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Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith
Message: A Promise & More Greetings

Transcribed Message
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Romans 16:20-23

I read a blog this past week and the guy was putting forth a question and the question was this. If someone polled your church and asked which preacher do you listen to most frequently, how would you respond? He gave the answers that would probably come to all of our minds and some of these considerations. After doing that then he quoted a man named Hugh Latimer who lived in the 15th and 16th centuries. He was a martyr for his faith. He gave his life for his Christian faith under the reign of the bloody Queen Mary. He said this: “The devil is the most diligent preacher of all others. He is never out of his diocese. You should never find him unoccupied. He is ever in his parish. He keeps residence at all times. You shall never find him out-of-the-way. Call for him when you will. He is ever at home. he is the most diligent preacher in the realm.” Satan is a preacher. He’s a manipulator. He gives a sophisticated and seductive message. Jesus said of Satan that there is no truth in him. He is the father of lies. What he does in our lives is he's constantly trying to convince us that lies are in fact true and that truth is lies. That is his mission. That is his stated purpose for all of life. When we come this morning to these nearly closing verses of Romans 16, Paul speaks about this matter very forcefully, very clearly, and I think with great encouragement to us. I want us to see in Romans 16 verses 20 to 23 – take heart. Be encouraged. We’re in this together and yes, we’re on the winning side. That’s the good news that he brings.

A very quick summary of chapter 16. Hang on. Here we go. I want you to see three things. There are people to be thankful for. This is as we’ve said one of the most remarkable chapters in the Bible because there are over 30 names that Paul mentions or people that Paul mentions by name as he gives thanks. It just speaks about the remarkable nature I think of the church. It speaks of this sense of connectedness that we’re to have with each other. It speaks of what the gospel does in the light of God's people, how it includes, welcomes, reaches across, encourages. It does all these things

and that's what Paul's doing in this 16th chapter. He is saying there are 30+ and he mentions 30+ by name and others as well.

The second thing that you see in the 16th chapter is that there's truth to hold onto. There is truth to hold onto. That's what Paul has been delivering all throughout Romans and so when he gave us that warning a couple weeks ago in verses 17 and 18, he said be mindful that there are false teachers out there. Be aware of that. Watch out for them and avoid them and be mindful of who they are and what they're doing. Sadly, I could not help but think of the Methodist Church that overwhelmingly voted just last week to simply and in one statement forever change for their church the doctrine of marriage. and they just redefined marriage in one statement. What has historically been the guidance for that church and all Christian churches for centuries they overwhelmingly said we're going to change the definition of a marriage. We're going to redefine what constitutes behavior before God. Paul reminds us there's truth that we hold on to and that we never let go of.

Then in verse 19 there's just this pattern to follow. He speaks of the great reputation that this church of Rome has. What a great thing to be a part of that church in Rome and have the apostle Paul write and say he wants to commend them because their reputation is known throughout all over the place because of their love for God, for how they love each other, and how they live out this glorious gospel. It is a beautiful thing. They're not just hearers of the word. They're doers of the word. So that brings us up to speed.

Let's look this morning at God, Satan, and us. We're going to spend a little more time on the 20th verse than we will the others, but let's jump in at that 20th verse. I want you to see first the nature of the battle. The nature of the battle. Verse 20. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet..." Let's just stop right there. What is this about the nature of the battle? Here's what's interesting to me. This is the first mention of Satan in all the book of Romans. An amazing observation. This is without question the greatest theological treatise that we have in Scripture, the book of Romans. Here we are at the 16th chapter and the 20th verse, and this is the first time that Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, specifically names Satan and the devil in the way that he does. He hints at it in chapter 8 about nothing being able to separate us – you can fill in

the blank there and see who he is talking about – but this is the first time in all the epistle that he does this.

This is the first mention and here's what I want you to see. It brings to mind for me the words of CS Lewis because remember he has already taken us into chapter 6 in this great struggle that we have with regard to sin. Should we continue in sin that grace may abound? *Me genoita*, he said. And then you go into chapter 7, and we have this great struggle unfold in chapter 7 which Paul says for I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing. Then he goes on to say as the greatest apostle who ever lived, he goes on to describe the things I want to do I don't do and the things that I don't want to do I do. CS Lewis put it best when he said Satan is equally happy when we spend all our time focusing on him. he's the bogeyman behind every tree and he is the cause of everything that goes wrong in my life and anything that happens. it's got to be him. And then going to the other side of the pendulum and just almost denying that he has any part in this spiritual struggle and warfare that we know the Bible speaks to and talks of often. The point is Satan is happy when we're preoccupied with him or he's equally happy when we just pretend like he doesn't exist. Of course, Paul is not doing either of those, but he's bringing to us here now this necessary balance.

That's the point I want to make. This necessary balance. Here we are in chapter 16 and it's the first time he mentions this. What can we conclude from that? That Satan isn't important or significant? No, course not because we have so much other scripture that speaks to this lion who goes around and seeks people to devour. The whole context of spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6. But it all speaks to the importance of a balance. The balance of the Christian life so that we don't swing too far one way or swing too far to the other, so that we don't minimize our own flesh in the struggle that we have with sin and we just want to blame something external and outside of us. No, we struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. All three of those are a part of that. It looks to me like when Paul says in verse 19, I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent to what is evil. As soon as he penned the word evil it seems to me that the Holy Spirit brought to mind what he says to us in this 20th verse and he thinks of evil and the personification of evil and the one who's behind evil as none other than Satan, the devil himself.

He says the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. When he says those words in his mind, we know where he goes. He goes right back to the beginning, and he goes right back to the book of Genesis. The language of verse 20 is reflective of the language of Genesis and it's the very thing that Moses recorded regarding the interchange that took place between the woman and the serpent and the judgment that God brought down upon them. You go back to Genesis, and we have God's created order. Everything is perfect and beautiful. There is nothing wrong. There is no sin within the context of this created order. And here's Adam and Eve. They're in the beauty of this garden. Everything that they could ever dream or hope for is available to them. They can enjoy everything that God has created ... except for one thing. Just one thing. You can have everything that you ever wanted or dreamed of, but just don't eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The serpent comes and he manifests himself and begins to dialogue with Eve, with Adam obviously standing right nearby. He begins to walk her through what it is that God has really said. Remember he begins to call into question God's goodness. Oh, Eve, are you really sure that God loves you? I mean why in the world if he loved you would he put this restriction on you? Look at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He began simply to undermine the very truthfulness of God. God said the moment you eat of it you will surely die, and the serpent comes and says no, you won't. You won't die. That is taking the truths of God's word and saying it's not true. Just as Latimer said Satan is either trying to take a lie and convince us it is the truth, or he's trying to take truth and convince us it's a lie.

then of course he undermines and causes them to doubt God's very purpose. You know he's restricting you. You really can't enjoy everything, can you? There's one thing that God is holding out on you for and you're never going to reach your full potential if you can't have that. Of all the things that they could enjoy, it was that one thing. It has a very modern sound to it. Somehow or other, the word of God and the truths of God and yes, even the restrictions of the word of God are somehow hindering who we can become, who we can be. It is with sadness that you read this report that comes out of these decisions that were made just this last week by the church that I mentioned. When you read the language of what they have affirmed regarding human sexuality, it is simply heartbreaking. But that's exactly what we have been told is

happening and it's happening because this one about whom we are to be aware is always at work.

Now in the midst of God's pronouncement of judgment, that's what we see in chapter 3 verse 15 in Genesis. In the midst of God's judgment, there's an announcement. Genesis 3:15. "I will put enmity between you and the woman." You, that is the serpent, and Eve, being the woman. "...and between your offspring and her offspring..." There's going to be a continual conflict that's going to take place. "...in between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel." That is exactly as Paul mentions in Romans 16:20 what is happening here. This is not just an announcement in Genesis 3:15. It's a pronouncement and it's a prophecy that we call the *protoevangelium*. *Protoevangelium* is a kind of a cool word because it's two words. *Proto* – first. *Evangelium* – gospel. The first preaching of the gospel takes place in Genesis 3:15. God makes this pronouncement, this prophecy, this judgment. It's the very thing that Paul is referring to. If you reread Genesis 3:15 and look at it again and you can kind of do a little bit of a commentary on that. When he says I will put enmity between you, Satan, and the woman and between your offspring, Satan and her offspring. He that is the coming one, the Messiah, the Savior, he will bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. That, my friends, I believe is exactly what Paul puts before us here.

I want us to look at that phrase and I want us to see three surprising things in that phrase. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The first thing is I want you to see he says the God of peace will soon crush Satan. Now there's a lot going on in that phrase. Look at it this way with me. The very first thing I want to highlight is within biblical cosmology there's no room for dualism. One of the things that Satan has promoted and tried to convince people of that within the understanding of our world there's God and there is Satan and they're equally powerful and equally forceful, and they're engaged in this conflict. It's the battle between good and evil. That's true in a limited sense. there is a battle between God and Satan and there is a battle between good and evil. But don't for a moment fall for the lie that it is dualism. Satan is a created being. Satan is a creature. He can't do one thing outside of the sovereign will and purpose of God. That is the the missing fact when people believe and see that there's

this battle going on between good and evil. Yes, there is. But God is always to be understood as the one who is sovereign. Satan is not.

The second thing I see is that Paul has no qualms about speaking of the God of peace who crushes Satan. Just put those words together. The God of peace crushes Satan. It almost sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? It almost sounds again like an antinomy. This is the contradiction. Can you actually say that? Can you say that the God of peace is going to crush somebody? Those things don't go together, do they? Absolutely they do. If we have a problem with that language, you know why we have a problem with that language? It is because we don't understand the God of the Bible. We don't understand the God who has revealed himself as righteous and holy and demanding justice in the face of evil. Within the framework of God's purposes and will, within what God is going to accomplish yet in the outflow of human history is that there is going to be no peace treaty with evil. There is no appeasement on the part of a holy and righteous God towards that which is evil and sinful. That's why it's so wrong when we step into that realm, and we begin to think in that kind of way. Here Paul will have none of that. God's peace does not allow for any kind of appeasement. Peace comes only and ultimately and finally with the destruction of evil and with the final judgment of the one who stands behind that evil, which is none other than the serpent, Satan, the devil himself. He is going to be crushed. and that word sounds as strong, and it is as strong as it sounds. It means to shatter. It means to literally break into pieces. The God of peace is going to shatter Satan. He is going to crush Satan. He is going to break him into pieces. so that's what he says to us.

Now that being said, what do we observe in our day and time? So often it seems as we look around our world that Satan is winning. There are times – I'll just be honest and maybe you are the same – when I feel like I need to step back and have a moratorium on reading the news and just taking in what's going on in our world. Sometimes it is so overwhelmingly negative and depressing that you just say I can't even watch this anymore. That's the world we live in. yet here he says the God of peace will soon crush Satan. We live in a world in which it seems so often like Satan is winning. What do we say about that? one of the things we say about that is it's not unlike death. It is not unlike the reality and experience of death. The Bible makes clear

that death is defeated. 1 Corinthians 15. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin. Yet Paul goes on to say that we live in that reality in which Christians die. Christians experience death. We walk through the valley of the shadow of death even as we have just prayed for this family who is experiencing that even today. That's the reality.

But here's the encouragement. We know it's not the end. We know that death doesn't win. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, he said at the end of that 1 Corinthians 15 chapter, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. That's the truth we hold onto. We go back to the opening statement. There's a truth that we hold on to all through this beautiful epistle of Romans. One of those truths that we have to anchor to, and we have to hold onto is that we know that death does not have the final word. There is life after death.

Now look at the next surprise. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under ... and if we were writing that and I just left this statement blank and you didn't know what Romans 16:20 would say, I think you and I would probably agree and say the God of peace will soon crush Satan under his feet. Isn't that what we would think? The God of peace will soon crush Satan under his feet. And that is true. He will do that, but that's not what he says here. Here he says the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. He's writing to the church at Rome and by application he's saying it to us today. We've got to figure out in what sense do you and I as Christ followers crush Satan under our feet? In what sense do we shatter Satan under our feet? That sounds a little bit like hyperbole, but it's not. It's not.

Here's what I want you to see. There are three tenses that we often think about regarding salvation. We could ask somebody if they are saved, and if they knew the language of the Bible they might know how to respond. Somebody that doesn't know the language of the Bible might look at us and wonder what we're talking about. But we would say if somebody asked us are you saved, we would say well it depends on which tense you're talking about. Yes, I have been saved. We can look back to the past tense and regarding the past, we can say I have been saved from the penalty of sin. The moment I put my trust in Christ as my Savior I am forever forgiven of my sin – past,

present, and future. I have the assurance that I have been forgiven and the penalty of sin is gone. But then there is the present element. The present element of salvation has to do with the power of sin. This has to do with the deliverance in day-to-day. and then there's even a future tense. I am one day going to be safe from the very presence of sin. Past, present, and future. From the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and from the very presence of sin.

When he says the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet, which of these tenses do you think he might have in mind? I think it clearly must be that of the present. He's saying to us this is a daily battle that we are in. Listen carefully. You and I have the opportunity to literally crush Satan under our feet every day that we live under the lordship of Christ, every day that we walk in fellowship with God, every day that we walk in the power and under the control of the Holy Spirit. We are fulfilling this statement that Paul issues here in Romans 16:20. It brings to mind the great words that every one of us should have committed to memory and have right in the forefront of our mind at all times. The words of John Owen. Be killing sin or sin will be killing you. If you're not killing sin, sin is going to kill you. He is talking here within the context of our present tense walk with God. It's never going to put us back under the penalty of sin. No, there is no way. Romans 8. Nothing can bring us back under the penalty of sin. That's been taken care of. It will not keep us from experiencing the presence of the absence of sin in glory forever, but yes, it can cause us to not enjoy the victory that God has for us in terms of our present experience. That's how ruthless you and I must be regarding sin. We cannot coddle sin in our life. We cannot manage sin in our life. Sin, if you're not killing it, will be killing you.

I want you to understand the weight of what Paul is saying here. When you're tempted to speak poorly of somebody and gossip, you have the opportunity to crush Satan at that moment, or to yield to the temptation. When you're tempted to look at pornography and to believe the lie that it doesn't really matter, it doesn't have an impact on you anyway, just go ahead and enjoy it, you have at that moment a choice to make whether you're going to kill that sin and that temptation or you're going to yield to it. You've got a choice when somebody has mistreated you, to either forgive them or to spend as many days as you can enjoy in resentment and bitterness towards them. Just

take every sin that the Bible brings to light and you and I step into Romans 16:20. The God of peace will, as you walk in fellowship and in the power of the Holy Spirit, he will enable you in that moment of time to crush Satan under your feet. If you don't, he'll rise up and he'll destroy you. He hates you. He hates this church. He hates your marriage. He hates you when you submit to your parents. He hates it when you have a testimony at work that is above reproach. Just name it. This is the great battle that he's speaking of here. This is why we have to walk in truth that he speaks of all through this book.

Then I just want you to see this last thing. We will be in this battle until Christ returns. We'll be in this battle until Christ returns. We don't know the time, but we do know that it is certain. He says he's going to do this soon. Soon can be taken as soon, as in chronology, like it can happen the next day, which we know it didn't because it's been going on for 2000 years. Or soon can be understood to be quickly. It can be understood in either of those. When you look at this and you put it in perspective of what has God said and done regarding the judgment of the serpent and Satan and the devil who is the god of this world, we start with Genesis 3:15. Genesis 3:15. This judgment, this pronouncement, this prophecy was made regarding the serpent and regarding Satan.

Then Jesus breaks into human history. The incarnation. Very God of very God. He comes and occupies space, time, and history on this planet. He crushes Satan under his feet every day of his life. he goes into the wilderness where he experiences that threefold temptation and at every point, He says it is written, it is written, it is written. Every day of Jesus's life, He fulfilled Romans 16:20 and he crushes Satan because he never yielded to sin. We also know that there was this decisive defeat on the cross. That was the decisive defeat of Satan. That sealed Satan's defeat forever. Satan may have in a moment of time thought I've done it. Jesus is hanging on the cross. Jesus just cried out my God, my God, why did you forsake me. I've done it. No, he didn't. three days later Jesus was raised, and Satan was crushed under the feet of Jesus. Then of course the final defeat, the ultimate defeat, when Jesus comes back again, Satan will be bound ultimately for most of the millennial reign of Christ and at the very end, he'll be released to unleash his horde on the people for those last few years, and then he'll be cast forever into the lake of fire. When Paul says in that 20th verse, the

God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet, I think Paul's reversing all of that in some form or another in his mind. It is an amazing picture of what we have by way of engagement in the spiritual battle that rages, not just in our life but within the context of our world and the unseen forces.

Now, in the meantime, here we go. We're going to wrap up these last few verses very quickly. There is a third benediction. I take comfort in the fact that this is Paul's third benediction. When he says in that 20th verse, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, he'd already said back in chapter 15 and verse 13 may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. We thought Paul was ending right there, but he didn't. he went on a little further. Romans 15:33. May the God of peace be with you all, amen. Everybody is like okay, he's getting ready to land the plane. He is almost done. Then Paul takes back off. He's like a preacher. Preachers say, "In conclusion..." I try not to say that very often, and if I do it's a slip of the tongue because you never know if you're in conclusion or not. At some point you've got to end. Well, here's the third benediction.

Look at this. What is our greatest need? It is the manifold grace of God. This is the third and final benediction. The greatest theme in all the Bible is the grace of God. The Christian life begins in grace. The Christian life continues in grace. The Christian life is secured forever by grace. As you have received Christ Jesus, so walk in him. Keep walking in that grace. Here's the beauty of it all. It centers on Jesus.

Look at those four words, and every one of them is needed. Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our. We are in Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the beauty of what he is speaking of here. John says in the 1st chapter verse 14: and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, to glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. That's what we need. We need grace and truth. These false teachers didn't have Jesus and they sure didn't have grace and they didn't have truth. But we've got it all.

The nature of the ministry in verses 21 through 23. Paul lifts four groups. Look at what he says. My fellow worker Timothy greets you. Timothy. Of all the people listed in chapter 16, Timothy is the best-known. Timothy might be from a human viewpoint the most deserving. He was Paul's faithful companion for eight years. He went everywhere

with Paul. Paul sent him all over the place to take care of things that needed to be taken care of. In Philippians 2, Paul says that I don't have anybody like him. In 2 Timothy chapter 4 when he's at the end of his life, he knows he's about to die a martyr's death, he writes to Timothy and says Timothy, come as soon as you can.

Next is my fellow kinsmen Lucius, Jason, Sosipater. Lucius some people think is Luke. We don't know. Jason appears in Acts 17 by the synagogue. Sosipater might be in Acts 20 but we don't know that for sure. In verse 22: I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. When he says that in verse 22, you get the picture of what's going on. I imagine that the word has gotten out to some people that Paul's getting close. He is now on his third and final benediction. He is going to wrap up the book of Romans and they're going to have a party, a celebration. That's where we got it – right out of the Bible. I've got a feeling that in the room there are some of these people that he mentioned here at the very end because he specifically lifts them up. I've got a feeling that as he is saying these different things to Tertius in the first 16 verses, he is sending greetings to people in Rome. Now at the end here in verses 21 to 23, he is sending greetings from people in Corinth to those who are in Rome. I think he gives a nod to Tertius and says Tertius, go ahead and say what you want by way of a greeting. He writes verse 22 and then finally, in verse 23, my supporters. Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus. Gaius is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14. Paul says I'm so glad I didn't baptize you guys there because you're fighting with each other. But I did baptize Gaius and the church meets in his home, so he must've been a man of some means. Erastus is the city treasurer, a high-ranking official in the city of Corinth, which means to say that we can have politicians who are believers and even are mentioned in the Bible. A word of encouragement. Quartus. We don't know anything about him.

There we are. We've gone full circle. We started off Romans 16 with names. We end with names. This is what we remind ourselves again. Take heart. Be encouraged because we're in this together. We're on the winning side.

What do we take away? Let's do this. Let's heed Paul's encouragement. Let's stay focused on the Lord and in this grace that we walk in every day, that we desperately need every day. Stay focused on this sense of team, how much we need

each other. Everybody is needed. Everybody is important. Everybody needs to be working together. When we focus on the word and those things, I think it will be a great encouragement to us. Most of all, we stay focused on the gospel.

It is after all the gospel that has brought these people together. It's the gospel that has brought us together. My friends, this morning, if you aren't familiar with the gospel, the gospel is very simply the good news of Jesus Christ. The reason this is good news is because it starts off by telling us that we've all sinned, and we've all fallen short of the glory of God. That's bad news to know that we've all sinned, and that sin separates us from God. There is not anything that we can do to earn God's favor, to earn salvation. That's where the beauty of the good news comes in and says to us Jesus came. He died on the cross for our sins and what we are asked to do is simply to believe and trust that what he did was enough. That's all that needed to be done. If you believe that, you will have the gift of eternal life given to you. That is a grace gift. Just simply acknowledge that Lord, I've sinned. I've fallen short. I can't earn my way to heaven. But I don't need to because Jesus has done everything that needs to be done, and I trust him right now in this moment, right where I'm sitting, I trust him as my Savior.

Let's pray. Father God, once again by your Spirit encourage us by your word. Remind us of this glorious gospel that comes to us, those of us who have our Lord Jesus Christ. What a beautiful statement Paul makes to us. We glory in that – not in ourselves, Father. We glory in what Jesus did, not in what we have done. We thank you for the greatness of our salvation. We thank you for Jesus our Savior. We pray that you will encourage and build us up. We thank you for all these mothers. We ask that they have a wonderful day with their family. We pray that you will cause them to be encouraged and rejoice in your provision. In Jesus's name, amen.