians from town to town. He was the architect of the death of the first martyr and a man that struggled with guilt after his conversion to following Christ.

- Knowing how vital and powerful Romans is further shows how amazing Paul's transformation was!

### PAUL IS GREAT, BUT GOD IS THE FOCUS

Romans is a book about God's wisdom, His plan and purpose for our lives, His grace, power, and His deep love for people.

- Romans was written to tell us **Who God is, who we are because of God, and to tell us that a relationship with Jesus is our only means of hope and salvation.** Simply put, it is all about Him!

### THE "REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY"

Paul's most powerful epistle is a part of the revelation of the mystery of our Creator and our relationship to Him.

- Through Romans **we learn the means by which we are saved and the mandate that all nations and people are called to have a relationship with God.**

### "TO ADVANCE THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH"

We're given clear direction and expectations from the Word so we can live in a way that not only honors God, but blesses us and those around us.

- **God wants us to follow His lead because He loves all kinds of people and knows what is best for us.** We see this love demonstrated through Jesus Christ.

### GOD DESERVES ALL OF THE GLORY

God deserves all honor because He is eternal, sovereign, all-powerful, and loving. He also is the architect of a plan by which disobedient men and women might once again have a relationship with their Creator.

- **God is good because we are invited to be His children and co-heirs to His kingdom if we will just trust in Him.**

### A CLEAR AND BETTER PATH

- Romans is a book that presents the raw and unfiltered truth about God, His ways, and His desire to have a relationship with His greatest creation: us.
- If we will search for the truth it will lead us in a direction that yields far better results than the culture of the world, both in the present and for eternity.

### IT IS ALL ABOUT HIM

- **If we are to see a change in ourselves, we must submit to Jesus,** making it more about Him than it is about us.
- We must admit that He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and good, regardless if we understand or not.
- We must live for His glory and honor, not for our ambitions and affirmations.

### MAKING IT ABOUT HIM CHANGES US

- God has nothing to benefit from a relationship with us, but because He loves us we are blessed when we "seek first the kingdom of God."
- When we objectively seek the truth we find out how to live abundantly through God's Word. God gives us the wisdom and strength to be what He wants us to be.
- In putting Jesus first we find **love, peace, security, hope, patience, fulfillment, self-control, contentment, a proper identity, forgiveness of sin, and relief from shame and guilt. We are set free.**
- When we make it about Him, **we become children of God and co-heirs of an eternal paradise with our Creator.**