So, Do We Love More Now?
Series: Righteousness Revealed
Romans 16:1-27
Chadron Bible Church

There is a meme that has made several rounds on my social media over the years that I am fond of. It's about the Christian who thinks he doesn't need the church. The Christian who thinks he doesn't need the church is like a baby zebra, separated from the herd, who becomes bait for the lion.

Remember the **big picture** from a couple of weeks is that He is building a community from all walks of life that will worship Him together forever. The NT encourages and assumes Spirit-filled Christians will do life in Chrisitan community. They will regularly **gather** with other Christians in a local church setting, become a **part** of it, **invest** in it, and just **do life** together. Without Christian community, the Christian life doesn't make much sense. That thought leads us to our eighth & final mark of a transformed life. If we really believe all the theology from Romans 1-11… we will…

What a **transformed** life looks like:
1. Harbor **humility** in God's household. (12:3-8)
2. **Love** others as Jesus loves us. (12:9-21)
4. Clothe ourselves with **Christlike conduct**. (13:1-14)
5. Give **grace** in the grays. (14:1-23)
6. Prioritize the **big picture** over personal preferences. (15:1-13)
7. Promote **gospel progress**. (Romans 15:14-33)
8. Cherish authentic Christian **community.** (Romans 16:1-27)

Authentic
I qualified Christian community with authentic because some people think Christian community is going to church on Sunday for an hour. That's part of it. Corporate worship. But I think as we're going to see, Christian community goes beyond that. It's more about **doing life together**. And it's a **lifeline** for us to do real authentic life together that goes beyond the surface and seeks to like a **mask-free, honest, and open life before others**. **Transformation happens through relationships like that**. That's what Romans 16 is all about. It's about people. Brothers and sisters in Christ, **doing ministry together, to the glory of God.**

Couldn't Ask For a Better Chapter
And I couldn't ask for a better chapter to celebrate our time together as I near the end of my time with you at CBC.

Favorite Chapter
Chapter 16 is one of those chapters that we're **tempted to speed-read** and skip over and even **wonder** why it's there in the first place. But this is a **helpful** chapter at the end of a book loaded

with **heavy** theology. It reminds us that if we really believe all that theology in Romans 1-11, we're going to **love Jesus and love people** more. **A true master of theology will love more.**

Ministry Is About People
It also reminds us that **ministry is about people**. Paul, this great theologian and thinker, wasn't an ivory tower theologian. He didn't do it on his own. He wasn't a lone ranger. He was a people person. He rolled up his sleeves and worked hard for the Lord. He did it with others. It shows us that a **true master of theology will love more.**

Recognizing Over 30
Paul is going to recognize **over 30 people** in this chapter, most of which are in Rome. If you're familiar with his letters, nowhere else does he even come close to greeting as many people as he does here in Romans 16. Why is that? He **didn't found this church** and hadn't **visited** this church so before he does—remember he has plans to visit them—I think he's seeking to **establish some connections** and **find common ground** with them ahead of time. Many of them he met in his travels and his course of ministry in the Eastern Mediterranean and many had moved to Rome or made their way back.

What cherishing Christian community looks like:

1. **<u>Celebrate</u> Christian coworkers. (1-16)**

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; 2 that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.

Phoebe
Our first personality is **Phoebe**, from Cenchrea. **Cenchrea** is a twin-port city with **Corinth** in Greece, located about 6 miles apart, and that's from where Paul is writing this. She is the one who will be **hand-delivering this letter of Roman churches. No email. No text.**

In a Manner Worthy
And Paul encourages them to **receive her in the Lord and in a manner worthy of the saints**. In other words, "Don't just let her drop the letter off and leave her hanging in the city of Rome to fend for herself. Welcome her into your homes and take care of her." We could ask each other the same question this morning: *How can we treat each other the same way? In a manner worthy of the Lord?* It's worth asking. I mean, if **Jesus** walked into your town today, all the sudden every one of us would be the most hospitable people on the planet, trying to get Jesus to come stay at our house. We'd bust out the best dishes. The best steaks. Make sure He has everything He needs. We should do that with each other in the household of God. Brothers & sisters in Christ.

Servant Debate
It also says she is a **servant** of the church at Cenchrea. In Greek the word is essentially **deacon** or **deaconess**, so theologians debate as to whether Paul is using the word as a title or in a general sense. And there are <u>very</u> conservative theologians and churches who would suggest both. That's

because deacon is a role that the Bible just **isn't explicit** about. The role of **elder** is clear. That's a role reserved for men. But the role of deaconess really isn't clear, and every Bible school student or seminary student writes a position paper on 1 Timothy 3:11. Is it referring to deaconesses or deacon wives? It's a good question.

Exemplary Women
What is **explicit** is her **exemplary servant heart for Jesus** and the **church**, along with **several other women** mentioned in this chapter who served in practical ways. Contrary to the culture of the day, women were highly involved in ministry in different ways in the early church. There are far more women **mentioned** in the NT than the typical literature of the day. It goes to show that Paul was no **misogynist** or woman hater, and the gospel helped bring about more equality than they were used to.

2. **<u>Connect</u> with other Christians. (3-16)**

*3 Greet **Prisca and Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; 5 also greet the church that is in their house. Greet **Epaenetus**, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. 6 Greet **Mary**, who has worked hard for you. 7 Greet **Andronicus and Junias**, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*

So for those of you that are still having children, **here's a wonderful list of potential names**!

Paul mentions **Prisca and Aquila**, no doubt the same as Priscilla and Aquila from Acts who are **tentmakers** like Paul. They are **Jewish Christians** from Rome who Paul met in Corinth because at the time, **AD 49, Emperor Claudius** had expelled Jews. Well, since that time, the edict had expired, and they had moved back to Rome. They are commended for being **fellow workers** with Paul and for being **risk-takers**. We don't know exactly how, but they risked their lives for Paul. And they apparently had a **church meeting** in their house.

House churches
That's something worth noting. Throughout this study I keep talking about the **churches, plural,** in Rome. How this wasn't written to just one church. There was no singular Roman church. Churches also didn't have **buildings** yet. They were often persecuted and would be driven underground before that happened. So Christians would often meet in peoples' houses. **3 are mentioned in this chapter.**

Epaenetus
He mentions Epaenetus, his **first convert** in Asia (western Turkey) who had apparently moved to Rome. Who could forget their first convert in a place?

Mary
Simply noted as a **hard worker**, along with others in the rest of the chapter. Paul commended several people for their hard work. And **ministry is hard work.**

Andronicus and Junias
Probably a husband and wife, who apparently did **time behind bars** with Paul for the gospel. He says they are **outstanding among the apostles**. So it's helpful to know that just like the word deacon can be used in an official sense or general sense, so can the word apostle. There are the 12 Apostles, with a capital "a" and there are apostles with a lower case "a". The word just means **sent-ones**. So it's likely that they were very effective **vocational missionaries**.

8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. 10 Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the ***household of Aristobulus****. 11 Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of* ***the household of Narcissus****, who are in the Lord. 12 Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. 15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. 16 Greet one another with a* ***holy kiss****. All the churches of Christ greet you.*

So many baby names!

Diversity-Jew Gentile
No, uh, obviously we don't need to dissect every name here that is recognized. There's really not a lot to say that would be helpful other than recognizing this is a **diverse group of believers**! There are **Jewish and Gentile** names here. Pagan names.

Slaves
We can recognize that there are some slaves among them. To **belong to the household of** a **certain person** meant they were that person's slave. There are two slave households mentioned.

Rufus & Simon
Another person mentioned uniquely is **Rufus**. Some think this is the **son of Simon the Cyrene** who carried Jesus' cross, thus the "choice man" in the Lord reference.

Rufus' mother
Either way, Rufus' mother became somewhat of a **mother to Paul** as well. She acted **like a mother to him**. I love that. That really stood out to me because I could point to a number of older women here who've been a **mother to me in Chadron**. It's a reminder that the church is a **family**. Paul **not only shared the gospel with them, but also his own life as well (1 Thess. 2:7-8).**

Gun-Shy on Relationships
And I just want to pause with that thought for a second because sometimes when pastors come and go, or even as members join churches and leave, we can **grow gun-shy about relationships**. They say things like, "I don't want to get close to another pastor or church family again because I don't want to get hurt." I get that. But I would ask you to

reconsider because the church is supposed to be like a family. And family is not always easy. It's particularly hard when family says goodbye and that's something Paul did often. That's part of the painful side of leadership. It's a pain that Paul experienced often. We were made for relationships. Transformation happens through real, transparent, honest and open relationships. At the end of the day, the richest people in the world are those who have loved well.

The Holy Kiss
The last thing to mention in this section is the **holy kiss**. The exact nature of the holy kiss is unknown. I've always figured it was something like what we experienced whenever we walked into someone's home in **South America**. They always give you that double kiss on each side our your face. It's a much warmer culture than our own. What's acceptable in one culture isn't always in another. So we prefer handshakes and hugs here.

But at the end of this section, it's clear that the church was diverse **ethnically and socially**. **Men, women, rich, poor, free, slave, Jew, Gentile**. And Paul was **honoring and respecting all**. And it was a **family** from **all walks of life**.

3. **<u>Conserve</u> sound doctrine. (17-20)**

17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. 18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. 19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. 20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Everywhere Paul went he dealt with **false teachers** so he can't help but throw in a word about that. That's a danger for every church. It's one of the reasons he wanted them **established** in the gospel. False teachers would follow Paul's travels, and **confuse** young believers by **adding** to the gospel, **causing division** and **roadblocks** to their **freedom** in Jesus. Quite often, they were Judaizers who would **mix Law and Grace**—and they would do it well. Convincingly.

Wisdom for Good & Evil
The same thing is going on today and so he just says, I want you to be wise in what's really **good** and what's really **evil**. Sometimes that's hard. Sometimes religious people look really wise. They can quote the Scriptures. They can live a disciplined life. But at the end, if they deny God's grace, they're destroying the church. **Remember, sound doctrine** is **healthy** doctrine (**Titus 2:1**-speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine). **False doctrine** is ultimately destructive to our life and our souls and the church. So if we love people, we have to watch our teaching. We have to **avoid** false teachers.

Who's Really Behind It
Paul mentions **Satan** and how **God will shortly crush him** under your feet. This is a reference to **Genesis 3:15** which speaks of Satan's eternal judgment, something described in **Revelation 20.**

He is the one who is really behind the false teachers and at the end of the day, God will win. But **Christians frustrate Satan's work when they reject false teachers**.

4. **Combining our efforts. (21-24)**

The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. 21 Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. 22 I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. 23 Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother. 24 [The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.]

No Lone Ranger

Again, it's apparent even here that Paul was **no lone ranger**. Sometimes I think we picture Paul sitting in a dark little room and writing his letters personally by hand. Actually, as we witness here, there was **always someone with him**. And like here, sometimes they want to say hi. Say hi for me! There's even some **evidence**, inconclusive as it is, that Paul had a **hard time seeing** and couldn't write his own letters. He relied on others.

Tertius

Worth mentioning is **Tertius**, Paul's amanuensis, or secretary, writing it for him.

Erastus

Another one that stands out to me because of my interest in biblical archaeology is **Erastus**. He's good evidence for the Bible's reliability because in a **1929 excavation at Corinth,** archaeologist found a rectangular stone near the theatre dating back to **AD 50**--approx. the same time--with a **commemorative inscription** mentioning Erastus. Kind of like how we put the **names of donors on bricks** when they contribute to building something. It reads, "Erastus, in return for his aedileship paved [this] it at his own expense." His personal philanthropy as the public works director was recognized in stone. But just another reason to **trust the Bible**. And a reminder that the gospel is for the **rich as well as for the poor. It's for all walks of life**.

5. **Conclude in doxology. (25-27)**

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

Established

In the closing statement, Paul reminds them all of God's power to **establish them** through the gospel of Jesus. It takes us back to the greeting in **Romans 1:11** where Paul mentioned how he longed for them to be established in the gospel. Let me ask you: **Do you feel more established in the gospel as a result of our time in Romans? I do. That's what I hope Romans has accomplished in us.** I pray it has **grounded** us in the gospel and **stabilized** us spiritually. Is there any greater gift than that?

A Gospel To Be Manifested
This is a gospel, too, that God has been **revealing for ages**. Again, it takes us back to the opening lines of Romans 1. Paul spoke of the prophets who predicted Jesus' coming; promised beforehand. Remember, when Paul writes, he's going around **convincing people of the New Covenant from the Old Testament Scriptures**. So he talks about how at one point it was a **mystery**. It was in the OT but a bit elusive. Then it was **revealed through Jesus and is now manifested through the apostles**.

As it is manifested, people are beleiivng it to the point that they're lives are transformed. Thus God is glorified. And that's the cycle we want to repeat. We get established. We manifest the gospel by word and deed. How we speak and how we live. Other believe. They're transformed. God is glorified.

But AGAIN: we're **participants**. We're still manifesting it to the world. And if we've been established in the gospel, we're going to get serious about transformation through relationships.

What step can you take to get more involved in Christian community? Like right now? Today? What is one small step you can take to invest in your Christian community? Get involved in a small group? Come to prayer meeting? Fellowship dinner? Finding a walking partner? Accountability partner? Become a member? Talk to the Lord about it and write it down.