

Romans 16

Romans 16
Tape #8135
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Open your Bibles to Romans, chapter sixteen, as we conclude this Book of Romans tonight.

Paul begins the sixteenth chapter by declaring, *I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant* (the word servant there in Greek is deaconess.) *of the church in Cenchrea*, Cenchrea is right there at Corinth. It was the actually the seaport of Corinth, just a few miles from Corinth. This Phoebe was a deaconess in the church. She had an important ministry in the church. There are those that would try to exclude women from any place of service in the church, but such was not the case in the early church. Women played a very important part of the ministry of the early church. There was only one thing that a woman was not allowed to do in the early church and that was to teach men or usurp authority over men. But she was able to pray. She was able to minister. She was able to prophesy in the church. She was able to share and prophesy in exhorting, exhortation. She was able to do that kind of thing. She was able to get up and exhort. She was able to comfort. She was able to share what the Lord had done and what the Lord was doing in what we should be doing for the Lord. And so in the early church the women had an extremely important part. This Phoebe was a deaconess there in the church at Cenchrea.

She also evidently was a businesswoman. She was going to Rome so she was the one that carried this epistle to the church in Rome. Paul wrote it from Corinth and Phoebe was businesswoman on her way to Rome. So she was entrusted with Paul's letter to the church in Rome. Thus, he commends her to the church. He tells them ²*that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints*, (As saints of God we should receive one another in the Lord. Never should anyone come into these doors and feel like a stranger if they are a child of God. It is our duty to make people feel welcome, to feel at home, to reach out to one another as the body of Christ. It is all the more important as the church grows and we become a large assembly. It is important that we go up and introduce ourselves to people and make them welcome, make them feel warm and like they are glad that they came because someone takes notice and someone cares about me.)

So receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints *and assist her* (Paul says) *in whatever business she has need of you*; (she was there in Rome on business. Help her. Assist her in whatever business she has) *for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also*. She has ministered to many people. She has ministered to me. She has been a blessing to me.

³*Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus*, ⁴*who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles*. Priscilla and Aquila, they are mentioned some six times in the New Testament. They are a very fascinating couple. The first mention of them was when they were living in Corinth. They were tent makers by trade. They had been forced out of Rome under emperor Claudius, who persecuted the Jews and who had all of the Jews put out of Rome. Having been put out of Rome, they came to Corinth, where Paul met them when he first came to Corinth. There, because he also was a tent maker, he worked with them in the trade of making tents.

Later on, they moved to Ephesus. When Apollos came to Ephesus, mightily teaching the people from the word of God, because he did not have an understanding of the complete work of Jesus Christ, Priscilla and Aquila took him aside. They explained the ways of the Lord more perfectly to him. Later of course, Paul came to Ephesus. There he was with Priscilla and Aquila again making tents. They actually there in Ephesus had a church in their home. When Paul writes to Timothy, he tells him to greet the church that is in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. Now they also had a church in their home in Rome. So now they moved back to Rome. After the death of Claudius, the persecution against the Jews subsided. So they moved back to Rome. They are sort of a nomadic kind of a couple. They are able to make a living wherever they go because of their trade. Wherever they go they open up their home for home Bible studies, for the church to gather. So they are just a wonderful couple. Paul is now at Corinth writing to the church at Rome. He has them to greet Priscilla and Aquila who are there in Rome.

⁵*Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.* So Paul went into the area of Achaia. The first convert was this Epaphroditus. Paul is asking that they salute him.

⁶*Greet Mary, who labored much for us.* And so we have a little insight into that church in Rome. Paul is giving personal greetings to the various members of that church. How he has crossed paths with many of them. They now have gone on to Rome. Paul of course is hoping to go to Rome himself one day and to renew acquaintance with these. But Mary who is there, labored much for us.

⁷*Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.* Here is a fascinating Scripture because Andronicus and Junia are female names. Paul declares that they were his countrymen and fellow prisoners. And they were of note among the apostles. It is quite possible they had been sent out. An apostle is one who has been sent out. Of course they were not one of the original apostles, but had that title of apostle. Thus, we find again that women had a very prominent place in the early church. It's only the male chauvinists that have tried to put them down into a subservient kind of position, but here he speaks of them as apostles and of them who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Now this means that their conversion must have been quite early because Paul was converted shortly after the birth of the church. Shortly after the death of Stephen, Paul was converted. So it is quite possible that these women were out of the church of Jerusalem, now in Rome, ministering there, perhaps even sent to Rome for the ministry.

Today there are a lot of women missionaries around the world, doing commendable jobs. A missionary comes closest to that of apostle because it means one who has been sent out. So many mission boards have sent out women throughout the world, who have carried on tremendous missionary work. Among the annals of some of the greatest missionaries are names of women, who have been out there serving the Lord in the mission field. So it is quite possible that Rome was their mission field, that they were sent by the church in Jerusalem.

I should make note of the fact that there is another possible interpretation here. But it is not the likely interpretation. Those men who like to deny women any place of note within the church, often interpret this as, "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my country men and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles who also were in Christ before me." In other words they were known by the apostles, by the twelve apostles who were in Christ before Paul. But that is not really the clearer teaching. It would better be understood that they had the title of apostle and they were in Christ before Paul.

⁸*Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord.* ⁹*Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved.* ¹⁰*Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.* ¹¹*Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.* ¹²*Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord.* The word labored here is *kopiaio*, which indicates tremendous labor. Labor to the point of exhaustion. It isn't just passing time. It is really laboring to the point of exhaustion. It is interesting that the names, Tryphena and Tryphosa, mean delicate. Here is talking about these delicate women, who are laboring, that is unto exhaustion in the Lord.

Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. Notice when he talks to the men, he says my beloved, but when he refers to the woman, Persis, he says "the beloved." He is very careful about this. It is important that we are careful in these things. So the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord.

¹³*Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.* It is thought that this Rufus is perhaps the son of Simeon, the Cyrene who was forced to carry the cross of Christ. As Mark tells us of how that when Christ was bearing His cross, that this Simon, coming out of the country of Cyrene, that he was compelled by the Roman soldiers to bear the cross of Jesus. It says that he is the father of Rufus and Alexander. It is thought that the Rufus here is actually the son. That Rufus and Alexander were well known to the church. So when Mark says the father of Rufus and Alexander, everybody knew well Rufus and Alexander, their names were names that were familiar in the church. Thus it is thought that this Rufus who is here in Rome, whose mother was also a mother to Paul in a spiritual sense. She ministered unto Paul as a mother. So he says, chosen in the Lord and his mother and mine.

¹⁴*Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them.* ¹⁵*Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.* So, little grouping of the saints, there in Rome.

¹⁶*Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.* So here we have Paul's personal salutation, words of love, words of commendation, words of tenderness, but words that indicate Paul's personal knowledge of these people and of their ministry and of the work that they were doing for the cause of Christ.

Now Paul, it's like he is having a hard time ending the letter, one more thing. Sort of like Columbo, you know, you come back with one more thing, here. ¹⁷*Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.* Note those or mark those, who would bring division, who would create offenses that are contrary to the doctrine, which you have learned, and avoid them. One thing that the New Testament teaches above all others is the importance of walking in love toward one another. Over and over again we are commanded not to judge one another, but to walk in love.

Paul in that great chapter in First Corinthians thirteen, speaks about a person who might have complete knowledge. I can understand all of the mysteries. I have a full and complete knowledge of theology, but he said, if I don't have love, it profits me nothing!

There are those today who are causing divisions. One of the chief characteristics that you can note is their lack of Christian love, their constant judging of others and no love at all, but just condemnation of those who don't agree with their theological positions. And there are those egotistical people, who to them a heretic is someone who doesn't believe what they believe. They are ready to condemn anybody who does not espouse the same five points of Calvinism as they see them. They are constantly haranguing on the one subject. They have just the one subject. They have gone seedy on it. They are not presenting a whole gospel. They are not teaching the whole Bible. One important part that they are leaving out is the part of love. Paul said to mark those who cause divisions and create offenses, contrary to the doctrine, which you have learned. He said to avoid them.

¹⁸*For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.* They don't really the serve the cause of Jesus Christ. They stand outside of the Billy Graham crusades. They pass out literature condemning Billy Graham. They stand outside the Harvest Crusades and pass out literature condemning Greg Laurie and the Harvest Crusades. They do not believe in evangelism.

In Sacramento they came with tee shirts saying, "Choice" with a line drawn through it, declaring you don't have a choice as far as salvation is concerned! They were trying to discourage people from coming into the service. They sat on the front row of the service in order to disrupt, because their theology leaves no place for human responsibility. If you have been chosen and ordained by God there is nothing that can keep you from being saved. If God has ordained that you should be lost there is nothing that you can do to be saved. And all of your believing and all of your pleading or whatever, you can't be saved unless you have been ordained by God to be saved from the foundations of the world. You have no choice in the matter at all, according to their theology.

Paul says to mark those that cause the division and the offenses that are contrary to the doctrines that you have received. They say that Christ didn't die for everybody. He only died for those who would believe. Thus the atonement of Christ wasn't for the world but only for the select. Contrary to what Jesus said to Nicodemus, "For God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son, that who so ever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The Bible tells us that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But they say God has ordained men to perish and that you have no choice in the matter. Paul said, avoid them. They are such as really don't serve the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ. They would hinder people from coming to Jesus, but by their smooth words and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the simple. Now they wouldn't deceive you, but tragically there are people that don't have the same kind of foundation that you have in the Word of God, whose hearts are simple. They can be deceived by these people, because they start giving them the half Scriptures like the Jehovah Witnesses, and they try and prove their points by half Scriptures.

Paul declares to the Romans, ¹⁹*For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.* A good idea! Be wise in the things that are good, but ignorant in the things that are evil. There are some people who have that curiosity. They want

to know all about the various practices of the world and the evil. They are curious about the seances, spiritism, and occultism. They are constantly reading, trying to learn more and more of the things of the occult. Paul said be simple concerning evil. It is better to be ignorant, not to delve into those things. Why fill your mind with pollution? Why not fill your mind with things that are edifying, things that will build you up? Be wise in that which is good, but be simple concerning that which is evil.

²⁰*And the God of peace* (We were looking the other day at the God of patience and the God of comfort and the God of hope and now the God of peace.) *will crush Satan under your feet shortly.* Satan has just about run full course. God has allowed him freedom. The promise of God to Adam was that the seed of the woman would bruise his head. Paul is saying that is going to be happening shortly. The God of peace will bruise or crush Satan under your feet shortly. We read that when Jesus comes again, Satan will be bound with a chain and cast into the abyss, the pit for the thousand years that Jesus reigns upon the earth. At the end of that thousand years, he will be loosed for a short season, going around, seeking to deceive many on the earth. Then he will be cast into the lake that burns with fire, Gehenna, where the beast and the false prophet are, the end of his career. God is going to bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

In the beginning, God, the sovereign government of God, ruling the universe. All of the created beings in the universe, are subject unto God. A glorious kingdom of love and joy and peace, harmony, but one of God's created beings, the cherubim of a high order, was lifted up in pride and exalted himself above God or sought to exalt himself above God and to be like God. In rebelling against God he took a third part of the angels with him in that rebellion. God allowed the rebellion. God has allowed him that freedom. When God created man and placed man upon this planet earth, He allowed Satan the freedom to come and to tempt man to disobey God. In these things he was serving a purpose of God. God allowed it. It served God's purposes and continued to serve God's purposes, because God wants a meaningful, loving relationship with you. In order for it to be meaningful, you have to have a capacity of choice. This is why this other doctrine is so off the wall. It takes choice out the hands of man. It makes man a robot. God wants meaningful love and a meaningful relationship, so He has given you choice.

Not only has He given you choice, but the alternative is extremely attractive to the flesh. The fruit on the tree that was forbidden was extremely attractive. Eve saw that it was pleasant to the eye. It was pleasant to the taste. And of course it was promised that it would make her wise, open her understanding, giving her enlightenment that she would be as God. So she ate.

But God allowed Satan that liberty. He has allowed him liberty today to tempt you, to tempt you into disobeying God. And in that there is the test of your love and the test of your faith. Do you love God, completely? Are you willing to forsake the flesh, the pleasures and the desires of the flesh to follow after God and be obedient unto God. Will you stand up against the temptation?

Let us say that as my boys were growing up, I said to them, boys, I'm going down to buy a new desk. I need to put it in my office upstairs. I've got a busy afternoon. I want you to stay here in the yard until I get back with the desk, because I need your help to carry it upstairs. So don't leave the yard while I am gone.

So I take them out into the backyard and I take a great chain and I chain them to the Eucalyptus tree in the back yard and lock it. I go down, get the desk, and I go into the backyard and unlock the chain and free them. They help me carry the desk upstairs. I say my, I've got such wonderful, obedient sons. I am proud of my boys. They did just exactly what their dad told them to do, great boys! My neighbor would say, you should have heard them yell and scream and try to break those chains while you were gone.

If on the other hand, I say, boys, I'm going down to get a desk. I'll need your help to get it upstairs when I get back. Stay in the yard. Don't go anywhere until I get back. I go down to get the desk. As I leave I see my neighbor watering the yard. I say, John, would you mind keeping an eye on my boys? I'm sort of curious what will happen. I told them not to leave the yard. While I'm gone, I'm sort of curious to know, did they obey their dad when he was not around? He says, I'll watch them, Mr. Smith. So I go downtown. I get the desk. When I get home I see my neighbor. I say, well, how did it go, John? Oh, Mr. Smith you have fine sons. I mean, really, they are good boys. They stayed in the yard the whole time while you were gone. But not only that, that little neighbor kid up the street, Jimmy, he came down. He said, hey guys, let's go over to the school and shoot some baskets. And your boys, said, no, we can't leave the yard. Dad wants us to stay here until he gets back. Oh, we

can be back before your Dad ever gets home, he'll never know you're gone. Come on let's go shoot some baskets! And your boys said, no, Dad told us to stay here. We're going to stay here until he gets back. Oh come on, you're chicken you know. You're just chicken, come on! Your boys pounce on him. They beat him up. He went home with a bloody nose. My, Mr. Smith you've got some fine sons!

Now you see, I can be justly proud because not only did they obey me without being chained, but when this little tempter came along and tried to entice them to disobey their dad, they remained obedient, so even greater glory because of their obedience to their father. And so with God! He allows you the freedom. He doesn't chain you. He has even allowed Satan that liberty to come and to tempt you. So that as you remain obedient unto God. As Paul phrases it in Ephesians, chapter one, you then become to the praise of the glory of His grace. That is, God is proud! You've remained true and faithful in spite of the enticement of the enemy. So Satan serves a purpose. But one of the days, shortly, Paul says, he is going to be under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

²¹*Timothy, my fellow worker*, (Timothy was, Paul called him his own son in the faith. Paul said, I don't have anybody who is like-minded to me as Timothy, who has your care and concern at his heart. Paul said he is the closest, that I have to having the same kind of attitude towards you that I have, an attitude of love. So I'm sending Timothy because there is no one else who is so like-minded to my own heart, in the ministry and the gospel, as is Timothy.

It's often times difficult to find someone who really has the same heart for the sheep that you have, that I feel. And Paul said, I really don't have anyone who has the same heart except Timothy. He has the same heart that I have, towards you. Timothy, my fellow worker.)

and Lucius, In Acts, chapter thirteen, when Paul was first sent out on the first missionary journey, one of the prophets in the church that sent Paul out, was Lucius. It is thought that this Lucius is that same Lucius that was associated with Paul there in the church in Antioch.

Jason, (You remember that when Paul came to Thessalonica in the Book of Acts, there was a Jason, a believer there, who actually got into a lot of trouble because of Paul. They hurried Paul out of the city. Jason had to face the judges there.)

and Sosipater, (He probably is the one that was in the church in Berea.)

my countrymen, greet you. It's interesting that Paul had many, who were travelling with him. There was a company that would go with Paul, men who Paul had touched in his ministry, men who had come to Christ through Paul's ministry. They would travel together as a team. They are now in Corinth with Paul as he is writing to the church in Rome.

And now, the fellow who wrote this, Paul, of course, didn't personally write it. Paul dictated it. The fellow who actually did the writing, the secretary, was Tertius. ²²*I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord*. (He got his own little kick in there. There is quite a bit of writing here actually. So he greets them also.)

²³*Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you*. (You remember that when Paul wrote his letter to the church in Corinth. He said I thank God I didn't baptize any of you but Crispus and Gaius. If there are any others I don't remember them because God didn't send me to baptize but to preach the gospel. So, this Gaius, Paul's host there in Corinth, a man who opened his home to Paul, the one that Paul baptized along with Crispus. Paul couldn't remember if he baptized any of the others. So he also greets you.

Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, Now in 1929, there in the city of Corinth, the archeologists discovered a plaque written in Latin, near the Bema seat, the judge's seat. It said, "Erastus, the commissioner for public works, laid this pavement at his own expense." You can go to Corinth today and you can see that inscription there in Latin, near what is called the Bema seat. It is very possible and thought by many that the very Erastus who left his mark on the street, is the same Erastus who was there with Paul. Paul says he is the treasurer of city and he also greets you. So it is a little bit of an archeological confirmation of some of these names. You know, you just read the names, Erastus, you know doesn't mean much until you realize that even to the present day there in the ruins of the city of Corinth, there is this inscription there in the pavement of Erastus, who with his own son, provided this pavement.

and Quartus, a brother. ²⁴The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now, this is a repetition. Back in verse twenty, Paul said the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, again.

²⁵Now to Him (This is the final benediction.) 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 ²⁶but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith-- ²⁷to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. These mysteries Paul talks about that were hidden, now discovered, the mysteries of the grace of God toward the Gentiles. The mysteries of the Gentiles would become fellow heirs in the kingdom of God. These glorious mysteries were there in the Scriptures but the people didn't understand them. It was as though they were hidden.

You remember when Daniel was writing his prophecy and he was asking for understanding, the angelic visitor who was giving Daniel the instruction, said, seal it up Daniel. It is for the last time. For in the last days, knowledge with be increased. This is the knowledge and the understanding of the mysteries of God and the glorious gospel that would be brought to the Gentiles. How that we Gentiles would be the fellow heirs of the promises of the kingdom, something that a Jew would never have dreamed because it had not yet been revealed. They were there in the Scriptures but it was as though they didn't see them.

So this wonderful mystery, the kingdom of God, including the Gentile believers, there in the Prophets, now being understood, now being revealed, now made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God. To God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

What a debt we owe to Paul the apostle! For the unfolding of the Scriptures to us, causing us to realize what a debt we owe to Jesus Christ, who gave Himself that we might be partakers of the heavenly cause.

Next week, we start the book of Corinthians, an interesting book as we deal with several problems that had developed in the Corinthian church. The first epistle to the Corinthians is known as a corrective epistle. Paul is correcting a lot of errors that had crept into the church in Corinth. And in so doing though, we find that many of the same errors that had crept into the church in Corinth have continued in the church. So there is great instruction for us through this first epistle to the Corinthians. I'm looking forward to the study of First Corinthians. It will be a great blessing to all of us. These letters of Paul are a tremendous value to the church today.

Father, we thank You for Your Word which is able to establish our lives in the things of Jesus Christ. Thank You, Lord, for the revelation of these mysteries by Paul the apostle so that we Gentiles see and can understand our place in the grace of God and in the kingdom of God. Lord, we pray that You will establish our hearts in these truths. May we be strong in the things of Your Spirit. And Lord, help us that men will know that we are Your disciples because of our love one to another. May we not be guilty, Lord, of biting and devouring and consuming one another. May we walk in the love of Jesus Christ. In His name, we pray. Amen.