

## **RCC in the Word**

### **Week of July 2**

### **Romans 16.1-16**

When I was in college, I called my parents (on a landline phone!) every Sunday and Wednesday evening to find out how things were going at home and to let them know about my week. Since my dad is not much of a phone conversationalist, I usually just talked with my mom. But, most every call would end with me saying, "Tell Daddy 'hello' and give him my love." I wanted to make sure my father received a greeting from me.

As is typical in Paul's epistles, the letter to the church at Rome ends with the Apostle's personal greetings. He sends his hello and his love to the church in Rome. What is unusual about Romans 16.1-16 is the extensive number of believers Paul mentions by name. Paul identifies 26 believers and speaks of many more unnamed saints and family members he also wishes to greet.

In chapter 1, Paul expresses his yearning to visit the church to encourage the believers and to be encouraged by them. He mentions these Christians always in his prayers (1.9-10) and petitions God to allow him the opportunity to travel to Rome. Even though he has not visited Rome, Paul has many personal relationships in the church. His affection and connection to the church is deep and rich.

These verses contain much more than an ancient church directory. They reveal important truths about the church and her members. From Paul's personal greetings we discover: every Christian has a necessary role to play in the local church, every Christian can enjoy deep fellowship with others in Christ, every Christian must strive to maintain unity in Christ and every Christian should thank God for the church.

#### **Every Christian has a necessary role to play in the local church.**

A striking feature of this list is the great diversity among the group. Women (Mary) and men (Nereus). Jews (Adronicus and Junia) and Gentiles (Epaenetus and Apelles). Slaves (Ampliatius, Urbanus, Stachys) and nobility (Aristobulus). The believers in Rome come from different backgrounds. They are on different rungs on the social ladder. Yet, each and every one is recognized by Paul for his or her role in the church. In chapter 12, Paul mentions spiritual gifts God gives to his children for the mutual edification of the church. From Prisca to Olympas and everyone in between, these believers are committed to exercising their spiritual giftedness. Each person is an essential part to the life and health of the church. As a follower of Christ, you, too, have been gifted by the Holy Spirit with a grace gift (maybe many grace gifts) to use for the benefit of the church. Are you playing your role at Redeemer?

#### **Every Christian can enjoy deep fellowship with others in Christ**

Paul understands that the fellowship shared by the church in Rome, and the fellowship he shares with them is possible only in Christ. Apart from Christ, this diverse group of people would not enjoy one another. They would not willingly choose to share their lives together. But, notice how many times Paul uses the terms "in Christ Jesus," "in the Lord" or "in Christ." It is only because these saints in Rome are in Christ that they can have genuine fellowship with one another. One of the great blessings of the Christian life is that we can share our lives with family who have all been adopted as children of God by the grace of God. If you are in Christ, you have siblings all across this globe and countless more in

heaven. The members of Redeemer are your brothers and sisters. Are you enjoying fellowship with them?

**Every Christian must strive to maintain unity in Christ**

We have fellowship in Christ. We are unified in Christ, but we must work to maintain that unity, to preserve that fellowship. This is why Paul gives careful instructions in chapter 14 on how we must treat “weaker” brothers and sisters. *Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother (14.13)*. Can you imagine how many potential “stumbling blocks” there could have been among the Christians in Rome? Yet, despite all their differences, these brothers and sisters “worked hard in the Lord” for one another. Part of that hard work involved preserving the unity already secured in Christ. What are you doing to maintain unity at Redeemer?

**Every Christian should give thanks for the church**

Paul understands that the local church is a gift from God that should be received with thanksgiving. His greetings to the church in Rome flow from a heart of thanksgiving. *I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you (1.8)*. He is grateful for the support and the hard work of saints like Prisca and Aquila. As Paul writes each name, he gives thanks not just for their ministry but because each person reminds him of the grace of God. Each life bears the testimony of a guilty and condemned sinner brought to life by the grace of God. Every name carries a story of God’s grace. They are not a church because they chose to start a religious group. They are the church because God chose them and made them into his dwelling place, his temple, his church. And, for that we all should give thanks to God.

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