

REMEMBERING OUR LABOR IN CHRIST

ROMANS 16:1-27

INTRODUCTION:

Paul closes his letter to the romans with a list of personal thanks' toward those who had served so diligently with him in the cause of the gospel. There can very little doubt that there is nothing more precious in the lord's sight than those who have come together to further the cause of Christ upon the earth. We find very few things in life more gratifying than those relationships, which have resulted from our lives crossing the path of others in our effort for the gospel.

Paul had touched the lives of countless thousands by his faithful preaching throughout Europe and Asia Minor. With a total abandonment of his own well being, and with a feverish determination for promoting the gospel, Paul served god with his whole heart. This determination would cause his life to become intertwined with many others who had an equal love for god and the message of life presented through his son Jesus Christ our lord.

As with all good relationships it is important that we take the time to remember those who have touched us with their unswerving devotion. So Paul remembers those who had labored, suffered, learned, and endured the trials of ministry with him. The list is quite formidable, yet very personal in its content and nature. Many of the names that Paul will list leave us with very little information or background. But I am sure each one held a special place in Paul's heart or he wouldn't have listed them.

There can be little or no doubt that Paul was inspired by the faithfulness of those who served with him in the spreading of the gospel. Not only were these people mentioned but those who helped him through their own selfless sacrifice so that he might minister the words of god to a lost and sinful world. It must be said that behind every great man for the cause of god upon the earth, are hundreds who have helped along the way. It is these people that Paul is remembering at the close of his letter to the romans.

Paul will accomplish this wonderful task of remembering by doing three things in his closing thoughts to the roman readers.

I. FIRST, THERE IS A COMMENDATION TO THE FAITHFUL! VV. 1-16

PAUL'S COMMENDATION CONSISTED OF RECOGNITION NOT ONLY OF THE PERSON BY NAME, BUT ALSO THEY'RE PERFORMANCE.

V.1 A SERVANT IN THE CHURCH.

A WILLINGNESS TO TAKE A PLACE OF HUMILITY ON BEHALF OF CHRIST AND OTHERS.

V.2 A HELPER OF MANY.

WILLING TO LIFT UP THE HEAD OF THE HURTING, AND TO EXTEND A HAND TO THE LESS FORTUNATE, ALL FOR CHRIST.

V.3 FELLOW WORKERS IN CHRIST JESUS.

PEOPLE YOKED TOGETHER IN A COMMON CAUSE, WITH A SINGLE DIRECTION, WITH A GODLY DETERMINATION.

V.4 RISKED THEIR OWN NECKS FOR MY LIFE.

THESE WERE PEOPLE WILLING TO TAKE A RISK AT THE EXPENSE OF THE TEMPORAL, KNOWING THAT THE REWARD WOULD BE THE ETERNAL. WE FIND GOD'S WORD TELLING US THAT WE, "HAVE NOT FOR WE ASK NOT." FOR THESE FOLKS THEY REALIZED THAT THEY WOULD HAVE NOT IF THEY RISKED NOT.

V.5 CHURCH THAT IS IN THEIR HOUSE.

CHURCH FOR THESE FOLKS WAS NOT BASED ON A LOCATION, BUT RATHER A LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD.

V.6 LABORED MUCH FOR US.

IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE LABORING OF THESE FOLKS WAS FOR SOMEONE ELSE NOT THEMSELVES.

POSSIBLY THE REASON WE DON'T HAVE QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS IS BECAUSE WE DON'T INVEST IN OTHERS.

V.7 COUNTRYMEN AND FELLOW PRISONERS, WERE IN CHRIST BEFORE ME."

IT'S ONE THING TO SHARE THE BOND OF BEING FELLOW COUNTRYMEN, YET SOMETHING FAR GREATER TO BE FELLOW PRISONERS (SUFFERERS). TO BE CHAINED WITH SOMEONE, OR PUNISHED ALONG SIDE ANOTHER BRINGS OUT THE DEEPEST TYPE OF BOND BETWEEN MEN.

V.8 "...BELOVED IN THE LORD."

PAUL RECOGNIZED THAT THESE INDIVIDUALS HAD A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST. IT WENT BEYOND JUST A SOCIAL OR CHURCHIANITY RELATIONSHIP, IT WAS REVEALED THROUGH GOD'S **AGAPE.**

V.10 "...APPROVED IN CHRIST."

WHAT'S THE BEST APPROVAL RATING IN THIS LIFE? THE ONE THAT COMES FROM JESUS WHEN HE WILL WELCOME US INTO HIS FATHERS PRESENCE.

V.13 "...CHOSEN IN THE LORD."

WHAT A BLESSING TO KNOW THAT CHRIST PICKED YOU AND ME OUT SO THAT WE MIGHT EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF HIS WONDERFUL FORGIVING GRACE. AND SO IT WAS FOR PAUL TO REALIZE THAT THOSE WHO WERE COMPANIONS WITH HIM IN THE WORK OF THE KINGDOM HAD BEEN SELECTED BY GOD NOT MAN. IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHEN IT COMES TO THE CHOOSING.

NOTE:

IT IS OF GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT TO SEE HOW PAUL ENDS THIS PARTICULAR SECTION OF HIS CLOSING TO THE ROMANS;

“THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST GREET YOU!” HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THE CHURCH WAS OWED ONLY TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF CHRIST AND NOT MERE MAN.

EVEN THOUGH PAUL HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN STARTING SO MANY OF THE CHURCHES IN THIS REGION, HE COULD NEVER LAY CLAIM TO A SINGLE ONE.

II. SECOND, THERE IS AN URGENCY TOWARD THE FAITHFUL! VV. 17-20

THERE WERE SOME THINGS THAT PAUL WANTED THEM TO TAKE NOTE OF. THESE THREE THINGS WOULD BE A GOOD REMINDER TO US AS WELL.

V.17 “...NOTE (IDENTIFY, MARK, MAKE KNOWN) THOSE WHO CAUSE DIVISIONS AND OFFENSES.”

FIRST, WE NEED TO MAKE A NOTE, OR AT LEAST ACKNOWLEDGE THOSE WHO ARE DISRUPTIVE IN THE BOBDDY OF CHRIST.

V.18 “...BY SMOOTH WORDS AND FLATTERING SPEECH DECEIVE THE HEARTS OF THE SIMPLE.”

SECOND, WE NEED TO OBSERVE TO SEE WHO IS SERVING THE CAUSE OF CHRIST, OR SERVING THEMSELVES. THE INFERENCE TO THE BELLY CAN BEST BE UNDERSTOOD AS THOSE WHO SERVE ONLY FOR PERSONAL GAIN OR GRATIFICATION, AND NOT FOR CHRIST.

VV. 19-20 “...BE WISE IN WHAT IS GOOD, AND SIMPLE CONCERNING EVIL.”

THIRDLY IT IS BEST THAT WE SPEND OUR TIME LEARNING WHAT IS REAL SO THAT WE CAN READILY IDENTIFY THE COUNTERFEIT. IF WE ARE TO BE SIMPLE ABOUT ANYTHING, THAT IS TO SAY HARMLESS TO OUR SELVES OR OTHERS IT SHOULD BE IN THE AREA OF EVIL.

GOD WILL CRUSH SATAN UNDER HIS FOOT. WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT WE HAVE NOT BEEN LURED TOO CLOSE TO SATAN THROUGH MINDLESS DECEPTION, AND CRUSHED ALONG WITH HIM.

III. THIRDLY, THERE IS GRACE EXTENDED THROUGH THE FAITHFUL! VV. 21-27

THE BENEDICTION OF PAUL WAS TO BE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE ROMANS IN THREE IMPORTANT WAYS.

V.24 "...THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALL."

1. FIRST, GRACE IS WITH US!

V.25 "...ESTABLISH YOU ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL AND THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST."

2. SECOND, THE WORD ESTABLISHES US!

V.27 "...TO GOD, ALONE WISE, BE GLORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST FOREVER."

3. THIRD, THE GLORY OF GOD THROUGH US CONCLUSION:

CONCLUSION:

Self-righteous service comes through human effort. True service comes from a relationship with the divine Other deep inside.

Self-righteous service is impressed with the "big deal." True service finds it almost impossible to distinguish the small from the large service.

Self-righteous service requires external rewards. True service rests contented in hiddenness.

Self-righteous service is highly concerned about results. True service is free of the need to calculate results.

Self-righteous service picks and chooses whom to serve. True service is indiscriminate in its ministry.

Self-righteous service is affected by moods and whims. True service ministers simply and faithfully because there is a need.

Self-righteous service is temporary. True service is a life-style.

5Self-righteous service is without sensitivity. It insists on meeting the need even when to do so would be destructive. True service can withhold the service as freely as perform it.

Self-righteous service fractures community. True service, on the other hand, builds community.

Richard Foster, [Celebration of Discipline](#), "The Discipline of Service."