

What Makes A Great Church, Part 3 - Romans 16:5-7 – November 3rd, 2013

- Today's teaching will be part three of a series titled, "What Makes A Great Church."
- This because, woven into the fabric of Paul's list of greetings in this last chapter is the common thread of how people make a church great.
- More specifically, all thirty-five people who Paul acknowledges, speaks to and points to particular aspects of what a great church looks like.

1. Faithful Women (Verses 1-2)

- Here Paul begins by greeting a woman by the name of Phoebe, who was so faithful and trustworthy that he has her hand deliver this letter.

2. Risk Takers (Verses 3-4)

- Paul sends his greeting to Priscilla and Aquila as fellow workers in Christ who risked their lives for Paul and all the Gentile churches.

3. Home Groups (Verse 5a)

- v5a The Apostle Paul sends his greetings to the church that met in Priscilla and Aquila's home, whom he mentioned in the previous verses.
- It's important to note that at this time, the early church did not have buildings, and as such, met in the believer's homes for their worship.
- That's not to say, while we have church buildings today, we don't also have studies in our homes, as an important part of a healthy church.

- There's something else here that I think I'd be remiss to not point out, as it relates to Priscilla and Aquila having Bible studies in their home.
- Here's what I'm thinking, their tent making business during the day, would have meant that their home groups must have been at night.
- The reason I point this out is that as busy as they were, they still made the time to open up their home in order to facilitate this Bible study.

4. New Believers (Verse 5b)

- v5b Paul greets his first convert to Jesus Christ, in the province of Asia, by the name of Epenetus, whom he considered to be a dear friend.
- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that Paul remembers the first person that he led to salvation in Christ.
- The reason I find this interesting is because he considers him a dear friend, which was sort of unusual for the Apostle Paul to acknowledge.

One commentator expounds on this when they wrote, "Epaenetus is of note because he was apparently among the very first converts of Achaia (the region where Corinth was, where Paul wrote this letter from). Epaenetus was also apparently dear to Paul; beloved isn't a term Paul used cheaply."

- In my own personal experience, in the more than thirty years I've been walking with Jesus Christ, is that this kind of love goes both ways.
- Let me explain, we tend to have fondness and love for the person who led us to Christ, and the feelings are mutual for the one who led us.
- Such is the case here with Paul, in that he loved this "dear friend," Epenetus, because he had the privilege of leading him to Jesus Christ.

5. Hard Workers (Verse 6)

- v6 The Apostle Paul in an eight word verse makes sure to send his greeting to a woman by the name of Mary, who was a very hard worker.
- I find it rather interesting that Paul would deem it fit to make note of how hard a worker this Mary was. This further reinforces our first one.
- Namely, the mention of Phoebe who so faithfully and tirelessly served. Furthermore, it also highlights the important role that women have.

Charles Spurgeon-This is the third woman whom Paul commends in this chapter as working for the Lord: [gender] is no hindrance to service.

- I want to mention two more things before we move on to verse seven, both of which can be easily missed at first read of the text in verse 6.
- Notice that the emphasis Paul places on Mary in her greeting, is that she "worked very hard," which coming from Paul is really something.
- The reason being is, Paul himself was the epitome of hard work, such that, one would be hard pressed to find anyone who worked harder.

- The second thing I want to mention here is, this Mary was one of no less than six Mary's, all of who were known for being sort of passive.
- This Mary on the other hand sort of broke the stereotypical mold of the name being the nature and became who she was supposed to be.
- In other words, though she was wired very differently than all the other Mary's before her, she was able to be who God made her to be.

Another commentator of this writes, "I find it's truly a red-letter day in the walk of a believer when he sheds the self-imposed pressures or expectations of what he thinks he should be. Often times, because we admire someone else and want to be like him or her, we put pressure on ourselves to be what we're not. Great is the day when you realize, 'Even though my name is Mary,' I'm one who likes to roll up my sleeves. So I'm just going to be who I am." Mary's name is recorded throughout history as one who was noteworthy because she did what she was made to do, regardless of what the other Mary's before her did. And her example is a good one."

6. Older Believers (Verse 7)

- v7 He greets his relatives who were in prison with him by the name of Andronicus and Junias, outstanding apostles in Christ before he was.
- Couple of thoughts here, the first of which is, they may have actually been related to Paul, and if they were that would make them family.

Henry Morris gives us some insight on this saying, "Andronicus and Junia, Herodion [in verse 11], Jason and Sosipater [in verse 21], are all said to be Paul's 'kinsmen' [or relatives]. The word normally refers to blood relatives, but it can be extended to include fellow countrymen."

- The bottom line is, these were older believers than the Apostle Paul himself was, which speaks to their important role in the life of a church.
- This of course presupposes that the older men and women in the church are spiritually mature, sound in their faith and worthy in their life.

Titus 2:2-8 NIV Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. (3) Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. (4) Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, (5) to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. (6) Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. (7) In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness (8) and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.