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# ROMANS

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## PART 10: CLOSING ROMANS 16:1-27

### ROMANS OVERVIEW

#### PROLOGUE (ROMANS 1:1-17)

1. **“THE WRATH OF GOD” (ROMANS 1:18-3:20)**
  - a. The Wrath of God against Gentiles (1:18-1:32)
  - b. The Wrath of God against Jewish People (2:1-3:20)
  
2. **“THE GRACE OF GOD” (ROMANS 3:21-4:25)**
  - a. The “Center” of the Gospel (Romans 3:21-31)
  - b. Abraham, the Model (Romans 4:1-25)
  
3. **“FREEDOM IN CHRIST” (ROMANS 5:1-8:39)**
  - a. Freedom to Hope (5:1-21)
  - b. Freedom from Sin (6:1-3:23)
  - c. Freedom from the Law (7:1-25)
  - d. Freedom in the Spirit (8:1-39)
  
4. **“BUT WHAT ABOUT THE ISRAELITES?” (ROMANS 9:1-11:36)**
  
5. **“THE GOSPEL IN EVERYDAY LIFE” (ROMANS 12:1-15:33)**
  - a. Serving one Another (12:1-21)
  - b. Submitting to Government (13:1-14)
  - c. A Final Plea for Unity (14:1-15:13)
  - d. Carrying on the Mission of Jesus (15:14-33)

#### CLOSING (ROMANS 16:1-27)

### **PART 10 OVERVIEW**

- What’s in a Name?: The Names of Romans 16
- Final Thoughts on Romans 16
- Application: Make God Famous!

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# WHAT'S IN A NAME?:

## THE NAMES OF ROMANS 16

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- One of the most striking things about the closing of Romans (Romans 16) is the number of names that Paul lists and wants to greet through this letter. Though it is not uncommon for Paul to mention people he wants to greet in his letters (see, for example, the end of 1 Corinthians), nowhere else in Paul's letters does he come anywhere close to the number of people he mentions in Romans.
- The likely reason why Paul mentions so many people at the end of the letter to the Romans is due to the fact that Paul had never visited the church in Rome before. Paul wants the church to know that although he had never visited them, he knows a lot of people there, establishing common ground with those who may have never met him before. (Paul may know so many people in the church in Rome because of the expulsion of Jews from Rome in AD 49; Paul may have been able to meet many Jewish Christians during this time.)
- Although many of the names have no significance to us today, there are a few interesting tidbits we can discern from what Paul says:
  - First, based on the types of names listed, it is clear that the church is made up of a good mix of both Jews and Gentiles:

Prisca and Aquila (v. 3), Mary (v. 6), Adronicus and Junia (v. 7), and Herodion (v. 11a) are likely from a Jewish backgrounds.

Hermes (v. 14), Nereus and Olympas (v. 15) are likely from a Gentile background.
  - Second, the number of women that Paul mentions in the list is quite surprising (e.g. Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus' mother, Julia). In an age when men and women often did things separate—with most “social outings” reserved for men only—it is clear that the church in Rome was an exception to this; men and women worshipped side-by-side. Further, the women in the church seemed to be quite involved in Christian ministry; Phoebe is referred to as a “deacon” (or “servant”) of her church (v. 1) and Prisca is called a “fellow worker” with Paul (v. 3). It may be that women in the church served as missionaries primarily to reach other women; in a patriarchal society this would have been necessary.<sup>1</sup>
  - Finally, we get a sense that within the larger church Rome there were smaller “gatherings” of Christians who met in various homes regularly (sort of like our small groups today). For example, Paul mentions the “church” that meets in the house of Prisca and Aquila (v. 5), and the reference to “all the saints that are with them” in v. 15 likely refers to a church meeting in the house of Philologus and Julia.
- Thus even in the names of Romans 16, we get some important lessons about the day-to-day life of the first-century church!

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<sup>1</sup> See 1 Timothy 2:11-15 for Paul's instruction regarding the role of women in a church gathering.

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# FINAL THOUGHTS ON ROMANS 16

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- There are a few additional things that Paul says in Romans 16 that are of note.
- First, in the middle of the chapter, Paul gives a stern warning against false teachers and those who cause divisions:

*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. - ROMANS 16:17-19*

- These sorts of warnings are common for Paul (see, for example, Galatians 6:12-16); it seems as though Paul was often concerned about others coming in and teaching things contrary to truth, thus undoing Paul's work and causing division within a church. It doesn't appear that the church in Rome has a problem with this—yet. But it is something that they are to watch out for.
  - This is a reminder for us that to look out for false teachers in our day and age, as well; just because someone is a gifted communicator, that doesn't mean that they are teaching truth (v. 18). Accurate Bible teaches should be prized over and above dynamic speakers.
- Second, we are given an interesting insight about how Paul composed the letter. Although the words are his, Paul mentions that he wrote via an “amanuenses” named “Tertius” who adds his own note to the church in Rome in v. 22.

*I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord - ROMANS 16:22*

This was a common practice in the time; amanuenses served as like “secretaries,” and it was common practice for Paul to use one (1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17), perhaps because Paul suffered from poor eyesight (see Galatians 4:15 with Galatians 6:11).

- Finally, Paul closes the letter with a doxology, which—unsurprisingly—praises God for the “mystery” that has now been revealed: the inclusion of “all the nations” within God's people...a fitting end to a letter often focused on that very subject!

*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. - ROMANS 16:25-27*

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# APPLICATION: MAKE GOD FAMOUS!

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*“to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.”* – ROMANS 16:27

1. Romans 16 ends with what it is all about (truly): giving God glory—or as I like to put it, “Making God famous!”
2. At the end of the day, we are here for one purpose and one purpose only: to point back to God and not to ourselves.
3. It is God who alone deserves all praise, honor and glory. As Paul puts it in Romans 11:36:

*“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”*  
– ROMANS 11:36

4. No matter where we are in life, no matter what we do in life, in every area we have the ability to bring honor to God and make Him famous... in our marriages, in our work, in our personal life... it’s all about God!
5. The book of Romans has given us many reasons to praise God and give Him all of the credit and all of the glory, for as Romans has established—we are nothing without God!
6. Therefore, our question for this session:

How will you make God famous this week?

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# QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

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1. Read the list of names in Romans 16:1-16. Does anything stand out to you about these names and the greetings that Paul gives them? If so, what? Why do you think God included this part of Romans in Scripture?<sup>2</sup>
2. Read Romans 16:17-20.
  - a. What does Paul say about these false teachers? What are their tactics? What do they try to do? What's Paul's instruction to the church to resist them?
  - b. How does the advice to be "wise about what is good; innocent about what is evil" (v. 19) help in the fight against false teaching?
  - c. How can we use Paul's guidance here to discern "false teaching" in the church today?
3. Why do you think Paul would include greetings to the Roman church from other people in Romans 16:21-23?
4. What themes of the entire letter to the Romans do you see Paul mention in Romans 16:25-27? Which one has been the most significant to you?
5. Look at the outline on pg. 105 of this handout. Which section of Romans has impacted you the most and why?
6. What about your life has changed or will change as a result of this study through Romans?
7. Read the six points on pg. 108. How will you make God famous this week?

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<sup>2</sup> Some questions in this section adapted from N.T. Wright, Romans (N.T. Wright Bible Studies for Everyone).

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# RESOURCES CONSULTED

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Though the handouts in this survey are original and created specifically for this study by the author, Christopher Ward, much of the content contained in these handouts—including, at times, specific wording and phrases—is cultivated from various sources, the most prominent of which are listed alphabetically by author’s last name, below.<sup>3</sup> (Books in bold and marked with an asterisk [\*] are ones that are especially helpful and recommended to consult first for further study.)

Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting?: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

Colin J. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

John MacArthur, *Romans*, vols 1 and 2 (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1991 and 1994).

Kevin W. McFadden, *Judgment according to Works in Romans* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013).

Douglas Moo, *The Letter to the Romans: Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018).

\*\_\_\_\_\_, *The NIV Application Commentary: Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000).

\*\_\_\_\_\_, *Encountering the Book of Romans* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

\*Grant R. Osborne, *Romans Verse-by-Verse* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017).

\*Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans: Second Edition* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2018).

Chuck Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015).

Frank Thielman, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2018).

Anthony C. Thiselton, *Discovering Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

N.T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019).

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<sup>3</sup> Note that I do not agree with everything in all of these resources, and the inclusion of them here do not constitute an unqualified endorsement of them. As with anything related to the Bible—including anything I say in this survey—it is incumbent upon the reader to examine the Scriptures to see if what is being said is true (Acts 17:11).

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