

Pt 55 Romans 16:5-16 Paul, A Friend to Many

Rooting Through Romans, a sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Porchlight Baptist Church www.pbcknox.com

Romans 16:5-16

- 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.
- 6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.
- 7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.
- 8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.
- 9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.
- 10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.
- 11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.
- 12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.
- 13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.
- 14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.
- 15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.
- 16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

The past two Sundays we focused our attention on three individuals; first it was Phebe, whom Paul commended to the Church and then Priscilla and Aquila, whom Paul called "helpers in Christ Jesus."

As we continue in this final chapter of Romans, we are going to look at the rest of this list of names that Paul mentions. Most of these (but not all) are Greek names and are only mentioned here in this passage of Scripture.

5b...Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

The next person Paul wants to mention is **Epaenetus**. This is the only time this man is mentioned in the Scriptures. Paul calls him "**my wellbeloved**." That particular phrase is only applied to 3 people in the Bible;

1. **Mark 12:6** Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. This is Jesus' Parable of the Vineyard where the father sends his son to collect the fruit of the Vineyard and the husbandmen killed him.
2. **3 John 1:1** The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. This is John's greeting in his letter to a man we know nothing else about except that he is wellbeloved by John.
3. Here in our text in Romans 16:5.

It is obvious that Epaenetus holds a special place in Paul's heart.

He also calls him "**the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ**." In the Jewish system, the "**firstfruits**" were a small gathering of the first crops harvested which were given to the Lord as a sacrifice. This means Apaenetus was one of the first converts during Paul's ministry in Achaia, which was a Roman province in Corinth.

Interestingly enough, Apaenetus was not the only person considered to be the "firstfruits" in Achaia.

Listen to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 16:15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,*)

This has caused some Bible doubters to say "*well, there's another mistake in the Bible*." Well, now hang on a minute. Who is to say that Apaenetus is not part of the house of Stephanas? I do not see any mistake or conflict here. Besides, during the firstfruits there is not just one fruit given, it is a fruit of every kind that was harvested.

6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.

Here Paul greets a woman named Mary. There just happens to be 6-different women named Mary in the New Testament:

1. Mary mother of Jesus
2. Mary Magdalene - whom Jesus cast out seven demons.
3. Mary of Bethany - sister of Martha and Lazarus.
4. Mary the mother of James
5. Mary the mother of John Mark
6. Mary of Rome

This is the only thing we know about this particular Mary. Paul said "she **bestowed much labour on us**." So, she was a worker, a helper, perhaps like Priscilla and Aquila?

7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Two more names here; **Andronicus** and **Junia**. These are both Jewish names and notice that Paul refers to them as "**my kinsmen**." That does not mean they are blood related to him; it means that they are Jews like he is. Down in verse 11 he referred to Herodion as his "**kinsman**." Paul often referred to those of the Jewish race as kinsmen, such as in **Romans 9:3** For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

As for Andronicus and Junia, this may have been a husband and wife because the name Junia can be either male or female. **Andronicus** means "**man of victory**," and **Junia** means "**youthful**."

These two people were also prisoners with Paul at some point. Since he says they were "**note among the apostles**," then that means that they probably lived in or around Jerusalem and were familiar with the other Apostles. They were most likely saved during the early days of the Church but certainly before Paul was, as he says: **who also were in Christ before me**.

An interesting thing to note here. If Junia is indeed a lady then out of the 29 names mentioned in Paul's salutation, 10 of them are women (9 if Junia is a man):

29 Names Mentioned, 10 Women, and 19 Men				
Phebe	Aquila	Priscilla	Epaenetus	Mary
Andronicus	Junia	Amplias	Urbane	Stachys
Apelles	Aristobulus	Herodion	Narcissus	Tryphena
Tryphosa	Persis	Rufus	Rufus' mother	Asyncritus
Phlegon	Hermas	Patrobas	Hermes	Philologus
Julia	Nereus	Nereus' sister	Olympas	

I believe this goes to show that Paul was not the male chauvinist that many people want to make him out to be. Paul understood the importance of the women's role in the church. No, it wasn't pastoring or being a deacon but there were many things that women did that kept the church operating smoothly.

I believe the role of women in the Church today is still very important. I will go as far as to say that most churches today would fold and go under if it weren't for faithful women.

I want to cover these next 10 names together in verses 8-12:

8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.

11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

Like most of the 29 people mentioned by Paul, these 10 people are not heard of anywhere else in Scripture outside of this chapter. But that doesn't mean they aren't important. They most certainly were important to Paul. Why else would he mention them? You won't find anyone else in the Bible giving such a list of people to greet. Most of these, if not all of them, were probably saved under Paul's preaching. He was their spiritual leader. Just as with any good shepherd, Paul watches over his flock.

13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

Does the name "Rufus" sound familiar to anyone? Turn over to: **Mark 15:16-21**

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.

20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

We cannot positively say that the Rufus mentioned in Paul's letter is the same Rufus who was a son of Simon that carried the cross for Jesus; however, the human penman of the Gospel of Mark was John-Mark. It is believed that Mark wrote his Gospel from Rome and was well connected with the church there. Rufus very likely could have been saved by the witness of his father carrying the cross for Jesus and that this is the same Rufus that Paul mentions.

Another very interesting thing we find in verse 13 is this: "and his mother and mine." Paul and Rufus were not brothers and Rufus' mother was not Paul's birth mother. More than likely Paul looked to her as a mother figure. She probably treated him as one of her own. Perhaps she had put Paul up and took care of him at some point and she treated Paul like a mother.

Now let's take the next 11 names that are in the next two verses:

14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

Here again is a mixture of both men and women whom Paul loved and cared for. Like the previous 11 people, they most likely were saved under Paul's preaching or had served in churches where Paul had been. Now all of these people are in Rome, and they make up all of the congregations that are there.

One thing for sure that we can say about Paul is that he was a man with many friends. **Proverbs 18:24** A man *that hath* friends *must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

It isn't easy to have friends when you are in the ministry. There are many that pretend to be your friend until they get from you what they want and then you never see them again. I've been done that way many times. I can count on one hand those in the ministry that I can truly say are my friends.

Then Paul ends his greetings and salutations with this:

16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

In Paul's day it was common that Christians would greet each other with a kiss on the cheek or forehead. It was also a custom of the Jews in the Old Testament. For the New Testament Christians it was a sign of brotherly love in Christ.

Paul felt it was important to remind them of this. This isn't the only place it is mentioned:

- In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians: **1 Thessalonians 5:26** Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.
- In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: **1 Corinthians 16:20** All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.
- In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians: **2 Corinthians 13:12** Greet one another with an holy kiss.
- In the Apostle Peter's letter to the Christians scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia: **1 Peter 5:14** Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Now, in today's COVID world, it is not recommended to go around kissing each other in the church, and actually unless it is your spouse, children, parents, or grandparents, you shouldn't be kissing on anyone else anyway! 😊

Paul is going to spend the last part of this letter giving them some warnings and advice, then some greetings from those of the churches that were not in Rome. We should be able to finish this Sermon series in two more messages, Lord willing; however, next Sunday is Homecoming and I am still praying about what the Lord would have me preach then.