

Paul's Pastoral Heart

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[0:00] We have come to the last chapter of the book of Romans.

! That depends. If you're going to be happy or sad, it depends on, well, I don't know. It depends on you.

We've been in it a long time. Probably good to finish it up. And so we're going to do that tonight, believe it or not, cover an entire chapter. Be finished with Romans, and then I'm not sure where we're going to go to from there, here on Sunday nights.

But open your Bibles then to Romans chapter 16, and I'm going to read the entire chapter. Romans 16. And let me give you a little disclaimer on the front end.

There are a lot of names here in this chapter. And if you think you can do a better job of pronouncing them than I, then you're welcome. Some of them I had to look up in the actual Greek and find what the pronunciation is in the Greek.

[1:28] And it doesn't look anything like the English, so I just forgot all about that. And try to give you some kind of pronunciation according to the English text. Okay. Chapter 16, verse 1.

Greet Mary.

I can pronounce that name. Greet Mary, who labored much for us. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Greet Amplius, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ. Greet Apelles, my beloved in Christ.

Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodian, my countrymen. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.

[3:24] Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa. A couple of sisters, obviously. Who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord.

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother in mine. Greet Asyncretus and Phlegon and Hermas and Petrobias and Hermes and the brethren who are with them.

Greet Philologus and Julia. Nereus and his sister. And Olympus and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

The churches of Christ greet you. Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

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.

[4:22] 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. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Saspater, my countrymen, greet you.

I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greet you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you.

And Quartus, a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now, in Him 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, but now made manifest and by the prophetic scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God for obedience to the faith.

To God alone be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. Now, that's a long chapter. In chapter 16, I would admit to you, is a chapter I've never preached from, ever.

[5:45] Now, there's a great portion of Romans that I could say I've not in the past preached from, but, you know, chapter 16 I certainly have. And I'm not sure if we were to take a poll tonight, if we could discover anyone who remembers hearing a message, sermon, from chapter 16.

It's just not one that you'll hear much about. And there are a number of reasons for that, some of them obvious, but maybe not so obvious as the fact that this particular chapter contains very little doctrinal, theological teaching, which I think is quite strange considering the theological content of the book of Romans.

So this last chapter has very little of that, if that at all, though I think there is some there, and we'll look at that. Also, it scarcely seems, really, just kind of on a practical, from a practical perspective, it scarcely seems that this portion of the letter is addressed to us.

I mean, you know, it's almost like we're reading somebody else's mail. It's greeting to all these people, and how in the world could any of that relate to any of us here? And so that's another reason.

It also, obviously, you know, close to that last thing I said, it contains the longest list of names, longer than any other list in any other book of the New Testament, with the exception of the genealogies in Matthew and in Luke.

[7:18] And so you've got this long list of names. Many of the names are next to impossible to pronounce, as you heard, and I've botched a few of them. Many of the names are certainly obscure to us, other than what Paul tells us about most of them.

We don't know anything else about them. They're not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. And some of the names that are mentioned, Paul says really virtually nothing about. And, you know, so we have here this long list of friends.

In fact, I'm quite disappointed, Jonathan, that we did not sing tonight as part of our worship. Friends are friends forever. We could have sung that tonight, part of our worship, and that would have fit right in with the text.

Anyway. All right, so, and then I would add one other. From the perspective of a preacher, this text doesn't lend itself very well to sermons, to a sermon, because, you know, it's difficult to discover any cohesive, unifying theme, you know, a one big idea or main idea that runs throughout the chapter.

And preachers are always looking for that in the block of text they've chosen to preach from. What's the theme? What's the idea here? And as we move through the text, something that's consistent all the way through.

[8:44] It's a little difficult to identify that. You just have this kind of list of names. And certainly what Paul says about many of them is similar. And then there's kind of a break in that.

And Paul says something else. And then we get to some more names, like Timothy and so forth. And then Paul just kind of gives a conclusion, a very short kind of epilogue, to the entire book. So it's difficult. And that's why I'm just kind of introducing it this way, why you don't often hear sermons out of this chapter, and why if Don had his way, we would just skip it and go on to something else.

So it begs the question then, what value is there in studying this chapter? Well, I would give you two reasons why.

The first one should be obvious. It's part of the Bible. Part of not only Paul's inspired letter to the Romans, but as such, it's part of God's inspired word.

[9:54] And we need to look at it, need to study it. That's the first and I guess the most obvious and most basic reason why I just can't skip this chapter and go on or just pick a few things out of it.

The second answer is this. There is a theme in this chapter. There is one that runs through the chapter.

And perhaps I might use a different word, a kind of character to the chapter. A character comes out. And what I mean by that is we have here in this chapter Paul's character.

Paul's a missionary. We know that. He's an apostle first. And a missionary second in some sense of an order. And he's a pastor. He's a pastor.

And so we have here in this chapter, very much like we had in chapter 15, though we probably have forgotten since it's been so long since we looked at it. We have a pastor's heart here.

[11:01] In this chapter. And I hope that I'll be able to communicate that to you so that you can see that here and be challenged by it.

You say, but I'm not a pastor. Well, you may not be a pastor, but you are connected to the family. The family of God. And connections and family connections and how we feel about one another and how we pour our lives into each other.

That is part of our duty as a member of this church. But it certainly is a part of a pastor's calling. And Paul exemplifies that in this chapter.

And it's quite challenging to me. The reason he lists all these names and says some of the things he says about them gives us a window into his pastoral heart.

And so I would say that pastoral love and by extension family love within the family of God is the theme that gives cohesiveness to this final chapter of this tremendous letter written by the Apostle Paul.

[12:15] All right, so getting to the text, I want to have you consider four elements of Paul's pastoral love.

And again, by extension, these can be true of our family love that we have for one another as each of us as members of the body of Christ.

Here they are on the front end. Paul's fond connections. Number two, Paul's family concerns.

He had some concerns that he wrote in this chapter. We'll get to that. Paul's fellow colleagues. He has a word about them.

And then finally, Paul's fitting conclusion, not only to the chapter but the entire book. All right? Quite an alliterated outline. First, Paul's fond connections.

[13:23] Paul had many connections. And you know, it's really kind of interesting when you think about it. He had no Facebook. And yet somehow, and the enormity of the list of names here gives us an indication, somehow he's able to keep track of these people.

Some of them he had not seen for years. And I think we can assume that, of course, the book of Romans is unique in the number of names that are listed.

But we can assume that Paul had the same kind of connection with people in every church, every church that he planted, every church he had anything to do with, and all the people that he met.

And somehow he's able to keep track of all these people. It's just amazing. I guess as he traveled, you know, he might meet someone who was from another city. And, of course, Paul was a social person.

He would ask, do you know such and such from Ephesus or from Corinth or from Rome? Or do you know this tent maker, Priscilla and Aquila? Do you know them?

[14:34] And he would just ask questions and inquire and find out information. And that's just how it worked. And Paul apparently went out of his way to make sure he did that. So he kept this connection with people because he loved them.

He had poured his life into them. Now, Paul says nothing about that in the chapter. About him pouring his life into their lives. But it's assumed, obviously, many of the people that Paul is greeting here in this letter, we can assume, were led to the Lord by Paul.

Some of them, we know for a fact that he did. And so Paul had poured his life into their lives and he loved them.

And so he greets them by name, one by one. And there are a bunch of them. Now, you can go back and count them on your own, but let me tell you that Paul mentions no fewer than 35 people by name in Romans chapter 16.

That's a bunch. Nine of them were with Paul in Corinth when he wrote. Eight men and one woman. Twenty-four of them were in Rome.

[15:45] Seventeen men and seven women. Added to these, Paul mentions the name of two households. A little unclear and we'll get to this whether the names that he mentions were actual believers, the heads of these households, or whether he was just referring to their household.

We'll talk about that in a minute. Some unnamed brothers in Christ were named here who were known to him, but they're unnamed here in the text.

And two unnamed women in this passage. I like what John Phillips, I really appreciate John Phillips, and if you have any of his commentaries, I would really recommend that you read them in your study of Scripture.

But John Phillips wrote about this list of Paul's and he wrote it in a very eloquent way and I just want to quote that for you. This is what John Phillips wrote.

There's something strangely attractive about it and about these shadowy names which appear for a flash upon the page of Scripture and then they're gone back into the black night of obscurity.

[16:56] They flare up before our gaze like bursts of flame and then burn down to a little handful of white ashes. And there they are, names forever immortalized by the pen of Paul.

Names that represent people who lived and loved long, long ago and who live forever in the power of an endless life. There they are, people dear to the heart of Paul, carrying the gospel banner high in Rome, the world's capital, and one by one summoned into the spotlight to be tenderly, lovingly mentioned and greeted by Paul.

And then that's all we know about them until one day we meet them in heaven. All right, so who were these people to whom Paul was fondly connected?

And that's probably putting it mildly. And not only that, but what, if anything, did Paul say about them? Well, let's just kind of walk through these. The first one was Phoebe. We do know a little bit about her, but only from what Paul says here.

And this was, I think, we could understand this as a kind of letter of recommendation. Look at what it says in verse 1. I commend to you, Phoebe, your or our sister.

[18:12] All right, so she's a believer. She's our sister. My sister, Paul says, your sister, you, believers there in Rome. So I commend her to you, who is a servant of the church in Cancra, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints.

and assist her in whatever business she has need of you. For indeed, she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

Now, what is this? It's a letter of recommendation. It's kind of like we would have today among churches, between churches, a transfer of letter.

Now, I don't know if it's quite like that, but he's sending a letter. Apparently, Phoebe lived in, maybe in Corinth where Paul was and she's moving to Rome or has moved to Rome and Paul is sending a letter to let the people know there that who she is and that they ought to not only greet her but that he commends her to them and tells them a little bit about her sacrifice for the Lord.

It's a letter of recommendation. A letter of commendation. Interesting. Then we have Priscilla and Aquila. Those are names that are fairly familiar to us.

[19:37] He says, Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ. Now, who are they?

Well, there are, by the way, two other references in the Bible to these two people, this husband and wife.

And in the other three places, or in all three places, rather, here in Romans 16 but also in Acts 18, verse 18, and then again in 2 Timothy 4, verse 19, those are the three places that Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned by Paul.

In all three places, the name of the wife is listed before the husband. We have Priscilla, the wife, mentioned first, then the husband, Aquila, which is kind of interesting.

That wouldn't be the normal way of doing it. And I think that it's evident there, apparently, that Priscilla was the dominant one when it came to spiritual things.

Not that Aquila was not a believer himself, but Priscilla was kind of the more dominant one, which is not all that unusual even in our day today. And so he mentions her first.

[20:42] They were fellow workers of Paul, Paul said here, and we know that to be the case. Paul, you might remember from the various references, the other two references to them, Paul met them in Corinth.

They weren't in Rome. They were in Corinth. It was during his second missionary journey. And that was where Paul, I think, led them to faith in Christ, led them to Christ, preached the gospel to them. And they, like Paul, were tent makers. We understand that from Scripture. So they had a common kind of vocation. And then when Paul left Corinth to head toward Ephesus, and he would stop off in Ephesus and then move on in his journey, Priscilla and Aquila traveled with him.

Went to Ephesus with him and then stayed there as he went on and then later came back to Ephesus. And it seems clear that Priscilla and Aquila had kind of laid the groundwork for a great work of God in the city of Ephesus.

And so they were very faithful. They were fellow worker in that sense. And then sometime later, they moved to Rome. And that's why he is sending this greeting to Priscilla and Aquila in Rome.

[21:58] Scripture also tells us that apparently after that, they moved back to Ephesus because Paul does mention them in Ephesus again after this point. So here's Aquila and Priscilla. Here's

Phoebe.

These are people that Paul had poured his life into. They're at Rome now. Now, Phoebe, he gives a letter of recommendation for so that they might welcome her and bring her into the fellowship and know a little bit about her commitment to Christ.

And then Aquila and Priscilla, he greets them because they mean so much to him. And then Paul says this also about Aquila, Priscilla and Aquila. He said, They risked their own necks for my life to whom not only I give thanks.

I'm thankful to them. They risked their lives for me. But also all the churches of the Gentiles. Now, we don't know anything from Scripture about this time when they risked their lives for Paul.

I don't know if it was a specific time or maybe it was just a number of times or maybe just their commitment to be fellow co-laborers with Paul, whether that was just a risk to them.

[23:12] But I think it apparently was a specific time in their lives where they came pretty close to becoming martyrs for Christ. And Paul is thanking them for that.

It was apparently in close connection with his ministry. And we know that apparently the Gentile churches knew of this event because they also sent thanks.

He sent thanks for them. And then he closes that off with likewise greet the church that is in their house. And so they had a house church there in Rome.

One of many in Rome. This huge city. Capital of the world. Very much like the big huge city in China that I visited. The real church.

The true church. The committed church. Or house churches dotted all around the city. And that was the case here in Rome. And Priscilla and Aquila had a house in their home.

[24:12] Then we have Apenitas. Verse 5. Greet my beloved Apenitas who is the first fruits of Achaia to Christ. That's how it's translated in the King James and New King James.

I mentioned that some of you might have Asia there instead of Achaia. And I think that's right. I think that would be more correct. The older and more reliable manuscripts have a totally different word.

They have the word Asia. And it's very easy to see how a scribe could make the mistake and make it Achaia rather than Asia. Now don't get too alarmed about some mistake in the Bible.

There are differences in the various manuscripts. Now Asia makes more sense because of what Paul says here about Apenitas.

He says he's the first fruits of Asia to Christ. The first fruits. Now what does that mean?

[25:13] I think what it means is that Apenitas was the first believer to come to Christ in Asia.

The first one. The first one of Paul's converts. And he's living now in Rome. And the point being here that Paul remember we're considering and understanding Paul's pastoral heart.

Paul never forgot about him. never forgot about this first convert to Christ in Asia. Next, including Apenitas by the way, none of the names given in verses 5 through 15 are mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.

So the rest of the names kind of just unfold for us. And none of them can we go to another place in Scripture and find some reference to except maybe Rufus in this next list.

and we'll get to him in a minute. Verse 6 says, greet Mary who labored much for us. We don't know anything about this Mary. There are a lot of Marys in the Bible.

[26:23] We don't know if she was Jew or Greek because of the various spellings of the name Mary and some of the transcripts have Maria which would be Greek, Gentile, and some have Mary which would be the Jewish name.

We don't have any idea. A lot of Marys in the Bible. A lot of Marys that traveled with Jesus and ministered to Him you remember. A number of them. At least three. Maybe four. This is not a Mary that traveled with Jesus.

This is a different Mary. But the point that we need to get is not who this Mary was but what she did. And the language that he uses in a very short sentence is quite strong.

He says that she labored much. Literally that means she wore herself out for Christ. For the cause of the gospel.

And for Paul and others who served with him in the ministry to help in his ministry. She literally wore herself out. And he commends her for that.

[27:29] Greets her. Verse 7 Greet Adronicus and Junia. My Countrymen. Now probably if you have NASB or ESV NIV probably it's the word kinsmen.

In fact in the King James it's kinsmen. It's only the New King James that translates it countrymen which suggests something a little different than kinsmen. Kinsmen could be in the sense of a fellow Jew could be a kinsman in the sense of you're from my hometown that would be or my country that would be a countryman or could be a blood relative.

And most scholars think that that's the case here. That Adronicus and Junia this man and his wife were kinsmen kinsmen of the Apostle Paul.

And what does he say about them? He says they were fellow prisoners so they were imprisoned had been imprisoned for the sake of the gospel. I think because it says that they were in Christ before me means that they had been believers longer than Paul.

And if they were kinsmen and had come to Christ before Paul had come to Christ then think of the dynamic of that. They had prayed for Paul I'm sure.

[29:01] All the while that Paul was persecuting the church having Christians arrested imprisoned even murdered. Here are his relatives Adronicus and Junia I think praying for him.

And they had been imprisoned for their faith. And they were also noted among the apostles. What does that mean? Were they apostles? I don't think that's the meaning.

I think it means that they were known among the apostles. Known by the apostles. They were believers before Paul. They had been imprisoned possibly even before Paul became a believer. They were known by the apostles. This was quite an interesting, very significant couple here for the spread of the gospel.

Paul in verses 8, 9, and 10 he goes on. Greet Amplius my beloved in the Lord. Urbanus our fellow worker in Christ.

[30:11] Stachius my beloved. Greet Apellus approved in Christ. So here's a bunch of other names. We don't know anything about them at all. We don't know anything other than how Paul values them and values them in their work in the gospel.

And like so many of these that we've already mentioned here, that have already been named by Paul, they were unsung heroes, to use that phrase.

Unsung heroes, except for the short little verse of song that Paul sings for them. And it's quite short. But one day, one day in glory, every one of us will know exactly what they did.

They're unsung now. And we have just bare mention of them in Scripture. We don't know anything else. But one day we'll know. It will be revealed. It will be manifest. And then their song will be sung. It made me remember something that I heard Adrian Rogers say years ago. And think about it. I don't know if you know much about him. He's with the Lord now, of course.

[31:29] Great, great, great preacher, leader in our denomination. Used mightily of God to bring our denomination back from its swinging and tending toward liberalism and moderate, moderateism, back to conservatism and belief in Scripture as the inerrant word of God, greatly used of God.

Great pastor, pastored then one of, maybe second largest church in our denomination, Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis.

Great preacher, great leader, great pastor, and I heard him say, he said, I really believe that one day when I get to heaven, the guy that will get more crowns than I will be some obscure pastor who pastored a little rural church in the back waters of nowhere, and yet he loved the Lord, preached the word of God faithfully to his small little congregation, and never gave up, never gave up.

Unsung heroes, and there are many of them. We have some mentioned in the Bible, we have some mentioned right here in this chapter, but one day their song will be sung. Paul then mentions some households in verses 10 and 11.

Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus, greet Herodian, my countrymen, greet those who are of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.

[33:00] Now, what is this about? Now, Herodian, let's take him first, he was probably of the household of Herod, and he was probably a slave in the household. And I say that because he is sandwiched between these two others, Aristobulus and Narcissus, and the Bible says at least in most translations we have the household of Aristobulus, the household of Narcissus.

And I want you to note that especially if you have a version that has household in italics, the point there is that the word is not in the original Greek text.

So the word doesn't belong there, it's been added by the translators. And so it's really those of Aristobulus, those of Narcissus. And this would be the general way to describe not the relatives of,

or the family of Aristobulus, but the household slaves of Aristobulus.

And the household slaves of Narcissus. And he sandwiches in between, or puts in between the two, Herodotus, Herodian, who's probably a slave.

And so the gospel had made inroads into these homes, these apparently very wealthy, very well-to-do homes. And it's quite possible Aristobulus was not even a believer, or Narcissus.

[34 : 23] I don't think the point is those guys, but their household slaves that had been saved. They possibly meaning they'd been led to Christ by the church there at Rome, by believers there.

Maybe Paul had some influence in their coming to Christ. And he greets them. They're household slaves. In fact, most, many, I don't know if I'd say most, many of the believers in the early church were slaves.

Because many of the Jews were slaves. Then we have Tryphena and Tryphosa. A couple of sisters.

And Persis, who labored. And then we have Rufus. Now, what about him? He says, greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

And that's kind of interesting. And see, that's what we've got to do when we look through this list. We've got to find some things that maybe are a little bit peculiar and analyze them and see what it is that Paul is telling us here about them.

[35 : 31] Well, what about this Rufus? Very likely. And we won't look at the text tonight. You can look at it some of the time. But according to Mark 15 and verse 21, Rufus was the son of Simon the Cyrenian.

Who was Simon the Cyrenian? He's the one who carried the cross for Christ. He was the one that was put into service by that Roman soldier to carry the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, Simon of Cyrenia.

And Mark 15 21 tells us he had two sons, Alexander and Rufus. Rufus. Also, I would take a step further and tell you that many scholars believe that Simon of Cyrenia may also have been the Simon mentioned in Acts 13 1, one of the elders of the church at Antioch who laid hands upon one Paul and Barnabas and sent them out on their first missionary journey.

There's some descriptions there and some history that lead us to believe that. And Rufus was his son and Rufus is now in Rome and Paul is sending greeting to him.

The second thing interesting, Paul's reference to Rufus' mother, being his mother and mine, probably suggests that Paul stayed in the home of Simon of Cyrenia.

[37 : 11] And Rufus, being his son, he knew him and he knew Rufus' mother and Rufus' mother had become a mother to Paul. Which I think gives us a window into how much Paul sacrificed when he came to Christ.

I think he lost his mother and father and most of his family. Could be he was married and lost his wife because of his conversion to Christ.

That happens all the time, even today. Paul sacrificed his mother. But Rufus' mother became his mother as a believer.

So he sends greeting to her. He loved her very much. And the rest. Verses 14 through 15. And you can pronounce those names yourself.

And the rest of them. And so here is Paul's pastoral heart for these people that he loved. Many of them he led to Christ.

[38 : 17] And we know that. We understand that because Paul didn't just lump them all together and say just greetings to all the saints in Rome. That might be something we would do.

It would be just too many to list. I don't want to miss anybody. Well, Paul apparently didn't miss anybody. He did not just give some generic kind of superficial greeting.

He singles them out. Mentions them by name. For most of them he mentions one little thing about their ministry and their service to the Lord.

And Paul's like a pastor. He's a shepherd. And he's like our shepherd, by the way. Not me, but our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 10 3 he calls his own sheep by name.

And Paul exemplifies that. That's a challenge to me. I have a hard time just remembering people's names. I'm just now getting yours. Some of you. Next time you see me and I have a blank look on my face you can just say, well he just forgot my name.

[39 : 26] Not because he doesn't love me, because he's stupid. That's just what you need to say. I know stupid is a bad word. Anyway, but it's a challenge to me as a pastor.

And I think of this in terms of remembering some other churches that God has allowed me to pastor. And I remember many of them. I ought to write them sometimes. I don't know if they'd appreciate that or not.

But it's also a challenge to those of us who are leaders in the church. If you're a youth pastor, worship pastor, you have people that you're pastoring and and we ought to have a kind of pastoral love toward them.

Where we remember them and we commend them where it's due. And if you're a teacher or a deacon or an elder or working in the children's departments or wherever and you have a group of people that you're getting to know and you're pouring your life into them, don't ever forget them. Those are fond connections that you will have for the rest of your life or should have. All right, so Paul's fond connections. I need to move on. Well, let me add this last little thing that he mentions here before we move on.

[40 : 45] He says, greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you. That's how he ends this section.

And that's pretty significant when you think about it. Now, he's writing a letter. He's the Apostle Paul. And he's writing a letter, a personal letter, to the believers at Rome.

All the believers in Rome. Probably a letter that was passed around all the house churches there and read by all the people over and over again. This is the great Apostle Paul. He's written a letter to us. Now, think about that.

You're one of the churches in Rome. And Paul has written a letter to you. He mentions many of your members there because he knows them personally, commends them, so forth.

And then he says, greet one another with a holy kiss. It's as if he's saying, kiss everyone for me. All right, guys, be careful about that. Then he says, the churches of Christ, the churches, plural, of Christ, greet you in Rome.

[42 : 00] That's significant. Think how thrilling it was for them to get that kind of a letter. Think how thrilling it was for them to be reminded of not only their connection to the great Apostle Paul, but to all the churches, all the other churches, churches they had never seen.

Churches populated by members, they did not know, never would know. They didn't live in a mobile society, a mobile world like we do today.

And here's this reminder, very short little reminder, that we're all connected. We're all connected. Very encouraging to them. We're connected to the ministry of Paul.

Just look at all these names he's listed. People who are co-laborers with him and workers with him and people he loves. We're connected with Paul and all the churches that he has planted and all the churches, we're connected with him.

This is so important. This is an important connection that should exist, that we should acknowledge in all of our churches today as well. in Colorado Springs.

[43 : 23] Open Bible Baptist Church, saw a little video. Do you feel more connected to that church than you did before? You saw the people, saw their face. When they come, a group of them, we're going to be even more connected with them.

We're part of one big huge family. One day we will be a visible, connected family in glory forever and ever. And how encouraging it is for us to realize, that we're connected right now.

We can't necessarily connect in a tangible way with every church like we have with Colorado Springs and so forth, but think about it in terms of Odessa, Ukraine.

It's even more encouraging and vital for some church thousands of miles away to know that they're connected with our church, that we're connected.

it's an encouragement to them, especially for churches in other countries that know a great deal about the great, you know, great churches in America.

[44 : 30] You know, this Christian nation. How little do they know, some of them. But the churches, to be connected, and China as well, to be connected.

people, I'm going to stop right there. I said we'd get through this chapter. Let's get to this chapter. Paul's family concerns. All right, let's just look at it real quick.

I'm determined. All right. Paul's family concerns. He's kind of the father of his children. And in these few verses here, verses 17 through 20, he warns his family, his family of faith.

He warns them. Look at it. Now, I urge you, brethren, note, or really a better word would be mark them. One translation says, keep your eye on them.

Watch out for them. Those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. Stay away from them. This is a pretty strong warning for the church.
[45 : 39] These would be false teachers creeping into the church or having some influence with people in the church.

They would include, today, they would include false teachers who preach on the radio that you might tune in to on the TV or on the Internet or write books that are influential in the, quote, church in the larger picture.

church. And Paul says there are many out there. They might be in your church. They might be outside your church and you could be affected by them, influenced by them. Mark them.

Mark them. Note them. Watch out for them. For those, and then he says, they cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them, he says.

Avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, their own fleshly desires, own pride.

[46 : 47] And by smooth words they do this. And they flatter. They use flattering speech. And they deceive the hearts of the simple, those who are not informed as they should be in the Word of God.

How do you recognize them? From what Paul said, how would we recognize them? We recognize them with the truth. That's how you recognize. Someone has said that the way to detect error is to lay the subversive teaching alongside the straight edge of divine truth.

It's always the truth. Paul called it the doctrine which you learned. So learn the doctrine. And the best way to identify the error is to know the truth.

And so this is Paul's warning. And so this is very practical advice. Mark them and avoid them. Mark them and avoid them. Mark them, that is by putting their teaching side by side with the truth, and avoid them.

Avoid them. Paul also gives them a warning concerning the personal choices they make in life. He says in verse 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.

[47 : 57] So he commends them, but then he also warns them, because none of us have arrived. And so he says, I want to warn you, to be wise in what is good.

That is, what is good according to God. Be wise in that. All of your decisions based upon the good that we know from God's Word revealed to us in His Word. All of the direction you go in life.

All of your desires. All of the activity of life. The words you speak. The thoughts you think even.

What you involve yourself in. All of it. Be wise in what is good.

And we get that from the Word of God. And then I like this statement. Simple concerning evil. You know that innocence is bliss.

Part of the problem in our Christian culture is we're too wise to evil. We know too much about it. More than we ought to know.

[48 : 54] There's a lot of it that we ought to be innocent about. But in our information age where we are, I mean, you know, we're gluttons. You know, whether it's through the TV or Internet where we have this glut of information about evil and wickedness and heinous sin and the most immoral of things.

We may not be participating in it but we have too much knowledge about it. And it serves to be tempting to us. And so really, ignorance is bliss.

He says, be simple concerning evil. All you have to know is the basic things. You don't have to watch a, you know, a pornographic movie just so you'll be informed about pornography.

You need to be simple concerning evil. Then he issues or assures them of the ultimate victory in Christ and the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

That is the end of the age. We're going to share in Christ's utter defeat of Satan. Remember, it was prophesied way back there in Genesis chapter 3. He will crush Satan's head.

[50 : 09] Well, we're going to be with him when he does that. When Satan will be crushed forever, it will be the end of Satan forever, for eternity. And then Paul prays for them. In the meantime, he says, in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Amen. All right. So Paul's fond connections, Paul's family concerns. And third, Paul returns to his naming of special people in his life. And we have Paul's fellow colleagues.

And this list of men, that is a list of those men who work closely with Paul in his ministry. They were, many of them, mentored by Paul.

Some of them led to Christ by Paul. And they're at the church of Rome. And the people of Rome, the church at Rome, would have known them. And so he says, I send you greeting from them. That's what we have in verses 21 through 24. So you can read that on your own. Then finally, Paul's fitting conclusion. This is fast forward, by the way. Paul's fitting conclusion.

[51:09] And it is a fitting conclusion. It is quite interesting. And I encourage you to make some of these connections on your own in your own study. But in verses 25 through to the end of the chapter, we have three verses there that are the conclusions to the letter.

And they have a similarity, very interesting similarity, with some of what Paul wrote in the first chapter of Romans.

And so he's kind of using that technique. He introduces the letter and then he says many of the same things at the conclusion of his letter. It's quite interesting. Let me just name them for you. When he says here in chapter 16, he who is able to establish you, that corresponds with chapter 1 and verse 11, for I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gifts so that you may be established.

So his intent in writing the letter was that you might be established. And here in the conclusion, that's still his desire. And that's a fitting conclusion to the book. When he mentions my gospel here in chapter 16, that corresponds to chapter 1, verse 1, the gospel of God.

[52:27] And then when he says the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began, that corresponds with chapter 1 and verse 2, the gospel of God, which he promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

Same idea. The preaching of Jesus Christ here in chapter 16 corresponds to chapter 1, verse 3, the gospel concerning his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And then when he says in chapter 16, the prophetic scriptures made known to all the nations, that corresponds to chapter 1 and verse 2 through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

Then when he says the prophetic scriptures, the gospel made known to all nations according to the commandment of the everlasting God for obedience to the faith, that corresponds with chapter 1 and verse 5.

Through him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name. A fitting conclusion to one of the most significant letters written by the apostle Paul, the book of Romans.

[53:30] Did you get all that? Well, you just take the last three verses of chapter 16 and put it side by side with chapter 1 and see if you can see those comparisons.

They're very interesting. And so Paul ends his book. And so we have ended our study of that book and praise the Lord for the letter to the Romans. .