

Introduction

This was finals week for my son, Chad. On Wednesday, I asked Chad what he was working on, and it was his final for his sociology class. He had to watch a video on the social strata of different types of communities, and then write a paper on it. After listening to him, I told him that we had similar assignments this week. As I studied Romans 16, Paul greets people of different social backgrounds. He greets some who were slaves, but were part of the church in Rome. In their culture, they would never leave their social stratus, but in the church they were equal with everyone else, and they could rise to prominent positions. Paul greeted some who were of the noble class. He greeted men, and he greeted women. In fact, Paul mentions eight women in this passage. The letter he wrote was most likely being delivered by Phoebe, a deaconess in Cenchrea. Women did not have much social position, but in the church they held prominent positions. Paul greeted Jews and he also greeted Gentiles. He greeted apostles, elders, and deacons, and he also greeted those not in leadership roles. Paul's greetings included all the various groups of people, and they are all part of the church. Chad and I had similar assignments this week, only my assignment was based on Scripture, the word of God that performs its work in us who believe.

This morning we are going to run through all the greetings in the passage, looking at the names and what Paul said about them. Then, we will wrap up by looking at five lessons from Paul's greetings.

- I. Paul's greetings
- II. Five Lessons from Paul's greetings
 - a. Greetings are important
 - b. Paul lived for Christ
 - c. Paul connected with others
 - d. Paul loved and honored others
 - e. Paul saw the church as family

(Rom 16:1-16) "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; {2} that you receive her **in the Lord** in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well. {3} **Greet** Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers **in Christ Jesus**, {4} who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; {5} also **greet** the church that is in their house. **Greet** Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert **to Christ** from Asia. {6} **Greet** Mary, who has worked hard for you. {7} **Greet** Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were **in Christ** before me. {8} **Greet** Ampliatus, my beloved **in the Lord**. {9} **Greet** Urbanus, our fellow worker **in Christ**, and Stachys my beloved. {10} **Greet** Apelles, the approved **in Christ**. **Greet** those who are of the household of Aristobulus. {11} **Greet** Herodion, my kinsman. **Greet** those of the household of Narcissus, who are **in the Lord**. {12} **Greet** Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers **in the Lord**. **Greet** Persis the beloved, who has worked hard **in the Lord**. {13} **Greet** Rufus, a choice man **in the Lord**, also his mother and mine. {14} **Greet** Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren 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. All the churches **of Christ** greet you."

I. Paul's greetings

Last week we looked at Paul's greeting to Prisca and Aquila. These were Paul's fellow workers, and they had risked their lives to save Paul's neck. Paul and all the other churches were grateful for their ministry to the churches.

(Rom 16:3-5) “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, {4} who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; {5} also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.”

Priscilla and Aquila have been special to me for many years, but I wanted to share one quick story about their significance to me. At 6:15 AM On Tuesday, October 10, 2017, I was already at work and received a call from one of my instructors, who was teaching a class in Trinidad. His wife had taken a turn for the worse and had been taken to the hospital, and he needed to fly back home to Houston immediately. I made a couple of quick calls to look for available flights, and then called Karen and told her to pack my suitcase while I drove back home. She took me to the airport, and I made an emergency trip to Trinidad and Tobago. I flew to Dallas, then to New York LaGuardia. Then I took a shuttle bus to New York Kennedy Airport. Then, I caught a midnight flight to Trinidad. I arrived at 6:30 a.m. and was teaching at 8:00 a.m. As I waited for my flight out of Albuquerque, I began asking the Lord for some specific answers. I asked him what the name of the church that we were now planting in our home was to be called. I asked Him for clear vision and direction. The phrase, “Aquila and Prisca...with the church in their house,” kept going through my head. So, I turned to 1 Corinthians 16:19-20, and the Lord began to speak to me about our church. I opened up a new word document on my laptop and began to jot down my impressions from the text. I typed in authentic, connected, genuine, family, house, affection, warmth, relational, and fellowship. As I jotted down my various impressions and began to look at what I had written, there was one word that was used repeatedly and it stood out very clearly. It was the word, “Connection.” The early church was very connected relationally to each other. Let me read the two short verses to you.

(1 Cor 16:19-20) “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. {20} All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

I typed, “The name of our church is the Connection Church. Then, I typed in the vision of Connection Church. It is a church that is very connected. They were in the Lord and were connected to God. They were also connected relationally to one another. The Corinthian Church was related to the other NT churches. Our church would also be connected with other churches and work with them. The vision of Connection Church is to be a church that connects people with God and with one another. It will be a relational church. The Holy Spirit spoke the phrase, Aquila and Priscilla, to lead me to a passage that would answer my question about the name of our church.

Aquila and Priscilla planted several churches. They helped Paul plant the church in Corinth. Then, they planted a church in their home in Ephesus. Then, they moved back to Rome and planted another church in their home. We will see in the rest of our text that many churches met in homes. In fact, that was the most common place that churches met. The early church was devoted to the apostles' teaching, to prayer, to breaking of bread, and fellowship, and meeting in homes worked just fine. So, I have a special place in my heart for Priscilla and Aquila.

Paul also greeted Epaphroditus. His name meant “praised.” (Strong’s G1866). Paul call him beloved and that he was the first convert to Christ from Asia. Paul loves this man and has a special place in his heart for him. He was the first man to receive Christ in Asia, and this was a significant start for Paul and his ministry.

(Rom 16:5b) “Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.”

Paul’s next greeting is to Mary, who has worked hard for them. Mary’s name comes from the Hebrew word, marah, which means bitter. Many name books say it means “favored one.” This comes from Luke 1:28, where the angel said, “Greetings, favored one...” Paul has never been to Rome, and yet he knows about Mary and what she has done. Paul is keenly aware of everything that is going on. He did not have text messaging, email, Facetime, Twitter, snail mail, email, or phone service, yet he knew all about the people in Rome and what they had done. Some of the people Paul may have met in other places, but it is likely that all of his information came from Priscilla, Aquilla, Epaphroditus, Urbanus, Ampliatus, and others that he worked with.

(Rom 16:6) “Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.”

(Luke 1:28) “And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

There are a number of churches meeting in homes in Rome. Priscilla and Aquila had one in their home, but there were others. We do not know if Mary worked hard for one particular church or for all of them. Since the letter is to the saints in Rome, I lean towards the notion that she was serving all the churches in Rome. I believe she had a significant ministry that was benefitting all the churches in Rome.

Paul’s next greeting goes to two of his fellow Jews. They were not just fellow Jews, they were his kinsmen, meaning they were related to Paul. Andronicus is a compound word that means a victorious man. Nike was the Greek mythological god of victory. Even though he was a Jew, he had a Greek name. Junia or Junias is a Latin name, meaning born in June. The KJV has it as Junia, which is a feminine name. The NASB has it as Junias, which would be a man’s name. I lean towards Junia, meaning this was a woman. Some scholars believe that Andronicus and Junia were a husband-wife team, similar to Aquila and Priscilla, and I would lean towards that view.

(Rom 16:7) “Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.”

Paul said that they were his fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles. In their apostolic work of preaching the gospel, planting and establishing churches, they were imprisoned for their faith at the same time and place as Paul. He probably got to know them fairly well while imprisoned with them. He said that they were outstanding among the apostles. Many scholars say they were not apostles, but had an outstanding reputation with the apostles. I believe that this is incorrect. I believe they were outstanding apostles, and had been persecuted for their faith. The context fits this interpretation.

Paul also said that they were in Christ before him. Paul was born around 3 AD. (Scholars say it could be between 2 AD and 10 AD.) They place his conversion in 33 AD. Paul wrote this letter in 56-57 AD, which means that he has been serving the Lord for twenty-three or twenty-four years. Andronicus and Junia, have been faithfully serving the Lord longer than Paul. They are seasoned ministers of the gospel.

Paul's next greeting is to Ampliatus, who he refers to as, "my beloved in the Lord." Ampliatus is a Latin name, which means to be enlarged. The name, Ampliatus, is found in inscriptions of Caesar's household. It is possible that he had been a slave of Caesar at one time, or was still a slave of Caesar's household. Ampliatus is considered by historians and church scholars to have been one of the seventy disciples that Jesus sent out in Luke 10. If that is true, then Ampliatus received a lot of training from the Lord, and would be a tremendous resource to the church in Rome. Paul calls him, "my beloved." I believe that Paul knows Ampliatus and has a deep love and admiration for him.

(Rom 16:8) **Greet** Ampliatus, my beloved **in the Lord.**"

In the Roman culture, noblemen had three names and slaves only had one name. Noblemen would never give or take a name that was used for slaves. The catacombs in Rome and Domatia indicate that Ampliatus was a slave name. Therefore, Ampliatus was a slave that had become a believer. In Christ we are all one, male and female, slave and free, Jew and Gentile. (Gal 3:28) In the church a slave could attain a prominent position, where in the Roman culture, a slave could never do that. The fact that Ampliatus had been a slave or was a slave did not matter to Paul; he had a love for this man of God.

Paul's next greeting is to Urbanus, which means city dweller. Similar to Ampliatus, this was a common slave name, so he was also a slave or former slave. Paul refers to Urbanus as our fellow worker in Christ. The Greek word for fellow worker was sunergos (Strong's G4904), which means to be joined together for work. Paul and Urbanus were joined together in the Lord's work. He is one of Paul's team members, which speaks highly of his character and faithfulness.

(Rom 16:9) "**Greet** Urbanus, our fellow worker **in Christ**, and Stachys my beloved."

Paul greets Stachys with Urbanus, so he is probably working with Urbanus and Paul. Stachys is a man's name, and it means, fruitful, rich in grain, or abundant in grain. Stachys is one of three people that Paul calls, "my beloved." It is highly unlikely to say this about a person that you have not met and become close friends, so Paul probably knew Stachys.

The tenth person that Paul greets is Apelles. His name means separation. The root word means to threaten or a threat, so it refers to someone who has separated because of a threat. **The Smith Bible Dictionary says that his name meant called.** He was said to have been of the seventy that Jesus sent out. He was also said to have been the bishop (pastor) of Smyrna or Heraclea (AD 55).

(Rom 16:10) "**Greet** Apelles, the approved **in Christ**. **Greet** those who are of the household of Aristobulus."

Paul said that he is approved in Christ. The word approved is dokimos (Strong's G1384), which means approved or tried. The Scriptures give several different ways that we become approved by God. In James 1:12, we are approved after we have persevered under trial. It is likely that Apelles had been through some trials and Paul's word about being approved is an encouraging affirmation to him.

(James 1:12) "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

Another way that we are approved by God is by accurately handling the word of truth. In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul wrote, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. It is also very likely that Apelles was an excellent teacher, who rightly divided the word of God. Since he was said to have been the bishop or pastor of Smyrna, a teaching gift would certainly have been important.

(2 Tim 2:15) "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."

A third way of being approved is through being a peacemaker. In 1 Corinthians 11:18-19, there were some divisions in the church. Those divisions made it very evident who was approved and who was not approved. Similarly, in Romans 14:18, Paul said that those who did not put an obstacle in a brother's way and did not offend others was acceptable to God and approved by men. So, learning to pursue things that make peace is another way of finding approval by God. Apelles was probably a good teacher of the word, and had gone through some trials, and is approved by God.

(1 Cor 11:18-19) "For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. {19} For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you."

(Rom 14:18-19) “For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. {19} So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

Paul also greeted those of the household of Aristobulus. His name means “best counselor.” Dr. William Barclay, an excellent commentator, said that Aristobulus may have been the grandson of King Herod the Great. He was apparently a very close friend to Emperor Claudius. When Aristobulus died, his household became the property of the new emperor, Nero. Dr. Barclay believes that the household of Aristobulus is the family, servants, and slaves of Aristobulus that were now under Nero. Apparently, many in the household had become Christians and were part of one of the churches in Rome.¹

(Rom 16:10) “Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.”

Next, Paul greets Herodion, who is another relative of Paul. His name means song of the heroic one, or a hero. It is believed that he had some kind of connection with the family of Herod.

(Rom 16:11) “Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.”

Paul's next greeting is to the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. Notice that Paul did not greet Narcissus and his household, but those of the household of Narcissus. It is believed that Narcissus, who became wealthy by serving as the personal secretary of Emperor Claudius. In order for people to get through to Claudius, they had to grease his palms, which is still the way it works in many government offices. Emperor Claudius was murdered and Nero took over, and when he did, he also took over the household of Narcissus. He forced Narcissus and many others

¹ <https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/romans/all-in-the-family>

to commit suicide. Paul's greeting indicates that there were a number of believers in his Narcissus' household.

Paul's next greetings went to two ladies that were thought to be twins. Tryphaena is mentioned first and her name means delicate or delicious. Tryphosa's name means dainty. This pair of ladies were delicate and dainty. Paul said that they are workers in the Lord. Paul does not say what kind of work they did, but it appears that they had some official duties in the church in Rome.

(Rom 16:12) “Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.”

Along with these twins, Paul greets Persis. Persis means a woman from Persia, so she is probably a Persian woman that lived in Rome. Paul calls her beloved, and that she had worked hard in the Lord. Paul had a great deal of love and respect for this woman, who had worked hard in the Lord. Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis may have worked hard evangelizing people. They may have worked hard discipling younger women. We don't know the work these three did, but it had obviously caught the attention and respect of Paul.

Paul's next greeting is to Rufus, a choice man in the Lord. Rufus is a Latin name, and means red, red-haired, or somber. We do not know for sure, but most scholars believe that this is the same Rufus mentioned in Mark 15:21. When Jesus was carrying His cross to Calvary, the Roman soldiers ordered Simon of Cyrene to help carry the cross. Simon had two sons, Alexander and Rufus. If this is the same Rufus, the church in Rome were privileged to have Rufus, the son of Simon of Cyrene, in their midst.

(Rom 16:13) “Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.”

(Mark 15:21) “They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.”

Paul's next greeting goes to six named people and then the brethren with them. This is obviously a church in Rome, and these are the leaders of that church. The first person mentioned is Asyncritus, whose name means incomparable or without comparison. Since he is mentioned first, it is likely that he is the leader of this team of elders. The second person is Phlegon, whose name means to burn brightly or to shine like a fire. The third person is Hermes, is named after the Greek mythological god, who was a messenger of the gods. He was supposedly the son of Zeus and the Pleiad Maia. Hermes probably had nothing to do with this pagan god, but it shows that he grew up in a Greek culture, and is obviously a Gentile believer.

(Rom 16:14) “Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them.”

Patrobas is the next person mentioned with this group of church leaders. His name means the life of his father. I imagine that many sons are the life of their fathers. Many people today do not know the love and affection of a father. I am blessed to have had a great relationship with my father, and he always wanted the best for me.

Hermas is the last man mentioned on this leadership team. His name means a pile or heap of stones. Hermas was considered to be one of the seventy disciples that Jesus sent out in Luke 10.

If the historians are correct, there were a total of four people among the saints in Rome that had been chosen and sent out by Jesus. They knew Jesus personally, and were probably among the five hundred brethren that saw Him after He was resurrected. (The four people that are said to be of the seventy are: Priscilla, Ampliatus, Apelles, and Hermas.)

Paul also greets the brethren that are with these leaders. When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, he addressed the elders, the deacons, and the saints. We don't know which of the leaders above are elders, and which, if any, are deacons, but it is likely that this list included the elders, deacons, and the brethren with them.

(Phil 1:1) “Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:”

Paul's last group that he greets is another congregation, led by Philologus and Julia. Philologus is a compound word that means a lover of words, or someone who loves to talk. Julia is probably his wife, and her name means youthful. This is another husband-wife team that is leading a church in Rome. Paul also greets Nereus and his sister, even though her name is not mentioned. Nereus means water or aquatic. The last person mentioned is Olympas. His name meant heavenly, and it comes from Mount Olympus, the fabled home of the Greek mythological gods. Paul also greets the saints that are with them.

(Rom 16:15) “Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.”

After greeting these twenty-six individuals and the brethren with them, Paul gives a brief exhortation of how to greet one another. He tells them to greet one another with a holy kiss. That was an affectionate way of greeting one another. Paul said a holy kiss, so there is no hint of any other motive when people greeted one another with a holy kiss. Having grown up overseas, it was very common in Europe and the Middle East for people to greet one another with a kiss. Most of the time it would be a kiss on the cheek of the other person. Sometimes, someone would kiss the hand of the other person. In America, the most common greeting is a handshake or a hug. Paul ends with a greeting from all of the churches of Christ.

(Rom 16:16) “Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.”

II. Five Lessons from Paul's greetings

In concluding today, I want to look at five lessons from Paul's greetings. There are some significant things that we can glean from this rich passage. All Scripture is inspired by God, so Romans 16 is not here by accident. “All Scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

(2 Tim 3:16–17) “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; {17} so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

a. Greetings are important

Romans 16 has been given that we might learn the importance of greeting. Paul used the word, greet, eighteen times, so it is obviously about his greeting to all the saints in Rome. In verse sixteen, he tells us how to greet one another. He had already given eighteen examples of what we should include in a greeting. Our greetings need to edify and honor others. Our greetings need to express our love and appreciation for people. Since our greetings are important, we need to give thought to them, and not take them for granted.

b. Paul lived for Christ (Rom 1:1, Phil 1:21, Rom 16:1-16)

It is clear from this passage that Paul lived for Christ. In the passage, there are twelve references about in the Lord, or in Christ Jesus, or of Christ. Everything is about in Christ. When Paul started this lengthy letter to the Romans, he wrote, “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus...” All of Paul's greetings are to people in Christ. His relationships and his conversations are about Christ. In Philippians 1:21, Paul wrote, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” It is obvious that Paul is living for Christ.

(Rom 1:1) “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,”

(Phil 1:21) “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

(Rom 16:1-16) “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; {2} that you receive her **in the Lord** in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well. {3} **Greet** Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers **in Christ Jesus**, {4} who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; {5} also **greet** the church that is in their house. **Greet** Epænetus, my beloved, who is the first convert **to Christ** from Asia. {6} **Greet** Mary, who has worked hard for you. {7} **Greet** Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were **in Christ** before me. {8} **Greet** Ampliatus, my beloved **in the Lord**. {9} **Greet** Urbanus, our fellow worker **in Christ**, and Stachys my beloved. {10} **Greet** Apelles, the approved **in Christ**. **Greet** those who are of the household of Aristobulus. {11} **Greet** Herodion, my kinsman. **Greet** those of the household of Narcissus, who are **in the Lord**. {12} **Greet** Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers **in the Lord**. **Greet** Persis the beloved, who has worked hard **in the Lord**. {13} **Greet** Rufus, a choice man **in the Lord**, also his mother and mine. {14} **Greet** Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren 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. All the churches **of Christ** greet you.”

Is your life about Christ? Are your conversations about Christ? Are you living and breathing for Christ? We can learn from Paul's example and his greetings to the saints in Rome.

c. Paul connected with others

The second thing that we clearly see in this passage is that Paul connects with others. He has never been to Rome, but he has just named twenty-six people in his greetings to them. Paul knows them by name. He knows what they have done and are doing. He is connected with the saints in many different ways. Some of the saints mentioned were wealthy and born into nobility; and others were slaves or came out of a slave background. Some of the people he greeted were

male, and eight were female. Some of the people he greeted were Gentiles, and others were Jews. Paul connected with people from all different social and economic backgrounds. He connected with people.

Paul had a passion for raising up leaders. As an apostle, that is a focus of his ministry. Paul greeted all these various leaders in the churches in Rome. Many of these leaders had teamed up with Paul, and he calls them fellow workers. Paul connected with the saints and with the leaders. Paul also connected with churches. He greeted several different churches in Rome and the leaders of those churches. He ended with a greeting from all the churches to the church in Rome. Paul connected with lots of different churches.

One of the ways that I try to connect with people is by their name. Names are important, and when you call someone by name and remember their name, that means a lot to them. I frequently ask people what their name is and if they know the meaning of it. Most people do not know the meaning of their names, and for most of them, I can tell them the meaning of their names. It helps me remember their names.

Another thing that helps me remember the names of people is by praying for them. When I pray through the list of people that I am trying to connect with, my memory gets refreshed. I will often ask them about whatever I have been praying for them, and it helps me connect and stay connected with them.

Do you connect with people? Do you find ways to reach out and connect with people? God wants us to love Him and love one another. The greatest commandment is to love Him and the second greatest is to love our neighbor. We have to connect with God and we have to connect with other people. How well are you connecting with others?

d. Paul loved and honored others

We learn from Paul's greetings how he loved people. He calls Epaenetus, "my beloved." He calls Persis, "the beloved." He tells them to greet one another with a holy kiss. His affection for people is very evident in these greetings. Jesus said that we will be known as His disciples when we love one another (John 13:34-35).

Paul's words honored people. Honoring people is another way of loving them. He found positive things to say about people. He commended Phoebe, who had helped him and many others (Rom 16:1-2). He commended Prisca and Aquila for risking their lives to save his neck (Rom 16:4). He honored Mary, saying that she had worked hard for them (Rom 16:6). He said that Andronicus and Junia were outstanding among the apostles (Rom 16:7). That had to build them up. He said that Apelles was approved in Christ (Rom 16:10). That is a great commendation coming from Paul. He mentioned that Tryphaena and Tryphosa were workers in the Lord, and that Persis had worked hard in the Lord (Rom 16:12). I am sure that they were edified by those words that recognized their hard work. Paul found ways to edify and build up others. He honored them with his words.

Are you known by your love for others? Do you tell people you love them? Do you lay your life down for others (John 15:13)? Do your actions demonstrate to people that you love them? Would people know that you are a disciple of Christ by your love?

We live in a day where people tear down one another. Most of us are fed up with politics because of how the politicians tear into one another. God tells us not to slander or gossip. He tells us not

to allow any word to proceed from our mouth that does not edify and give grace to those who hear (Eph 4:29). Paul's words edified and gave grace. How are your words? Do you find things that will edify and build up others? The writer of Hebrews, and it may have been Paul, said that we need to consider how to stimulate one another to good deeds, and to encourage one another. That means that we have to give some thought about what we can say that will honor and build up others. That is what Paul did, and this passage is a great example of this.

e. Paul saw the church as family

We also see that Paul saw the church as a family. Many today see the church as a business or an organization, but Paul saw it as the family of God. He introduced Phoebe to the Romans as "our sister." He said to greet Rufus and his mother and mine. This was not Paul's real mother. Scholars say that he had treated her like a spiritual mother. He mentioned the brethren that are with Asyncritus and his team. Sisters, brethren, and mothers are all family names. Then, he told them to greet one another with a holy kiss, something that family members would do when they greeted one another. Paul also told the Romans to help Phoebe with any need that she might have. Families help one another with any needs that they might have. Paul saw the church as a family.

How do you see the church? Do you see it as a religious organization? Do you see it as a place to get fed and to hear some great worship music, or do you see it as a family? Do you try to spend time with your family? Do you treat the other members in your church as family? God wants us to see ourselves as brothers and sisters in Christ, part of the family of God. He wants us to treat one another as family members.

When Paul wrote Timothy, he told him how we are to treat one another. He said that we are to treat older men like fathers, and older women like mothers. He said we are to treat young women like sisters. We are to honor widows and take care of them. The church is a family and that is how we are to see and treat one another.

Do you have a church home? The Connection Church is going to be starting live services in the next few months. We are looking for those that want to connect with us and be part of our church family. If you would like to know more about being part of the Connection Church of Rome, please speak to me about your desire.

Prayer

Father, thank You for this passage of greetings. Thank You for giving us a glimpse of the people and the churches in Rome. Thank You for the example of Paul? Father, help us to connect with one another like Paul did. Help us to love one another, which is the perfect bond of unity. Help us to honor one another with our words, and to build up one another. Help us to appreciate the labor and hard work of others. Help us to see the church as a family and to relate to one another as family members. No matter how much we grow as a church body, help us always to be a family that loves and cares for one another. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Q & A

- How did Paul know so much about so many people and churches in a city that he had never been to?

- How did Paul remember all these names and what each of them had done? What are things that you do to help you remember?
- Paul was a team builder, and had many “fellow workers.” (sunergos) What are the things in Paul's greetings that help people build leadership teams?
- Why did God include a whole section of greetings? What was God teaching you out of this passage? What are the applications for your life?
- If Paul was writing about you, what would he commend you for? What would he say about the people around you?

Introduction (Rom 16:1-16)**I. Paul's greetings**

(Rom 16:1-16, 1 Cor 16:19-20,

- Prisca, Aquila, Epaenetus (Rom 16:3-5)
- Mary (Rom 16:6)
- Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16:7)
- Ampliatus (Rom 16:8)
- Urbanus, Stachys (Rom 16:9)
- Apelles, household of Aristobulus (Rom 16:10, James 1:12, 2 Tim 2:15, 1 Cor 11:18-19, Rom 14:18-19)
- Herodion, household of Narcissus (Rom 16:11)
- Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Rom 16:12)
- Rufus and his mother (Rom 16:13, Mark 15:21)
- Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas (Rom 16:14)
- Philologus, Julia, Nereus, Olympas (Rom 16:15)

II. Five Lessons from Paul's greetings

- a. **Greetings are important** (2 Tim 3:16, Rom 16:3-16)
- b. **Paul lived for Christ** (Rom 1:1, Phil 1:21, Rom 16:1-16)
- c. **Paul connected with others**
- d. **Paul love and honored others** (Rom 16:1-2, 16:4, 16:6, 16:7, 16:10, 16:12, John 13:34-35, Eph 4:29)
- e. **Paul saw the church as family**