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What Kind of Church Would This Church Be?

Romans 16:1-16

INTRO: As we read through Romans 16:1-16, we find many names: names of Paul's Christian friends, names of Gospel workers, names of participators not spectators.

Those who are lovingly mentioned in these verses were part of the churches at Rome, not the Roman Catholic Church. It did not begin until hundreds of years after the book of Romans was written.

A church is no stronger than the members that make up that church. The churches at Rome are a powerhouse for Gospel preaching because of the faithfulness of their memberships. The Elliott Baptist Church is only as strong as you are. Let me ask this question: "What kind of church would this church be if every member was just like you?"

May the Lord give us wisdom to learn from the faithful members of the churches at Rome.

I. VSS 1-2, A SISTER COMMENDED

A. Vs 1, The first two verses of Romans sixteen commend a devoted Christian lady name Pheba.

1. "Commended"-- she is commended to the church at Rome by Paul.
 - a) Commended to their fellowship, a practice used then and now (II Cor 3:1). We call this granting a letter.
 - b) Commended to their love, watch care, and protection.
 - (1) In the ancient world, it was necessary to protect folks from crooks and thieves.
 - (2) The inns at the time were few and far between and usually connected with taverns and brothels.
 - (3) The safe place to stay was with a friend or in the care of believers+with other believers.
2. "Phebe"-- her name means "bright and radiant." It is the heathen name for "Moon." She was probably saved from heathenism.
 - a) Her name seems to describe her radiant personality and her vibrant Christian life.
 - b) How would people describe your Christian life? As a grump or as a radiant child of God?
3. "Servant"-- she was a servant of the church at Cenchrea. Cenchrea was Corinth's seaport situated on the Saronic Gulf. Paul had sailed from here a few years before on the way to Ephesus (Acts 18:18). The church at Corinth

seems to have been the mother church of the church at Cenchrea.

- a) Phebe was a “servant,” Greek *diakonos*. We get our English word deacon from this word.
- b) The role of a woman servant was to:
 - (1) Care for believers who were sick.
 - (2) Care for the poor, especially believers.
 - (3) Care for travelers passing through.
- c) Are women today so caught up in their own lives that they have no time to care for others?

B. Vs 2, Paul tells the church at Rome to receive Phebe. She was to be received into the fellowship of the church. Could it be that some of you here today needed to be a part of this fellowship.

1. “As becometh saints”+she was to be received as true and faithful believer.
 - a) Christians are to care for one another, to love one another.
 - b) The fellowship of the church is different from that of the world.
2. It seems that Phebe had a business matter to take care of, and Paul tells the church to help her out.
3. “She hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also.”
 - a) She had helped many.
 - (1) She used her time.
 - (2) She used her money.
 - (3) She used her hands and feet.
 - b) How about you? Do you help others? Is this church better because of you?

II. VSS 3-15, THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

A. In this section, several things are evident:

1. The Christian home is very important. Some had churches in their home.
2. The Christian woman is shown to be very important to Gospel work (nine of the twenty-six people greeted are women.)

B. Vss 3-5a, Priscilla and Aquila

1. Vs 3, “Helpers in Christ Jesus.”
 - a) They are in Christ+saved. “In union with Christ and His cause” (Robinson 319).
 - b) “Helpers”
 - (1) Fellow workers in spreading the Gospel.
 - (2) We see the privilege of private Christians to help God’s servants.
2. Vs 4, They had put their lives in harms way to protect Paul’s life. “From a human perspective, they prevented Paul’s life and ministry from being cut short before he had fulfilled his role in God’s plan” (MacArthur 363).

a) Love for God and His work causes us to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren (I John 3:16).

b) Paul gave thanks for their lives, and so did the church of the Gentiles.

(1) Gratefulness is a needed virtue.

(2) To be ungrateful is to be ungracious.

3. Vs 5a, One of the churches met in the home of Priscilla and Aquila.

a) It was not until the third century that church buildings were erected.

b) The church is not a building. It is a congregation of baptized believers covenanted together to carry out the great commission.

C. Vs 5b, This man was Paul's first convert in Asia. Paul preached the Gospel and this man was saved. Paul was pleased that Epaenetus was now a member of the church at Rome.

D. Vs 6, Mary was a laborer, a hard worker.

1. She toiled to the point of weariness and exhaustion.

2. We need folks like Mary who will burn out rather than rust out.

E. Vs 7, "Kinsmen"+Jews for sure and possibly relatives of Paul. What a joy to see relatives saved!

1. "Fellow prisoners"+they were prisoners for the faith. This was not uncommon then.

2. "Who are of note among the Apostles."

a) Of note because of their work for God.

b) Of note because of their support of God's work.

c) Of note because of faithfulness+they had been saved for a long time.

3. "Were in Christ before me." Saved before Paul+ there is no eternal justification here! They heard and believed the Gospel before Paul did.

F. Vs 8, Amplias was a common name among slaves.

1. This beloved saint had been or was a slave.

2. Caesar had many slaves, and it could be that he was one of the believers in Caesar's household (Phil 4:22).

G. Vs 9, Urbane was a common Roman name suggesting he was a saved Roman citizen. He was a helper not a hinderer. Friend, help the work; don't hinder it!

1. Stachys means "ear of corn." It is a Greek name.

2. "Our helper in Christ" could indicate that Urbane was involved in evangelism thus close to Paul's heart.

H. Vs 10, Paul here salutes Apelles and the saints of Atristobulus household.

1. "Apelles" is said to be "approved in Christ."

a) He had been tried and tested. He had gone through the fire, tried

as precious metals are, and had come out pure.

b) Some do not pass. They quit when tests come! Stay by the stuff!
Don't quit!

2. "Aristobulus household."

a) Aristobulus was probably a rich man with many slaves.

b) In this household, there were believers men, women, boys, and girls who had heard the Gospel and come to Christ.

I. Vs 11, Paul salutes Herodion and greet those of the household of Narcissus.

1. Herodion+a fellow countryman of Paul and a physical kinsman and now a spiritual kinsman. His name indicates a relationship to the Herod family.

2. Narcissus, like Aristobulus, was probably unsaved! Yet, within his house were saved slaves who served the Lord Jesus Christ.

J. Vs 12, This verse commends three ladies.

1. Tryphena and Tryphosa.

a) Probably twin sisters.

b) Faithful labors.

c) Their names mean "delicate and dainty"; but in the work of God, they labored.

2. "Persis"+she probably got her name from her homeland of Persia.

a) "The beloved"-- the definite article indicates she was loved by everyone!

b) It is good to have a few like her in the churches.

K. Vs 13, Rufus and his mother are greeted by Paul.

1. "Rufus" is called chosen in the Lord.

a) All believers are God's elect, chosen.

b) The word chosen used here probably means that Rufus was a choice servant of God, excellent in his life and labors.

c) Scholars believe that Rufus is the son of Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross of Jesus (Mark 15:21).

2. "His mother and mine." She was a believer; she was not Paul's nature mother but had cared for him as a mother would and was thus honored.

L. Vs 14, Little is known of these five men. "The brethren which are with them," speaks of members of the same house church.

M. Vs 15, Greetings are sent to another assembly in Rome.

III. VS 16, GREETINGS FROM ALL THE CHURCHES

A. "Salute one another with an holy kiss."

1. Common and traditional in Old Testament times.

2. Mainly on forehead or beard. On the mouth only if husband and wife or

close relative, not romantic.

3. Believers were often cast out of their families, thus their church family became precious.

4. Our church family ought to be precious to us today.

B. "The churches of Christ salute you." True churches throughout the ages have saluted and prayed for each other.

CONCLUSION: Is your life as a Christian commendable?