

Closing Greetings and Benediction

Romans 16:21-27

Romans 16:21-27 - *“Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you. ²² I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord.*

²³ Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. ²⁴ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. ²⁵ Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began ²⁶ but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— ²⁷ to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.”

Background Notes

In the first part of Romans 16 we looked at a number of greetings, and now here in the closing section we have a few more greetings. What is the difference? In the first set of greetings, Paul was greeting some of the Christian brothers and sisters at the church in Rome. In the second set of greetings, some of the believers at Corinth joined Paul in sending their greetings to the believers at Rome.

Remember, Paul was at Corinth on his third missionary journey when he wrote this letter to the Romans. He was hoping to visit the Christians at Rome soon after he wrote this letter, but his plans were changed. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and then imprisoned in Caesarea, perhaps for as long as two years. Although Paul finally did get to Rome, it was as a prisoner. The good news, of course, is that God was in full control of all the events of the apostle's life. From that Roman imprisonment, Paul wrote four more books of the New Testament, often called the “Prison Epistles.”

Some of Paul's associates listed at the end of chapter 16 are well known from other Scriptures, such as Timothy. We, however, know others, only from this passage. *Gaius* (v23) is probably the Gaius that we read of in 1 Corinthians 1 and the *Erastus* (v23) is probably the Erastus of Acts 19 and 2 Timothy 4. Notice that Erastus had a high-ranking position in Corinth. He was the treasurer or steward of the city, or maybe the director of public works. In the ruins of ancient Corinth today, you can see the name *Erastus* inscribed in large Latin letters on an excavated pavement – his name and position at that time were inscribed in stone. That's certainly evidence from archaeology backing up the accuracy of Scripture.

In verses 25-27 we have Paul's closing benediction. This benediction is really a doxology, and our two doctrinal points will come from this benediction.

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers are established by the preaching of “Christ crucified.”

Verse 25: “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ...” When Paul said “my gospel,” he didn’t mean that he came up with the idea of the good news of the gospel, or that it was only his and no one else’s gospel! No, he meant that he was given a special commission by the Lord to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. In Galatians 2:7 Paul wrote that he had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised (Gentile people), whereas Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised (Jewish people).

The phrase “according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ” means proclaiming Jesus Christ, and particularly **Christ crucified**. 1 Corinthians 1:22-23: “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks demand wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified...” And 1 Corinthians 2:1-2: “I did not come to you with eloquence or superior wisdom ... for I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified...”

The idea in “Christ crucified” is that we are not to proclaim Christ only as the greatest moral teacher who ever lived, or just as the greatest human leader in history. No -- that’s not the gospel! That will not establish anyone in the faith. The gospel is the proclamation of Christ as the One who died to save us. That’s what is in view here! That is the gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ that is able to establish you.

How does the proclamation of *Christ crucified* establish you as a believer? Well, first of all, it’s your salvation – that’s obvious, right? When you believe that Christ died for you, and you trust Him as your personal Savior, you are established in the Christian faith. Now in your Christian growth, the gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ crucified will continue to establish you. The helmet of **salvation** in Ephesians 6, for example, is a piece of armor for spiritual warfare in the Christian life. The proclamation of *Christ crucified* should be a focal point in your Christian life. It will establish you.

My experience as a Christian involved in teaching the word has been that every time I preach the gospel or hear the gospel of Christ proclaimed, my faith is built up. I’m established in the faith. Have you had that experience as a Christian? You should! That’s what this passage is teaching.

Never get away from the focal point of “Christ crucified.” That should be a focal point in our walk of faith. Believers are established by the preaching of “Christ crucified.”

2. Believers are established by the teaching of church truth.

Verses 25-26: “according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began²⁶ but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith...” Now certainly the gospel is related to “the mystery of the Church” that Paul spoke of here, but we’re separating them in our doctrinal points.

In Colossians 1:23-26, the apostle Paul related that the Lord had committed to him a two-fold ministry: the ministry of the Gospel and the ministry of the Church. Speaking of the **gospel**, in Colossians 1:23 Paul said, “*the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*” And then speaking of the **Church**, in Colossians 1:24-26 Paul said, “*the church,²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.*”

Do you see the two-fold ministry that was committed to the apostle Paul? This two-fold ministry is also in view here at the end of Romans 16. The two ministries certainly go together. We talked about the gospel in our first doctrinal point, and now we’ll discuss the “mystery kept secret since the world began” – the Church!

Do you remember what the New Testament calls a “mystery”? It’s not a spy novel or something strange and mysterious! A biblical “mystery” is truth that was concealed in the Old Testament, but was fully revealed in the New Testament. The Church is specifically called a mystery in both Ephesians and Colossians. The Church didn’t begin in the Old Testament - it was never even mentioned in the Old Testament. The Church began at Pentecost. The Church is the uniquely called-out body and Bride of Christ. It is composed of all believers – Jews and Gentiles.

This truth was not revealed in the Old Testament, but was made known by the New Testament prophetic Scriptures. The “prophetic Scriptures” or “writing of the prophets” mentioned in verse 26 are not the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures! They’re the writings of the New Testament prophets – namely, the apostle Paul and the other writers of the New Testament Scriptures.

The main point here is that the appreciation of this mystery, or appreciation of Church truth, also establishes the believer. Note the end of verse 26: “*for obedience to the faith...*” As you study the wealth of Church truth found in the New Testament, you are built up in the truth and in your faith. That’s why, whenever I preach on a passage from the Old Testament, I always try to relate it to the New Testament teaching of Christ and the Church and the Christian life. Believers are established by the teaching of Church truth.

Practical Applications

1. Don't feel bad if you are “only” a Tertius or a Quartus!

It seems that the Tertius (v22) and the Quartus (v23) were converted Roman slaves. Do you know what their names mean? Their names mean “Third” and “Fourth”! That’s all! In other words, they didn’t even have real names -- only numbers. Sometimes in slave families the children were just given numbers.

How would you feel if you didn’t have a name, only a number? You probably wouldn’t feel too good about that, right? Well, maybe you do have a name, but you feel like you don’t have a name. Maybe you feel like you’re “a nobody” -- at

least that's the way you see yourself. You feel that you're not very gifted or talented. No one pays much attention to you. You're never in the limelight! Well, don't feel bad! God can use you in important ways.

Look at Brother 3#, Tertius. Tertius was a secretary for the apostle Paul -- no small responsibility! He even sent his own greetings to the Romans! How about Brother #4, Quartus. We don't know what Quartus did. Maybe he cooked or did the laundry for Paul's team. That certainly would have been very important and necessary work for this ongoing ministry.

So if you feel like you're "only" an insignificant Brother #3 or Brother #4, look around you and see where you can fit in. Don't feel sorry for yourself; **you are important** and **you are needed** in the work of the Lord. Don't feel bad if you are "only" a Tertius or a Quartus!

2. Aren't you glad that God is wise?

"To God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen" (v27).

What a fitting final verse -- the last verse of the letter to the Romans, this wonderful book of Christian doctrine. We are not wise, especially when we try to second guess God and do our own thing. But **God is wise!**

I'm so glad that God knows **all** the facts, and with His wisdom He is in sovereign control of **all** situations. Despite the threats and sabre-rattling that's on going in the Middle East, or the corruption and scandals in Washington, **God is in charge** and **He** is in sovereign control of **all** situations! Aren't you glad that God is wise?