

“Corinthian Greetings”
Romans 16:21-23
(Preached at Trinity, April 1, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter Paul spends considerable time giving commendations regarding various people that he has seen as valuable to the church. There are actually two separate lists of names—33 in all.
 - A. The first list, **Verses 3-16** contain Christians from the Church of Rome.
 - B. The second list, **Verses 21-23**, contain people from the Church of Corinth, the city from which Paul is writing – a total of 8.
2. There is a distinct difference between the two lists. The first list contains the personal greetings from Paul. This second list, however, contains personal greetings from individuals who were in one way or another associated with Paul while he was in Corinth. They were sending their own greetings to the Church of Rome.
3. As we looked at the Roman list I brought a sermon before you that I titled, “Biographies.”
 - a. I stressed the importance of how we live our life. Most of these individuals we know very little about, but God knows them intimately.
 - b. Each of them have gone the way of humanity – they lived, and they died, and for most, have been long forgotten—but not in the knowledge of God.
 - c. The point is this. For most of us our lives are soon forgotten of men. We want to think that we will be long remembered upon the earth. The truth is we are very soon forgotten. How many of you know intimate details of your great grandfather?
 - d. The life of most of us has been described as putting your hand into a bucket of water. As soon as you remove it the water fills the space and there is little evidence that it was ever there.
 - e. But know this. God has carefully recorded every detail. And we all will be called to give account.
4. This morning I want to direct your attention to this second list, the Corinthian list—eight men who also lived their lives and God has recorded their names here for us to consider. These are very practical sections with rich application for us. May God grant us to profit from the lives of these obscure men.
5. Before I begin I need to remind you again of the importance of women in the work of the Kingdom of God. Although this list before us this morning are all men, of the first five people Paul mentions in **Chapter 16** three are women. We can never underestimate the importance of women in the church. Some presume that because women cannot hold an office in the church their work is insignificant. What foolish thinking. Paul speaks of women as having great value to the church
6. Let’s proceed to look at these individuals that God holds before us this morning.

1. The first one Paul speaks of is Timothy, the beloved disciple of Paul. Of all of these men, Timothy is the least obscure. We feel that we know him well.
 - A. Paul refers to Timothy as a “fellow worker” – one who shared in the great work of the Gospel. But Timothy meant far more than this to Paul. Paul had met him on his second missionary journey and had had the pleasure of leading him to Christ
1 Timothy 1:2 NAU - "To Timothy, *my true child in the faith*"
 - B. Paul knew, however, that he was only building upon the work of others. Timothy’s mother and grandmother were also believers.
2 Timothy 1:5 NAU - " For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that *it is* in you as well."
 - C. Paul had the privilege of discipling him as a pastor. In fact, Paul had been involved in his ordination.
2 Timothy 1:6 NAS - "And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands."
 - D. Timothy was young, at times fearful, but a pastor who gave himself to the shepherding of souls.
Philippians 2:19-22 NAS - "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. ²⁰ For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. ²¹ For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. ²² But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serving* his father."
 1. The indication was that while others might serve to the benefit of themselves with their own self-interests in mind Timothy was a single minded servant of Christ. He was faithful. He was selfless. He was loyal.
 2. He was a proven servant.
 “But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serving* his father.”
 3. Over and over we find that God recognizes these traits. They are of great value in the Kingdom of God.
 4. Have you proven to be faithful? Loyal? Selfless?
2. Next Paul mentions three men whom he refers to as his kinsmen, probably referring to their Jewish heritage.
Romans 16:21 NAS - "Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen."
 - A. Lucius we know little of. He is possibly the one mentioned in Acts 13
Acts 13:1 NAS - "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."
 This would make him one the leaders of the church of Antioch – a prophet and teacher who set Paul and Barnabas aside to begin their missionary journey. But we cannot be dogmatic that this is the same Lucius
 - B. Jason could be the Jason of Acts 17, but again we cannot be certain.

- C. Sosipater could possibly be the Sopater of Acts 20:4
Acts 20:4 NAU - "And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, *the son of Pyrrhus*, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia."
- D. The point is these men were men of high character as was Timothy.
 If your name was recorded here how would it read? How would your service to the church be described?
3. Let's give some attention to Gaius and Tertius
- A. While in Corinth Paul stayed in the home of "Gaius."
 1. He would have been one of Paul's early converts in Corinth. Paul baptized him personally.
1 Corinthians 1:14 NAU - "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,"
 2. Paul describes Gaius as being particularly hospitable.
 "host to me and to the whole church" – He must have frequently opened his home up to the church. He would have been a wealthy man who owned at least several slaves.
- B. Tertius was probably one of Gaius' servants who was enlisted to serve Paul.
 1. It was customary for Paul to use a secretary to record his words. Perhaps this was because of his poor eyesight. Tertius takes the opportunity to send his personal greetings.
 2. In a prominent Roman household the servants acquired distinct ranks and were given names in accordance with their position - Primus (one), Secundus (two), Tertius (three), Quartus (four), Quintus (five), and so on.
 3. Tertius would have been the number 3 servant.
 "Secundus" – Second – is described in **Acts 20:4**
 "Quartus" is also listed and would have been number 4
- C. This stresses the nature of the household of Gaius. He and most of his servants were believers.
 1. We don't know what Gaius was like before God saved him. Was he cruel to his slaves? Did he beat them? Was he stingy with his money?
 2. All that we know is what he was since God saved him. He was hospitable. During the year and a half Paul lived with him Gaius made sure his slaves heard the Gospel. He made sure his entire household heard. A Christian is never content with his own knowledge of Christ. He wants others to know.
Matthew 5:16 NAS - ""Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."
 3. At least some of his slaves believed and he welcomed them into the service of Christ.
- D. It is also worth noting the literal translation of this text
 ἀσπάζομαι ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ Τέρτιος ὁ γράψας τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἐν κυρίῳ.
 "I greet you, I Tertius, who wrote the epistle, in the Lord."
 In other words, instead of greeting them in the Lord, it would seem that he's saying he wrote in the Lord. He wrote in service to Christ.
 The point is, as a humble Christian servant, he labored as to the Lord.

Ephesians 6:5-7 NAS - "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷ With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,"

Colossians 3:22-24 NAS - "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

- D. Is that the way you live your life?
1. Is your life filled with Christ? Are others brought near to Christ by your life?
 2. What kind of an employee are you? What kind of citizen are you? What kind of husband or wife are you? What kind of child are you? What kind of church member are you?
 3. Do you do all things as to the Lord?
 4. Do you receive whatever task He gives you as a labor for Him – and do you do it to the best of your ability?
4. "Erastus, the city treasurer greets you"
- The word for "treasurer" is οἰκονόμος – From two Greek words – one meaning house, and the other meaning law. It describes one who rules over a household or a house steward. In this case, he is described as the οἰκονόμος of the city – one who manages the affairs of the city. KJV: chamberlain, NIV: Director of public works, NASB, ESV: treasurer
- A. Erastus was a high ranking official. He was probably a man of wealth. God saves people of every walk of life.
 - B. It demonstrates that Christians can hold all manner of offices and positions. They can become magistrates and high officials.
 - C. Yet, when God saves us our identity changes. Notice Erastus sends his greeting to the body of Christ in Rome. He was a Christian. Although Erastus would have been a man of wealth he was no longer a socialite. The same was true of Gaius. Whatever he was before, after God saved him he saw his life and his resources as tools for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.
 1. God is never impressed by the status of men.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 NAU - "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no man may boast before God."
 2. God always humbles us to make us more useful as servants.

5. Notice this also regarding the body of Christ. There are rich and there are poor; there are high ranking officials – but none are insignificant in the body of Christ, and none are excluded.
- A. In this list of eight men, there are wealthy men like Gaius and Erastus. There is a well known pastor, Timothy.
 - B. But then there is Quartus – the slave, and the least of the slaves – number four. In the natural world he would have been nothing. But in the body of Christ he was significant. He would not be excluded. He was also allowed to send his greetings. Tertius outranked him as a slave, but he didn't outrank him as a Christian.
 - C. He is called here, "Quartus, the brother." As a brother, he was just like the other seven who sent their greetings.
 - Galatians 3:28 NAS** - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
 - Matthew 19:30 KJV** - "But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first."

Conclusion:

- 1. This should be encouraging for you. You may not be wealthy. You may not be a powerful official. You may not be the pastor of a church. But you are not insignificant in the Kingdom of God. You are of high significance.
- 2. People make themselves insignificant through their own refusal to give themselves to the service of Christ.
- 3. If a list were compiled of each member of our church and their service to the church how would you be described. The truth is, such a record *is* being kept.