

“Recognizing People God Uses in Your Life” Romans 16:1-16

- Paul continues to close out his letter (epilogue from 15:14-16:27) and he shares his longest section of greetings in any one of his letters. Paul reveals how connected he is and how important he sees other people are in his life and ministry.
- The heart and soul of Christianity is relational:
 1. God is a relational God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit are distinct, yet “one”)
 2. Salvation is a relational blessing (no hope or forgiveness without a relationship with Jesus Christ)
 3. Spiritual growth is a relational commitment (development happens in relationship with the Holy Spirit and like-minded believers)
 4. Ministry is a relational exercise (don’t exist to please ourselves, but “*please our neighbor for his good*”)
 5. Outreach is a relational necessity (the gospel message needs to connect with people who need Jesus Christ)
 6. Church life is one big relational experience (we worship, grow, sing, serve, love, pray, witness fellowship together)
- What do we learn from 27 people we don’t know, 5 house-church’s, a mother, a sister, 17 greetings and a few personal commendations?

1. **Recognize the blesser’s God brings into your life** (16:1-16)

- Who would you put on your blesser list? Would your name be on someone else’s list?
 - a. **Remember people’s names:** Paul names all kinds of people he’s met and never met, but heard about in the Roman church. He was committed to the personal touch.
 - b. **Respond to people’s needs** (v. 1-2): Paul commends a special women named “Phoebe” who would be travelling to Rome (many

believe she carried the Romans letter) and Paul wanted the church to bless the blesser.

- She was a fellow member of God's family ("*our sister*")
- She was active in serving the church ("*a servant of the church*"): some think she was a deacon since the word "*servant*" is the same word used for a deacon though it is also used as a general word for servant.
- She's a supporter of ministry and ministers ("*a helper of many*" and of "*Paul*"): the word "*helper*" denotes a patron who would help believers find hospitality and financial assistance as needed. Phoebe was probably a wealthy businesswoman.
- Paul wanted the church to do two things:
 1. "*receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints*" (give her a family reception)
 2. "*help her in whatever manner she may have need*" (give her whatever is needed for her trip and ministry)

c. **Recognize people's notability** (v. 3-4): Paul highlights two "*fellow workers*" Prisca & Aquila who "*risked their own necks*" for Paul (Paul met them in Corinth and worked with them in Ephesus). They were loyal and willingly gave selfless sacrifice on Paul's behalf.

2. **Recognize the blessing God brings into your life through people** (16:3-16)

- **The blessing of "*greeting*"** (v. 3-16): the word was a customary welcome or farewell that was outward and affectionate and shared several times (1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14)

Do it proactively ("*greet*"): it's commanded of believers (v. 16)

Do it personally ("*one another*"): it's a reciprocal action toward believers who are family and will be with each other eternally

Do it purely ("*with a holy kiss*"): The key word is "holy" as God wants our interactions to be free from any illicit or sensual interactions.

- **The blessing of integration**: Since we are all "*one in Christ*", Paul lists contains people from all walks of life (17-18 men; 8-9 women; many

Gentiles; some Jews; a Hellenistic Jew; 19+ slaves or “*freedman*” and “*freedwomen*”; some rich; some connected to nobility; 2 unbelievers)

- **The blessing of ministering women:** Paul lists 8 or 9 women (not sure whether Junia/Junias is a man or women) who were recognized as workers in the ministry.
- **The blessing of “*fellow workers*”** (v. 3, 9): Paul notes that some were co-workers in the ministry with him. God has called his people to the “*work of faith*” (1 Thess 1:3), “*always abounding in the work of the Lord*” (1 Cor. 15:58)
- **The blessing of excellence** (v. 7, 10, 13): Paul note three things about four different people (Andronicus & Junia/Junias; Apelles; Rufus)
 1. **v. 7:** “Andronicus and Junia/Junia” were “***outstanding among the apostles***”: There is much discussion whether Junia/Junias is a man or woman as the name is unclear. If a man, then it’s Junias, but if a woman, it’s Junia and she is recognized as an “apostle” which some say this means woman can be in key authoritative roles in church leadership and teaching ministry. While women are equal in value, capability and giftedness, God is clear that He has differing functional roles in the church. Men are given authority to lead and teach the church (1 Tim. 2:12) and women can lead and teach other women and children (Titus 2). So if Junia is a women her apostleship (with authority and teaching) would honor God’s functional design for women to lead and teach other women and/or children.
 2. **v. 10:** Apelles was “***approved in Christ***”: The word “approved” is a word for being tested and approved. Apelles had proved his worth in ministry with Paul and was commended for it (unknown if it was his character or ministry skill)
 3. **v. 13:** Rufus was “***a choice man in the Lord***”: The word “choice” is the word for elect or chosen and while it can refer to the Lord’s salvation choice of a person (true of all believers), it seems Paul is singling out something outstanding in Rufus’s life and ministry.

- God wants His people to give their best in honor and praise of Him (Jer. 48:10; Malachi 1)
- **The blessing of empathy** (v. 7 – “fellow prisoners:”) Paul notes his shared suffering experience with Andronicus and Junia/Junia as prisoners. There is something about sharing a similar experience (whether good or bad) that binds hearts together (see 2 Cor. 1:5-7)
- **The blessing of fruitfulness** (v. 5): Epaphroditus was the “*first convert to Christ from Asia*” which highlighted some fruit that God gave Paul and which he was looking to produce (Rom. 1:13). The key is to “*abide in Christ*” and you will “*bear much fruit*” including people fruit (Jn. 15:8)
- **The blessing of love** (v. 5, 8, 9, 12): Paul used the word “*beloved*” to describe four people. He must have had a special affection for some whom he knew better and experienced their words of encouragement or acts of practical assistance in some way during his travels or ministry or opposition.