

Roman 16:1-16

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[0 : 00] Alright, and please take your copy of God's Word out and turn to Romans chapter 16. Wes, thank you for saying be seated. I lost track of where we were in those verses.

! No, the song was over. Romans chapter 16. We're going to look together today at verses 1 through 16. And as I said to you before, we've completed now Paul's doctrinal treatise. He ended in chapter 15, verse 13 with that. We're sort of in the epilogue stage now. He's winding it down for us. And we come here to what could be, at a first glance, sort of a meaningless list of names.

Just his cordiality towards the church in Rome. And he's just kind of wrapping things up. But if we look at it carefully, and we really begin to think about who Paul is, his life, his ministry, and why it is that he's writing these words that he's writing.

Why it is that he pins it in this way. There's still much to glean in this last chapter of Romans. So let's read it together, and I'll lead us in a prayer, and we'll begin.

[1 : 15] Romans 16, verse 1. I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church of Kincray, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you.

For she has been a patron of many, and of myself as well. Greet Prissa and Achilla, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Aponatus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.

Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. Greet my kinsmen Herodian. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.

[2 : 18] Greet those workers in the Lord, Trephania and Trephosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.

Greet Asencretus, Phlegion, Hermes, Patrobos, Hermes, and the brothers who are with them.

Greet Philologus, I knew that was the one that was going to get me.

Julia, Nerus, and his sister, and Olympus, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. Let's pray.

Father, we praise you for your word, and we believe that all of it is inspired. And we believe it is sufficient as the guide for holy living. So I pray, Father, as we approach a text that may seem meaningless on the surface, you will help us to glean what should be gleaned from it.

That you will apply it to our hearts and have it yield wisdom and proper living in our lives. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So I want to bring to you four observations from the text this morning.

[3 : 22] And we're actually going to come back to this text, I believe, next week. Lord willing, I think that's what he would have me do, to look at the first few verses in a little greater detail. But I want to show you some overarching observations from the text.

So four observations, and the first being the names. Paul names off 27 people. He asks others to be greeted, those of the household, etc., those that meet in the church, in so-and-so's home.

But he names specifically 27 people. We see Phoebe, who she's believed to be the one carrying this letter. We don't know that for a fact, but with fair certainty, there are some clues that tell us she's the one that's actually carrying the letter to the church in Rome.

And then 26 others who are in Rome at this time. Now just in brief, just to give you a little bit of background for Phoebe, and then Prissa, and Achilla. And that's who we're going to look at next week, I believe.

Phoebe here is referred to as a sister, a servant, a patron of many. She's from a little port, which is now a town. It actually still exists, called Kincray.

[4 : 31] I believe I'm pronouncing that correctly. Which is a port that's southeast of Corinth. So she's a Corinthian. She lives there in Corinth. It's believed that that's where Paul was wintering when he wrote this letter.

And then Prissa, or Priscilla, you'll find that in Acts 18. She's called Priscilla there. It would be like William and Will. And Achilla, her husband. They're tent makers, and Paul stayed with them. They were the ones that Paul was actually with in Corinth. And we see a great commendation of these three individuals to the church there in Rome. But the real point I want to make to you as he's laying out all of these names in this way, is that we ought to know one another's names.

And that might seem kind of obtuse, right? Like, well, sure, we ought to. But don't we fail at that? Aren't we really kind of pitiful at really knowing one another's names?

And we use all kinds of excuses for that. Certainly all of us have a capacity for knowledge and being able to remember faces and names. But don't we tend to use an excuse?

[5 : 39] I'm just not good at remembering names, right? As an excuse for not really knowing one another. Now, there's evidence in this text that Paul knew some of these individuals. We see that throughout it.

But we don't know for a fact how he knew them, what interaction he had had with them. It would be my assumption that many of them he's just simply heard of. He's heard of their faithfulness as their Roman believers.

But yet he knew their names. I believe he took as Jesus his great example. Jesus knows our names. John 10, 3 says, The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name.

And he leads them out. We have, I think, a particularly difficult setting in which to learn names.

Because we have a lot of college students that come here. And this is an abnormal service for us.

If this is your first time here, the college students have been released for the summer. And they'll be back in the fall. And they come and they go. And they kind of become, at times, the faceless masses.

[6 : 42] That show up right before the service and sit down. And up and out they go. And I've gotten this horrible habit of learning people's names by what they're wearing. But, you know, people don't tend to wear the same thing every week. I wish you would.

That would help me a lot in that way. But we use that, at least I have, as an excuse. And then we're embarrassed when we don't know people's names. Right?

So you feel like you should, I'm pretty sure I've seen him here like three or four times. I really ought to know his name. But we become embarrassed by the fact that we don't know one another's names. And this church is going to have to take a big slice of humble pie.

And start going to each other and saying, I know I should know your name. I know that we've been here together for a year. And I've never taken the time to come and even ask you what your name is. But we ought to know one another's names.

Simple, right? The first observation. More than that, though, we ought to know one another. Not just know somebody's names, but actually know one another.

[7 : 44] And so that's the second observation. Notice the differing relationships that Paul lays out for us throughout this text. I'm just going to rattle them off for you here. He says, Sister, brother, servant, saints, patron, fellow workers, church, first fruits, kinsmen, fellow prisoners, beloved, approved in Christ, elect, and mother to me.

You find all of these differing relationships throughout the text. And as you come to know more people and to actually know them, to actually share your life with them, you are going to find that God is going to bring grace to your life in varying ways, in different measures, and people are going to take on different forms of relationship with you.

And you will be a grace to them. So we must not only know each other's names, but we must actually know one another. Be honest with one another.

Become transparent and share with one another what's going on in our lives. Be willing to ask difficult questions when people want to put up barriers and not share with you what's going on in

their life. Have a deep, real concern for people's souls.

Thirdly, notice the Christ-centered nature of these relationships. The Christ-centered nature of these relationships.

[9:07] In verse 2, he says, Welcome her in the Lord. Verse 3, My fellow workers in Christ Jesus. Verse 5, The first convert to Christ. Verse 7, They were in Christ before me.

Verse 8, My beloved in the Lord. Verse 9, My fellow worker in Christ. Verse 10, Apelles, Who is approved in Christ. Verse 11, Greet those in the Lord.

Verse 12, Greet those workers in the Lord. Verse 13, Persis, Who has worked hard in the Lord.

Verse 14, Rufus, Chosen in the Lord. You see the theme that he's carrying on as he begins to speak about these people.

Remember that Paul's not writing to us to teach us something in this case, but we can learn from the way he talks about the saints. How we speak about others bears witness of the condition of our hearts.

When you're speaking with others, when you're interacting with them on the phone and in person and through email and on Facebook, do you speak of Christ? Is your relationship centered on Christ in this way?

[10:12] As you speak of others, you talk about those in the church. Is it in these terms? Is it this way? And some of you may say to me, Well, I just don't really like to talk spiritual.

It's not really my thing. I don't like to wear my faith on my sleeve. But the greater issue here is the condition of our hearts. Are our relationships Christ centered?

Are they Christ centric? Are they saturated with the gospel? And I present to you that if they are, we'll speak this way. We'll talk about Christ. We'll couple him up with these people we talk about that we love and genuinely care about so very much.

Matthew 12, 34, Jesus said, For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. What you say gives clear evidence to who you are. You must ask yourself that question.

I've had to ask it of myself this week. Is Christ on my lips as I speak to and speak about the church?

Fourthly, notice the love that saturates these relationships.

[11:22] The love that saturates these relationships. The overarching, the repeated command that Paul continues to give to them is this word greet. Verb, greet.

Which means to draw to oneself. Right? Picture wise, you can think of somebody reaching out and grabbing somebody and embracing them. Right? So what he's saying to them is, As this letter is being circulated, As you're traveling this letter around Rome to these multiple churches that are meeting in homes, Embrace one another.

Have an endearing love one another that is fueled by the gospel. Notice four times, verse 5, verse 8, verse 9, and verse 12. He uses the term, My beloved.

A great term of endearment. And at the very end, in verse 16, He says, Greet one another with a holy kiss. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I'm not going to suggest that we start kissing one another. So, let your guard down. Alright? Culturally, And we're this way some too. Some families do this. But culturally, Families in this day always kissed.

[12:32] In greeting and in departure. That was a common thing that they did. They would embrace each other's faces. And they would kiss on the forehead. Or for men, You'd kiss their beard. Which I thought was really interesting. I don't really know what that means exactly.

But somewhere on the face region, They would kiss their beard. This was a common thing you did. And it was a way that you endeared yourself to a family member. So, in these days, As people were claiming Christ, Becoming part of the Christian church, Many of them were being wholly rejected by their families.

They were now orphans, so to speak. They no longer had a family. They didn't go to family reunions. They didn't have a place to go on Mother's Day. Right? So, the church became their family.

And it became common practice in these days To display. We're a family in this way. They greeted one another. They called it a holy kiss. That became the common vernacular for what that was. A holy kiss. We are now family in Christ. So, he's encouraging them to do that. And to continue doing that. To treat each other in that way.

[13:36] So, you can see that love absolutely saturates these relationships. And they ought for ours. Christians, fellow Christians, Will be precious to one another When they feel deeply the

realities of the gospel.

Christians will be precious to one another When they feel deeply the realities of the gospel. Now, notice I say, feel deeply. I didn't say, when they know the realities of the gospel.

I say, when they feel deeply. Because a lot of us have a lot of mental knowledge. We could expound for you all of the promises of the gospel. How they're carried out. We could use large words to make our points.

But until we feel it. Until it actually works down in us and softens our hearts. Christians will not be precious to us the way they should. We have been saved from great sin.

Every one of us. It doesn't matter where you grew up. It doesn't matter the household you were in. It doesn't matter how moral you were. You were an enemy of God. And God has rescued you because of his great love for you.

[14 : 44] And that binds us together. If you realize what you've been saved from. Can you just imagine if all of us were in a great natural disaster together. If suddenly this ground shook. This building collapsed on all of us.

And we were all trapped together in this building for days. Rescue crew came and dug us out a week later. Think of like the Chilean miners and all that time they spent underground. We would be tight. Right?

We would be really, really good friends. Because we had gone through a great tragedy together. This is true of us. We have all lived in sin and been rescued from sin.

When we understand the weight of that. It will make us precious to one another. We will see pictures of God's grace in each other's faces.

Right? We will make expressions of who he is to us. And we will love one another. This gospel will permeate our hearts. And it will trickle out in loving relationships.

[15 : 43] John 13, 35. Jesus says, By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. People will know we are disciples of Christ if we love one another.

It doesn't say if we go to church on Sunday morning. It doesn't say if we dress a certain way. Do or don't listen to certain music. Eat certain foods. Abstain from certain drinks.

That's not what he says to us here. He says the true mark of the Christian life is if we love one another. Turn back in Romans with me to chapter 12.

Verses 9 through 13. You remember Paul finishes his heavy doctrine at the end of chapter 11. He goes on to say then, Therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

Holy and acceptable to God. Which is your spiritual worship. And I've shown you how his logic follows. That the overarching thing he's saying to us in verse 9 of chapter 12 is let love be genuine.

[16 : 46] And then he's fleshing out for us the rest of that through chapter 15 verse 13. He's showing us what that actually looks like. It's summed up in those four words.

Let love be genuine. Or let love be without hypocrisy. So let's read the rest of that. Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil. Hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal. Be fervent in spirit. Serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation. Be constant in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the saints. And seek to show hospitality. And he goes on to talk about the way in which we should love the world and beyond that. Even when it's difficult. Even when we have to give up our own rights.

Right? But here's where he's thrusting this idea of what it looks like to be a Christian. To be a life sacrifice to God in light of what he's done for us.

[17 : 42] It's that our love is genuine. 1 Corinthians 13.1 says, If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels. We get that. If I can speak all languages.

And I can even speak the language of the angels. But I have not love. I am a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. The things that come out of my mouth are absolutely worthless. Love is the thing that should characterize us.

And look at Paul's life. As he speaks of these 27 believers. The love that permeates that text. Do you love the church in that way?

I don't think I do all the time. I express to you some of my own failure in this regard. A man that I love dearly in this church brought to me this week.

That I have been neglecting his soul. He needed me at some times. And I wasn't there for him. My initial reaction was, Well, you've got to ask. You've got to ask me.

[18 : 44] I'm available. But he wasn't even in a state to ask. He really wanted to avoid me. What he really needed was me to be in his life. He really needed me to pour out gospel into him.

And I realized as he talked to me. As I was going through stages of defense and acceptance. As he's talking. Right? I realized a painful truth.

And it's even embarrassing to say. But it needs to be said. That I have felt inadequate for the task God's given me here. I felt inadequate for it. And I have waited for you guys to give me the approval.

By asking me to be involved in your life. Nathan, we want you to input into our lives. And this young man said to me very well. They've already asked.

They're here. They sit in the congregation. You're the pastor. They've already asked. Should they have to vocalize it? And I realized all at once. That my insufficiency.

[19 : 44] Was coming from the fact that I don't believe the gospel in this area. Right? Because if I did. I would believe God's put me in this position. And he has made me sufficient. Not that I have sufficiency of myself.

But that he has made me sufficient. So we need to preach the gospel to one another. I had to preach the gospel to myself every hour.

Since I had that conversation. To remind myself. My sufficiency is not in me. I am insufficient. Of my own accord. But Christ in me. Is supremely sufficient. Beyond sufficient.

Overflowingly sufficient. He has given me everything I need. To minister to those in their time of need. And I've been asked. So I wanted to show you this morning.

My own failure. I think you need to see. That I need grace. I am so far. So far. From perfect. And this is how the gospel then.

[20 : 42] Ministers to every aspect. Of our living. The great hurt for me. As we're talking. Is not so much. That I neglected. The relationship.

Which was the. Then the horizontal. Outworking. Right. But that the. Vertical axis had been. Messed up. That I had missed the ultimate point. Of the gospel.

In my ministry. And that is that. Christ. Is my sufficiency. Right. So how does that work into. Your life. As you're hearing these things.

As you're saying. You know. Nathan kind of got me on the obtuse point. I don't know everybody's name. I'm not even really working at knowing everybody's name. I certainly don't know people. The way I ought to know people.

I can't say that I. My relationship with Christ centered. That he's on my lips all the time. As I talk about them. As I talk with them. And I don't know that love saturates. The relationship in this way.

[21 : 38] Recognize that Christ has made you sufficient. For the place that he has called you. As well. Right. You may not be good at remembering names. He's sufficient for that. Right. There are mnemonic devices.

There are ways. To work it out. Right. Keep a notepad in your pocket. God will give you the grace. To remember names. Through a notepad in your pocket. Find a way. To do these things.

Christ. Is sufficient for them. Moms. It's Mother's Day. And a lot of sermons are being preached today. On a charge to you. You know your responsibilities.

You know that those precious babies are yours. To raise up. Right. You know. Day in and day out. You're experiencing it. Right. Keeping the house picked up. And keeping fingers from getting cut off.

You know. The great challenges. That are in front of you. And Christ is sufficient for that. Right. He will fill you up. That you can accomplish that task. Because he's put you in that role.

[22 : 35] Father's the same is true. To pastor. Provide. And protect. For our families. The task has been given to you. And therefore. Christ has made you sufficient.

For it. 2 Corinthians 9. 8 says. And God is able to make all grace abound to you. So that having all sufficiency. In all things. At all times. You may abound.

In every. Good work. Let's pray together.