

Romans 16 v 17-27

Introduction

Romans is a letter which Paul found difficult to bring to an end. Time and again we feel this must be the very last sentence, but then he finds something else to say by way of greeting or warning or wish for God's blessing on them.

Greetings to Church from people with Paul

Paul sends to the Romans the greetings of those with him in Corinth as he writes the letter.

Firstly Timothy, Paul's fellow-worker (v21) and son in the faith, assistant and colleague, who took over Paul's work, and received two letters from Paul. The next three names on the list – Lucius, Jason and Sosipater – he describes as his kinsmen, just like Andronicus and Julia (v7) and Herodian (v11) who were also relations, "kinsmen". Therefore quite a few of Paul's relations were Christians, and presumably won through Paul's witness. Often forget this. Aware of Paul's friends who were Christians, but not aware that some of Paul's family circle were Christians.

**I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord** (v22). Paul normally dictated letter to a secretary or amanuensis. No great man could do this work without help of humble helpers. Paul was great orator and theologian, but without aid of man using his pen, doubtful if we would have had Romans.

Everyone is necessary in the playing of great pieces of music – from the virtuoso violinist to the person on the triangle. So it is in the work of the Gospel. "Dignity of subordinate work needs to be kind to the heart by those who think they are capable of more important service and by those who know they can only do smaller tasks" They would be humbled and encouraged respectively.

The list continues in v23 with Gaius, Paul's host, who had looked after Paul, and in whose house the whole church of Corinth probably met. Erastus was the treasurer of the city, an important man of the city, and who no doubt used his influence for good and to further the Gospel. Quartus "the brother" (not "a brother", as in A.V.), was perhaps Erastus' brother or someone known to the Christians in Rome, and therefore could be called "the brother".

One of interesting things about the list here, as earlier in the chapter when sending greetings to Rome, is the way in which Paul characterizes people in one sentence. Single sentence sums up each person – Gaius, the hospitable man, Quartus, the brotherly man etc. Some day people might sum us up in a sentence or a phrase, picking out one thing which strikes them and sums us up. What will that be?

Final Warning by Paul

Keep eye on those teaching anything that is opposed to teaching already received. Some people are anxious to trip Christians up. Not real sorts of Christians. Out for own ends and to line their pockets. Use plausibility and flattery to deceive the innocent. Right from the beginning there have been those anxious to teach false doctrine, to cause dissension and strife among brethren. Trouble makers. Full of suspicion and doubt, and thinking the worst. Putting hindrances in the way of others, making it hard for people to become, and continue as, Christians. Bad example or use of influence to undermine faith of others.

The Christian is not to be gullible or silly or sentimental. People undermining or wrecking fellowship are a serious menace. Make note of them. Steer clear of them. Give them a wide berth. N.B. No point in debating with these men, discussions are ineffective and useless. Be aware of danger from beginning. Prevention is better than cure. Easy enough to extinguish a spark if deal with it at once. Once it gets a hold and becomes a forest fire, the matter is soon out of hand.

Test to bring to this situation is whether or not these trouble makers keep and obey Christian teaching given by apostles, i.e. the doctrine of Jesus Christ in all its simplicity and purity. This doctrine binds together all who are in Christ in heart and soul. Therefore divisions in such a fellowship based on Christ could not be from God.

Promises of aid: **God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly** (Romans 16:20), i.e. soon. God is source of power and grace. But we need to appropriate it in order to overcome Satan and safeguard ourselves from his instruments. Throughout New Testament, warning about those causing trouble in churches. Church history shows wisdom of these warnings.

Importance of unity in a church based on the Gospel. Not allow disruptive elements. Need for wise and mature leadership in churches. Immature Christians can be easily misled. **Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves** (Matthew 10:16) – is still best advice available.

#### Final Promise

**To him that is of power to establish you according to my Gospel** (Romans 16:25). The Gospel and preaching which centres on Jesus Christ, foretold in prophetic writings, designed to bring all nations to obedience – this is the message of power. It is God's instrument for making us strong and steadfast. One of greatest needs, especially in this age, is that in all circumstances we should be firm and steadfast, spiritually consistent and stable. When established, we are happy and helpful. Strength brings confidence and courage. God is able to make us like this. Uses Gospel to this end. The Gospel is power of God, not only to save, but to stabilize us. The more fully we enter into experience of Gospel and allow it to dominate our lives, the more steadfast we become.

Under all circumstances, and in every emergency, surrounded by most pressing problems and aware of our own weakness – remember God has the power to stabilize us. He is able to impart grace and strength. Life can be hard. It can batter a man to his knees. It can be perilous. Slippery places of temptation abound. But Gospel has power to safeguard a man, make him meet life erect. **The people that do know their God**

**shall be strong and do exploits** (Daniel 11:32). Need to be rooted in truth. Need triumphant capacity not to be moved by doubt or fear or apprehension or weariness. God is able to make us rock-like.

### Epilogue

William Tyndale's prologue to the Epistle to the Romans ends with the following admonition:

“Now go to, reader, and according to the order of Paul's writing, even so do thou. First behold thyself diligently in the law of God, and see there thy just damnation. Secondly, turn thine eyes to Christ, and see there the exceeding mercy of thy most kind and loving Father. Thirdly remember that Christ made not this atonement that thou shouldest anger God again: neither died he for thy sins, that thou shouldest live still in them: neither cleansed he thee, that thou shouldest return (as a swine) unto thine old puddle again: but that thou shouldest be a new creature and live a new life after the will of God and not of the flesh. And be diligent lest through thine own negligence and unthankfulness thou lose this favour and mercy again.”