

ROMANS 12-16: Putting Your Faith into Action

Give People a Reason to Get Out of Bed

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello men. Welcome to another episode of The Man In The Mirror Bible study. I'm Pat Morley. Today we're going to be talking about the subject, **Give People a Reason to Get Out of Bed**. Please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 16, verse one. We come today to a very interesting text. In fact, I think you're going to find this as extremely fascinating, and there's a lot to learn from this text that we're going to look at today. The personal remarks that Paul makes at the very end of Romans, chapter 16, really just a bunch of names. And at first it looks like, wow, this is just a bunch of small talk, but I think there's a much deeper lesson to be learned in here.

WHY DID PAUL END WITH A LIST OF NAMES?

So the first thing we want to talk about is why did Paul end with a list of names? Well, the reason he ended with a list of names is the same reason that all authors really end their books with a page or two of acknowledgements, where they recognize and appreciate, and thank the people that have helped them with the book or along the way to make a better book. And that's exactly what Paul is doing here. And I think we learned some very interesting things. For example, number one, have you wondered, how was it that Paul, even with this apostolic authority, how was it that Paul was able to write such a letter with such accuracy to the Romans, that it would satisfy both parties? You have these Jewish Christians and these Gentile Christians who were having this culture clash, and Paul somehow was able to gather enough of the correct intel that he needed in order to write that letter and not have them blow back by saying, "Well, who do you think you are? You don't really understand what's going on here."

Obviously he did. And I think we get a clue or an insight into the possible reason for that here, by looking at this text. And then also in addition, we're also going to see a lot about what's going on in Rome itself. So let's take a look at why Paul ends up here with a list of names. Romans chapter 16, verse one. And as we get started, I'm going to tell you that I probably have spent as much time trying to figure out how to pronounce all these names as I have on anything else, but there's a cute story here. 25 years ago or so, one morning I stood up in front of the Bible study and I mispronounced the word Nebuchadnezzar, king Nebuchadnezzar. I'm too embarrassed to even tell you how I mispronounced it here now.

However, one of our men at the time, a pastor, the following week took me aside, put his arm around me and he presented me with this Bible, his personal Bible, and the reason that it was so significant and still is to me, and the reason I keep it on my desk very close is that there is a key to how to pronounce Bible words at the beginning of this Bible. So I've used that in order to be able to make sure I pronounce these words correctly today. Verse one says, "I commend to you, our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae." What we learn quite a lot already from this, Cenchreae is part of Corinth. Paul is writing this book from Corinth. And so it's someone he's been in association with, there. She is a deacon

in the church. Now, we don't know if that's an official office or more generally as one who serves, because the word here for deacon literally means one who serves.

So he's commending Phoebe. And then in verse two, "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." It's very likely that Phoebe is the courier of this letter. She was there with Paul in Corinth, right? And so she very likely took this letter and concealed it in her cloak and made her way to Rome to deliver this letter of Romans to the church in Rome. We don't know that, but it's very likely. Verse three, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my coworkers in Christ Jesus." This is significant because Paul had worked with them in other areas. Paul was a tentmaker, they were tent makers. And so they labored together and then spread the gospel. Originally, it was Aquila and Priscilla. Now notice it's Priscilla and Aquilla, and there is a technique in the Bible or a protocol or a procedure where the person who is making the largest contribution is typically named first. So it started out Barnabas and Paul, but ended up being Paul and Barnabas.

And we see that here. And so here, the woman is making apparently the greater contribution in that relationship. Verse four, "They risked their lives for me. Not only I, but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them." And then in verse five, "Greet also the church that meets at their house." And so this is the first mention of house churches here in Rome. All of the churches in Rome were house churches. They weren't meeting in buildings. It was Christianity as a monotheistic religion in the Roman empire, they were polytheistic. And one of the gods to be worshiped was the emperor. And so Christians would not bother kneel and worship the emperor. And no god but God. So there was some necessity for them to have secrecy about what they were doing. They were meeting in house churches. And by the way, the house church movement has been hugely growing here in the United States and around the world.

But here in the United States, especially since roughly the early 1990s. Reading on, "Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia." Okay, well, that's pretty interesting. The first convert in the entire province of Asia. And then in verse six, "Greet Mary who worked very hard for you." We don't know which Mary this is, but note that it's a woman and she's worked very hard for the Romans. Verse seven, "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." So here we have a couple. Junia is the feminine of that particular name. And they were in prison with Paul. We know that Paul was in prison in many places, and now they're in Rome. And then verse eight, "Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our coworker 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." Maybe another house church possibly. "Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet those in the household of Narcissus, who were in the Lord." Maybe another house church. Verse 12, "Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord." Again, women being mentioned, who are hard workers for the gospel. "Greet my friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord." Verse 13, "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord and his mother who has been a mother to me too." So Rufus is mentioned twice in the Bible. All of these other names here now are only mentioned once. 23 of the 27 are only mentioned once. Rufus is mentioned twice, along with Alexander, the sons of the man who carried the cross of Jesus. So this would be someone who was very precious to Paul because of his relationship to Jesus and then also the care that Rufus' mother had taken of Paul.

Verse 14, "Greet Asynchritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympus and all the Lord's people with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ, send greetings." Just a little bit of the sidebar here. "Greet one another with a holy kiss." There were two charges that the Romans were

making against the Christians; cannibalism and incest. Cannibalism, because they were drinking the blood of Christ. Incest, because of this holy kiss that was part of the culture of the early church. Today, we might do hugs in the church, but back then it was a holy kiss. So we have this incredibly interesting series of people that are mentioned here, and he gives us a beautiful picture of the people that were helping Paul or had helped Paul, the relationships that he'd had along the way. And so we really do learn quite a lot. Now, here's the question.

How do you think it made them feel to be recognized and acknowledged like this by Paul, at the end of the book of Romans? It would have made them feel great. They would have been encouraged. They would have felt appreciated. They would have felt loved. They would have felt cared for. They would have felt like their labors had not been in vain. They would not feel like they were alone. There were so many positive things that would happen by being acknowledged like this. So there's a message here and a lesson for us as well, because you know that any time you are acknowledged or greeted, how it makes you feel. And that leads us to why it matters for us today as well. And that's because of the Big Idea and we get it from here because we see Paul encouraging these people. The Big Idea today; **Encouragement is the food of the heart. And every heart is a hungry heart.**

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Now I want to look at the question, why should we care? Why should we care? We should care because of three reasons. Number one is because of all the discouragement that's in the world today. All the people that are out there driving up and down the streets, maybe you could look out the window of a place of work, or maybe think of a busy intersection in your city and think about all the people going to and from, many of those people are deeply discouraged. So, that's one reason that we should care. Second, everyone needs to be encouraged. Everyone deserves to be encouraged. Every human being is made in the image of God. And just as a matter of human dignity, they deserve to be encouraged.

And then a third reason why you should care is that at its very core, Christianity is a ministry of reconciliation that includes the encouragement of brothers and sisters. I have a friend in Canada, one month ago, his wife who has underlying health conditions developed COVID and ended up in the hospital and they didn't think she was going to make it. Her kidneys failed and a number of other things. I first met Dan many years ago when I was doing Promise Keeper Canada conferences. They had a theme to one of their seasons around my book, Man Alive. So I went to each of the different provinces and I met Dan. He was my driver and he was very rough around the edges. I remember my first encounter with him. We got into a van, it was freezing, like 10 degrees. And he turns on the heater in this cold van, full blast. The fan motor on high is blowing all this cold air right into my face.

And then he hits the accelerator, off we go in the ice. And so he was a little rough around the edges. And I asked him if he would turn off the blower until the car heated up. And he said, "Oh yeah, okay. I'll do that." Well, Dan and I have become great friends over these last few years. It's an unusual friendship, I guess, because of the distance, but I just love him. And he was also my driver another time when I went up to Canada. So during this last 30 days, we've had a daily relationship because he has been discouraged. She's been discouraged. Everybody deserves to be encouraged. And we have the ministry of encouraging. It just means so much when we do this for other people. So let me ask you this question; how about you? How does it make you feel?

How does it make you feel when you're recognized and acknowledged? You feel appreciated, right? You feel encouraged. You feel like somebody knows you're out there, somebody cares and you don't feel like you're alone. Just think about for a moment about how good that makes you feel when you get acknowledged in the same way that Paul is acknowledging these people here in Rome and just how encouraged they would have been. And then the follow on to that is that just remember this, everyone deserves that. Everyone deserves that. The Big Idea today; **Encouragement is the food of the heart. And every heart is a hungry heart.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE

Finally, what can you do to encourage people? We could talk about a lot of things. Let me just mention three. Verbally acknowledge people, acknowledge people in writing and then pray. Acknowledging people verbally is extremely valuable and easy to do.

I took a man to lunch this past week. He's moving out of town now after having been friends for a number of years, and I asked him to lunch and I just wanted to acknowledge the contribution that he made to my life. I wanted to tell him how much it had meant to me that he had been in my life and I wanted to honor him and I wanted him to feel appreciated for it, something like that. Another thing is to do what I did with my friend, Dan. You can send a text to people. Another thing, and the final thing I'll close with today, is to pray for people and to let them know that you're praying for them. Yesterday, I mean literally yesterday, our next door neighbor, and I mean, our immediate next door neighbor, they've recently retired and it has been a dream of his to buy a private plane.

So yesterday they took off from Orlando, Florida to go to Birmingham, Alabama to visit their children and grandchildren. Somewhere over Columbus, Georgia, the plane malfunctioned and crashed into... We don't exactly know where yet. It's still very early. We got a call about 6:00 P.M. last evening from their daughter to let us know what was going on. And he must be a great pilot because miraculously, they both survived the crash. He was in surgery when she called, having a rod put in his back and they were evaluating her to see whether or not she needed the same thing.

I don't even know if she would be able to receive a text at that particular point, but I did text her to let her know and to have her, let her husband know that my wife and I had heard about the devastating news and that we loved them and we cared about them, and that we were praying for them and that we would continue to pray for them. And we wanted them to be encouraged, even though they were going through a very difficult time. Why did we do that? Well, we did that because encouragement is the food of the heart, and every heart is a hungry heart. So for the application for you, who is it that you know, who needs to be encouraged right now, today? And maybe it's you. And if it is, I encourage you to let someone know that you're going through a time and you need to hear some encouraging words.

Encouragement is the food of the heart, and every heart is a hungry heart. Let's pray. Our dearest father, we come to you. We thank you that even though this looks like a passage that's going to be a bunch of smalltalk, it actually turns out to have a deep meaning. We learn a lot. And we also get an example for how we can be encouragers of others by acknowledging them and greeting them. So we ask that we would take this to heart and that you would help us to both encourage others and be the recipients of that encouragement. We pray this in your name, Jesus. Amen. Thank you, men.