

Welcome To

Malvern Bible Chapel



A Snapshot of a Church

Part of the Romans Series (part 3)

Romans 16:1-16

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January 6, 2019

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Romans 16:1-16 New King James Version (NKJV)

16 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, ² 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.

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. ⁵ Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house.

Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. ⁶ Greet Mary, who 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.

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Romans 16:1-16 (NKJV) (cont.)

- 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. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. ¹³ Greet Rufus, 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.
- ¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.

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Introduction:

- Today we begin a new calendar year. We also begin the last chapter of this great letter to the Romans penned by Paul nearly 2,000 years ago to the Christians meeting in fledgling house churches in Rome. It was written from Corinth during his 3rd missionary journey when he stayed there 3 months as his base of operations (**Acts 20:2-3**).
- Today we will also see how he personally greets many of his friends that are now in Rome. It provides a valuable snapshot of a local church, and it also gives us a great reminder today of what our church should look like and what should be our priorities.

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- The MBC logo:

Glorify

Edify

Testify



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Body of Lesson:

1. **Glorify (Glorifying God)** (magnify, extol, praise, honor, acknowledging Him & His attributes)

In the local church we are all connected, bound together with a special affection. In our text today we read of 27 people who are greeted or commented on.

God has accepted each one and as we accept one another we bring glory to God for all that He has done in saving us and bringing us into His family. The unsaved world can't do this.

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1. **Glorify (Glorifying God)** (magnify, extol, praise, honor, acknowledging Him & His attributes) (cont.)

We often think that we only glorify God as we worship or remember Him each week on Sunday, but we also glorify God by our service for Him every day! We saw this when we recently looked at that great “Psalm of Thanksgiving” (Serve/worship the Lord with gladness...**Psalm 100:2**).

Paul gives a great example of this in our text today as he describes a great early Christian whose service ended up glorifying God in a powerful way:

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- **Phoebe (v.1-2).** Phoebe means “pure, bright, radiant”. She was a winsome sister in Christ and a servant (deaconess) in an assembly at Cenchrea (7 miles east of Corinth). Paul commends her for her service, which most likely also meant entrusting the original copy of this monumentally important letter to the Christians in Rome, meeting in house churches.

She may have been relocating to Rome and Paul personally endorses her and asks for their help for her, just as she had been a great help to him. Her faithful service preserved this most critical letter that has done so much over the centuries to glorify God, to proclaim all the attributes and character of God (e.g. righteousness), and to save and edify believers.

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2. **Edify (Nurturing Believers)** (building up, providing nourishment, promoting spiritual growth)

As we serve God there will no doubt be those who become followers of Jesus Christ and those who need to be discipled (taught). New Christians are not just to be abandoned, but must be built up and nourished with the milk and then meat of God's Word. This process of edification is something we all can do, starting in our homes, and reaching out to our friends and neighbors. Paul lists 26 individuals who were involved with him in doing just that. We don't know a lot about most of these people, because they were just ordinary people, like you and me, but who were obeying God and doing His will.

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- **Priscilla and Aquila (v.3-4).** We do know quite a lot about this couple. Prisca (formal) or Pricilla (familiar) and Aquila are first to be greeted. They were originally from Rome but they fled to Corinth under the persecution of the Christians under Emperor Claudius. They served with Paul at Corinth where they met him during Paul's 2nd missionary journey.

They shared the same trade as tentmakers, and he may have led them to Christ (**Acts 18:1-3**). They accompanied Paul to Ephesus and remained there several years (**Acts 18:18-19**). The church met and was edified in their home (**1 Cor. 16:19**), including the dynamic Jewish evangelist Apollos (**Acts 18:24-28**).

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- **Priscilla and Aquila (v.3-4).** (cont.)

They returned to Rome after the death of Claudius. Once again they provided mature leadership for a church that met in their home there in Rome. Some Christians gathered there for fellowship, learning and growing. They were edified and nurtured in Christ.

- **Epaenetus (v.5).**

He was Paul's first convert in Asia, and then he went with Priscilla and Aquila to Rome to continue as their disciple and be built up in his faith (edified).

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- **Mary, Andronicus and Junias (v.6-7).**

Mary (anglicized version of Heb. Mariam) “toiled much” on behalf of the church. Her focus was on building up the believers in the family of God.

Paul then greets Andronicus and Junias using four significant titles:

- “Kinsmen” so they most likely were fellow Jews.
- “Fellow prisoners” so they were imprisoned (time unknown) along with Paul.
- “Notable among the apostles” (highly regarded for their church/missionary service).
- “Had become in Christ before me” (saved before Paul).

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- **20 others (v.8-15).**

The next twenty names offer little information. Each comment is like the tip of a narrative iceberg! We wish we knew more! “Beloved”, “fellow worker”, “approved in Christ”, “kinsmen”, “workers in the Lord”, “a choice man”, “brethren”, “holy ones”. We can only imagine what stories each comment would introduce. All we know for certain is that each name brings to Paul’s mind a cherished relationship in common with these believers in the church at Rome.

What brief comment could you use to summarize each of your relationships at MBC? If you don’t know someone well enough to do this, develop a relationship so you can distill what they mean to you into a few words, just like Paul.

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3. Testify (Attracting Others)

Greet one another with a holy kiss (v.16).

Paul liked this expression (1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26). He seemed to stress this special form of greeting even where other forms of greeting were more common (like handshaking in Rome).

Why?

- Christians shouldn't lose their distinctiveness in a foreign culture. The unique greeting is a testimony, and attracts those who witness the genuine love in the family of God.
- Remind the Christians of their Middle East origins and heritage even when displaced.
- Powerful motivation to keep relationships clear and close. It is hard to give a holy kiss to someone that you don't feel close to or can't feel any affection towards in the church.
- Connecting like this is more meaningful than messaging like so many only do today! It has to be done in person!

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So what can we learn from a long list of 27 people at the end of this letter to the Romans? (adapted from Swindoll)

1. The body of Christ has variety within its unity

- Men and women, singles and married couples, widows and widowers, slaves and social elites, new Christians and mature believers, Greeks, Romans, and Jews. Paul met some in prison, many in synagogues, several in marketplaces, and a few in churches—all in the course of proclaiming Christ. But all had this one thing in common that unites them in the body of Christ: salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. That should characterize believers at MBC also.

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2. The body of Christ is held together by those who serve in obscurity.

- The 27 names listed, who we know so little about, represent countless others who quietly and profoundly enrich the body of Christ. Your service is not in vain if you serve the Lord! He knows and appreciates you. So do we at MBC, but it never hurt to tell someone how much they are appreciated while they are still alive! Don't wait until their memorial service!

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3. The body of Christ is characterized by simple down-to-earth love.

- Paul's greetings are rather unadorned considering the bond of love he shares with many of them individually. This is true "brotherly love" that should characterize the brothers and sisters who are part of the fellowship of believers that meets at MBC. It also will be sure to attract others to join with us and thus bring glory to God!

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3. The body of Christ is characterized by simple down-to-earth love. (cont.)

- Paul was in Corinth when he wrote this letter to his many friends scattered among what appears to be several house churches in Rome. The hardships and victories of ministry together bound their hearts together in a deep, abiding affection that neither time nor distance could diminish. He hoped that this same kind of love would bind together those believers in Rome into a similar tight-knit community. No doubt he would desire the same for us, meeting as an assembly of believers in Malvern, PA.

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Application:

Following all that we have seen about the 27 persons greeted or commended, we can reduce the lessons learned into 4 commands (“the A-B-Cs of authentic affection”) (Swindoll):

1. A **Accept one another.**

Accept variety. Not only did God create people with diverse appearances, He gave us a broad range of opinions, values, interests, gifts, and abilities. We need them all. We are also a community of Christians at varying stages of growth and growing at different rates. We are a diverse family, not a collection of clones. Accept (“receive unto yourself”) those who are unlike yourself!

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Application: (cont.)

2. Become a servant of one another.

Communities work best when we serve one another. Find something that needs doing or someone who needs help and don't hold back! If you aren't sure where to begin, ask someone who has been around awhile and ask, "What can I do to help around here?" Most of us want to find out where our spiritual gift fits in best, but often there are other more pressing needs. You will still get plenty of opportunity to exercise your gift as you stay here.

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Application: (cont.)

3. Cultivate esteem for one another.

Esteem means “to show value or worth”. Treat each person as a VIP. Paul mentions this in [Phil. 4:1-4](#), just before he goes on to show how our Lord Jesus Christ is the example that we all should emulate ([Phil. 4:5-8](#)). Some people are harder to give the VIP treatment to, but God would encourage us to begin with those that might be the hardest to esteem or that we might normally want to avoid. After all, He came to show value to us sinners!

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Application: (cont.)

4. Demonstrate your love for one another.

Love without deeds is no better than cold indifference. Find ways to demonstrate your love through acts of kindness. Ask God to help you do this and to show you those who are desperate to experience the Love of God, then obey His leading!