

## Greetings, Grace and Praise

### Romans 16:21-27

#### Introduction

We come to the end of our study in Romans. We have only scratched the surface, picking up bright glowing nuggets of gospel gold—from one of God’s richest Bible mines. Perhaps the key verse has been: Romans 5:1; “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The book of Romans tells us the believer has peace with God (5:1); access to God (5:2); assurance from God (5:3-4).

Paul has taken us on a journey into God’s holiness in condemning sin (1:18-3:9); into God’s grace in justifying sinners (3:21-5:1); into God’s power in sanctifying believers (6:1-8:28); into God’s sovereignty who saves Jew and Gentile (9:1-11:1). Paul invites former slaves to sin to become slaves to God.

Paul was a man of faith—but he was also a man to whom friendship was important. Paul invites us to consider what it means to have friendship and association in our mutual ministries in Christ Jesus. We all need friends; ministry partners who are faithful to the Gospel and Christ. **Perhaps you might be in a place where the hassle and accountability of friendship and fellowship seems more like a burden than a blessing! Paul invites us to share both the burdens and blessings of ministry as we enjoy this life of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.** Paul concludes the book with greetings, grace, and praise.

#### Greetings From The Gang (vv.21-23)

*Romans 16:21 (NKJV) Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.*

Paul sends greetings from his companions in ministry. Timothy—Paul’s right hand man. There is enough information about Timothy in the New Testament to provide an entire study. Let me give you the short version. His name means “one who honors God.” Timothy’s mother and grandmother were both believers in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote two letters to Timothy which bear his name in the New Testament. It would appear—that when Timothy was born—his mother dedicated him to the service of the Lord. Parents note—Timothy was called and used by God in ministry by the prayerful examples of believing family members. Timothy is called ‘my fellow worker’ putting him on an equal ministry footing with his mentor Paul the Apostle. Paul makes this interesting statement about Timothy in Philippians 2:20; “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.”

Paul and Timothy were like-minded—sharing common ministry goals. They were like-minded in philosophy, theology, concerns and plans. 1 Corinthians 4:17; “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”

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Paul mentions Lucius, Jason and Sosipater. They are called ‘kinsmen’ or relatives. This can either mean close relatives, members of the same tribe (Benjamin) or countrymen. They were Jews. Paul was ministering and serving side by side with both Jew and Gentile. Paul was modeling in his ministry the message of his ministry (unity in Christ between Jew and Gentile). Lucius may have been from Cyrene. We have no proof that the Jason mentioned here is the same Jason mentioned in the book of Acts (17:1-9); unless kinsmen also carries with it the idea of kinsmen in the faith—rather than blood.

*22I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord.*

Paul had an amanuensis or secretary; someone who wrote letters for him. Tertius served as Paul’s scribe, taking dictation. There is no such thing as a great minister who does not have the help of humble, dedicated, talented, consistent, committed helpers.

When we think of Paul—his monumental ministry and his evident impact on the early church; we may be tempted to forget the faithful, humble, believers who made Paul’s ministry possible.

We have at our church a small but dedicated group that make ministry possible. My wife Mary, who serves with joy and patience and faithfulness. All of our staff, all of our volunteers, all of you who with dedication continue to do the work of the ministry—at Denver Rescue Mission—Assisted Living Centers—working in a variety of discipleship and evangelism adventures! Our children’s ministry and student ministries and men and women’s ministries! Those who provide help and hospitality—cleaning—and meals. Few things would get done without these faithful saints—serving in practical ministry to the Lord. I pray that like Tertius you might step forward and start to serve! Couldn’t Paul write his own letters? Perhaps—but perhaps an eye infection or some other limitation made writing painful or difficult.

We are given ever so subtle hints about Tertius (his name means the third!). He knows and loves the Lord. He shares his testimony! I suspect Paul may have encouraged Tertius to include a note; but perhaps Tertius took it upon himself to slip a note into the divine record! People may sadly interpret the ministry of Tertius as limited, mundane or unimportant! Not Tertius! He proclaims his faith and ministry “in the Lord”.

Behind almost every effective minister and ministry is an army of effective ministers, praying, cleaning, answering phones, writing messages, doing research, providing support. People often ask me; “How do you do it?” How do you Pastor a church, serve as Chaplain and maintain a daily radio program?” The answer is simple—I have a dedicated self-less wife—who works harder than anyone I know—who rarely makes demands and when she does deserves every request! I have a small army of faithful men and women who serve the Lord, shoulder the burden, who provide spiritual and physical support. Paul wrote (Rom.12:10-11); “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; (11) not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

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We sometimes have an odd way of ranking our work. We think of it as large or small, important or unimportant, critical, or essential, or valuable. All work done for Jesus Christ and the gospel of Christ is valuable. No work or service done in Jesus's name is inconsequential. Men rank work and labor. But not the Lord Jesus Christ. God ranks obedience and faithfulness in the gift and task assigned to you. Luke 16:10; "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."

*23Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.*

I am amazed at Paul's ability to sum up a person in a single sentence. Gaius the man with the gift of hospitality; Erastus, the treasurer of the city; Quartus a brother. Archeological evidence exists in Corinth as a cornerstone is inscribed with the name of Erastus. Who do you make treasurer? Someone you can trust with money!

In 1 Corinthians 1:14 Paul mentions a *Gaius* who was baptized by Paul; and Acts 19:29 mentions a Gaius who served as a traveling companion in Macedonia; Acts 20:4; mentions another Gaius from Derbe—and in 3 John John speaks of "the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth".

I suspect one day—someone will sum up my life—your life—in a single sentence. What will they say? In Tombstone Arizona at Boot Hill you can a gravestone marker that reads; "Pause my friend as you walk by, as you are now, so once was I, as I am now so you will be, consider friend and follow me." I told Mary—we should scratch underneath—to follow you is not my intent—until I know which you way you went!"

Here's another favorite:

Here lies George Johnson, hanged by mistake 1882.

He was right

We was wrong

But we strung him up and now he's gone.

The world of the Wild West may have seemed harsh, nonsensical, cruel, and perhaps a little unforgiving. We still live in a fallen world. I read that the most recent United States census failed to count some 6 million people! They were left out! How did that happen? How did they wind up missing? And what about when the roll is called up yonder? Are you missing? Are you being counted in the life of the Church?

I read a survey taken in a suburban area of Houston. The Pollster wanted to find out what motivated people to choose a particular church. There were several surprises. 12% chose their church because of prior denominational affiliation. 8% on the basis of architectural beauty ( a nice facility!). 3% because of the Pastor in the Pulpit (ouch!). 18% because of the convenience of location. 21% because of people in the congregation whom they respected. But the largest

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amount, the single greatest factor, 37%—were influenced by the fact that friends and neighbors took an interest in them and invited them!

I am amazed. According to this survey the most effective way to get people to go to church is to invite them! The single most effective way to get a person to leave the church is to ignore them, forget them, isolate them, treat them with disrespect—or forget to ask them how they are doing!

Paul may have been the single greatest Christian intellect of his time—but he certainly had a heart that burned for the glory of God, and the testimony of Jesus, and the Gospel of Grace; but Paul loved people. Paul formed friendships; Paul forged ministry alliances. Kent Hughes writes; “The truly revolutionary heart is not just a visionary heart with great dreams, but a heart that loves people, a heart that remembers names, a heart with a good word for its brothers and sisters, a protective heart, and finally a contagious heart” (see pp. 301-302).

### **Grace From The Lord (v.24)**

*24The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

Some manuscripts omit verse 24. The verse is a repeat of verse 20; “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” except now Paul adds “all”. Paul may have written this verse in his own hand. Paul repeats the benediction in every book; 2 Thessalonians 3:17-18; “The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. (18) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Is it possible to over-estimate the power, the need, for God’s all sufficiency of grace? William Newell in his commentary on Romans says:

“Grace is God acting freely, according to his own nature as Love; with no promises or obligations to fulfill; and acting of course righteously—in view of the cross. Grace there is uncaused in the recipient; its cause lies wholly in the GIVER (*his emphasis*), *in GOD*. Grace also is sovereign. Not having debts to pay, or fulfilled conditions on man’s part to wait for, it can act toward whom, and how it pleases. It can, and does, often, place the worst deservers in the highest favors” (Newell p. 245).

Newell goes on and describes a section he entitles; “Things Which Gracious Souls Discover”

1. To “hope to be better” is to fail to see yourself in Christ only.
2. To be disappointed with yourself, is to have believed in yourself.
3. To be discouraged is unbelief—as to God’s purpose and plan of blessing for you.
4. To be proud, is to be blind! For we have no standing before God, in ourselves.
5. The lack of Divine blessing, therefore, comes from unbelief, and not from failure of devotion.

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6. Real devotion to God arises, not from man's will to show it; but from the discovery that blessing has been received from God while we were yet unworthy and undevoted.

7. To preach devotion first, and blessing second, is to reverse God's order, and preach law, not grace. The Law made man's blessing depend on devotion; Grace confers undeserved, unconditional blessing: our devotion may follow, but does not always do so, —in proper measure (Newell p., 247).

“Some people are truly fearful of grace. They complain that grace may lead to license or the freedom to do all kinds of terrible sinful things and abuse grace. Jesus apparently was not afraid of grace. He wasn't afraid of giving the prodigal son a kiss instead of a lecture; a party instead of probation; and he proved that by bringing in the elder brother at the end of the story and having him raise pretty much the same objections those who are fearful and skeptical of grace. The elder brother is angry about the party. He complains that his father is lowering standards and ignoring virtue—that music, dancing, and a fattened calf are, in effect, just so many permissions to break the law. And to that, Jesus has the Father say only one thing: “Cut that out! We're not playing good boys and bad boys any more. Your brother was dead and he's alive again. The name of the game from now on is resurrection, not bookkeeping” (Adapted just a little—Robert Farrar Capon, *Between Noon and Three*. Christianity Today; Vol. 30; no. 7.).

### Praise From Paul (vv.25-27)

*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*

Paul's letter ends with a long and beautiful doxology; Paul's praise for the Lord. Paul's praise can in many ways serve as a model for our praise; Paul praises the work of God (vv.25-26); and the wisdom of God (v.27). It has also been called a doxology of desire (Roy Laurin p.525). In what sense? In the sense that it consists of praise to God—and praise that God will establish the believer in a secure relationship with Christ. Paul sees no advantage for weak and wishy-washy saints—he sees no advantages for the saint who nullifies their testimony of Christ by wrong conduct.

I want to draw your attention to the word *establish* (*sterizo*). The root of that word means to prop or buttress or fortify. God is able to make us stand. The same word is used in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 which says God is able to 'establish' (NASB) our hearts in blameless holiness. Paul reminds the reader that God is able to make us strong, steadfast—God props us up so we will not fall. In the beginning of Paul's letter he wrote (1:10-11) “making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established (same word).

We sometimes support—each other—but in the end God props us up. We often say; “lean on me!” Or we look to lean on members of the Church or the Government; but Paul points people to the Lord and the Gospel and the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have argued that

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Paul's gospel is somehow different from the Gospel of God or the Gospel of Christ. But that isn't true—there is a singular gospel.

What is the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began? I believe Paul is making reference to the true Church of Jesus Christ. A mystery was often something unknown but eventually revealed. God revealed to Paul that the Church of Jesus Christ would consist of both Jews and Gentiles. The fact that it was a mystery for so long speaks of the intimacy and credibility of Paul's message. The third chapter of Ephesians examines and expands this theme. Wiersbe reminds us; "It was because of this message that the Judaizers persecuted Paul, because they wanted to maintain Jewish privileges. Both Jews and Gentiles in the Roman churches needed to know what God's program was. Some of this Paul explained in Romans 9-11" (TBEC Vol. 1 p. 566).

Paul argues that Christian believers are made strong by God's revelation of the mystery of the gospel. We are encouraged to understand three things:

1. The mystery of the gospel had been a secret since the world began. Remember the word mystery does not mean something difficult or obscure. We often think of a mystery as something that needs to be searched and solved by human ingenuity. Here it means a truth previously unknown—now known. This is a truth—not discovered by human reason—but revealed by God. The gospel could never be known unless it was revealed by God. And so the gospel is not the product of wishful thinking; or human invention; or rationalization. The gospel is God's revelation of how sinful human beings can be reconciled to God. Human beings apart from Christ and the gospel could never figure out a way to be accepted by God. Jesus in John 3:13 said, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven".

2. The mystery of the gospel is now revealed by the commandment of God in the prophetic Scriptures. God wants the world to know the gospel; therefore God has commanded that it be revealed and preached and proclaimed to the whole world. "Pay close attention to this crucial point—it is revealed by the prophetic Scriptures (*dia gryphon prophetikon*).

*26but 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—*

This is extremely important. We are told exactly where we are to find out about God and His message to the world. We do not discover God by natural reasoning: God reveals Himself to us. It could be that Paul is making reference to the New Testament writings; since the mystery was unknown in the Old; perhaps concealed in the Old—revealed in the New—made known to the nations in order that people might believe—and obey respond in faith and be saved.

3. The mystery of the gospel is revealed for a purpose: to lead all nations to be obedient to the faith (Note This Outline taken from *The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible*; pp.283).

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There are at least five things we should never forget about the gospel.

1. The Lord God is able to establish us or make us stand firm in our hope in Christ.
2. The Lord Jesus offered the gospel and Paul preached the gospel.
3. The gospel is where all humanity finds hope.
4. The gospel is meant for all people and was always meant for all people.
5. The gospel requires a response of faith in Christ.

*27to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.*

The Lord alone is the source of true and pure wisdom; and to Him alone belongs honor and glory through Jesus Christ our eternal Mediator. God in His wisdom saves people who trust Jesus.

### **Conclusion**

Just a few things before we close. If God has revealed how we are to be right with Him through faith in Jesus Christ, why do human beings continue to create their own ideas, thoughts, opinions, suggestions on how to have a right relationship with God?

Since God has revealed the Gospel in the Scriptures, why don't people rush to Church, rush to Bible Study? Why aren't our churches packed with hope starved people? Why don't people search the Scriptures daily for truth?

An unsaved man talked with an evangelist about how to be saved because he was deeply convicted about his sin. When he asked the Christian what he could do to be saved, the Christian said he was too late. "Too late! What do you mean? You mean I'm too late to be saved?" The man laughed. "No, you're just too late to do anything yourself. Christ has already done it all."

Years ago Billy Graham was preaching in Scotland. Some local reporters were poking fun at "Preacher Graham". An older man replied; "He's saying we are all sinners. It's not hard to believe that." "And he's saying that Christ died for us." When he spoke those words out loud his heart was convicted and he realized that he needed Christ as his Savior—and accepted Christ right there!