Sermon Highlights

Known by Name: Faithful Service and the Roll Call of Heaven

Summary:

Drawing from Romans 16, Pastor Bruce Gordon explores the significance of the list of names Paul includes at the close of his letter to the Roman church. Rather than treating this passage as a mere formality, the sermon presents it as a window into how God personally recognizes and values every act of faithful service, no matter how small. Pastor Bruce Gordon argues that the historical accuracy of these names serves as evidence of Scripture's authenticity, and that the passage itself foreshadows the judgment seat of Christ, where believers will be individually acknowledged for their works done in love and faithfulness. The central call to the congregation is to stop waiting for grand opportunities and instead begin serving faithfully in the small, everyday moments available to them.

Key Points:

- The historically accurate names in Romans 16 serve as evidence that Scripture was written in its correct time period, lending credibility to the Bible as the inspired Word of God

- Phoebe is highlighted as an example of someone whose faithful, practical service to others earned her a place on the inspired pages of Scripture

- Priscilla and Aquila demonstrate the kind of total commitment to Christ that went as far as risking their own lives, a standard Pastor Bruce Gordon challenges modern believers to consider

- The church in Rome was made up of people from vastly different social standings, including slaves and noblemen, yet all were equal within the body of Christ

- God keeps a record not of believers' wrongs, which are covered by the blood of Christ, but of their faithful works done in service to Him and others

- The judgment seat of Christ will involve individual acknowledgment of every believer's faithful service, and many who are overlooked in this life will be honored prominently in eternity

- Faithful service does not require grand gestures; it includes small acts such as offering a prayer, learning someone's name, encouraging a young person, or bringing comfort to someone who is suffering

- Knowing and using the names of fellow believers, especially the young people in the congregation, is itself a meaningful act of love and care

Scripture Reference:

- Romans 16:1-16, in which Paul commends Phoebe to the Roman church and greets numerous believers by name, acknowledging their various contributions to the work of the gospel

Stories:

- Pastor Bruce Gordon recalls baptizing a man from New York in a swimming pool at the AT&T complex in Chicago, using it to illustrate the memorable nature of meaningful gospel encounters and reflecting on whether he could name the first person he ever led to faith

- Pastor Bruce Gordon describes a hypothetical scene in heaven where God shows preachers a faithful woman whose quiet ministry of bringing soup to the sick and laying hands on the suffering is held up as a model of true service

- Pastor Bruce Gordon references the historical connection between Rufus mentioned in Romans 16 and the account in the Gospel of Mark of Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross of Jesus, suggesting this Rufus may be the son of that same Simon