

Positive Politicians

A. Here and there in this list are names of city officials and people with connections to political leaders. Erastus (vs. 24) was the commissioner of public works while Aristobulus (vs. 10) was probably a grandson of King Herod. Herodian (vs. 11) appears to have been connected to the family of Herod, and there was a Narcissus who was a slave but became the personal secretary to the Emperor Claudius. He became a wealthy man.

B. Let's bless church family members who find their way into public office. Many of them have opportunities to use their position for great good and for the glory of God.

Family Dividers and Family Builders

A. I'm pretty sure you can find yourself in one of the six groups we've just looked at. It really feels like an "all in the family" collage of photos and greetings. In Rome, these people built the church. How about you? Whatever category you find yourself in, are you using your influence to build or divide? (Read vs. 17-20)

B. Paul's warning is to keep away from those who divide the church. Don't be distracted or divided by them, and of course, don't be one of them. Rather, pay attention to your call and trust that God will, at the right time, take care of deceivers and dividers. Notice that the same God who can give peace to his family can crush the enemy.

C. Paul concludes with a sense of awe at God's wisdom and faithfulness (vs. 25-27). In family terms, Paul sees God as full of wisdom when we need guidance and absolutely faithful when we need help. The lessons of Romans 16 are:

- We need really each other – don't try to stand alone.
- We're in a battle, not a picnic – be strong in the front lines.
- We have important work to do – leisure is only to restore us for the work and ready us for more battle.
- The church functions best when we see each other as a spiritual family and when we all understand our gifts. No one in the church needs to be without a ministry.

"All in the Family"
Romans 16

4/25/10

RMBC
Pastor Dennis

Introduction

A. The other day I dug out some old high school year books – we used to call them "annuals". This is one of Connie's from 1967-8. It records important and interesting events from that year. Here in the back and on some other pages are little notes from her friends. Some are inside information and others are affirmations. They tell me something about Connie, but they say something about her friends too. What great memories! Maybe you should dig out your "annuals" and have a good laugh or a good cry.

B. The book of Romans is something like a year book. It is a record of foundational truth that we can build our lives on, and then "in the back" (chapter 16) we have a lot of personal notes to friends. There are names, memories, greetings, and final thoughts about life.

C. I counted 35 names in this chapter, mixed in with some final words of warning and encouragement. Instead of reading through them, let's look at this family history in categories and see what we can learn.

Worthy Women

A. Did you know that women are mentioned more in the N.T. than in any other literature of that day? Women were among the first to learn of Christ's coming (Mary, Elizabeth) and they were the first to see him after the Resurrection (Mary, Mary Magdalene and others). Women had to tell the doubtful disciples that Jesus is alive! According to Acts women held some important positions in the church in keeping with their gifts.

- B. Note five of the seven women mentioned in Romans 16:
- Phoebe stands out (vs. 1) as having an important ministry along with Paul. She carried this letter to Rome from Corinth – a great honor for her faithfulness. We are not sure of the extent of her ministry but she is called a deacon (servant) and was trusted with this great letter, Romans.
 - In vs. 12 we have Tryphena and Tryphosa (probably twins whose names mean "dainty" and "delicate"). Along with Persis their names suggest upper-class society – yet they were willing to do hard work for the Lord.
 - And of course there was Priscilla whom we also meet in Acts. In four of the six times she is mentioned in the N.T. her name is ahead of her husband's, Aquila. She must have had some significant leadership or speaking abilities.

C. Let's be sure to affirm the ministry of women in our congregation. Your contribution is so significant and so important. We see all the gifts of the Spirit in your ministries. Let's stop and pray with gratitude for women in their roles in ministry, in the home, and in the community. (Prayer)

Significant Singles

A. Glance at vs. 14 where Paul greets five men with Greek names. It is thought that these may have been young businessmen in Rome. They were some of the earliest "yuppies" – young urban professionals. It is quite possible that they shared their living quarters and used it as a house-church on the Lord's Day.

B. We must always be alert to the needs as well as the potential of the singles in our church. Singles walk with us at all ages and in all experiences of life. We have a class called UBLONG for our young professional singles; there is a ministry to our widows that gives them opportunity for fellowship. Some singles meet on their own for games, Bibles study, prayer, or just to encourage each other.

C. One church has a group called S.L.O.B.S. It stands for Singles, Lonely, Only Bible Study. They aren't looking for new mates, just solid relationships around God's Word. At times we think of our singles as ready and available for ministry, and having fewer family responsibilities. The truth is, most singles prefer to be welcomed into the full life of the church and not segregated as singles. Singles, you are a blessing to the church. Thank you for hanging in here and serving and growing and striving!

Courageous Couples

A. According to vs. 3-4 Priscilla and Aquila risked their lives for Paul – that's how deeply they believed in the gospel. Paul disciplined them for a year and a half (Acts 18) and it seems that wherever they went they practiced hospitality and hosted a church in their home.

B. Andronicus and Junias are mentioned in vs. 7 (KJV – Junia -- which is feminine). It's not clear if these two were co-workers or a husband and wife team. Evidently they were believers before Paul and shared prison time with him. They were so good at what they did that Paul refers to them as "outstanding among the apostles."

C. May I encourage you married couples in ministry? Not every couple shares the same passion and gifts. But working side by side, complimenting each other, and encouraging each other you make a great impression. The church needs people willing to open their homes, their lives, and their hearts to serve side by side.

Reliable Relatives

A. Family relationships shouldn't outshine our love for the family of God. Churches always suffocate when the circle is drawn so tight that family, or having the right name, takes priority. But, Christian families form a tremendous foundation for the church. Paul mentions "my relatives" in vs. 7 and 11.

B. Also look at vs. 13 – the mother of Rufus had adopted Paul like a son. We think this is the same Rufus mentioned in Mark 15:21, the son of Simon of Cyrene, the man ordered to carry the cross of Jesus. I wonder if he was there that day, walking with his father and Jesus to Golgatha. Can you imagine the lasting impression of the love, sorrow, and agony he saw in Jesus' eyes?

I'm sure he never forgot this and his family, including his mother, became devoted followers of Jesus. When Paul had no family, no hope, no relatives, Rufus' mother adopted him.

C. Think about the ministry of adoption for a moment. Some of you are adoptive parents; others are waiting for word of a child to adopt. Still others host international students. Many of the children who come on our campus from our neighborhood need the love of an adult. Currently visits are being made to the homes of those who received Christ during Kingdom Kids -- They will get a Bible and be shown love. Children and students up through college need a family or someone to love them and welcome them. Will you look out for the lonely? Some college students haven't had a home cooked meal in months. Will you welcome them?

Sanctified Slaves

A. Several people named must have been slaves won to Christ. Ampliatus (vs. 8) may be one of those. A Christian burial plot in Rome has a tomb with the name, Ampliatus. The ornate decorations indicate he was respected, and the single name suggests he was a slave who became a believer.

B. In vs. 22 there is Tertius and in vs. 24 Quartus. These names mean 3rd and 4th in Latin. Some slaves were given a number instead of a name which must have been very demeaning. But when Christ saved them they found meaning, purpose and a place in the family of God. They shared Christ boldly though they were lowly. And of course, Tertius was the scribe who penned Paul's words, this letter.

C. Could we stop for a moment and thank God for people who serve us behind the scenes? Who comes to mind? What roles in the church do you think of? How grateful we can be for these people! (Prayer)

Analogy: The book of Romans is like a _____ :
A _____ of foundational _____ in the middle.
A lot of _____ and _____ in the back.

Six Categories (35 Names)

Worthy _____

Significant _____

Courageous _____

Reliable _____

Sanctified _____

Positive _____

Am I a Family _____ or a Family _____?
Vs. 17-20; 25-27

Four Lessons From Romans 16

- We need really each other – don’t try to stand alone.
- We’re in a battle, not a picnic – be strong in the front lines.
- We have important work to do – leisure is for restoration.
- The church functions best when we see each other as a spiritual family and when we all understand our gifts.