

The Beautiful Church

Romans 15:14-16:19

Series: "Good News Changes Everything! A Study of the Book of Romans"

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New Day Christian Church, Port Charlotte, FL

July 20 & 21, 2024

ICE BREAKER: What creative gifts would you most like to have that you don't already possess? The ability to:

- 1) Author a book.
- 2) Cook/Bake.
- 3) Choreograph/perform dance.
- 4) Create graphic design.
- 5) Design/create clothing.
- 6) Draw/paint/sculpt.
- 7) Invent/engineer.
- 8) Write songs/create music.
- 9) Write/direct/act in a screenplay

VIDEO: It's exciting to watch wildlife channels in the comfort of our own home, but are we silent observers to the people around us? This funny illustration shows a small group that doesn't know what to do with the "wildlife" in their own neighborhood. About 2 minutes.

<https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/98454>

The Beautiful Church

INTRODUCTION: My wife and I just had our first child, Callan. It has been so amazing to see how the church, both locally and across the country has come around us to support us and be there for us. When the church is on mission, it is a beautiful thing!

A. What does it look like when the church is on mission?

1. Paul closes out his letter to the Roman church by giving us a snapshot of what that looks like by laying out:
2. Paul's reason for writing and this explanation of why he is writing gives us a reminder of the church's mission. (**Romans 15:14-33**)
3. Paul sending his greetings to the church (**Romans 16:1-16 & 21-27**)
4. Paul giving a warning of false teachers (**Romans 16:17-20**)

I. TEXT.

A. Paul's Reason for Writing:

I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another. Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done-- by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So, from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.
[Romans 15:14-24 NIV]

1. Paul tells the church that he has long planned to visit them but has not yet been able to. His reason gives us a look at Paul's belief of the church's mission.
2. Paul hasn't come their way yet because there were still people who needed to hear the Gospel. At the forefront of the church should be the goal of furthering the Gospel to everyone.

B. Paul's Greetings.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them. [Romans 16:1-15 NIV]

- C. On the surface, this looks like a list of names, but it really is so much more when you pay attention to the list. What do these greetings teach us about the early church?
 1. Women were an integral part of the church.
 - a. Paul lists many women (Pheobe, Priscilla, Rufus' mother, Mary, Persis) who all were commended for their important and hard work in their local church communities.
 - b. In a culture that demeaned women, the church elevated them.
 2. The church was a cultural melting pot.

Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews. I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. [Romans 16:21-23 NIV]

- a. Both Jews and Gentiles had a place in the early church.

From a commentary from Douglas Moo: *We know for sure that some of these individuals are Jewish... the rest, obviously the majority are most likely Gentiles, since their names were used by Gentiles of that day. This does not necessarily prove that the church as a whole was predominantly Gentile, but it points in that direction*

3. The church possessed a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Jack Cottrell says this in his commentary: *"Many of the names on the list are otherwise found to be common among slaves and former slaves (freedmen and freedwomen). Many of these names were prominent among slaves in the emperor's household."*

4. Contrast the number of slaves/freed people listed to the director of public works, Erastus. The early church covered it all. Nobody was excluded.

D. Warning against False Teachers.

I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. [Romans 16:17-19 NIV]

1. False Teachers cause division.
 - a. He wants them to be sure that their unity is protected! He doesn't want false doctrine coming in and tearing their community apart.
2. False Teachers provide obstacles.
 - a. This false teaching is anything that comes contrary to basic Christian beliefs. Paul says that these teachings can be destructive and provide obstacles to the growth that Paul sees in them.

Jack Cottrell in his commentary puts this so well: *"We do not have to choose between doctrinal truth and unity. Rather, we must pursue unity through sound doctrine and 'watch out for' the false doctrine that causes divisions and destruction. In and of itself, standing for the truth is not divisive in any negative sense; error is the true cause of divisions"*

E. What do we learn?

1. The Gospel is for everyone, and the church has a place for everyone.

CONCLUSION: The most practical way to apply this is to invest in the church in the ways Paul explains.

- A. Move away from a Sunday Morning type of church and invest in a community that supports each other as they pursue the world in the name of the Gospel.
 1. Join a group.
 - a. It can sometimes seem hard to find connection, but it's out there. We encourage our congregation to get plugged in to a small group. This is a group of believers who get together regularly to share life together. They share struggles. They pray for each other. They have fun together.
 2. Start serving.
 - a. You will notice that almost every single person that Paul listed here has a comment after their names and many of them say something along the lines of "for they work hard in the Lord". These people came to know Jesus, found a community, and got to work to make the Gospel known.
 - b. Hard work for the Lord isn't just a recommendation, it is the example set for us in the New Testament for how to be a part of the Church. It was never about consuming content. It is about being an active part of community.
 3. Accept the Invitation into the greatest community in human history.
 - a. The Church is founded on the Gospel and if the book of Romans has taught us anything it is that we desperately need this Good News in our lives.
 4. And from there we get to work. We join this community of believers and make him known.
 5. Consider this your formal invitation. Would today be the day that you name Jesus the lord of your life and enter into the greatest community you could ever be a part of?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As Pastor Billy begins his message, he talks about the Apostle Paul. What did you see was the focus of Paul's life? What was the only thing that Paul was willing to speak of? What do you see was Paul's ambition? Why do you think Paul desired to preach the gospel where Christ was not known?
2. Pastor Billy reads a long list of names that Paul says good things about each. Is Paul just flattering them here? If not, then why do you think he mentions their positive traits? What do you think we can learn from this?
3. Paul mentions several things about his ministry. Where does he say his authority comes from? Why is this important? When you share, where does your authority come from? How do you think this happens? How can you assist in the mission of sharing the Gospel in your community or beyond?
4. What steps can you take to make others feel accepted within your Christian community? How does your understanding of Christ's role as a servant influence your interactions with others? How can you show more compassion and understanding towards those who are weak or struggling in your community? What are some practical ways for you to offer encouragement and hope to others based on the teachings in this chapter?
5. What can you learn from Paul's courage and determination in spreading the Gospel?
6. How many dear friends do you have in the Lord? Who are the people that throughout your life have played a major role in encouraging you, spurring you on toward growth, and holding you accountable to continually grow in Godliness?

Challenge #1 If you have not joined a group look online and find a group to join. If you belong to a group that is full think about branching off in a new group to enable more to belong. If your group is not full invite some to join your group.

Challenge #2: Encourage your group to memorize Scripture. If you haven't already memorized this passage work on it this week. ***I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people. [Romans 16:17-18 NIV]***

Wrapping Up and Preparation for Next Week:

1. Pray that many people might step up and find a place to serve. Is that you?
2. Pray for those that have recently been baptized at New Day (Including the football team) that they might walk in the Spirit.
3. Pray that 2024 will be a year that you are able to bring someone to Christ.
4. Pray for those still dealing with insurance and repairs on their homes. Continue to pray for those that still need repairs or those that are still homeless due to Hurricane Ian?
5. Take time with your group for prayer requests.