

What Makes A Great Church, Part 9 - Romans 16:21-24 – December 15th, 2013

- Today's teaching will be part nine of a series titled, "What Makes A Great Church."
- From verse one through verse twenty, we've identified thirteen characteristics of a great church, and today, we'll look at our fourteenth one.

14. Ordinary Christians (Verses 21-24)

(21) Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives. (22) I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. (23) Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. (24) [*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.*]

- v21 Paul, on behalf of Timothy, whom he calls his fellow worker, sends his greetings along with his relatives, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater.
- v22-23 Tertius, who wrote this letter greets them, on behalf of Gaius for his hospitality, Erastus a civil servant and a brother named Quartus.
- v24 It appears Paul takes the pen back from Tertius for his second closing saying, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Of Paul's difficulty to say goodbye, as it were, Charles Spurgeon writes, "Paul cannot finish. He writes postscript after postscript. Letter writing was a serious business in his day, and as he might never be able to write again, he wishes to say all he can. The last postscript is a delightful doxology in which we can heartily unite."

- Be that as it may, this is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is the names listed last as we near the end of this letter.
- Actually, for two of them, they're really not their names rather they're referred to as numbers. More specifically, both, Tertius and Quartus.
- Let me explain, Tertius, the scribe who wrote the epistle means third, and Quartus, the last name on this list, appropriately means, fourth.

- Here's why at the time the epistle to the Romans was written many in the early church were slaves and as such referred to only by number.
- In other words, these ordinary slaves were deemed unworthy of being referred to by name, which as we know also refers to their nature.
- By stripping a slave of their name making them only a number you in effect also strip them of their identity personality, and even nationality.

- I think of Esther, whose Hebrew name was Hadassah, before it was changed, not to a number like Tertius and Quartus, but to a false god.
- Not just any false god, but the pagan goddess Ishtar, also known as Astarte where we get our English word for Easter a pagan celebration.
- This because, the name Esther comes from a form of the Persian word, "satarah," which carries with it the literal interpretation of a "star."

- Here's where I'm going, God in His grace, chooses nobody's like Tertius, Quartus, and Hadassah, in the ordinary, to do the extraordinary.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest, God can't choose the one who fancies himself as a "somebody," because they're puffed up in pride.
- We saw this Thursday night with Moses, whom God could choose and use to do everything, when he, after forty-years, came to be nothing.

- The common denominator with all the men and women who were mightily used of God is, it was all of grace and it had changed everything.
- At the risk of reading too much into Tertius as the third and Quartus as the fourth I see God's grace being the fifth, as the number of grace.
- We did an in-depth study of the number five being the number of grace, back when we were in 1 Samuel 6, as it related to the Philistines.

- You'll forgive this referencing, but it's interesting they chose to send a five golden tumors and rats as an offering appealing to God's grace.
- Furthermore, there were five Philistine Lord's for whom there were five Philistine cities, which speaks to the significance of choosing five.
- Here's what I'm thinking, the number five as the number of grace was that which brought salvation to Israel, vis-à-vis David's five stones.

- It's also interesting to note that the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments were on two tablets each containing five commandments.
- What's even more interesting is that the fifth commandment is the only one of the Ten Commandments that has what I call a grace clause.
- These are only a small percentage of all the times the Bible records the number five in the context of God's grace and as such, redemption.

In his book, "Number in Scripture," E.W. Bullinger had this to say about the significance of the number five, "Five is four plus one (4+1). We have had hitherto the three major Offices of the Godhead. Now we have a further revelation of a People called out from mankind, redeemed and saved, to walk with God from earth to heaven. Hence, Redemption follows creation. Inasmuch as in consequence of the fall of man creation came under the curse and was "made subject to vanity," therefore man and creation must be redeemed. Thus we have, one the Father, two the Son, three the Spirit, four the creation, and five the redemption. These are the five great mysteries, and five is therefore the number of GRACE. ...The fifth book of the Bible, Deuteronomy, magnifies the grace of God, and in it special pains, so to speak, are taken to emphasize the great fact that not for the sake of the people, but for God's own Name's sake had He called, and chosen, and blessed them. The fifth book of Psalms sets forth the same great fact. ... Israel came out of Egypt, five in a rank, (Exodus 13:18). God's demand to Pharaoh, was five-fold in its nature, because it was the expression of His grace in this deliverance of His people. It brought out, therefore, five distinct objections from Pharaoh.

- I am ending the quote with the mention of Pharaoh distinctly refusing to let God's people go five times for what I think are obvious reasons.
- Namely, because of what 1 Samuel 6:6 says about the Philistines, yet again referring to what took place four hundred years prior in Egypt.
- The last time they did this was when they heard the Israelites were bringing the Ark into battle, and this time it's Pharaoh's hardened heart.

- Pre Egypt, God took the fifth Hebrew letter replacing the fifth letter in Abram and Sarai's name, speaking to how it's by grace through faith.
- In other words, God, by grace through faith chose the ordinary, Abram and Sarai, and in so doing, changed everything to the extraordinary
- Abram (father of many), Abraham (father of many nations), but he's the father of none, thus it's by grace through faith in the promised son.

- Namely, Isaac the promised son to Abraham and Sarah who paints a profound prophetic picture pointing to the promised one Jesus Christ.
- We are just like an Abram and Sarai, who point to the person of Christ, and Tertius and Quartus, one of whom penned the Words of Christ.
- I would submit, in closing, that the great men and women of faith, mightily used of God, were in fact, just ordinary people like you and me.