

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

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

### GREETING FRIENDS (ROMANS 16:1-16)

As Paul finishes his letter to the Roman church, he sends greetings to his friends in the church at Rome.

- He's finished with the instructional content of the letter, and now he wants to focus on the relationships that mean a lot to him.
- Theology is important - but God loves people more than anything. If we love theology but not people, something's wrong!

What follows is a list of 28 individuals from 5 house churches (vs. 5,10,11,14,15).

- 17 are men, 9 are women, 5 are slaves, 2 are couples, and 2 are families (vs. 10-11).
- 3 are people of distinction - Aristobulus (vs. 10) & Narcissus (vs. 11) were possibly friends of Emperor Claudius, and Rufus (vs. 13) was possibly the son of Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross to Golgotha (Mark 15:21).

### 1. THE CHURCH IN ROME WAS EXTREMELY DIVERSE.

In Paul's list of friends to greet there are men, women, slaves, freed-men, Jews, Gentiles, working class people, wealthy people, and people of influence.

- Church is not supposed to be a country club, a clique, an interest group, a sorority, or a fraternity.
- If we're doing this right, we'll be surrounded by people who are different from us.

### 2. WOMEN ARE MENTIONED PROMINENTLY.

In ancient Rome, women couldn't vote, hold political office, and were generally regarded as 2nd class citizens with no role in society other than being a wife or mother.

- Christianity was radical in that women were elevated as equals (Gal. 3:28) and given important roles to play in the life of the church.
- 1/3 of those mentioned by Paul are women.

In fact, Phoebe (vs. 1-2) was a deaconess and leader in the church at Cenchrea who most likely was tasked with the important job of carrying Paul's letter to Rome.

- Other women in the church at Rome Paul commends for "working hard" (vs. 6) and being valuable in their service to God.
- God has given men and women different roles in the home, family, and church, but equal value, dignity, respect, and worth!

### 3. HOUSE CHURCHES WERE A THING.

There were possibly as many as 5 house churches Paul mentions (vs. 5, 10-11, 14-15) that made up the church in Rome.

- Most likely, Roman Christians met in houses out of necessity, NOT because it's more spiritual to meet in a house with a small group.
- Church is not a building - it's a group of people united to worship Jesus, study God's Word, pray, and live in community with the gospel at the center.

### 4. CULTURE OF HONOR, FRIENDSHIP, AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

The language Paul uses suggests a deep level of friendship that he shared with these Roman believers as well, as an intentional effort he put forth to build up and honor them.

- Do you have friends in the church? Do you put forth the effort to make friends, to build up and honor others who are serving the Lord?

Paul exhorts his friends in Rome to "greet one another with a holy kiss" (vs. 16) - this was a custom in the early church.

- Upon completion of the Lord's Supper, church members would customarily embrace one another with a kiss on the cheek (common in the Middle East today).
- The application of this instruction is to be understood in our culture and context.

### DIVISIONS & OBSTACLES (ROMANS 16:17-20)

People mattered a lot to Paul- he saw the believers in Rome as his brothers and sisters (vs. 17).

- They mattered so much to him that he didn't want them to be misled or harmed spiritually in any way whatsoever.
- One of the ways that Satan attacks the Church is through false teaching and false teachers.
- Many people are deceived by this and therefore misled and spiritually harmed.

### "WATCH OUT..."

Part of "watching out" for false teaching is knowing the real thing so well that you can spot the counterfeit.

- Groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, the New Age Movement, & Universalists use some of the same language as Biblical theology but distort terms to give them an entirely different meaning - we must be discerning!

### "THOSE WHO CAUSE DIVISIONS..."

Part of how Satan attacks the church is through attempts to divide and destroy unity.

- He can do this through blatant false teaching, but he can also do this through influencing some to major on minor doctrinal or ideological disagreements that split the church into factions and warring camps.
- We must watch out for this spiritual attack.

### "...THOSE WHO CREATE OBSTACLES"

Paul probably has in mind the Judaizers who had given him trouble in other churches (Phil. 3:17-21).

- Any teaching that contradicts the clear teachings of Scripture by claiming that salvation is only available to those who follow legalistic rules, laws, or standards creates obstacles and detracts from Jesus' work on the cross!

### "AVOID THEM!"

We're to avoid teaching that creates obstacles to real faith by contradicting the clear message of the gospel and the book of Romans.

- We are to avoid teaching that causes division - if a teacher insists that they're the only ones who have it right on a doctrinal or ideological minor and everyone else is less spiritual (or dumber) than they are, then we don't need to listen.

Those who are peddling false teaching that causes divisions and creates obstacles aren't truly serving the Lord (vs. 18).

- They're in it for their own "appetites"- for money, control, admiration, power, or applause.
- Dividers and deceivers don't announce their presence because they use "smooth talk" and "flattery"- but if we know the truth well enough, we can spot them and avoid them.

The Roman church is doing well! They've been staying obedient to the Lord, and Paul rejoices over them, but still, he wants them to be "wise as to what is good, and innocent as to what is evil"(vs. 19).

- Someday soon, Satan and all of his schemes and attempts to destroy the church will be crushed by the God of peace (vs. 20).
- In the meantime, we need God's grace to help us be discerning, wise, and thoughtful about these things.

### THE ETERNAL GOD (ROMANS 16:21-27)

In addition to greeting his personal friends in Rome, Paul now sends personal greetings from his friends who are with him in Corinth (vs. 21-23).

- Timothy is mentioned first, as he was Paul's spiritual son and most trusted ministry associate. Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater were Jewish believers ("my kinsman"), and Tertius was the scribe who penned the letter to Rome as Paul dictated it.
- Gaius, Erastus, and Quartus were members of the church in Corinth that gave greetings also.

With all the dangers, challenges, obstacles, and difficulties facing the Roman church-persecution from without and disunity from within - Paul concludes by commending them to Him who is able to "strengthen you" (vs. 25a).

- He prays that they'd be strengthened by his "gospel" and the "preaching of Jesus Christ".
- The gospel gives us security, gives us identity, and it gives us purpose and direction.

The gospel and preaching of Jesus Christ is according to the "revelation of the mystery" that God has now made known to "all nations" (vs. 25-26).

- The whole plan of God's redemption had been previously announced through prophetic writings, but its final outworking wasn't evident until revealed by God through Jesus.
- Through this gospel, the eternal God calls unto the nations to bow the knee to Jesus as King in the obedience of allegiant faith (vs. 26b).

As Paul concludes his letter, he breaks into glorious praise to God for His wisdom (vs. 27).

- Who could have come up with this plan other than God? The greatness and glory of God's plan is what Paul preached as gospel - good news.
- The good news is that Jesus is the risen, victorious King who has made a way for us as sinful, broken humans to have peace with God.
- This a truth that will radically change our entire lives.

### THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

- Creates spiritual families & unites people from all backgrounds, ethnicities, and social classes (vs. 1-16).
- Reveals truth and protects us from dangerous falsehoods (vs. 17-20).
- Strengthens us and creates in us wonder, worship, and praise to eternal God (vs. 21-27).
- We need the POWER of the gospel at work in our world today - not just religion or moralism or ideology.
- We need our lives shaped by the gospel - if what God has done for us in Christ isn't shaping every part of who we are, we're missing something.

### WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

- This Gospel invites you to trust the reality that Jesus got what you deserved, so you can have freedom, forgiveness, and eternal life (Rom. 3).
- We receive God's promise and power in our lives by FAITH - we place faith in God to save us through Christ through trusting, obedient, allegiant faith in Christ alone (Rom. 4).
- The Gospel is not just the power to be delivered from the penalty of sin - it's also the power we need to be delivered from the bondage of sin (Rom. 6).
- The Gospel also reminds us that we have a responsibility - we must call on the name of the Lord to be saved, and we must share this message (Rom. 10).
- The Gospel calls us to be people of honor (Rom. 13), people of unity (Rom. 14), and people of selfless sacrifice (Rom. 15) as we follow the example of King Jesus.

**Do you have peace with God? Does your life look like Jesus? Are you a person of honor?**