

## Romans Chapter 16- John Karmelich

1. Most adults can relate to the following scenario: You see somebody that you knew from a long time ago. You can't remember their name. You remember lots of things about your past together and things about their personality, but you still can't recall their name.
  - a) In a sense, that is what I want you to get out of Chapter 16.
  - b) In this chapter, Paul lists about 25 people that that either are associated with the Christians in Rome, or will be associated with them.
  - c) I mention this because six months from now, I doubt you'll remember all of these names. If you do, you're memory is much better than mine. Hopefully, you might remember a few facts about these people the next time you read this chapter.
  - d) My point is that Paul not only lists names, but facts about these names. It is the "facts" that I want to focus upon is this lesson.
2. With that said, welcome to the last lesson on the Book of Romans.
  - a) It is always bittersweet writing the last lesson on a bible book. Romans has become a good friend the past several months. My thanks to you who read these studies. I pray they have blessed you as much as they have blessed me as I prepare them and write them.
  - b) My goal in writing these lessons is never to do a complete analysis of any book. This is impossible, especially with Romans. My goal is that the next time you or I read Romans as we read our way through the bible, is we will have a better understanding of what Paul is saying and what the bible is trying to teach us in order to be better followers of Christ.
  - c) If you want further study, I always make it a point on the last lesson to list my sources. They are on the last page of this lesson.
3. In this chapter, Paul is giving his final thoughts and salutations. The word "salutations" is Paul's greetings to people he knew in Rome, or were going to Rome. Even though Paul had never been there, with these 25 (or so) names, Paul still knew a bunch of people tied to that church.
  - a) The chapter will wrap up with some final ideas and blessings from Paul.
  - b) Most of the chapter deals with these names. What I am going to focus upon is the "stories" behind these names as Paul describes them and what we can learn from Paul's comments on these people. With that said, we can start on the first name.
  - c) Again, if you want to learn the names, all power to you. We're going to meet all of these people one day, and I should probably learn them as well. My emphasis on these studies is how to apply the bible to our lives today, and for the moment, the stories behind the names have the greatest personal appeal.
4. Verse 1: I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.
  - a) A woman named Phoebe is listed first. Many commentators believe that Phoebe is the person who delivered Paul's letter to Rome. It is speculation, but it is "logical".
  - b) Verse 1 says Phoebe is from the church in Cenchrea. The town of Cenchrea is a "suburb" of Corinth. The City of Corinth was a major city in Greece. Cenchrea was a port-town.
    - i) The point here is that the church Paul started in Corinth sprouted other churches. One of those churches is in nearby Cenchrea.
    - ii) That little fact is a good reminder that Christianity is designed to be "spread". A strong healthy church should grow and eventually sprout other churches.
  - c) Paul calls Phoebe a servant. The Greek word is the same word that many Christian churches use for the word "deacon". It's a good excuse to talk about "deacons".
    - i) The role of "deacons" is based on something that happened in the Book of Acts. The leaders of the early church needed someone to take care of the serving aspect of the Christian churches. The head deacons were good at helping people, but they were also administrators to decide who needs help and who are to be the people doing the helping. (Ref: Acts 6: 1-5.)

- ii) While the elders of the early churches were in charge of preaching, teaching, and governing the church, the deacons did the “real” work of helping those in need. The focus was the sick, elderly, and those who needed financial support. Thus, the first deacons were set up to administrate helping those in need.
  - iii) Today, many denominations formalize the role of deacons and have appointed deacons for their church. Many other churches don’t formalize deacons but just ask the congregation to help those in need.
  - iv) In Paul’s 1<sup>st</sup> Letter to Timothy, Chapter 3, Paul lists the qualifications for a deacon. In those qualifications, Paul uses “male” pronouns to describe their qualifications.
    - a) Here we have Phoebe, a female name. Paul calls her a deacon and Paul asks the church in Rome to accept her as a deacon. That should end the debate of “whether or not women are allowed to be deacons”.
    - b) As to church elders, that is a whole other debate. There are no explicit examples of female elders in the bible. Most Christian denominations have only male elders, but there are exceptions. That is a separate issue.
5. Verse 2: I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.
- a) In Verse 2, Paul is still talking about Phoebe. She is the only person on this list who gets two verses solely about a single person. That alone is noteworthy.
  - b) Let me try to paraphrase Paul’s thoughts here: “There is a woman named Phoebe. When you meet her, treat her like one of the best people you could imagine. Further, this woman has a great gift for helping people in need. She has great discernment on how to help the sick, the poor and the needy in the church. Watch what she does and follow.”
    - i) Verse 2 says, “She has been a great help to many people, including me.” In other words, Phoebe has a great reputation for being an outstanding deacon.
    - ii) If you want a great resume as a Christian, I can’t think of one much better than Phoebe’s. Remember that no Christian position is more or less important than others. We are all called to help people in need. Some people have a gift more than others to lead in such situations. Phoebe is one of those leaders.
  - c) Phoebe strikes me as the kind of person who gets stuff done. I’m speculating that Paul never had to ask Phoebe to do something twice. Paul would ask Phoebe to help a person in need and it would be a “done deal”. She is given that type of reputation in this one verse. It is something for all Christians to strive for.
  - d) If it is true that Phoebe is the one who delivered this letter to Rome, notice that Paul picked a great deacon, as opposed to a church leader or a great speaker. It is Paul’s way of saying, “I assume you guys in Rome already have some good elders. Let me send you someone who is going to get the real work done. Watch her and follow her lead!”
  - e) For those who have been involved in Christian churches for a long time, you would know that the greatest ministry work is not done by the preachers and leaders, but by the ones in service helping those in need. They are the one’s usually making the biggest difference in people’s lives for Christians. The teachers are the ones who say “How to do it”. The deacons lead by example of actually doing what God commands of us.
6. Verse 3: Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. <sup>5</sup> Greet also the church that meets at their house.
- a) When you study the book of Acts, the names Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned a bunch of times. They are a husband and wife that worked with Paul on his missionary journeys and set up churches in their homes.
  - b) The wife Priscilla is usually mentioned more prominently. Many suspect that she did the majority of the Christian work while the husband had to work for a living. Their names are usually listed together as they apparently work well as a team.

- c) So why did Paul tell the church(es) in Rome to “greet” them?
  - i) Verse 5 says to greet the church that meets in their house (in Rome).
  - ii) That means Priscilla and Aquila were already based in Rome and had a church that met in their house. With the “great Paul” mentioning their names, it tells the other home churches that Paul condones of Priscilla and Aquila as workers.
  - iii) Remember that Priscilla and Aquila were old friends of Paul. It may just be Paul’s way of saying hello to those he knew in Rome. Paul is saying to the Roman Christians in effect, “Hey, you know that husband and wife couple Aquila and Priscilla? I know them well. Treat them well and follow what they do!”
- d) The verse says, “They (Priscilla and Aquila) risked their lives for me”.
  - i) Historically, there is no record of this event in the bible. Given the fact that people were constantly trying to kill Paul in the Book of Acts, this is likely.
  - ii) An interesting note is that the book of Acts mentioned that Priscilla and Aquila had to leave Rome. Paul met them in Corinth because Aquila was a tentmaker like Paul. (Ref. Acts 18:3). There was a time when the Emperor of Rome expelled all Jews out of Rome (Ref. Acts 18:2). The Romans didn’t like the idea of believing in one only God, and were anti-Jewish for that reason. If it weren’t for the fact that Priscilla and Aquila had to leave Rome, they never would have met Paul.
    - a) What is interesting is that Priscilla and Aquila are now back in Rome. That Roman order to kick the Jews out of Rome had been rescinded or no longer enforced. This couple decided it was best to go back to their home in Rome and set up a church at that location.
  - iii) Paul then says, “All the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.” What I suspect that means is that if Paul was dead, he could not have started all of those Gentile-based churches that Paul started. If Paul was dead, he could not have written all of those letters we Christians study. Assuming Priscilla and Aquila did save Paul’s life as he states in this verse, then we are grateful for what they did.
  - iv) The application of this sentence is you never know the impact of any Christian service one performs. There is a classic story of an “insignificant” Sunday school teacher close to a hundred years ago. There were no major accomplishments in his life, other than the fact he was the one who preached the Gospel message to Billy Graham as a child when he first got saved. Billy Graham has lead millions to Christ. My point is one never knows the impact of one’s service for God.
  - v) When Priscilla and Aquila did something to save Paul’s life, they probably thought they were just helping a friend in need. They didn’t think about the long-term impact of what Paul would later accomplish. My point again, is to never underestimate being of service to other Christians and its possible impact.
- e) I’d like to wrap up this section with a quick discussion of “home churches”. This couple Priscilla and Aquila had a church that met in their home.
  - i) First of all, Jesus said, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20 NIV). In that sense, it only takes two or three Christians in one location, praying together or worshipping together to form a “church” at that particular time.
  - ii) On a practical level, Christianity was mostly illegal for the better part of the first few centuries. Christians had to meet in hiding, and usually at people’s homes.
  - iii) The bible is not anti-building-church or anti-large churches. The point is a small home-group meeting is just as “biblical” as a large gathering in a big building.
  - iv) If you meet a person today who says their “church” is a gathering of people every week in their home, accept that as a church as much as if any larger group of Christians meeting a large building.

7. Verse 5 (Part 2): Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.
  - a) In the world of business, many people frame the first dollar they ever earn. When it comes to leading other people to Christ, you never forget the first person you help “save”.
    - i) There are few things as exhilarating as being with someone when they first give their lives to Jesus. Some people have a gift more than others do on this issue, but we are all called to share the Gospel message with others. It is God’s job to save people, but God calls on us to deliver the message. It is special to watch the event.
    - ii) With that said, Verse 2 mentions one of Paul’s first “converts” was now in Rome.
  - b) I should also state that the word “Asia” as Paul used it is different from how we think of the word Asia. It refers to Asia Minor, which is now (mostly) the country of Turkey.
  - c) So, what is Paul saying to the Roman church? “Hey, that guy named Epenetus, he’s a veteran of Christianity. He is a brother in the Lord. Treat him well!”
8. Verse 6: Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.
  - a) There is a bunch of Mary’s in the bible, and I doubt this is any of the famous ones. All we know about this Mary is what her reputation is: “(She) worked very hard for you”.
  - b) Remember that Paul’s never been to Rome. We don’t know how Paul even knows this Mary. All we do know is that she is committed to helping the churches in that town and has a reputation that spread hundreds of miles away to where Paul is located!
    - i) I doubt this Mary had any idea that she had made an impression on Paul. I’m sure she had a life in Rome and worked hard to help other Christians.
    - ii) If there is one thing to get out of this simple sentence, is that we never know who our lives as Christians are impacting or the extent of that impact. Our job is to just serve Christ to the best of our ability. Let our reputation speak for itself.
9. Verse 7: Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.
  - a) Now we have two more people named “Andronicus and Junias”.
  - b) Paul says they were relatives. The word is also translated “kinsmen” in other English bibles. Most scholars argue these two were actual blood relatives. The minority view is that they were “fellow Jewish Christians” and Paul calls them kinsmen. Either translation can be biblically correct. Most likely they were actual relatives, but it cannot be proven.
  - c) The interesting thing is these two were Christians prior to Paul’s conversion. If they were Paul’s relatives and they saw Paul persecuting the church as he did prior to his conversion. Did these two people pray for Paul? Most likely.
    - i) Imagine praying for someone’s salvation that spent their life persecuting the church! Was that prayer ever answered! It is an example of the power of prayer.
  - d) Paul mentions these two were in jail with him. You could imagine how that conversation went assuming they were blood relatives: “Hey Paul, I remember when you were busy putting guys like us in jail. Now here you are with us, guilty of the same crime”.
  - e) So why were these two relatives in prison with Paul? They were “guilty” of being Christians. This reminds me of the classic line, “If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” These two, Andronicus and Junias had such a reputation.
  - f) The next thing Paul says is they were “outstanding among the apostles”. That does not mean they were among the original apostles, but worked among them. If these two guys were Christians prior to Paul, they must have been around the early church.
  - g) Paul is saying in effect to the church in Rome, “Hey, you know those two guys named Andronicus and Junias? I want you to treat them well. They’ve had good long-term reputations as Christians and have been around since the early days. They believe in Jesus to the point they were willing to serve jail time for their faith. Treat them well as they are your Christian brothers.”

10. Verse 8: Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.
  - a) Here are some people we don't know much about. All Paul is saying in effect is, "I love these three people. That's good enough for me and should be good enough for you. Treat them likewise!" This is all about having love for the fellow Christian.
  - b) Back in Chapters 1, Verse 8, Paul mentioned that he prayed regularly for the church in Rome. I doubt Paul just prayed, "God bless the Roman church." These verses indicated that Paul knew a bunch of people in Rome. I suspect he prayed for them by name if for no other reason he remembered all of those names.
  - c) The interesting thing is that these people have their names recorded for all of history. It is a reminder of how God cares for all believers, no matter how large or how small our role.
11. Verse 10a: Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ.
  - a) All we know about Apelles is he is "(1) tested and (2) approved by Christ".
  - b) Keep those two facts separate. In other words, this guy Apelles is not approved by Jesus because he is tested. Apelles is approved by Jesus because Apelles believes in Him.
  - c) Paul said this guy Apelles was tested in his faith. All Christians are tested in their faith. (Ref.: 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:4). That probably meant Apelles faced a jail sentence or death sentence for being a Christian and did not deny his faith under such an accusation.
  - d) The point here is Apelles is commended for being tested, and on that ground he is approved by God for passing that test.
  - e) Near the end of Revelation, among the people not in heaven are the "cowardly". (Revelation 21:8). The cowardly are those who are afraid to publicly proclaim Jesus as God due to fears of repercussions. All Christians have had some points in their life where they failed to take a stand, and that's not the point here. The point is "when push comes to shove" and a situation arises where one must take a stand for Christians, one who is a true believer steps is willing to publicly state their faith.
12. Verse 10b: Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. <sup>11</sup> Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.
  - a) Paul says the Roman Church is to greet the "household" of Aristobulus (Verse 10) and the "household" of Narcissus (Verse 11). It doesn't necessary mean these two guys are saved, but just those in their household. (Most scholars argue that the first guy (Aristobulus) was a Christian and the second guy (Narcissus) was not.
  - b) So does that mean when we go to a house where only some are Christians we are to say, "Hello to person A, B and C, but then shun person "D" who is not a Christian? No. ☺
    - i) The focus of this chapter is to greet fellow Christians who are believers. We are to treat Christians as "more special" as we will spend eternity with them. We don't know who among nonbelievers will be saved. We are still to be witnesses to all.
  - c) There are some historical references to an Aristobulus as being part of the family of King Herod that ruled in Jerusalem. This guy Aristobulus is in Rome. If this Aristobulus is of Herod's family, it is interesting to note that we never know who will be saved. Aristobulus is the grandson of the one who killed the babies in Bethlehem. Just because one person is rotten, you never know about that person's offspring.
  - d) The other person mentioned is Herodion. The obvious speculation is that this guy is also part of King Herod's family or his parents were "Pro-King Herod" and named the child accordingly. One should never judge one's background when they give their life to Christ. Their sins or background prior to giving their lives to Christ now becomes irrelevant. They are now only brothers and sisters in Christ.
  - e) With Paul specifically greeting a Christian named "Herodion", Paul is endorsing the fact that this guy is a Christian and "that's that". Even if this guy was of no relation to the King Herod family, the more subtle point is that his name is irrelevant. The only thing that matters is his relationship with Jesus.

13. Verse 12: Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.
  - a) As I stated in the beginning, note the comments about the people. Here we have a couple of women. They each have the comment that is translated “worked hard in the Lord”.
  - b) That’s a one-line resume to be proud of. These women are remembered all through history for “working hard in the Lord”. When one thinks of all the things in life to be remembered for, that’s pretty impressive by God’s standards. I suspect that when we get to heaven, the rewards of these women would rival those who we think of as accomplishing great things. We tend to forget that it is not status that it is important to God, but whether or not we gave it our all in whatever God has called us to do.
  - c) Whether we are called to lead a great ministry position, or “sweep up” in that ministry, what is important is that we give it all. I’ve yet to see any ministry opportunity that didn’t require a lot of hard work over and above whatever gifts God has given us. Yes, God gives us special gifts. Yes, God gives us passionate desires to get involved with those ministries. There is still plain old hard work to be done. This one line statement about these two women is a good reminder that hard work for the Lord is worth doing.
14. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.
  - a) We don’t have any commentary on this guy Rufus, only on his unnamed mother.
  - b) Rufus’ mother also ministered to Paul in a mother-like way.
  - c) I find it kind of funny that Paul lists Rufus name, but when it comes to his mom, who also gave loving, mother-like qualities to Paul, he didn’t list her name. (“Gee, she was like a mom to me, but I can’t remember her name.” ☺ I’m glad I’m not the only one who has trouble remembering names. ☺) Who knows, maybe she liked to stay in the background and didn’t want her name mentioned.
  - d) Rufus’ mother is another example of how working in the background is an essential ministry. Those small roles in big ministries are as essential as the big roles themselves.
15. Verse 14: Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them.  
<sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them.
  - a) Here are some names with no commentary. It is amazing how many people Paul knew of in a city he has never visited. This is a reminder that Paul cared for people. The heart of a missionary is one who cares for people and wants to see them grow in the Lord.
  - b) Historians are pretty sure some of these people were slaves. A few of the names are really numbers. It would be like naming a person, “Person #2” and “Person #3”. Roman slaves were often not given names, but just numbers. Contrast that with the Herodian’s named a few verses back who were probably from that royal family. It shows how God picks people from all sorts of backgrounds to eternal salvation. My point here is never assume one can or cannot be a Christian based on their background, be it royalty or slave.
16. Verse 16: Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.
  - a) A “holy kiss” is an Eastern style of greeting. In Western culture, we greet with handshakes or maybe a hug. In Eastern style, one greets relatives or close friends with a kiss on each cheek. To kiss someone that way is to say in effect, “You are special to me either as a relative or friend.” Paul is saying in effect to the Christians in Rome, “Treat all Christians this way. You are all part of the same family.”
  - b) The second sentence is self-explanatory: “All the churches of Christ send greetings.”
  - c) Both sentences give the idea of “unity”. In the first sentence, the idea is to treat all Christians as being special within that church. In the second sentence, it is the idea that all Christians churches are special, no matter where the location. The fact that Paul sends greetings from other churches state that the Roman church is welcome as an equal.
  - d) This is a good verse to emphasize the danger of bigotry of one church against another.

17. Verse 17: I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.
- a) The funny thing about the Book of Romans is that it reads like it wants to end in several places and then goes on with “oh, and one more thing”. For example, the middle of the Chapter 15 had a nice “God bless you all” type of ending, and then Paul went on to give his travel plans. It had a nice farewell type of ending at the end of Chapter 15, and then gives a “one more thing” as Paul lists a bunch of names in Chapter 16, Verses 1-15.
  - b) As we start Verse 17, after Paul greets everyone he could think of that is associated with the Roman Church, Paul now gives another “oh, and one more thing”. He spends a couple of verses talking about the dangers of false teachers and divisions.
  - c) One of the key points of the last lesson has to do with “unity”. It is the idea that all Christians are united in God’s truth to serve Him and work to help mature each other. A corollary thought to that idea is to beware of people who can cause church division.
  - d) To paraphrase Paul, “There are people who show up in Christian churches that like to cause debate and split up the churches. Avoid these people like the plague”.
    - i) One has to remember that false teachers don’t go around wearing name badges saying they are such. One must judge people by their behavior.
  - e) Let’s define false teachers: This is a person who teaches an idea that is contrary to one of the basic foundational truths of Christianity. Such people may be highly moral, great speakers, and wonderful people to be around. They may be 99% right in their Christian views. For example, they may believe in the Trinity and that Jesus paid the price for our sins. However, they insist that Jesus didn’t really die on the cross and rise again as God can’t really die or some similar nonsense. They may believe in Jesus, but believe he is a created being and not equal with God the Father. One can only tell a false teacher based on what he or she teaches, and not by their personality, morals, attitude, etc.
  - f) On a similar note is what I call “professional controversy starters”. These are people who like to argue and like to cause division with a church. They have their pet-peeve issue and try to find out what side everyone is on. Their issue is more important than unity.
    - i) There are situation where debatable issues must be dealt with. That is different from the kind of person who willfully starts controversies. All churches have to make tough decisions and for a time, the church may be split on an issue. The point is, once that decision is made, the church needs to come back together.
    - ii) Historically, some church splits have been good things. People have left denominations to form new major denominations. In the Book of Acts, Paul and his good friend Barnabus went together on Paul’s first missionary journey. For their second missionary journey, they argued over an issue and ended up splitting up. The good news is that God now had two separate teams of missionaries on the road. (Ref.: Acts 15:36-41).
    - iii) The focus here is on those who cause harm to churches through divisions. That is different from one with different theological views who changes denominations.
18. Verse 18: For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.
- a) In Verse 18, Paul is still focusing on false teachers and those who want to split the church. They could be false teachers or just people with a personal agenda that is different than the goal of loving, supporting and helping other Christians.
  - b) Paul calls such church dividers, “Serving...their own appetites”. They put their own agenda over God’s. God’s agenda is that churches work together to help each other grow in God’s truth, God’s love and help build up each other’s faith. One can recognize a false teacher because they are more interested in their own agenda than God’s agenda.

- c) Paul's point in second sentence is false teachers go after the "naïve".
  - i) Being naïve has nothing to do with one's physical age. This is about one's knowledge of the fundamental Christian facts when one gives their life to Jesus.
  - ii) A typical false-teacher line might be, "Well, you've given your life to Jesus? Praise God, that's great! Now, if you want to become "really" spiritual, let me tell you what you have to do..."
  - iii) When I first became born again, the church I was at offered a class for new believers. Not only did they teach the basic doctrines of Christianity, but also taught what some of the major cults believed and why they were wrong. That church understood that false teachers preyed on the naïve Christian and helped protect Christians who were naïve in their faith.
  - iv) When people work as tellers in banks, often they spend a lot of time working with money. The more time you spend holding money, feeling money, looking at money, the more likely you are to recognize counterfeit money. The same applies to the Word of God. The more time you spend with the real thing, the easier it is to spot false teachers. This is why the naïve are the most likely to be cult victims.
- 19. Verse 19: Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.
  - a) In Verse 19, Paul gives another "good standard to live up to". Paul tells the church in Rome in effect, "Your reputation has reached me. I've heard that you are obedient to God and the fundamental principals of Christianity. You are faithful despite all the false gods that are worshipped all around you in Rome. Keep it up. Stick to what is taught in God's word. If people come around trying to teach their own agenda, keep away from them."
  - b) The next sentence says, "Be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil."
  - c) Let's define "what is good": There is a story in the gospels where someone called Jesus "good teacher". Here is Jesus response: "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." (Matthew 19:17, NIV)
    - i) The reason Jesus made this response is the guy did not understand who Jesus was. The guy approached Jesus as "a wise teacher" as opposed to the Son of God. Jesus then said the only one who is "good" is God the Father.
    - ii) Jesus wanted to teach us that to learn what is "good", one must study God's commandments. Anything else about God is false teaching. (The reason Jesus didn't teach the fact He was the Messiah is that Jesus wanted people to come to that conclusion on their own, as opposed to blatantly stating it all the time.)
    - iii) My point of this story about Jesus ties back to Paul's statement about "being wise about what is good". It is about learning from God and no one else! It is about learning what the Scriptures teach and applying them to our lives.
  - d) Paul says in this verse "to be wise about what is good". It is important to define wisdom so we know how to be wise. I like the "sandwich illustration" to describe wisdom:
    - i) "Knowledge" is understanding that eating a sandwich when one is hungry will take away the hunger.
    - ii) "Intelligence" is how fast you figure that out.
    - iii) "Wisdom" is when one actually eats the sandwich.
    - iv) In Christianity, "knowledge" is when one studies the word of God and understands what it means. "Wisdom" is one applies it to their life.
    - v) It is also important to pray for wisdom. Never hesitate to ask God to give us the wisdom to actually apply biblical principals as we go through our lives.



- e) The second part of this verse states to “(be) innocent about what is evil.”
  - i) There is a false view in modern Christianity that we have to understand evil in order to avoid it. Paul teaches the opposite in this verse. Paul essentially says to avoid what is evil and not try to understand it.
  - ii) Let me give a practical example: Some Christians have a weak temptation when it comes to drinking alcohol. They have to avoid being in places where it is tempting to get drunk. The false idea in this case is, “I have to be in bars in order to minister to my old friends about Jesus.” The point is to not try to “understand” sinful behavior in order to help it, but just avoid it in the first place.
  - iii) Another classic illustration is that of charcoal briquettes. If you put a bunch of hot coals together, they stay hot. If you isolate one piece of coal by itself, it goes cold. The way the Christian is to live is to “stay warm” with other Christians and at the same time, avoid the “sinful pile of charcoals”. The way to deal with sin is to isolate oneself from that sin like a single charcoal so that the desire “grows cold”.
  - iv) A similar thought comes from John’s third letter: “Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.” (3 John 1:11 NIV)
- 20. Verse 20a: The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
  - a) First, let’s discuss the word “soon”. If you’re life is anything like mine, sin is still around and I’m certain Satan is alive and well someplace. “Soon” is not soon enough for me! ☺
    - i) The word “soon” in this context refers either to the moment we die and go to heaven or the moment Jesus comes back. The word “soon” is a relative term. Compared to living for eternity in heaven, our life will end “soon”.
  - b) Now let’s discuss, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”
    - i) That word “your” refers to Christians in Rome. It refers to those Paul is writing the letter to. It refers to all Christians.
    - ii) To understand this term, we need to go back to the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve ate the bad fruit, God put curses on Adam, Even and Satan. Here is the specific, predictive curse God said to Satan:
      - a) “And I (God the Father) will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman (Eve), and between your (Satan’s) offspring and hers (Eve’s); he (Eve’s offspring) will crush your head, and you (Satan) will strike his (Eve’s offspring) heel.” (Genesis 3:15, NIV, words in parenthesis added)
    - iii) The point of this sentence is that God made a prediction that one day, the “seed” (i.e., offspring or descendants) of Satan will bruise the heel (i.e., do some minor harm) to the offspring of God. God’s “offspring” refers to Jesus and His followers.
    - iv) The second part of this prediction is that the offspring of God will “crush the head” of Satan. I don’t know about you, but having my heel bruised sounds a lot less painful than having my head crushed. ☺ That’s the point. Satan will do some sinful damage to believers in God, but no permanent damage as we will live forever. There is also coming a day when Satan will be bound in hell for eternity (Ref.: Rev. 20:10). There is a false-view that Satan is in charge of hell. That is not true. Satan is a prisoner there like all other condemned souls.
    - v) Tying all of this back to Romans 16:20, Paul’s point is that “soon”, (i.e., after we are all in heaven, where time no longer exists), Satan will be crushed. In heaven, the power of sin will no longer have any effect over us. Satan’s power will be crushed.
    - vi) The application is that all the effects of sin are temporary. All the pain we suffer, all of the horrible things that occur because we live in a sinful world are temporary. There is a future hope in heaven that lasts far longer than this life. The way to have comfort during rough times is to have the eternal perspective.

21. Verse 20b: The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.
- a) The second sentence of Verse 20 is another attempt by Paul to end this letter. He almost makes it. ☺ There are seven more verses to go.
  - b) During Paul's life, there was a recorded time where Paul was really feeling sorry for himself. He was going through some unknown pain and Paul prayed for God to take away that pain. God responded to Paul's prayer with the line, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:9 NIV)
    - i) The point of Paul's statement in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians is God's grace is greater than anything and everything we face in this lifetime. The word "grace" means "unmerited favor". It is about getting a gift we didn't deserve.
    - ii) God's grace is that He provides us with internal joy no matter what our situation if we can focus on the eternal perspective. If we can mediate on the fact that all of our sins are forgiven and we spend eternity in heaven, that is much greater than any pain we have at the moment. (I'm not anti-medicine in times of physical pain. This is about mental perspective.)
  - c) Now we can put together the two sentences of Verse 20:
    - i) First sentence: The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
    - ii) Second sentence: The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.
    - iii) The first sentence is the idea that God is greater than Satan's power. All the evil that occurs in this world is less powerful than God. One needs to focus upon that fact. It ties to the second sentence of understanding God's grace. God loves us and cares for us. God allows us to go through difficult situations in order to mature us by keeping our focus upon Him and not our problems.
    - iv) The first sentence reminds us that the ultimate victory over Satan belongs to God. The second sentence is the reminder that God is with us through the present situation and that God's grace is greater than whatever we are going through at the present moment.
22. Verse 21: Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.
- a) Timothy was Paul's young protégé. For those who don't know, Paul's two letters to Timothy are referring to this same Timothy.
  - b) Paul took Timothy along in his later missionary journeys. He became Paul's right-hand-man for a while. My favorite application regarding Timothy is that all older Christians should team up with younger ones they could train. Younger Christians need an older mentor. In other words, "Every Paul needs a Timothy and every Timothy needs a Paul."
  - c) The other three guys we don't know much about. The NIV translation here calls them "relatives". As I stated earlier in the lesson, the original Greek word can also be translated "comrades" or "brethren", so it is not a guarantee they are Paul's relatives.
  - d) As Paul wraps up this letter, I think Paul is saying to the church in Rome, "It is not just I that wish you well. Those who are around me are in agreement with what I write and they support you as well. We all desire to see you grow in our mutual faith in Christ."
23. Verse 22: I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.
- a) Verse 22 tells us that Paul dictated this letter, and a scribe named Tertius wrote it down.
  - b) Here Tertius says in effect, "Hey, I didn't just write this letter because Paul told me to take this down. I, Tertius also care about you Christians in Rome. I didn't write these 16 chapters down for the fun of it. I too, care about you guys and am honored that Paul used me to help out. Let me send my personal greetings as well."
  - c) Notice Paul didn't have a big ego and let his secretary give a personal greeting.

24. Verse 23a: Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.
  - a) Paul was on the road when he wrote this. Most likely, it was written from Corinth. The opening verse of this chapter mentions a woman from Cenchrea who probably delivered this letter. That was the port-town associated with the major city of Corinth.
  - b) This verse indicates that the home church where Paul is staying is at Gaius' home. Paul probably wrote this letter from this house. Here Gaius himself sends the greeting. It is also telling the Roman church that those around Paul are also endorsing his letter.
25. Verse 23b: Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.
  - a) Here is the only person mentioned in this chapter who lists his occupation. I can't help thinking that a person in Rome might think, "Wow, the director of public works for the City of Corinth sends his greeting. That's impressive!" ☺ (Yes, I'm being flippant, and I'm not degrading the occupation of being in charge of public works.) I just find it interesting this is the only guy who gives his occupation. Maybe Paul wants to point out that "high officials" such as this are willing to risk their lives to be associated with Paul.
  - b) The last part of this verse mentions a man named Quartus. He is probably another member of this home church who was around when Paul wrote this letter.
26. Verse 25: Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,<sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him--<sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.
  - a) Paul finally gets around to ending this letter. Just to give an encore performance of Paul's style of long running sentences, he ends the letter with a 3-verse sentence. ☺
  - b) Let's break this down into bite-size pieces: The first phrase says, "Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel".
    - i) The "Him" is God the Father. We know this because Jesus is mentioned separately in the next phrase.
    - ii) Paul ends this phrase with "my gospel". Paul personalizes the Gospel message and calls it "my gospel". That's ok. It's my gospel too. It's your gospel too. Paul was individually saved by Jesus' payment on the cross. So was I and hopefully, so are you. The point is it is ok to personalize it.
    - iii) The middle part is the fact that God the Father "establishes you" in this Gospel. The idea is that our salvation starts with God and not with us. God knows all things and God picked us in advance. God is perfect and by definition, cannot change His mind or lie. (Ref: Malachi 3:6, Titus 1:2). The point is if God has picked us, He cannot change His mind based on our behavior. We are permanently "established" from God's perspective.
    - iv) Paul said, "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6 NIV)
  - c) The next phrase is "the proclamation of Jesus Christ"
    - i) Paul not only is saying God the Father "proclaims" the Gospel message, but also Jesus himself proclaimed the Gospel. There were points in Jesus ministry when He states He would die and rise again. He also claimed to be the Son of God.
    - ii) The point is Paul is stating "two different entities, God the Father and God the Son" both proclaim the Gospel message. It is given by God the Father through various prophets in the Old Testament, and by Jesus himself in the Gospels.
  - d) The next phrase is "according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past".
    - i) The word "mystery" as Paul uses it, means, "something unrevealed up to now". It is the idea that something is no longer a secret. The "Old Testament Jigsaw Puzzle Mystery" is now revealed as Jesus has risen from Paul's time frame.

- ii) This is the idea that the Gospel message was given by various people (prophets) over a thousand-plus year time span in the Old Testament.
- iii) Another point of this phrase is you can't find a single passage in the Old Testament that bluntly says, "God will come in the form of man, proclaim himself to be the son of God, die for the sins of everyone else and then be resurrected to sit at God's right hand." What you can find is bits and pieces of every part of that message somewhere in the Old Testament. It is designed to be like a jigsaw puzzle for us to be put together.
- iv) If you study all the times Paul uses the word "mystery" in his letters, he appears mainly to be talking about the Christian church. If you study the Old Testament, there are clues in every Old Testament book about some aspect of Jesus' ministry. The only "true" mystery from an Old Testament perspective is the Christian church. In that sense, when Paul says mystery, he is probably referring more to the Christian church than the Gospel message itself.
  - a) In this context, the point is the Christian church is the "mystery" but the emphasis is on the fact the church exists based on the Gospel message.
- e) The next phrase is, "but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God so that all nations might believe and obey him".
  - i) Let's start with "but now revealed". The idea is the Gospel message is no longer a vague puzzle based on Old Testament predictions. It is now a historical fact. The idea of the Christian church is no longer a mystery. It now exists.
  - ii) It is still amazing to consider how "a bunch of Jewish guys" convinced the Gentile world that a Jewish man died for their sins and is the Son of God. There is no logical explanation for the massive growth of the Christian church unless God himself was behind this growth. The growth of the church is a testimony all unto itself of the existence of God.
  - iii) This ties to the latter phrase, "So that all nations might believe and obey him". The predictions about Jesus are all through the Old Testament. It is the power of God that made these predictions true. There are now billions of Christians through out the world.
  - iv) This phrase does not say all people would be Christians. Notice the word "might" near the end of this phrase. The idea is we all have free will and some choose not to believe the Gospel message.
- f) The final phrase is "to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. Now let's tie this sentence together as well as the whole book of Romans.
  - i) The reason we exist is to give glory to God.
  - ii) Our purpose for living is to give glory to God in all that we do.
  - iii) God created this whole "game plan", from the six days of creation until the events of Jesus Second Coming and beyond, so that "some people" out our free will (our perspective) and chosen by God (His perspective) will glorify God in all they do and we do.
  - iv) The mystery of the Old Testament, "the Christian church" was created for the purpose of giving glory to God through our lives.
- g) The first eight chapters of the book of Romans defined Christianity and states God's unconditional promises for our lives. The next three chapters define God's relationship with the Nation of Israel and God's unconditional promises to that nation. The final five chapters of Romans deal with our response to God's unconditional promises to us. Paul is ending this letter with the reminder that we are to glorify God in all that we do. That is the purpose of Christian living and a good ending (finally! ☺) to the Book of Romans.
- h) Again, my thanks for all of you who have read through these lessons. My references are on the next page. May God bless you as we work in unity to glorify God in all we do!

## Supplement: Bibliography

“If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.” (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. “The Message” copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. All the bible text is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on First and Second Samuel are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to “audio” commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in Real Audio® or MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on Romans by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at
2. Commentary on Romans by Bob Davies. They are available in Real Audio® format at [http://www.northcountrychapel.com/audio\\_studies/index.php](http://www.northcountrychapel.com/audio_studies/index.php)
3. Commentary on Romans by David Guzik. It is available for free in text format. The web address is [http://www.enduringword.com/library\\_commentaries.html](http://www.enduringword.com/library_commentaries.html).
4. Commentary on Romans by Ray Steadman. It is available for free in audio and text format. The web address is <http://www.pbc.org/library/series/4623>
5. Commentary on Romans by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>. Also available at <http://firefighters.org/html/library.cfm>
6. Commentary on Romans by Chuck Smith, available at The Word for Today ministries. The web address is <http://www.thewordfortoday.org/>
7. MacArthur’s New Testament Commentary: Romans (Volume 1 – Chapters 1-8 and Volume 2 – Chapters 9-16); By John MacArthur, Jr. Moody Press, Chicago, IL. Copyright © 1991 and © 1994 by The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Also available in electronic format through Parsons Technology (“QuickVerse® 7.0”) Copyright © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa. All rights reserved.
8. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229
9. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: [www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm](http://www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm)
10. The Expositor’s Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every verse of the Bible. (It is available at Christian bookstores.) Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this source.
11. When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties -- Norman L. Geisler, Thomas Howe; Baker Book House 1999 (Available at Christian Bookstores.)
12. I also refer to Greg Koukl’s apologetic ministry which is Stand to Reason at [www.str.org](http://www.str.org)