

ROMANS 16:1-24
DECEMBER 19, 2021



INTRODUCTION

At school, do you prefer group projects or would you rather complete a project by yourself? Why?

What about here at FBC Summit Students? Have you ever participated in a service project or mission endeavor alongside the larger group? How did that go?

Why are we better together here at FBC Summit Students?

As we've learned in this study of Romans, Paul had never met these Roman believers. It might seem strange to us that he wrote to them like he did know them, but that's the thing about the body of Christ. We're connected in ways we're not connected with people outside the church, and we're better together.

DISCUSSION

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 16:1-24.

How many people did Paul name in these verses? Which greeting stands out to you the most? Why?

Based on these verses, how close did Paul get to people?

Compare that to your relationships here at Summit. Would you say you're close to a variety of people here? Why or why not?

Would you be able to have something nice to say about a lot of different people at Summit Students? Why or why not?

What do we miss out on when we don't get close to other Christians? What do we miss out on when we try to live the Christian life on our own—without close relationship with other believers?

What do you think would happen in our church if we truly encouraged one another?

What are some reasons we might struggle to get close to each other? What are some reasons we might struggle to encourage each other? What are some reasons we might struggle to think of each other as partners in ministry?

How does verse 20 encourage you today?

GOING DEEPER

Read verses 17-18 again. How can you be a friend to the people in our group who cause division, without adding to that division?

Paul wrote in verse 19, "The report of your obedience has reached everyone." What do you think that means? How can you apply it to your life and our church?

APPLICATION

Based on Paul's example of relationships in Romans 16, what is one change you know you need to make in your relationships?

How are we doing as a group at partnering together in ministry? How can we grow in this area?

What are some ways that we might serve one another in a way that demonstrates our love and appreciation?

PRAYER

Thank God for other believers. Ask Him to help you love one another sacrificially. Pray that our mutual love and dedication to one another would help those outside the faith be drawn to salvation in Christ

COMMENTARY

ROMANS 16:1-24

16:1-2. Before Paul begins his greetings to his friends in the church in Rome, he commends to them a fellow believer, Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. It is widely agreed that Phoebe was likely the carrier of Paul's letter to Rome. Her designation as a servant probably implies a position of responsibility in the church at Cenchrea, perhaps that of deaconess. Paul's request that she be given any help she may need is doubtless a response to the great help she had been to many.

Paul's reference to Phoebe as a great help is probably more than just physical assistance, meaning that Phoebe was possibly a woman of means who had helped to support the Cenchrean church and possibly Paul himself.

16:3-16. Next, Paul enters into a lengthy list of greetings to acquaintances in Rome. Immediately coming to mind is the image of Christ as the Good Shepherd of His sheep (John 10:3). As a shepherd of the church in Rome, Paul obviously knows many of the sheep there by name. Yet another side of the apostle Paul is seen in his conveyance of personal greetings and expressions of well-being to so many by name. Two final words from Paul in verse 16 add additional insights into the state, or the need, of the church at Rome. First, for the fourth time in his letters, Paul urges the believers to greet one another with a holy kiss (cf. 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; see also 1 Pet. 5:14). Was this exhortation because they were lacking affection for one another or because they were being encouraged to continue it? Either way, it is a good word for the church today. Second, all the churches of Christ send greetings to the church in Rome. These greetings most likely came from the members of Paul's entourage who were about to leave with him on the journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). They would represent churches in Macedonia and Achaia as well as Asia Minor (Galatia). Paul worked hard at doing whatever might increase the unity of the body of Christ.

16:19-20. In the midst of his warnings, Paul reaffirms his joy, first mentioned in Romans 1:8, over their faith and obedience. But he does not want them to be naive about their faith. His wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil parallels Jesus' words to His disciples when He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God (Matt. 10:16). The life of faith must be received with the innocence and purity of faith of a child (Mark 10:15) but lived in the maturity and reality of an adult who knows there is a war going on. The harshness of Paul's words—will soon crush—is cast in stark contrast to the backdrop of his earlier declaration—I am full of joy. Both are true in the Christian life—joy in the midst of war. The joy comes from knowing that the war has been and will be won. Our part (the Roman church's part) is to be alert and vigilant until the final armistice. It is the grace of God that empowers us to understand, and stand in, the conflict.

16:21-24. It is easy to read the New Testament and gloss over the many names of individuals who contributed to the spread of the gospel and the building of the church in the first century. The temptation now is the same as it was then, to think that history will not record or remember what we do for Christ in our corner of the kingdom. That is correct—"history" will know little and care less of what the average believer does in his or her life of faith. The faithful first-century men and women who, in the midst of the same fears, testings, limitations, and insecurities that we face, continued to build the church, did so not in hopes of finding their names on the pages of history. They did it because they were faithful, and because their names were already written on far more important pages than those of history (Rev. 21:27).

May the church today honor the memory of the few whose names we know, and the millions whose names we will not know until "the roll is called up yonder." May we honor their memory by being as faithful in our day as they were in theirs.