

## Romans Chapter 16 - John Karmelich

Title "What matters in the end!"

We made it to the final chapter of Romans. The short version is Paul names people he personally knew or knew of in the Roman church, as well as a few with him when he wrote this letter. Then he includes a few "doxologies" (a fancy word that just asks God for a blessing on those he is talking to!) So why is this letter ending this way? Paul spent 8 chapters teaching what being a Christian meant. Then there's 3 chapters using (nation of) Israel as an illustration on how God's not capable of going back on His word. Then Chapters 12 to 15 gave practical advice on living the Christian life on how to handle "this or that" situation! As I state way too often, no chapter breaks exist in the original text. My question is why does Paul end this letter by naming about 30 people he knew or knew of? Then he gives a quick warning on warning about false teachers and ends with a bunch of verses praising God! That of course leads to my favorite question in bible study: "Why should we care"?

Pause and think what matters when we die? Is it all the places we have been to? Is it how much money we made? To quote a famous former football coach, "You always want to die having at least 6 friends, that way you got enough people to carry the casket!" (Lou Holtz.) Remember that Paul has never been to Rome, but because it was the capital of the largest empire in world history, he knew a few Christians there. There was a famous saying in Europe, "all roads lead to Rome" and Paul took advantage of those roads. The empire was at its peak when Paul was traveling around! Think it was a coincidence for that time in history for Jesus to die for our sins? On our deathbed, what matters? Our relationship with God and those who will be with us in heaven! If you've been with me from the beginning, we have spent 15 chapters discussion why the only way to heaven is through Jesus! In effect we're past that, and now we are discussing what matters when it is all over. No, Paul's life didn't end after this letter and the book of Acts tells us Paul made it there as a prisoner! My point is after a long letter about doctrine, what should matter is our relationship with God and with the people who we'll spend eternity with!

I must admit when I come to the end of a project, I spend time thinking about what I learned! Why did God wanted me to take on Romans? In effect, I already answered the question! What's important in the end is our relationship with God and with people! But John, can't those of other religions say the same thing? That's when the previous chapters are important as they argue the necessity of Jesus death as an entrance requirement into heaven. OK enough on that, let's talk about Chapter 16 itself!

Let me begin by stating this is a good spot for a chapter break. Chapter 15 finished a multi-chapter talk on how we Christians should act. In effect Paul's in his wrap-up mode here in this chapter. The first of the people he mentions is the woman who actually delivered the letter. Remember Paul wrote it from a part of what's Greece today (City of Corinth). Think about traveling from Greece to Rome without any modern form of transportation. Just saying this was a big deal especially for a woman! A positive part of the Roman empire was they made sure it was safe to travel on their roads. Her name was Phoebe. It is interesting that she was probably a deacon. An office that was formalized by Paul which refers to an official helper in the church. There is some debate whether she formally held that office or if it was just a title Paul gave her. If we meet her in heaven, we can ask!

By the way, I'm not going to give a lecture on each of these names. Lots of interesting speculation and a few logical things can be said about most of these people. Notice how much Paul cared about all his fellow believers. It wasn't you're now saved, good luck with your life, go away! I'm positive he wasn't close with a lot of these people, but he cared about believers just as we should! I admit, I'd struggle for

a list of 30 people at church I know by name. I know lots of faces, but names are a challenge. We will get to know all these people in heaven since time is not an issue! If you desire a little more background about each of them, lots of good commentaries exist. I'll give a few highlights, but I want to discuss the rest of the letter as well. OK let me continue:

Next, we get a husband and wife couple mentioned in the Corinthian letters. Apparently, they helped to save Paul's life at one point which isn't surprising if one studies the number of death threats he had as a spreader of the Gospel message. (Priscilla (wife) and Aquilla (husband)). Then he mentioned they got a group of Christians that meet at their home in Rome. What's interesting is they met Paul because they were kicked out of Rome along with all Jewish people. They eventually went back and started a church in their home! Just saying one never knows how God will use us!

Then Paul mentions the first person he ever led to Jesus (based out of what is Turkey today). That man is now in Rome, and Paul didn't forget that! We get people who were part of the "Herod" family, and it is logical some who were slaves working for members of that family! We get men and women, so Paul didn't care about one's sex as far as being saved! Bottom line, this "I send my love" fest continues until Verse 15. Verse 16 mentions a "holy kiss". That was a standard greeting still used today through most of Europe (kissing on both cheeks). His final word to all of them was that those with him (getting to all of them in a few verses) all send their love as well!

Verses 17-19 are warnings about false teachers. I admit, these verses puzzled me. God desires we be a good witness to all people. Yet here, Paul says we are not to waste our time with people who teach contrary to the Gospel message! To me it's sort of like, "not casting our pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6). In essence it's about not wasting our time with those who don't care what we have to say. I realize we do things with non-believers. That's not the point. It is about not wasting our time in situations that in effect don't do any good! Time helps us understand such discernment!

Verse 20 also fascinates me: Paul says, the God of all peace will soon crush Satan under your feet! I'm positive Satan's still alive and well! I believe the point is Satan and evil never wins in the long run, and all efforts we make for God are for His glory!

We then get a few greetings from those with Paul. He dictated this letter! The guy who wrote it also is named! Same with the person who housed Paul while he was there in Corinth! Others are also given a brief mention! The point is Paul cared about believers and that's a model for us to follow!

The letter ends with a "benediction". It's a reminder not only will God win in the end, but our efforts to make a difference "pay off". It also includes a reference to what we call the Old Testament (the New is not written yet!) and Paul's point is simply that all of that is worth studying for our benefit! It ends with the reminder that the glory belongs to God the Father through Jesus. That's why we bother! That's why we deal with all the suffering! That's why we use our lives for His glory! No one says living the life of a Christian is easy! Paul (and me for that matter) are saying it's worth it! Can't think of a better way to end this letter!

As always, thanks for reading and I hope it helps you draw closer to God. When I wrote a commentary on Romans a few decades ago, I listed my sources on the last page of the last lesson. My sources today are the same, except I'll now add John MacArthur's verse by verse commentary (free on the internet)!

With that said, hope you like this study. If you want to read my older commentary, click on one of the links below. It is still a joy to study and teach this and again I'm grateful for you reading this. The rest

of this email is links to questions you may have. If you're new here, you are always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading this! Obviously, I'm starting a new project next week! Details to come!

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