

Romans 16

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning.

Those who are tuning in online and those who are listening in on the telephone once more, and it's good for us to be able to come together in worship of God. Intimation is one or two things to highlight.

The first is that the evening service will come online just before six. And this evening, Hugh Morrison, Hugh Briony will be sharing his testimony, and there'll be a short evangelistic message.

And over the course of the month of September, that will be the order of things for the evening. Someone will share testimony, and there will be a short evangelistic message.

And next Sunday, God willing, Stuart and Joyce will share testimony. So you can be praying for them in their preparation. This evening, there'll be no YF, but on Wednesday, the prayer meeting will meet as usual in Zoom at half past seven.

[1 : 15] The other intimation to highlight is that the Faith Mission are hoping to do drive-in services in Tarbert. That's next Saturday and Sunday, Saturday the 12th and Sunday the 13th.

The Saturday service will be at 7pm, and the Sunday service will be at 4pm, and they'll be in the distillery car park in Tarbert. So when we have that confirmed on a flyer, that will be perhaps able to be shown on the video, or it'll be on the Facebook page in the next couple of days.

But Saturday and Sunday of next weekend, let's be praying for these services and encouraged to attend that Faith Mission outreach service. These, I think, are all the intimations.

So let's begin this time of worship, and we'll sing to God's praise from the hymn, To God be the glory, great things he hath done. To God be the glory, great things he hath done.

So loved he the world, that he gave us his Son. Who yielded his life an atonement for sin, And opened the life gate that all may go in.

[2 : 50] Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.

O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son, And give him the glory, great things he hath done.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood, To every believer the promise of God, The vilest offender who truly believes, That moment from Jesus our pardon receives.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice. O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son, And give him the glory, great things he hath done.

[4 : 16] Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done, and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son.

But purer and higher and greater will be our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.

O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer, let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you once more for this, your day, and we thank you once more that you've given us the desire and the opportunity to come together in this way in worship of you.

[5 : 39] We thank you, Lord, for the fact that the way is open into your presence, that we are able to come to you and call you our Father through Jesus, your Son.

And we thank you, Lord, for the words of the hymn that we've just sung, a hymn that speaks to us of the greatness of your glory and the wonder of your love for us.

We thank you, Lord, that you... We thank you, Father, that you sent us your Son. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came to this world. We thank you, Holy Spirit, that you have opened our eyes to see the truth and the wonder of all of this.

We thank you that Jesus yielded his life as an atonement for our sin. We who were at odds with you because of our sin can be made at one with God because of Jesus, the perfect sacrifice that was offered up on the cross for us.

We thank you that his blood shed is powerful to forgive us for all our sin. We thank you that the vilest offender that truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

[6 : 53] And, Lord, we praise you. We say with the hymn writer, praise the Lord, praise the Lord. Let the earth hear his voice. We thank you that you've opened our ears, that we have heard the voice of God in the gospel.

And we pray, Lord, that you would open the ears of many more people, that they too would hear the wonder of the message of salvation, the message of redemption, the fact that God has brought us back and freed us from the clutches of sin and Satan and death and hell and brought us into eternal life if we are those who are believing in Jesus.

So give us, Lord, faith, we pray, that we may be those who are truly believing in Jesus. Increase our faith if we are those who are walking with you, that we may walk more closely with you and that we may bring glory to your name because, Lord, we acknowledge that you alone are worthy of all our praise and all glory.

We pray for every effort that's made to reach out with the gospel message. We pray for Hugh as he shares testimony this evening. We thank you for his willingness, his eagerness to do that.

We thank you for your work in his life. And as he shares of that work, we pray that you would use him to encourage many other people to look to Jesus, the one who is able to save them from sin as he has saved us from sin.

[8 : 25] We pray, Father, for the faith mission and the drive-in services that are planned for these next few days. We pray your blessing on the services happening in Lewis over the course of the next few days.

And we pray, Lord, also for the plans and for the services as they are scheduled for Harris next weekend. Thank you for Donnie and for the bond that we have with him in Christ.

Thank you for Gordon and for others who have been with them in the tent mission and past times. And we ask, Lord, that you would be with them and that you would use them.

We pray, Lord, that you would stir the hearts of many people to come out and that you would open the hearts of those who are present. Just like Lydia, her heart was opened and she believed she was saved.

We pray that there would be many in this area who, as they hear the message of the gospel, even in this slightly unusual means for us, we ask that you would be working, Lord, and that many people would be drawn to Jesus.

[9 : 36] We pray, Father, for Gordon also, as he preaches your word in Scalpy this morning, that you would speak through him and that you would give him liberty as he preaches. Bless the congregation there.

Bless all the congregations of your people as they meet in different denominations in Tarbert and across the island and across the nation and all nations.

May the gospel of Jesus Christ go forward in power. May the kingdom of God be built up and the kingdom of Satan be destroyed. We pray on for those, Lord, who are needing a special touch from you this morning.

We pray for those who are grieving. We're conscious once more of those who have passed from time into eternity and we pray on for the Kenyon family and their loss.

We pray for Marion in Stockanish, having lost her husband, Janangus. We pray for the children, for Erica and for Janorman. We pray for Marlene as well, having lost her brother in recent days, having just lost her other brother in recent weeks.

[10 : 46] We pray for your comfort to be with her. We pray that she would know the peace of God, which passes all understanding. And may she know your hand upon her.

And may all who grieve be comforted as they look to you and as we bring them to you in prayer at this time. We pray on for those who are sick and who are receiving treatment.

We pray on for those who are in hospital, for those who are in care homes. We ask, Lord, that you would give wisdom to those in authority over us, that they may look to you for wisdom which comes from heaven alone, from no other source.

We pray, Lord, for our nation. We pray for the community. We ask, Lord, that you would be at work for your glory, for the good of your people, for the salvation of souls.

So hear our prayers. Help us, we pray, in these strange times to continue trusting you and to continue looking to you. Help us to fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

[11 : 51] For we pray these things together with the forgiveness of our sins in his name and for his sake. Amen. Boys and girls, I hope you're well. I hope you're doing good today.

Michael, especially, I hope you're well. We missed you on Wednesday night. I know you had a bad cold, so I hope you're feeling better now. Now, what have I got to show you this morning, boys and girls? Well, I've got to show you this.

And if you were here with me, you would tell me what this is. It's a jigsaw puzzle. Mary's dad brought it to do when he was in Harris for a few days.

He never got near it, though, because Mary had so many jobs for him to do. But you know how jigsaw puzzles work, don't you? There's all the different pieces. If I take the lid off this box.

There's all the different pieces. There's a thousand pieces in this jigsaw. And they all fit together. And it's sometimes not very easy to see how they fit together.

[12 : 51] Sometimes, I have to say, especially for me, I find it very frustrating and very annoying to try to figure out how to put them all together. But they all do fit together. And each bit has a special place.

So that's a jigsaw. Now, in Romans chapter 16, which is the passage that we're going to be reading in just a minute, Paul, he's writing a letter to those who are in Rome.

And at the end of his letter, he writes a huge long list of names of different people. Priscilla, Aquila, Mary, Andronicus, Junius, Ampliatus, Aristobulus.

Funny names to us. But they're all different people with different names, different characters. Some were rich, some were poor.

Some were old, some were young, some were men, some were women. But they all kind of fitted together in Rome, in the church in Rome, like a big jigsaw puzzle. They all, when they were brought together, they made up the church of Jesus in Rome.

[14 : 06] Now, this jigsaw, if all you had was all these pieces sitting on the table, then you would look at this and think, I don't know what on earth this is supposed to be.

I don't know what kind of picture it's supposed to show me. And even if we spent a wee while working on this, it would still not be very easy to see what we're supposed to be looking at.

But the more it comes together, the more clearly we can see. And then when it's done, it won't look like that.

But it'll look like this. And we'll be able to see the big picture of the bus and the pram and the dog and the old swing bridge. So that's what it's supposed to do.

All these pieces fit together so we can see this picture. Now, you know, boys and girls, we're a bit like all the different pieces. If we're trusting in Jesus, we're a bit like all the different pieces of a jigsaw.

[15 : 11] And we all are supposed to fit together. Remember we were saying that last weekend. We don't go on unicycles. We're all coming together when we're following Jesus.

And as we all fit together as part of the church of Jesus, what should we look like? Or who should we look like? When this jigsaw is put together, that's what people see.

But when we come together, who should people see in us and through us? Well, they should see Jesus. Jesus. Our job, if we're Christians, is to show people Jesus.

And the best way we can do that is not by being all on our own, but by being all together. Almost 2,000 years ago in Rome, people in the city, they looked at the church, they looked at the people that they knew were Christians.

Christians. And do you know what they said about the Christians? They said, see how they love one another. See how close they are to each other. I wonder what makes them different.

[16 : 26] I wonder who it is that we're seeing as we look at these Christians. And the answer, of course, was Jesus. They were seeing the church, all the different pieces of the jigsaw, all the different people, coming together, and showing love to each other and to everyone else.

And as they looked at them, they were seeing a picture of Jesus. So boys and girls, let's remember that if we're trusting in Jesus, we're all part of God's big jigsaw.

And our job is to try to show the world Jesus. And share with the world the good news about Jesus. Jesus. So let's pray about that.

Lord God, we thank you that you love us. We thank you that you have chosen us to hear this message of the gospel. We thank you that we know because our Sunday school teachers have told us that God so loved the world that he sent his only son, that whoever believes in him will not die but have everlasting life.

We thank you that when we believe that and when we ask you to come into our lives and to take away our sin, you come in, Lord, and you bring us into the church of Jesus and you make us a special person that you use in the world to show other people what Jesus is like.

[17 : 57] So help us, we pray, in our own lives and as we try to love each other, help us to show the world Jesus. and we ask all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Let's read God's word now and we'll read from Romans chapter 16, the last chapter in Paul's letter to the Romans. This is God's word.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cancra. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you for she has been a great help to many people including me.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me, not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the house that meets in their home.

Greet my friends Eponetus who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. Greet Mary who worked very hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junius my relatives who have been in prison with me.

[19 : 06] They are outstanding among the apostles and they were in Christ before I was. Greet Ampliatus whom I love in the Lord. Greet Urbanus our fellow worker in Christ and my dear friend Stachys.

Greet Apellas tested and approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodian my relative. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my friend Persis another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus chosen in the Lord and his mother who has been a mother to me too.

Greet Asyncretus Phlegon Hermes Petrobis Hermas and the other brothers with them. Greet Phlogus Julia Nereus and his sister and Olympus and all the saints with them.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings. I urge you brothers to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned.

[20 : 26] Keep away from them for such people are not serving our Lord Christ but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

Everyone has heard about your obedience so I am full of joy over you but I want you to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Timothy my fellow worker sends his greetings to you as do Lucius, Jason and Susipater my relatives.

I, Tertius who wrote down this letter greet you in the Lord. Gaius whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy sends you his greetings.

Erastus who is the city's director of public works and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God so that all nations might believe and obey him to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ.

[21 : 53] Amen. Well just as we turn back to the passage that we read we'll pray for a moment. Our Heavenly Father we thank you for your word we thank you for this letter which we have received such encouragement and direction instruction through.

We thank you that this letter from Paul to the Romans is a letter still very much relevant to all of us. So we ask Lord that as we consider this as we come to the end of it that you would open our hearts that you would open our eyes unblock our ears help us to see and hear to understand and to respond to your word in a way that will bring glory to your name and a blessing to us as your people.

And we ask this in Jesus name and for Jesus sake Amen. Well as we come to the end of this this book of Romans we're in chapter 16 today we're reminded I think even as we look at the verses before us we're reminded of the fact that this book we've been studying it's a letter it's not a theological textbook that we take off the shelf in some seminary this is a this is a personal letter God the Holy Spirit inspired it the Apostle Paul he wrote it or well he dictated it and it was then written and it was a letter that was intended for for real people and we have the names of these real people people like Urbanus and Herodian and Tryphena and Tryphosa people in Rome that Paul addresses this to and this is a letter which it wasn't simply intended to stay in Rome it was first to go to Rome but in God's plan this is a letter that was to be preserved and passed on and read not simply by the the Tryphenas and the Tryphosas but the people like us in Harris so today we're taking a final look at Paul's letter to the Romans and God's letter to us

I think it's interesting for us to see as we are in the conclusion of this it's interesting for us to see how Paul signs off on this letter now when we sign sign a letter we tend to sign it with something like yours sincerely or yours faithfully you know if we're dealing with a text message or an email or a whatsapp some kind of social media thing we tend to be a bit less formal a bit more familiar we might sign off the message with thanks or cheers or a smiley face or an X and an O I don't do that but the young people tell me when these messages are sent with an X and an O it's a virtual it's text message language for a kiss and a hug so that's some of the means that we might use to bring a letter to a conclusion or a message to a conclusion but how does Paul end this letter to the Romans that's what I want to think about first here and it might surprise us to to see that Paul's final word to the Romans

Paul's signing off of this letter to the Romans it's not a cool formal you're sincerely Paul or you're faithfully Paul rather there's there's great warmth and intimacy in Paul's concluding words Paul's conclusion here is very personal it's not generic at all he even encourages in the course of this conclusion not a text message kiss but a holy kiss we're in COVID times so we're restricted from that for which we can be thankful I think but that's Paul's conclusion here and I want to look at this conclusion in the course of the time that we have today and the first heading the first point that we come to as we look at this conclusion to the letter to the Romans is that we see here a gospel carrier verses 1 and 2

[26 : 30] Paul says I commend to your sister Phoebe a servant of the church in Cancria I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you for she has been a great help to many people including me so we see here first as Paul begins this chapter we see a gospel carrier I think it's 12 times in the book of Romans that Paul speaks about his gospel my gospel and so we maybe need to just stop for a second and ask the obvious question what does gospel mean it's not a word that we often use in common conversation today well gospel simply means good news so what is this the good news about well it's the good news about the righteousness that comes from God and is promised to all who believe in

Jesus that's chapter 3 verses 21 and 22 I think that's one of the central things in this book this is the good news about Jesus the fact that there is righteousness that comes to us by faith in Christ now if we went back to the beginning of Romans we see in these early chapters that we are those who are sinful Paul spares no details in chapters 1 and 2 in the first part of chapter 3 in telling us that we are guilty before God that we are sinners that we are deserving of condemnation because of our sin that was the bad news but then from chapter 3 verse 20 and following Paul tells us over and over and over again about Jesus who he is he's God the son he is our saviour and what he's done for us on the cross to die to shed his blood to cleanse us from our sin that's the good news says Paul we who are sinners and who are condemned can be made righteous can be saved through the finished work of Christ through the cleansing blood of Christ that's the good news that Paul was expounding but for that good news to reach the Romans it had to be carried

Paul is in Corinth as he writes he wants this message to get to the Romans but in order for it to get from Corinth to Rome it had to be carried there was no royal mail there was no James McLean shuttling between Corinth and Rome and so Phoebe who's introduced to us here she was given the task of carrying this gospel this good news and this is a task that she was successful in otherwise we wouldn't have this letter to the Romans it's a task that Paul commends her for she was the gospel carrier I think as we think back over our Christian lives we should be thankful for the Phoebes we should be thankful for those who carried the gospel the good news about Jesus Christ to us we might be able to think back through

Sunday school lessons through youth clubs through times with our family through friends who shared with us who carried to us the gospel the good news about Jesus and as we think about these people we should be thankful for them they're Phoebes they're gospel carriers I think also as we see Phoebe here we should take the challenge that she presents we should always be ready if we are Christians to carry this gospel that has been taken to us to the people around us we are to be gospel carriers like Phoebe I was listening to a sermon last Sunday that in the Sean Macdonald preached in Dingwall Free Church some time ago and in the course of the sermon he told a story about a man that he visited in hospital he went to see a member of his congregation in hospital and in the course of the visit the man he went to see said you should go across the ward because there's a man just on the other side of this ward and he went in for surgery this morning they closed him up immediately and said there's nothing we can do for you you've probably only got a couple of days left to live and so

Innesian was told you should go and see that man and so he went over to see the man and as he approached him and as the man recognised him as a minister he said to Innesian he said I suppose all I can do now is wait to meet my maker and take my punishment and Innesian when he heard that he says he shivered but he went on immediately to tell this man about Jesus to tell this man about the fact that Jesus went to a cross to take the punishment away from those who believe in him yes we are sinners yes we are deserving of punishment but Jesus went to a cross to pay the price of our sin to take the punishment from us that's the good news said Innesian and as he told the man the tears filled the man's eyes he believed he was saved and he said as Innesian was leaving he said thank you thank you for telling me this

[32 : 40] I've never heard this message before you know there are people all around us they don't understand properly who Jesus is they don't understand what it is that he did on the cross and who he did it for they haven't heard the good news and our job if we are Christians is to be like Phoebe were to be gospel carriers so that's the first point we see in Paul's concluding remarks that he identifies Phoebe as a gospel carrier the second point we come to is a series of greetings from Rome from verse three down to to verse 16 we have a long list of names names of people that

Paul wanted to send greetings to we have Priscilla and Aquila verse three Eponetus verse five Mary verse six Adronicus and Junius verse seven Ampliatus verse eight Urbanus and Stachus verse nine Apellus verse ten and so on we have all these names I was tripping over in the reading of them and we might be tempted to just fly over all these names like we might just gloss over a whole list of names in a phone book we might be tempted just to sort of scan this and say well let's let's move on to something that's a bit more more interesting but these names are there in this concluding chapter for good reason and there are lessons to learn through these names there's encouragement there's direction that we can receive through these names there's four things I want to just highlight and deal with as sub points under this section and the first thing to note here by way of instruction is that the book of Romans is for everyone

I think that's the first lesson we can take from this long list of names the book of Romans is for everyone and I know that many PhDs have been written about the book of Romans we know it's full of doctrine it's packed full of doctrine and theology it stretches the mind sometimes you know beyond where our minds can go it's it's a book that is intimidating in some ways and yet it's a book that's not simply to be studied by professors of theology it's for everyone Phoebe's instructions were not to take this book directly to the university divinity department rather she is told to take this book this letter to these wee church gatherings because Paul is saying in the personal names that he includes here that this is a letter for everyone for

Aristobulus and Herodian and for Narcissus and Tryphena and Tryphosa for Persis for Rufus and his mother for Asyncretus and Phlegon and Hermes and Petrobus and so on Paul is at pains to get over to them and to get over to us that this is a letter for everyone and I think we need to take the challenge and the encouragement of that truth on board the Bible the whole of the Bible and even the high points especially the high points like Romans this is God's message to us it's for you it's for me you know when our phones buzz in our pockets and we see a text message on the screen immediately we want to open it we don't just sort of set it aside as something generic when it comes on our screen on our phone we know that somebody has taken the time to write a message directly to us and so we want to see what it says because we know it's for me in the book of Romans it's not a dusty old scroll for someone else it's not a book to be left to those who spend their lives in seminaries

Paul is saying to these people back then and God is saying to us today this is my letter to you so the book of Romans is for everyone all these names and all the names of the people that sit in these chairs in normal times it's for everyone the second point to note under this heading of greetings to Rome is that as we think about the church in Rome we need to see that the church situation in Rome looked a lot like lockdown at this moment in time we feel very much restricted we can't get into our church building the chairs are still empty we can't gather as a whole congregation and fill the church building and so I've heard it said by various people in the course of the past months we can't do church I think if Paul heard us saying that he would take exception to that and he would say oh yes you can do church because as we think about the church in

[38 : 37] Rome in AD 57 they had no church buildings church buildings I don't think came about for about another 300 years and when they met as a group of God's people they didn't meet in great numbers they met as small house churches there's probably five house churches mentioned in this section verses 3 to 5 there's the church that gathered in the house of Priscilla and Aquila now these were friends of Paul we find them in Acts chapter 18 Paul worked with them in their tent making business and they had a church in their home and then in verse 10 there's the church made up of the household of Aristobulus verse 11 there's the church made up of the household of Narcissus that's three churches verse 14 there's the congregation of Asyncretus and Phlegon and Hermes and Petrobus and Hermas and the brothers with them that's the fourth church and then the final church

I think that we can see here is in verse 15 the congregation of Philologus Julia Nerius and his sister and Olympus and all the saints with them so we have five little house churches in Rome no church buildings gatherings of likely no more than 40 people that was the situation that was what church looked like in Rome in AD 57 and it just strikes me it's not a point that I would make an application in normal times but it strikes me in this strange time that church in Rome in AD 57 seems very close to church in Harris in 2020 lockdown we're very much restricted and yet the restrictions that we are under they lived with and in spite of those restrictions they were the church of Jesus they came together in worship they were used by

God to reach many people with the gospel so we have more in common I think with the church the Christians in Rome in AD 57 now than we ever have done before and I think that should encourage us to be like them so what would they like that takes us to the third element within this point the Christians they were committed the book of Romans is for everyone the church situation in Rome looked a lot like our lockdown the third thing we see under this point is that the Christians were committed and I haven't got time to dig into this in any depth but just look at how Paul describes them in the level of their commitment they were they were workers they were they were hard workers and Paul he says that in verse 3 and in verse 6 and in verse 9 he says that twice in verse 12 they were hard workers they were gospel grafters they were committed and they were brave they were risk takers verse 4

Priscilla and Aquila they risked their lives for me says Paul Andronicus and Junius verse 7 they did time in prison with Paul and yet that didn't put them off they didn't walk away from Christianity after the difficulties that they had they kept on going they're still following Jesus they were brave third thing we see here is that they were hospitable they opened up their houses to each other they opened up their lives to each other they weren't kind of nominal one hour on a Sunday Christians their whole lives their whole existence their property they shared it with each other and they had stickability Apolos verse 10 was tested and approved in Christ and that phrase suggests that Apolos he suffered somehow we don't know how he suffered but he was tested and approved in

Christ he went through something difficult but we find him and he's keeping on keeping on he has stickability and then there was love shared amongst them verse 8 there was a real genuine affection amongst the believers there were true deep friendships verse 9 there was an eternal bond that brought this diverse group of people together they were from different racial backgrounds there was different genders there were different ages there was different social classes there was different professions some were slaves some were free it's a very diverse group of people but they were all united because they were all in Christ in the Lord and you can see that in this in this section nine times in these verses Paul uses that phrase in Christ in the

[44 : 10] Lord what brought them together what kept them together what gave them such character was that they were in the Lord they were in Christ they were trusting in Jesus they had fully committed their lives their hearts to Jesus and I want to ask the question of all of us as we listen at this point are you in Christ I mean that is the most important thing it would be it would be an absolute tragedy to get this letter and to hear the bad news about our sin and then to hear the good news about our saviour and then not to believe not to respond in faith not to become those who were who have gone from being out of Christ and lost to in Christ and saved what a tragedy it would be for us to have gone through these 16 chapters and to get to the end of it and to still not be committing our lives to

Jesus and if that's you if somebody listening in or watching this just now and that's you you're still lost you're still on that track to a lost eternity why do you not even now pray and ask God to take your sin away to come into your life so that you will be one who is eternally safely securely gloriously in the Lord in Christ so we see there the Christians were committed the final thing under this heading is that we see something about Paul we see that Paul the apostle he was a warm man of prayer you know you can learn a lot about a person through their through their letters through the way that they write we neglect this somewhat these days but there's so many stories going back to past generations where there were those who fell in love even as they corresponded one with each other because there's so much of a person that's shared in the way that we write and what we learn about Paul through this letter is that he was a warm man of prayer and I think that needs to be said today some people today they they they paint

Paul as a bit of a tyrant I mean he's very clear Paul in his teaching and strong in his teaching about the role of men and women in the family and in the church family he's straight down the line when it comes to the teaching about sexuality and relationships and what is right and good and what is wrong and sinful because of that some people absolutely hate him and we hear people saying of Paul he's a sexist he's a bigot we don't want to hear anything about Paul we don't want to hear anything from Paul he's a cold heartless monster of a man that's what they say I've heard it said on assembly floors but if we take the time to step through his writings we see very clearly that he he's not he's a warm man he's not a sexist a sexist wouldn't have included nine women in his greetings in an age when it would be the norm to have no women in any greetings a bitter bigot of a man wouldn't write with such warmth and sensitivity as Paul does there's a deep pastoral concern there's a warm

Christian love and compassion that so clearly comes through the apostle Paul even in this final chapter in these final greetings he's a warm man and he was a man of prayer how do we know he was a man of prayer well I think we know he was a man of prayer because of the detail in which he brings this letter to conclusion we have all these names and we immediately ask the question how could he remember all these names how could he how could he greet people so personally and I don't think it's it's down to having a photographic memory I think that the reason that Paul writes so precisely so personally and so warmly is because he has spent hours on his knees praying for these people many of whom he'd never met sometimes we say to each other you know

I'm terrible with names well you know what would help us remember the names of the people that God has put around us prayer would I think I told you before about I think it was an old lady I think she was from over Lachs direction and she became ill she was bed bound and someone was visiting her one day she was a lovely Christian godly woman and in the course of the visit she was asked the question don't you feel the time long and she responded by saying no I don't feel the time long at all what do you do said the visitor she said well I'll tell you what I do when I'm in my bed here she says in my mind's eye I walk around the villages can still see them in my mind's eye and I picture all the houses and I picture all the people in the houses and I pray for everyone in each house by name and once I've finished praying for everyone by name I then begin to pray for their children that they haven't yet have and then once I pray for the children I start praying for the grandchildren that I'll never meet it's what she did when she was lying in her bed day after day she prayed she prayed for whole families she prayed for individuals by by name she prayed that generation after generation would be following

[51 : 08] Jesus that's a wonderful thing when we see it Paul here he mentions the name of Rufus who was chosen in the Lord verse 13 now who was this Rufus let me interest you to know that Rufus was probably the son of Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross for Jesus in Mark 15 verse 21 we're told that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus he was chosen to carry the cross of Jesus and now we're reading I believe about his son Rufus and his wife who was like a mother to Paul verse 13 what are they doing all this time further on how many years down the line 20 years down the line from the crucifixion what are they doing well they're taking up their cross and they're following Jesus just like Simon their father the husband did it's a blessing to see whole families brought together in Christ

I think it's something that we need to be praying for whole families in an age when we are so conscious of sustained attacks on the family as God designed it we need to be praying for families as I'm sure Simon of Cyrene was praying for his family as the old lady in lochs was praying for all the families in the villages around her and as I believe Paul prayed for the people and for the families that he was aware of in Rome maybe that's what he did when he was in prison for stretches he prayed that I think is how he could remember their names and write to them with such detail such warmth so personally Paul was a warm man of prayer so that takes us to the end of the of the greetings the greetings for Rome we see the gospel carrier in Phoebe we read of

Paul's greetings to Rome and thirdly here we have this grave warning which comes from Paul to the Romans verse 17 he says I urge you brothers to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned keep away from them for such people are not serving our Lord Christ but their own appetites by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people everyone has heard about your obedience so I am full of joy over you but I want you to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil now after the warmth of Paul's greetings this may come to some as a bit of a boat from the blue some of the commentators they are perplexed by the sudden change of tone in the letter Paul goes from the warmth and the personal nature of these greetings to a very sharp and grave warning

Kofi the commentator says there is such a change of mood that some commentators have doubted whether Paul could have written in such a style but we believe that he did write in such a style I don't think that's something that's up for debate I don't think actually that this change in tone at this point in the letter is actually very hard to figure at all if you listen to a parent speaking to their toddler child there is great warmth and there is great tenderness and love in the way that they speak to their little toddler child but if that child moves towards an open fire or if that child goes and picks up a sharp knife or if that child steps out onto the road immediately the parent will raise their voice and sound the warning get back they say watch out now why does a parent speak in that way sometimes well it's because the parent loves their child and doesn't want their child to come to any harm so there can be that change in tone almost instantaneously from a warm gentle loving tone to a sharp warning which still is driven by the same sense of love and care and Paul as he closes this letter he's aware of those who would seek to bring divisions into the fellowship now how could divisions come into the fellowship well verse 17 it's by teaching things that were contrary to the Bible that makes sense doesn't it divisions always come that way when somebody starts to teach something that's contrary to God's word there are divisions because there is only unity when we are grounded in scriptural truth and

Paul clearly is aware of some who are wanting to teach things that are contrary to the Bible he can see that there's division or the prospect of division so he says watch out for these people that will take you away from what I'm teaching you watch out for these people who will put obstacles in the way to following Jesus verse 17 keep away from them he says that's the nature of this grave warning I think it probably surprises us this kind of level of intolerance from the apostle Paul I think in our culture we tend to want to say well you know maybe there are people who are teaching things that are contrary but shouldn't we dialogue with them shouldn't we try to listen to what they're saying and have a discussion with them at least and Paul says here in this warning that he signs to the Romans he says no I have nothing to do with them be warned about them he says keep away from them but don't be scared of them verse 20 the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet the grace of our

[57 : 59] Lord Jesus Christ be with you and notice the paradox in that verse the God of peace is a God who crushes the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet we don't expect these two words to come into the same sentence the God of peace crushes and yet as we think about our salvation Jesus was crushed under the weight of our sin Jesus felt the crushing attacks of Satan but he overcame on the cross his grace was stronger than sin and Satan and death and hell he crushed sin Satan death and hell ultimately and eternally through what he did on that cross that's the gospel the God of peace although our sin crushed him in what he did he crushed our sin he crushed

Satan he crushed death he crushed hell and Paul is saying here any teaching that is contrary to what Jesus did for us on the cross any teaching that will take us away from the cross and away from who Jesus is no matter how smooth the talker may be no matter how nice the person who's presenting it may seem Paul is saying any teaching contrary to what I have given you in my gospel let it be crushed so that the grace of our Lord Jesus will be with you it's the third point it's the grave warning fourth point is we have greetings from Corinth verse 21 Timothy my fellow worker sends his greetings to you as to Lucius Jason and Suscipiter my relatives I Tertius who wrote this letter greet you in the

Lord and so on he goes down to the end of verse 23 Paul brings his greetings from Corinth he's identified the people that he wants to greet in Rome but now he identifies the people who are with him in Corinth and what we see here is we see teamwork we see when we think about the children's talk we see pieces in a jigsaw in Rome as they receive this letter they know that they are getting a letter from Paul but Paul is quick to say it's not just me I have fellow workers who are with me here in Corinth I have Timothy with me verse 21 Timothy was his son in the faith Timothy was one who was so close to the apostle Paul throughout his ministry he's a fellow worker with the apostle Paul as he sends these greetings from Corinth and then there's

Lucius and Jason and Suscipiter my relatives they weren't blood relatives Paul's blood relatives we believe disowned him because of his faith in Jesus he was cut off from his family but he finds a new family in Christ he sees these men as those who are eternally related to him as brothers in Christ they're with me says the apostle Paul they're part of my team then there's Tertius verse 22 which means three he was another member of the team that was around Paul it's kind of sad isn't it when you think about it when your parents don't give you a name but they give you a number because that's what his name meant it was just simply the number three and yet the Lord knew his name and the Lord gave him this important task of writing the letter scribing this letter that

Paul was dictating that the Holy Spirit was inspiring he's part of the team then verse 23 there's Gaius likely a man who was wealthy and who used his wealth to give hospitality to Paul and to many other Christians he was part of the team and then there was Erastus verse 23 who had an important job as the director of public works and then there was Quartus which means four I don't know was he the brother of Tertius but he also was brought alongside Paul as a fellow worker in the gospel and Paul together with his fellow workers he sends greetings from Corinth he introduces them to his team we have here a picture of what the church is we have different jobs some are more visible than others but all are needed and God sees everyone and God sees everything and I think that should encourage us if we are striving to serve God if we are team players if we are those who are on the field if we are those who are committed to gospel enterprise no one else might see what we're doing but God sees it and that should encourage us perhaps it should also challenge us as well in every game in every team effort there are spectators and perhaps there's a challenge here to the spectators

[64 : 05] God sees them too and the encouragement the instruction the challenge here is to get off the seat and get onto the park and play your part in the team that God mobilizes to go out with the gospel and the final point here time is long gone is glory to God verse 25 now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God so that all nations might believe and obey him to the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ Amen and that there was the that was the verse that was the goal that was the purpose of Paul's life

I think there's a picture that's going to be on the screen of a stick of rock remember these sticks of rock you used to be able to buy when you went to the beach and went away on holiday and going right to the core of the stick of rock was the message of where it was bought or whatever the manufacturer was it says on this bit of rock Brighton rock you could break at any point and that's the same picture it's the same message and that was like Paul running through the core of his being running through his whole life was that desire and that determination to bring glory to God to God be the glory we sang great things he hath done and that has been Paul's focus all the way through this letter he wants to bring glory to God and that's the note on which

Paul finishes he wants to bring glory to God that's the life story of the apostle that's the summary of this message to the Romans glory to God and that's the purpose of our lives man's chief end woman's chief end boy girl our chief end our main purpose if we are in Christ is to glorify him and to enjoy him forever amen his name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall man shall be blessed in heaven and blessed all nations shall him call now blessed be the

Lord our God the God of Israel for he alone does wondrous works in glory that excel and blessed be his glorious name to all eternity the whole earth let his glory fill amen so let it be and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of

God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forever more amen to