

Series Title: Truth Unashamed, Part 7- Together in the Journey

Sermon Title: Week 2: People like me

Date: 07-07-19

✠ **People like me!**

- **LAST WEEK: ESSENTIAL to our identity in Christ is our active participation in the BODY OF CHRIST. As believers, we are called into the fellowship, the community, of all believers, whatever local form that community might take.**
- **TODAY we enter Romans 16! Interesting- while Romans is most expansive/comprehensive letter of Christian theology in NT, AND He's talked a lot about community of disciples, Paul doesn't use phrase BOC (in reference to Church). HE only uses the word CHURCH five times, and they are ALL in chapter 16.**
- **AND SO, if we take the great letter of Romans, and ask "What does Paul teach us about the church", what do we find here in this last Chapter?**
- **LIST OF NAMES. SPECIFIC PEOPLE...**
- **WHEN PAUL WROTE ROMANS, he wasn't doing his doctoral thesis. Wasn't writing an abstract book on theology to go into an academic library. No.**
- **Paul was writing to a very diverse community of very real people, people who had come to hear the Gospel about Jesus Christ, and had entered into a faith relationship with Jesus Christ, and whose lives were never the same.**
- **While this first community of believers was predominantly from the lower and slave classes of Roman society, when you look close you see the full spectrum of society. These people were men, women, rich, poor, slaves, free, greeks, jews, educated, uneducated. If you can strip away the 2000 year cultural divide, they were people like you. People like me. THEY WERE THE CHURCH.**

READ Romans 16:1-15, 21-23

- **37 individuals. Who were they? What do we learn from them? Paul describes...**
*Wealthy Benefactors, financial supporters. House church leaders
Risky lives for the gospel, sent to prison
Worked hard and sacrificially for the gospel
Dear friends and co-workers. Known for their faithfulness
Parental figures. Showing great hospitality. Civic leaders.*
- **Names indicate many were slaves, common people, but some also very educated (Tertius, scribe) and powerful (Erastus, "aedile"- powerful civic leader)**
- **WHY DO WE HAVE THIS? Customary to end letter, but scripture is inspired, GOD WANTS US TO SEE THESE PEOPLE! When we associate a name with Romans, it is "PAUL"... BUT HEAR!**
- **The western world in the 1&2 century wasn't transformed by the Gospel because of PAUL, but because of the individual believers that made up the church, all faithfully living out their lives as disciples of Christ, following Jesus as he led them to LIVE OUT his goodness in their lives, as a community- and CHANGED THE WORLD around them.**
- **People like Phoebe. Priscilla and Aquilla. Epenetus. Andronicas and Junia. Urbanus. Herodion. Persis. Rufus. His mother. People like... you and me.**
- **WE EACH ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF GOD'S PLAN, because we are an ESSENTIAL part of God's community, the church.**
- **THIS LEADS to an observation here that can't be ignored and still be honest with the text.**
- **ANY look at history of 1st century shows a male-dominant society. Women in this time had virtually no rights. They were property, aside from rare exceptions, outside the home, they were unseen.**

- **THE FASCINATING glimpse R16 gives... this was evidently NOT the case in the church. 37 people mentioned here... 10 are women. NOT hidden f...**

✠ Not so hidden figures

- **Remember movie? Story of African American women in early days of space program- 1960's. Space program- visible to public eye- was virtually all white, and all male. These women, brilliant mathematicians, were integral to space program, but because of their race and gender, were hidden.**
- **Looking just at question of gender- for centuries the traditional reality in the church is that women, while obviously present- when it comes to matters of public leadership in the church, have been excluded, hidden. In the tradition of the conservative evangelical church (and others) Church-wide Teaching, Spiritual leadership, decision making, and authority have been roles exclusive to men.**
- **BASED on R16, and other scripture, this was NOT the case in the early church. FEW OBSERVATIONS**
 - **10 women mentioned, 8 by name. This alone would be unexpected given male dominant culture.. FEW of the ladies**
 - **PHEOBE, first person Paul mentions.**

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. ² I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

- **Likely person entrusted to deliver the letter. Respected and trusted, especially by Paul.**
- **Wealthy, important person, benefactor of church**
- **Paul calls her a 'deacon' of the church. Some translations say "deaconess", many 'servant', but direct Greek word is 'deacon', and is translated as 'deacon' in other places. Many scholars have argued for 'servant' because a woman couldn't have been a church official, but that is an assumption read into the text, the text itself is 'deacon'. While we don't know what specific role this may refer to, the nature of the text argues that she likely held some recognized official role in the church.**
 - Priscilla, along with husband Acquilla. Mentioned four places in NT. Loved and respected, had risked lives for Paul. Well known House church leaders, meaning they were church leaders, no larger regular public gathering. Paul calls them his 'Co-workers' which could indicate they had a significant teaching role to the church. Never just Acquilla, but always both, and four of the six times, Priscilla's name is first. ACTS 18- Apollos- "mighty in scriptures" was 'taken aside and explained way of God more accurately' by BOTH P&A.**
- **This leads to another likely husband wife duo, Andronicus and Junia. Jews among earliest of believers, may have been in Jerusalem, not sure. Believers before Paul, had been imprisoned because of their faith. Paul refers to them as being "outstanding among the apostles".**
- **Apostles: Beyond the 12, highest recognized spiritual leaders in all of Christianity.**
- **NOTE! Some translations say "well known to apostles", or 'esteemed/noteworthy' in eyes of apostles. But this is not most direct translation of the greek! Conservative commentator (Morris and others) state that clear honest statement of text is that they were indeed apostles, and notable apostles at that. SO CLEAR that some have tried to argue that Junia is male, but almost all Greek scholarship agrees that name is female.**
- **TAKEAWAY is that both Andronicus and Junia were among the most respected spiritual leaders and teachers in Paul's time, and given his mention of them here as part of church in Rome, some commentators think it could have been through Junia and Andronicus that the people of Rome were originally evangelized.**

– **POINT: In contrast to the prevailing culture around them, Women in the 1st century church were not hidden figures. They were taught alongside men, they were leaders, they were respected and recognized as integral co-workers in God's kingdom, in the life and work of the church. There is a persistent sentiment in church tradition that Paul holds a low and restrictive view of women in the church- Romans 16 challenges this view...**

– **MOVING ON! Having expressed his gratitude...**

Romans 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings. **ONCE MORE...**

† **The centrality of community**

– **Customary to greet with a kiss. Not some liturgical or perfunctory practice, but a common expression of love and friendship. WHEN YOU COME TOGETHER, embrace each other! Know each other! Genuinely love and care for each other! Be in unity!**

– **THEN, with community still in mind, Paul gives...**

† **A word of caution**

Romans 16:17-19 I urge you, brothers and sisters, 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. 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. ¹⁹ Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

- **Strong warning! Chief concern? People who would cause division into the community.**
- **People whose teaching are obstacles- are contrary to essential teaching of the Gospel.**
- **Look at people's motivations. Christ, or themselves?**
- **STAY AWAY FROM THEM! Why such strong language? Because even though they may sound convincing, their goal is to deceive. Picture of a person with polished speech but character that is counter to nature of Christ, fruit of spirit.**
- **BE WISE! Be strong, know what is right... And be innocent, be strong in your integrity, staying away from what is evil and counter to who we are In Christ**

– **WITH SAME STRONG VOICE, awesome statement- promise of PEACE OF GOD in action**

† **Peace in action!**

Romans 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

- **Seems like a contrast? To US, Peace is a passive concept- absence of war, absence of conflict. To NT writers, idea of peace came from Hebrew concept of 'shalom'- peace- which is active concept- presence of wholeness, the prosperity of the whole life.**
- **NOTE that God is doing the crushing, but under OUR feet. THE GOD WHO BRINGS WHOLENESS, FULLNESS- is working THROUGH US to crush satan- to defeat the work of our enemy! SOON.. urgency, something that God is actively doing in lives NOW.**
- **The GOD OF PEACE is the God who is at work- actively- maturing us, shaping us, equipping us, working through us... so that we may KNOW HIM and EXPERIENCE HIS PRESENCE in all of who we are, so that HE MAY BE GLORIFIED through us- all of us- as his Church.**

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it*