

Intro: When reading through the bible, there are areas we can come upon that may easily be passed over. Whether it be in the Book of Numbers or the genealogies written in Matthew or the 16th Chapter of Romans; we can be tempted to either speed read right through it, or pass it all together.

Matter fact when I've come to the 15th chapter of Romans there have been times I've considered myself to have finished the book and move on to another. Why? Well because it's just a list of bunch of people I know nothing about.

But "People are important". Especially if we are one of those people!

In the 15th chapter of Romans Paul seemed to have closed off the letter for us already right? Vs 33 "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." This seems like a familiar closing to all of Paul's letters. **Phil** "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" **1 Cor** "my love be with you all in Christ Jesus Amen." **Eph** "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen". So Chapter 15 seemed to have closed the book but if your name was one of those names mentioned in Ch 16, you'd be saying "Hey wait, we ain't done yet We got one more Chapter! This is the best part!"

And you'd be right. And not just because your important, but because to God "People are important"

You see without People there's no gospel to spread. God has chosen to use foulable everyday people to relay His most holy message of salvation to the world.

I love what J.Vernon McGee said (read) (Expound)

God uses everyday people, everyday! Even though we may think we're insignificant and unimportant; God can use us in the most simple yet most powerful ways.

And though you may think “no one notices what I do; and no one appreciates the little guy or little gal”. Well, Chapter 16 is nothing but shouts out to the little guy! Those everyday Christians behind the scenes getting a little bit done, to make a big difference.

So as they get their little “15 minutes of fame” by having their names mentioned lets let it be an encouragement to us and allow it to serve as a reminder that to God, all “People are Important”

1-2 I. **COMMENDING PHOEBE**

1 A. **Phoebe The Servant (deacon)**

- 1 1. **“I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea”** He’s saying I show approval of , as I introduce to you Phoebe our sister.
 - a. Who is a **“servant”** of the church in Cenchrea. She’s a deacon in the church of Cenchrea.
- 2 2. He says **“receive her in the Lord”** . She’s the one that was intrusted to take this very valuable letter to Rome. And Paul is saying “As she arrives there to give you this letter know that #1 Im personally vouching for her walk. I commend her to you #2 The church in Cenchrea also sees the hand of the Lord on her life, she serves as a deacon.
 - a. She’s an important woman to us. Important sister. **“Receive her in a manner that’s worthy of the saints”**
 - b. What’s cool about these first 2 verses is that amongst all the 35 names mentioned; a woman is the first.
 - c. Why is that important? Well because reading some of Paul’s writings some have had problems with Christianity, maybe with Paul personally because of the order of things he wrote about.

i. How God has directed women's roles to be in the body.

d. "Paul just don't like women". He just want's women to be seen & not heard. He's a male shovenist". Women are just as important as men! Paul would agree.

3. Matter fact there's no one more important to me than this trusted woman of God here that I've asked to bring this letter to you.

4. Please receive here in a manner worthy of her service as a saint of God and valued deacon in the church.

2b 5. In fact **"assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also"**.

a. So the first person we're introduced to is a woman. Ladies first!

b. A helper of so many.

c. I think of the many women in our fellowship that are helpers of so many.

As we get into this next section we begin Paul's Greetings to the Christians there in the church in Rome. And what I'd like us to keep in mind is that, though we may think of the great apostle Paul as doing ministry mostly by himself, besides the help of Timothy & Silas ; it would be easy to miss how much Paul was a man of deep relationships. He built and kept relationships. They were very important to him, we'll see. Because he mentions each one of these people by name but he'd never been to Rome. Meaning these are people he kept relationships with throughout his ministry. People he met; poured into; prayed with, did life with at some point, that had eventually joined the church there in Rome.

- I don't know if we understand how huge that is

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- Paul's a people person. Though if we were to meet him we would be brushing up on our doctrine, theology, Old Testament memory verses, He'd be more interested in how we are. How's your kids? Etc.
 - We see that in these names he keeps track of and where and how they were a blessing specifically.
 - Paul's a people person. Building the Kingdom by building relationships.
 - Read Kent Hughes

3-16 II. GREETING THE ROMAN CHRISTIANS

3-5a A. PRISCILLA AND AQUILA

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. NKJV

1. Paul's 2nd missionary journey; he's been run out of Thessalonica, through Berea, goes to Athens but leaves Timothy & Silas behind to minister to them. And after leaving Athens by himself for a stretch, he goes to Corinth. (Acts 18)

a. I imagine Paul is tired, discouraged just a little without his team, but God gives him another team. A husband & wife team.

b. He meets Priscilla & Aquila two Jews from Italy and stays with them. (Tent makers).

c. He works with them, lives with them, does life with them, as those two begin to grow.

d. They start a home fellowship. (we would later call the church in Corinth) which Paul ministered.

e. When he leaves to Ephesus they help Apollos. **"explained to him the way more accurately"** Acts 18:24-26

i. Apollos then goes to Achaia area of Athens & Corinth to **"vigorously refuted the Jews showing from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ"**

g. Amazing husband & wife team Paul met, taught, lived among, worked with, that became so fruitfull.

3b 2. Here Paul says **"Greet"** them my **fellow workers**

4a 3. **"who risked their own necks for my life"** . We don't know exactly when this was, could've been when first meeting him in Corinth, or the riot in Ephesus during his 3rd journey. Whenever it was it was well known. Because he says

4b 4. Not only I give thanks but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Look also at verse 5

5 5. **"Likewise greet the church that is in their house"** So the church in Rome is meeting at the house of this awesome Husband & wife team. Again!

a. There is something special about serving the Lord together as a marriage. In your marriage.

b. Something Powerful about a husband & wife team.

c. **2 Cor 6:14-15** Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? **NKJV**

d. Their names are never mentioned apart.

e. They are the go to in the bible for Christian marriage teams. Not Ananias & Sapphira

5b B. **EPAENETUS (The first fruits of Achaia)**

5b

1. **"Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the first fruits of Achaia to Christ"**

- a. **"First fruits"** What does that mean? The first of what's to come after.
- b. So Epaphroditus was the first one to be converted in Asia. Meaning this may be Paul's first missionary convert.
 - i. The 1st amongst hundreds of thousands.
- c. Paul says greet Epaphroditus for me; that's the 1st person I brought to the Lord.
 - i. Paul still had a relationship with him. (do we ?)
 - ii. Who are the first fruits in our ministry?

6 C. **MARY**

"Greet Mary, who labored much for us"

- 1. There are many Mary's mentioned in scripture. We don't know exactly which one this is.
- 2. What's more important than her last name or identity, is what he says about her character. He describes her by describing what she did.
 - a. **"who labored much for us"** that's the same word used for Jesus when in John Ch4 He went to Samaria to meet up with the Samaritan woman and it says **"Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey sat thus on the well"**
 - b. It means to grow weary tired or exhausted.
 - c. That's how she served. And Paul recognizes her and her help by mentioning her here. Imagine how she felt when her name was read

out loud in the presence of the church. (thinking "I thought nobody noticed")

7 D. ANDRONICUS AND JUNIA

7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. NKJV

1. These two are interesting. Andronicus & Junia **"my countrymen and my fellow prisoners"**

a. **"Countrymen"** has two possible meanings. Either Jews from the same country possibly tribe of Benjamin as well; or blood relatives.

i. **KJV says Kinsman.**

2. We don't know which of these he means but we do know they had numbers. They were convicted felons. **"my fellow prisoners"**

3. Somewhere in one of Paul's many prison experiences these two had done time right alongside of the Apostle Paul.

a. And I can understand how this relationship would be important to Paul. One you would never forget.

b. Many of you know I've been to prison, I don't try to hide it, nor could I if I wanted to, living in Barstow. But even though I was there for something I did wrong, the work God did in my life while having me separated from society was tremendous. Being around other Christian brothers going through the same thing brought a sense of comradery & brotherhood deeper than any other relationships I had.

i. I can imagine being locked up for serving the Lord like Paul in these guys. (they were fellow prisoners)

He says something else interesting

7b

4. **"who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me"**. So basically they got saved before Paul did, and were known by the apostles. (12)

a. Paul kinda gives them props for that.

8-11 E. **AMPLIAS AND A FEW OTHER BELOVEDS**

You got this long list of names Paul mentions, 20 some in this section, 35 total and what strikes me about all this is how much Paul had a love for people. He had been to many cities, traveled some 1,400 miles and encountered many people and yet somehow Paul is able to follow them, tracking them to where he knows they're in Rome at this time.

1. Somehow he had a network of people informing him how everyone was doing and where they were at.

a. And what that shows us is that Paul loved people.

b. You don't keep track of people like this if it's not your passion.

2. I think Paul understood very well what we all know and that's that "we all want to be acknowledged.

a. Everyone wants to know that they have value. (To be loved)

3. Imagine having your name read from this letter. To have someone say "Hey the Apostle Paul said to greet you, he mentioned you by name"

a. You'd feel special.

b. That's powerful! Because you never know what someone's going through and you may not realize the power behind your greeting of love.

i. To be acknowledged

c. Shouldn't that be our heart, that when someone walks through those doors, that we would love on them and acknowledge them as a brother or sister in the Lord, fellow workers; laborers; family.

i. That should be the mark of TRC

13 F. RUFUS

13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

13 1. Now this is another interesting name **"Rufus"**. This, some believe, maybe the same Rufus mentioned in Marks gospel 15:21 when Jesus was carrying the cross through Jerusalem and it began to be heavy for Him, since He'd been scourged so badly, that they got someone else to carry it.

a. **Mark 15:21** Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross.

b. If this is the same Rufus (I believe it is because why would Mark mention the son's names if they weren't already known being that he wrote his gospel 9 years after Paul wrote Romans) but if it's the same Rufus – imagine how much of a testimony their father was to these boys watching him carry Jesus' cross.

13b 2. **"chosen in the Lord"** much like his father was **"chosen"** to carry the cross.

a. We've all been chosen! Your chosen!

13c 3. Greet **"his mother and mine"** Paul was so close to this family that he had grown to consider Rufus' mother as his own.

a. We see this powerful dynamic of intimacy here.

b. A sense of family.

14-16 G. MORE GREETINGS

So we see this big long list of people Paul had labored with. At some point or another, some place or another they all had this in common – they had served the Lord together! And there's something special about coming together and growing with each other as we roll up our sleeves and begin to do the work of the ministry as a family.

1. Paul says **"greet one another with a holy kiss"** . Something you do with family right?
2. I just wanna say this, if you haven't had a chance to serve the Lord in ministry, corporately, your missing out.
 - a. That laboring with one another.....
 - b. There's just something about coming together as a family working on things that are eternal.

Now just as much as there is a sense of family and unity in the church, Paul gives them some warnings about those who would go to church with different motives.....(17-18)

17-20 III. NOTE AND AVOID THE DIVISIVE

17-18 A. AVOID OFFENSIVE, DIVISIVE PEOPLE

Paul quickly turns very serious. Because this is a serious matter to him. To where he says **"I urge you brethren"**

- 17
1. **"note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them"**

- a. **NASB** keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

b. NLT Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them.

2. "Watch out; keep your eye on; make note of; people who cause dissensions, divisions, hindrances and offenses contrary to the teachings you've learned.

a. So what's Paul doing giving people a police mans ticket book to begin running around the church giving out tickets and taking notes on people? No

b. Just as much as there's this sense of unity and family in the church, there's also those who's habit it is or "aim" it is to bring division and offenses. NASB called them, rightly so, Hindrances.

c. Paul said note those who cause this and avoid them to guard this family environment.

i. To protect it. (it can easily get out of control if not)

d. Paul's not trying to kick people out of the church. He's trying to protect what's inside the church.

i. Like a lock on your door. You don't lock your door because you hate the people outside you do it because you love those on the inside.

Why does Paul say to avoid them.....?

18 **3. "For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple"**

19-20 B. YOUR DOING WELL, HOLD ON!

19 For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.

1. But you guys are doing well, and I'm glad for you.

2. But this is cool **"But I want you to be wise in what is good and simple concerning evil.**

a. Instead of asking "Is there an app for that?" I asked Holy Spirit "is there a proverb for that?"

b. This is what I believe He led me to. **Prov 4:23** Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. NKJV
NLT Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

20 3. **And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.** (Expound)

So Paul closes this letter the 2nd time. "Oh and another thing"

21-29 IV. GREETING FROM PAULS COMPANIONS

21 A. TIMOTHY AND OTHERS

22 B. TERTIUS (TORTILLAS) WHO WROTE THE EPISTLE

23-24 C. MORE GREETINGS

1. And Paul closes this letter a 3rd time "And another thing!"