

**Title: The Power of Gospel-Powered People**

**Text: Romans 16:1-24**

What is the church?

The church is NOT a business. The church is an organism. And the makeup of this organism is people. Every person that is a part of a local church an individual person who possesses God-given talents and Spiritual gifts for the enhancement of this body for the glory of God and the furtherance of His gospel. We are Gospel-Powered People.

*Alas! Much has been done of late to promote the production of dwarfish Christians. Poor, sickly believers turn the church into a hospital, rather than an army. Oh, to have a church built up with the deep godliness of people who know the Lord in their very hearts, and will seek to follow the Lamb wherever he goes! -Charles Spurgeon*

This is a rather bleak assessment from the Prince of Preacher for an organism he gave his life to serve.

Unfortunately, in many cases, Spurgeon is correct. Not only in his time but ours as well.

But is it possible to be a community of Gospel-Powered People? An army for the Lord?

Yes, and Paul was writing to one.

As he closes this important letter, he doesn't simply give a general sweeping farewell. Instead, he identifies individuals who made a difference in his life!

After all, it is individuals empowered by the Holy Spirit that make up the corporate body of Christ.

And so we can learn from Paul...

**Main Idea: Celebrate The Individual People at Your Church**

How?

**1. Be An Encourager In Your Church (vs. 1-16)**

**Romans 16:1-16 ESV**

*I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.*

*Greet **Prisca and Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,*

*who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.*

*Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved **Epaen-etus**, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.*

*Greet **Mary**, who has worked hard for you.*

*Greet **An-dron-icus** and **Junia**, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the*

*apostles, and they were in Christ before me.*

*Greet **Am-plia-tus**, my beloved in the Lord.*

*Greet **Ur-banus**, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved **Sta-chys**.*

*Greet **A-pell-es**, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of **Ari-stob-ulus**.*

*Greet my kinsman **He-rod-ion**. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of **Nar-cis-sus**.*

*Greet those workers in the Lord, **Try-phaena** and **Try-phosa**. Greet the beloved **Per-sis**, who has worked hard in the Lord.*

*Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.*

*Greet **A-syn-critus**, **Phle-gon**, **Hermes**, **Pa-trob-as**, **Her-mas**, and the brothers who are with them.*

*Greet **Philo-logus**, **Julia**, **Ne-re-us** and his sister, and **Olympas** and all the saints who are with them.*

*Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.*

Paul mentions various individuals, honoring their contributions.

We must recognize and celebrate the diverse roles within the church, from prominent leaders to those often unseen. Each person's unique contribution strengthens the body of Christ.

This is the longest list of any of Paul's letters. He mentioned 26 people by name and referred to many others. Please note there are several women included in the list.

1st Century Christianity lifted women up did not subjugate them down.

1. Phoebe - Bright, radiant, diakonon "Great help to Paul and many."
2. Prisca and Aquila - Paul became friends with this couple on his second missionary journey recorded in [Acts 18:2](#). They were fellow tentmakers with Paul. They were also the couple that taught Apollos about the way of God more accurately.
3. E-paen-etus - He was the first convert to Christianity on Paul's third missionary journey to the province of Asia.
4. Mary - A hardworking female Jew.
5. An-dronicus - Paul's kinsmen, probably tribal, not family. Most likely the husband of Junia.
6. Junia - and Andronicus were standouts or esteemed by the apostles. Christians longer than Paul - about 25 years.
7. Am-pliat-us - Loved by Paul. NIV says, "Dear Friend of Paul."
8. Ur-banus - Fellow worker with Paul
9. Stach-ys - dear friend, literally, loved by me.
10. A-pell-es – tested and approved

## Romans: Unashamed - Building the Church through the Gospel

11. Aristob-ulus - The whole family is greeted by Paul. Possibly a grandson of Herod the Great.
12. Herodion - a tribal relation. Another possible relative of Herod the Great.
13. Nar-cis-sus - The household. This family is possibly divided spiritually because Paul specifically greets those “who are in the Lord.”
14. Try-phaena - (woman) possibly sisters with Tryphosa
15. Try-phosa - (woman) These sisters were hard workers for Christ. I wonder what that means from the Lord’s perspective.
16. Persis – a dear friend of Paul and here is another woman who was a hard worker for Christ.
17. Rufus - chosen in the Lord - Possibly the son of Simon of Cyrene

### **Mark 15:21 ESV**

*And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.*

18. his mother - So close was she to Paul, he considered her to be his mother as well.
19. A-sync-ritus – the next five names mentioned had something in common. They could have been leaders in a Roman house church. These are all common names, particularly among slaves. the Lord’s people
20. Phle-gon – the Lord’s people
21. Hermes – the Lord’s people
22. Pa-trob-as – the Lord’s people
23. Her-mas - the Lord’s people
24. the brothers and sisters with them - This indicates they may be part of a separate Roman house church.
25. Philo-log-us – Husband of Julia
26. Julia – the Lord’s people
27. Ner-eus – the Lord’s people
28. and his sister – the Lord’s people
29. Olympas - the Lord’s people.
30. all the saints who are with them - other believers in another house church in Rome.

Paul may have been a type “A” personality. A real “get it done” kind of Guy. But, based on what we see here, no one could accuse him of not being a people person. He loved people, especially

those who God had chosen to work for Christ. He was no “Lone Ranger,” he acknowledged, celebrated, and encouraged those who served the Lord together with him.

How would Paul celebrate you if he wrote a letter to ABC?

What are you doing to further the mission of God through this church?

If you are in Christ, you bring a contribution to this church, and I thank God for you! Don't sit on it; use it for His glory!

Looking at the negative within the church body is too easy and quite lazy.

In fact, we are admonished by Paul, to think the best of people because we are called to love people.

### **1 Corinthians 13:4–7 ESV**

*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

People are sinners, and they are quite capable of making unwise decisions - we ought not to be surprised about this.

Our response should be to not make it about ourselves - in other words, I should not be personally offended at someone's sin, I should instead love them and help free them from the bondage of the sin they are in.

### **Galatians 6:1–2 ESV**

*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Paul was an encourager. He appreciated people and let them know about it. He even wanted to greet them with a holy kiss.

Now, I know that the holy kiss sounds strange to our ears, but some cultures, even today, greet one another with such a practice.

Don't miss the point here. Paul loves the people in the Church of Rome. They have impacted him personally and his ministry holistically in powerful ways. And Paul wants them to understand that he appreciates their contribution.

Think about it: this letter Paul wrote includes all these names that will forever be celebrated because Paul saw fit to mention them in this text. God's word is forever, and so they will be listed forever. Pretty amazing.

There is something we can learn from the great apostle. Paul couldn't have accomplished much apart from the support he received from fellow believers in Christ.

The same is true of us. It is the profoundly proud person who takes all the credit and forgets to recognize those who have helped along the way.

This church needs more of Paul's kind of spirit.

Speak encouragement into the lives of those around you. Lose the West-Michigan stoicism and find ways to speak love and appreciation into one another's lives.

Can you imagine what kind of church we would be if we were known for loving conversation that builds up and refuses to tear down?

We would be an oasis of joy!

**Review:** Celebrate The Individual People at Your Church

- Be an encourager in your church

## **2. Be Careful of Divisive People in Your Church (vs. 17-20)**

Paul had a shepherd's heart. Now, to be clear, the heart of a shepherd isn't just about the encouragement of the believers in the body...

A shepherd's heart is also concerned with the protection of the flock and the unity of the body.

And so in [Romans 16:17-20](#), Paul warns against divisive individuals. Take a look...

### **Romans 16:17-20 ESV**

*<sup>17</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. <sup>18</sup> For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. <sup>19</sup> For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. <sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

Paul urges the church at Rome to be careful, to watch out for those that would come in and wreak havoc on the church body. How do they cause trouble?

By messing with Doctrine.

What is doctrine? Doctrine means teaching.

**Jesus is passionate about doctrine! There are two reasons this is true...**

1. He is doctrine. [John 1:1](#)

### **John 1:1 ESV**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

2. He commands doctrine as part of His Great Commission

**Matthew 28:19–20 ESV**

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.** And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

The Word of God commands that his disciples teach doctrine. By the way, this assumes they know doctrine.

*The Devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the Church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them. Providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the Church. The need is biblical doctrine, so understood and felt that it sets men afire. – Charles Spurgeon*

Elders of ABC, you must know doctrine. You are charged with the protection of this body. Un-doctrinal views are not welcome here and you must help this body be protected from aberrant and wicked views that are being promulgated today.

Church, you too must know and love doctrine! Knowing doctrine well is your best defense against the evil One and his sneaky tactics.

Paul’s admonition to the church regarding those who are contrary to sound doctrine?

“TURN AWAY FROM THEM!”

Why? Look at verse 18...

**Romans 16:18 ESV**

*For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

Folks, whom you listen to, to whom you subject your mind will have an impact on your walk with the Lord. Be careful!

Paul’s point is to be careful regarding who comes into this congregation. We ought not to lay our hands on someone quickly, but instead, do a thorough job knowing who they are and what they believe.

Principle - We welcome everyone, but we do not learn doctrine from everyone.

By the way, there are other ways we can invite false teaching into our lives and we must be careful.

Podcasts, online sermons, and books are all wonderful resources. My books are some of my best teachers. However, you must be discerning about what you allow into your ears and eyes. The best rule for you is always square what you read and hear with the Scriptures. This was the wise practice of the Bereans in [Acts 17](#).

**Acts 17:10–11 ESV**

## Romans: Unashamed - Building the Church through the Gospel

*The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*

Do you know the best way to determine if something is false? KNOW THE TRUTH!

*“The best way to show that a stick is crooked is not to argue about it or to spend time denouncing it, but to lay a straight stick alongside it.” —D. L. Moody*

The church at Rome was a good church! They had a significant and good reputation for obedience. And for this, Paul had great joy.

But, he wanted them to be on guard.

### **Romans 16:18 ESV**

*For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

Why would Paul want them to be on guard?

Did you know that Satan HATES the church? Hates you, hates anything to do with God.

It would stand to reason then that Satan hates Jesus' bride, the church. And he will do whatever he can do to hamper, hinder, and hijack the mission of God.

He knows he can't stop the church.

### **Matthew 16:18 ESV**

*And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

But he can mess with it pretty well by sending wolves among the sheep!

By causing divisions.

By encouraging the Saints of God to live by their flesh instead of by God's Spirit.

But yet, Paul warns them.

But he also encourages them. The reality of evil and Satan is a temporary situation that will one day come to a glorious end.

### **Romans 16:20 ESV**

*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

### **No More Night**

## Romans: Unashamed - Building the Church through the Gospel

*The timeless theme, Earth and Heaven will pass away  
It's not a dream, God will make all things new that day  
Gone is the curse from which I stumbled and fell  
Evil is banished to eternal hell*

*No more night, no more pain  
No more tears, never crying again  
And praises to the great, "I am"  
We will live in the light of the risen Lamb*

Friends, the end is coming, and God will make all things right in the end. In the meantime, we have a job to do. And that job is to be Christ in our world.

Are we doing our job well? According to Dallas Willard, not so much...

*Contemporary American churches in particular do not require following Christ in his example, spirit, and teachings as a condition of membership-either of entering into or continuing in fellowship of a denomination or a local church.... Most problems in contemporary churches can be explained by the fact that members have not yet decided to follow Christ.*

*-Dallas Willard*

In order to follow Christ we must know how to rightly divide the Word of truth so that we might be able to make disciples who in turn make disciples.

We need to be a people who are vigilant in keeping this church as pure as we can by washing her in the pure and holy Word of God. This means we must know the word of God and invest it in others.

This is not optional for the Christian.

And by demanding this (being experts in the Bible) of our Body, we automatically will give those would-be wolves no reason to flourish here.

*It's kinda like the motivation behind our child protection policies and procedures. A pedophile will have less tendency to attack a ministry who have safety protocols in place than on other that has little to no protection.*

We must become comfortable with the truth of the Word of God. So comfortable, in fact, that we can prevent people from coming into our fellowship who are used by Satan with false teachings that will potentially divide us and set us against one another.

So, very simple application for you this morning. Grow in your knowledge and love for the word of God.

Literally, the only way you will become insatiably thirsty for God's word is to drink it often!

What is your habit in the bible?

What is your demand for your church?

How are you helping your church protect herself from being vulnerable to the attacks of the evil one?

**Review:** Celebrate The Individual People at Your Church

- Be an encourager in your church
- Be careful of divisive people in your church

### **3. Be Thankful for Those Who Work for the Church (vs. 21-24)**

These verses are where Paul includes greetings from his companions and offers a final blessing.

#### **Romans 16:21–24 ESV**

*<sup>21</sup> Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and So-si-pater, my kinsmen. <sup>22</sup> I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.*

Paul highlights the importance of godly partnerships in ministry and the power of collective blessings in the Christian journey.

#### **1. Timothy - Kinsmen, fellow servants of Paul**

2. Lucius - Kinsmen, fellow servants of Paul
3. Jason - Kinsmen, fellow servants of Paul
4. Sos-ipater - Kinsmen, fellow servants of Paul
5. Tert-ius - Paul's amanuensis / stenographer

**6. Gaius - "Paul's host in Corinth, who apparently had a church meeting in his home. This Gaius was probably not the same Gaius who was from Macedonia and traveled with Paul ([Acts 19:29](#)) nor the Gaius who was from Derbe ([Acts 20:4](#)). The Gaius mentioned here in Romans was probably Paul's convert whom he baptized ([1 Cor. 1:14](#))."** - John A. Witmer, BKC

**7. Erastus - "He was the city's director of public works (lit., "the city's steward," a high position in Corinth)."** - John A. Witmer, BKC

8. Quartus - Spiritual brother to Paul

Paul makes sure to communicate a very important point here in these verses. Paul did not work alone, and he was thankful and grateful for the work they had accomplished in the Lord's army!

Each one of these people is named by Paul, signaling his appreciation for their contribution to the missionary activity of God. They each play an important part!

## Romans: Unashamed - Building the Church through the Gospel

Just like the men mentioned played an important role in Christ's church and her expansion, so you do as well. We all bring something to the table. Frankly, it is why God gifted us so uniquely within the body of Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 12:11–12 ESV**

*All these [gifts] are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.*

### **1 Corinthians 12:17 ESV**

*If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?*

Get the point? You are an invaluable member of ABC! You have been gifted by God to strengthen the Body of Christ. This body!

The converse is true as well: if you do not use your God-given gift here, you are weakening the body.

**There are four kinds of church members: the tired, tireless, tiresome and retired. - Unknown**

What kind of Christian are you? I hope you are not tired - that may mean you are living the Christian life in your own strength.

I really hope you are not a tiresome Christian - Someone who sucks the energy out of everyone you come into contact with because everything is always about you.

I also hope and pray you are not a retired Christian. There is no retirement in God's economy. As long as we breathe, we can serve the Lord.

I hope you are a tireless Christian. One who is empowered and sustained by the Holy Spirit. One who has an eternal perspective regarding this life. One who is determined to live out your faith empowered by God himself...

### **Philippians 2:12–13 ESV**

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

We live and we work for His good pleasure by His power, not our own.

Paul was thankful for those who served with him. Why do I know this? Because he took the time to mention them at the end of his letter.

Why is he thankful for them? Because they served alongside him in the ministry the Lord gave him.

I thank God for those of you who serve alongside me in this ministry.

## Romans: Unashamed - Building the Church through the Gospel

By the very nature of my position, I can get a lot of attention. But the fact is, I wouldn't accomplish anything of substance if it were not for you...

Who is serving alongside you in the ministry? Are you thankful for them? How do you express your gratitude?

**Review:** Celebrate The Individual People at Your Church

- Be an encourager in your church
- Be careful of divisive people in your church
- Be thankful for those who work for the church

### Conclusion

So, What is the church?

*"As the Church is the aggregate of believers, there is an intimate analogy between the experience of the individual believer, and of the Church as a whole." -Charles Hodge*

The church's strength is realized through the power of spirit-empowered people.

When the church of Jesus Christ exercises her power through spirit-filled people, the results are beyond phenomenal. The results are beyond comprehension; the results are breathtaking and miraculous.

**We are Gospel-Powered People.**

**I wonder what God might do with a people who really believed this?**

### Connection Group Reflection Questions

1. In verses 1-16, Paul highlights the importance of encouragement within the church. Can you think of someone in our church or community who has been a source of encouragement to you? How can you actively become an encourager to others in our congregation?
2. Verses 17-20 warn about the influence of divisive people in the church. Have you ever encountered divisiveness within a church setting? What are some practical ways we can foster unity and handle divisiveness in a Christ-like manner?
3. Paul expresses gratitude for those who work for the church in verses 21-24. How can we as a group show our appreciation for those who serve in various capacities in our church? Are

## Romans: Unashamed - Building the Church through the Gospel

there specific individuals or teams whose efforts we might acknowledge and support more intentionally?

4. Who are you praying for daily?
5. Who are you engaging with weekly?
6. Who are you sharing the gospel with monthly?