

Personal Greetings & Closing Words

Text: Romans 16:1-27

Introduction:

1. Paul brings this monumental Epistle to a close in this chapter with words of personal greeting, a final warning and a heart-warming benediction.
2. This is the most extensive conclusion of any of Paul's letters.
3. We will divide and study this final chapter of Romans under 4 headings:

I. The Commendation (Vs. 1-2)

A. The Character of Phebe (Vs. 1)

1. "our sister" = she was a part of the family of God. As believers, we are to view and treat each other with the warmth and affection of family love.
2. "which is a servant" = she was a faithful servant of the Lord in her church at Cenchrea. It is likely that Phebe was either a single lady or a widow who invested her time into the service of the Lord.
3. 'Cenchrea' = town located about 12-13 kms from Corinth where Paul was writing the Epistle to the Romans.

B. The Command concerning Phebe (Vs. 2)

1. The specifics of the command (2a)
 - a. "receive her" = they are to extend warm Christian hospitality to her
 - b. "assist her" = appears the ministry she had required the assistance of believers. Note: While a woman cannot hold a formal office of leadership in the church such as pastor or deacon, they can be led of God to minister in a full-time capacity and be supported for their work (e.g. a woman missionary)
2. The reason for the command (2b)
 - a. 'succourer' = one who brings relief, assistance, a helper (Webster).
 - b. "of many" = she had a wide-reaching ministry to the people of God
 - c. "of myself also" = Paul had personally been blessed through the ministry of this dear Christian sister.

II. The Salutations (Vs. 3-16; 21-24)

A. Paul's Greetings (Vs. 3-16)

On the surface it appears we simply have a list of names but there are some lessons we can learn from these greetings:

1. The value of Christian service. A number of people in this list are noted for their sacrificial service to the Lord.

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- a. Priscilla and Aquila (Vs. 3-5) (See also Acts 18:1-3)
 - i. Servants to God's man
 - ii. Servants to God's people
 - b. Mary (Vs. 6)
 - i. 'much' = the quantity of her service
 - ii. 'labor' = wearisome toil
 - c. Urbane (Vs. 9)
 - d. Tryphena, Tryphosa & Persis (Vs. 12) Note: Names are all feminine indicating these are names of ladies.
2. The value of the Christian family. Note the terms of warm affection used by Paul
 - a. Epānetus – “my wellbeloved” (Vs. 5)
 - b. Amplias – “my beloved in the Lord” (Vs. 8)
 - c. Stachys – “my beloved” (Vs. 9)
 - d. Narcissus & household – “in the Lord” (Vs. 11)
 - e. Rufus – “chosen in the Lord” (Vs. 13)
 - f. Rufus' mother – “his mother and mine” (Vs. 13) Note: Rufus' mother had been like a mother to Paul in her kind, maternal treatment of him.
 3. The value of the role of Christian women in the church. At least 9 women are mentioned by name in this list (Phebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus' mother, Nereus' sister etc...). Christianity, contrary to the claims of the 21st century, elevates women to the noble and honorable place God designed for them.
 4. The importance of the Christian courtesies (manners) (Vs. 16)
 - a. “holy kiss” = a kiss was an important part of greeting one another in the East. Would correspond somewhat to our handshake or an embrace. The word 'holy' reveals that even the small activities of life (e.g. a greeting) take on sacred meaning and purpose.
 - b. We are commanded to greet one another in the local church! There is absolutely **NO** place in the body of Christ for cold shoulder tactics, the silent treatment, sour expressions or animal like grunts for a response to a greeting!
 - c. 1 Peter 3:8 *“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be **courteous**.”*
'courteous' = friendly, kind, polite, civil, of elegant manners
- B. Partners' Greetings (Vs. 21-24)**
1. Greetings from Paul's ministry associates
 2. God's work best accomplished by a team!

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III. The Admonition (Vs. 17-20)

A. Their Obligation (Vs. 17-18)

1. Alertness to false teachers (Vs. 17a)
 - a. 'mark' = to look at, fix one's eyes upon, observe, identify. We are to be governed by a spirit of watchfulness for the inroads of the enemy.
 - b. "divisions and offences" = they create disunity and fracture the assembly life of the church with their error
 - c. "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned" = the N.T. doctrinal standard; the fundamentals of the faith; the Word of God. The Bible is our sole authority for faith and practice.
2. Avoidance of false teachers (Vs. 17b)
 - a. 'avoid' = to turn away from, shun
 - b. Principle: Separation from error a Christian duty
 - c. Avoid them: Avoid their blogs, websites and podcasts. Avoid their invitations, meetings and campaigns. Avoid their company (2 John 1:11)
3. Attributes of false teachers (Vs. 18)
 - a. They are covetous – they claim to serve Christ but in reality, they serve their own lusts and desires ('belly' speaks of the appetites) (18a)
 - b. They are deceptive – they sound so good! (18b) Words are powerful tools, for good or evil (remember Satan in the garden)
 - i. Jude 1:16 *"These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."*
 - ii. 2 Peter 2:3 *"And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."*

B. Their Obedience (Vs. 19)

1. Paul rejoices in the godly testimony of the Roman believers (19a). They were known throughout the empire for their obedience to the Lord. Paul is confident they will obey the command just given.
2. Paul is concerned that grow in wisdom of that which is good and maintain innocent concerning that which is evil. It seems that Paul's admonition concerning false teachers is behind this. He wants them to avoid them so as to not be contaminated with their evil teachings.
3. Illustration: Bank workers or government agents are taught to identify counterfeit money by studying genuine money. They are to be intimately familiar with the markings, feel and appearance of real money so that they can easily spot a fake when they see one.

C. Their Optimism (Vs. 20)

1. Satan is the Architect of false doctrine and its attendant divisions (1 Tim. 4:1)
2. Satan was dealt a mortal wound at the cross (Gen. 3:15; Col. 2:15)
3. God has promised to bring about Satan's defeat as we are faithful to separate from error. "The victory shall be ours, though wrought by Him" (Haldane)

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IV. The Benediction (Vs. 25-27)

A. The Power to Establish (Vs. 25a)

1. 'power' = to be able. God is the one who has the power to establish the believer
2. 'stablish' = to make stable, set fast, fix firmly, strengthen
3. Paul expressed a desire for their establishment at the start of the Epistle (1:11)

B. The Precept to Establish (Vs. 25b-26)

The Gospel message is God's means for establishing the believers. Observe 3 key truths about this Gospel message:

1. The truth of the Gospel – “my Gospel” Apostolic Gospel as opposed to fake alternatives.
2. The theme of the Gospel – “the preaching of Jesus Christ”
3. The unveiling of the Gospel – “according to the revelation of the mystery”
 - a. Revealed in the Scriptures – “according to the Scriptures of the prophets”
 - b. Revealed by God's decree – “according to the commandment of the everlasting God” God is the author and instigator of salvation.
 - c. Revealed for a purpose – “to all nations for the obedience of the faith”

C. The Praise to Him who Establishes (Vs. 27)

1. God of wisdom – “God only wise”
2. God of glory – “be glory through Jesus Christ”
3. Note: Christ is the Mediator of our worship and praise. It is “through” Christ that glory is offered to the Father.

Conclusion:

1. Are you saved? This series in Romans which focuses so much on salvation will be in vain if you remain unsaved!
2. Are you serving the Lord faithfully?
3. Are you worshiping God for His great salvation?