

**To God be the Glory (Genesis 3:13-15 and Romans 16:1-27)****28-Jul-2024****Genesis 3:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup> So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

**Romans 16:1-27****Personal Greetings**

16 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. <sup>2</sup> I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

<sup>3</sup> Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

<sup>5</sup> Greet also the church that meets at their house.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

<sup>6</sup> Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

<sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

<sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

<sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

<sup>11</sup> Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew.

Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.

<sup>14</sup> Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them.

<sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them.

<sup>16</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the churches of Christ send greetings.

<sup>17</sup> I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. <sup>18</sup> For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own

appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people. <sup>19</sup> Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

<sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.

<sup>22</sup> I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

<sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>[24]</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, <sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith— <sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

## Sermon: “To God be the Glory”

Please turn your Bible to **Romans chapter 16** – starting at verse 1.

There is an outline if you would like to take down some notes!

Let me **pray** first...

### Intro

#### [Slide-Intro]

Paul has spent the **last 15 chapters** of his letter to the Romans **explaining** what the **Gospel** is [[Define the Gospel](#)],

Paul has explained why **we need the Gospel**, how it saves people, how it transforms people – and how people are to live out the Gospel.

As we live out the Gospel – **we do that** individually – but we also do it corporately.

To live out the Gospel corporately – **Jesus established His Church** as the vehicle to live out the Gospel and proclaim the Gospel.

In this **last chapter** of Romans – as Paul does in a lot of his letters – he **finishes** **with a whole bunch of** personal greetings.

A bit like how we might say – “**say hello to your mum and dad**” – and “**Aunty Freda and Uncle Fred send their love**” – and so on...

Now, we shouldn't **just skim past these greetings and say to ourselves** – “*I don't know these people – so who cares!*”

#### [Slide-Intro]

We can learn a lot from these **personal greetings** that Paul sends

1. 1<sup>st</sup> – the value of women in a church
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> – the diversity and unity in a church
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> – the danger a church faces
4. 4<sup>th</sup> – the purpose of a church

### The Value of Women in a Church (vv1-16)

#### [Slide-heading]

1<sup>st</sup> lesson then – is the **value of women in a church**

Look at verse 1

Paul commends Phoebe

Which probably means she was the one who **brought Paul's letter** to the church in Rome.

Paul commends her as his sister in Christ – and as a deacon – a servant of Christ.

Paul also describes Phoebe as a benefactor.

She was clearly a **woman of business or independent means** - who had been **using her gifts and wealth to serve and support the church and help people**, including Paul himself.

Phoebe wasn't the only woman, Paul mentions

He also mentions **Priscilla** (v3) who we know from Acts 18 was a **fellow missionary** with Paul and worked as a **tentmaker** to finance her mission work

Paul mentions **Mary** (v6) who **worked very hard**.

And **Tryphena** and **Tryphosa** (v12) who also worked hard.

And **Rufus' mother** (v13) who mothered Paul

As well as other **sisters in Christ** (v14)

In Paul's day – **women didn't get much of a look** in – and were pretty much **second-class citizens**. **Women's evidence was even admissible in court back then!**

**[Slide-big deal]**

So, for Paul **to mention so many women is a big big deal!**

We have **plenty of Phoebe's, Priscilla's, Mary's, Tryphena's and Tryphosa's** in our church – here at **Toukley**.

We have many **sisters in Christ**

And there's a few who mother me too!

In our **Bible Study Groups** this week – we were **asked to pause** – and **reflect** on the **women who serve in our ministries** here at church.

I'm thankful for my dear wife **Heather** for all her help and support

And for **Lina** – my helper – who works way too hard [my fault]

And **Jenny** as she heads up Pastoral Care

But as we reflect a bit more on women who serve in our ministries at church we also have:

- Many women helping in **pastoral care**

- Our **committee of management** is **predominantly women** – including **Pat Abel** as our treasurer and **Margaret** as chairperson
- We have over **12 women** serving in the **P.W.A.**
- **Judith** heading up **Missions**
- **Christine** handling the **prayer chain**
- **Lorraine plus 5 other women** serving in **P.A.T.**
- **11 women** on our **Bible Reading** roster on Sunday
- **3 women** on our **Prayer roster** for Sunday
- **Chris heads up our choir** – and we have **6 or more women** singing in the choir
- Our **Sunday Jaffa teachers and helpers** are all women – except for one man
- Our **Friday Jaffa leaders** are **mostly women**
- Not to mention our **Craft leaders** and **Olivia** leading the **Art Group**
- Our **Kitchen** would come to a standstill without **Joy, Robyn and Lorraine** – and it's **mostly our women** who **serve and provide morning tea**
- Then there's our **welcomers at the front door** – **mostly women**
- And it's **women** who take up the **collection** and **count the money**
- **Zelka** heads up the **Working Bee**
- Our **auditors** are **Eileen and Judith**

**[Slide-many women serve]**

I think we'd all agree it's remarkable **how many women serve the Lord and our church family** – and **many in multiple ministries**.

### [Slide-prayers]

Perhaps when we go home today – we could **offer up a prayer of thanks** for the women of our church family

And that's not to say – our men don't serve – I know they do – and they are appreciated too!

It just struck me in preparing this week – that it is a big deal that Paul – mentions them. And as Heather's grandfather – who was also a minister – would say – ***'let's not forget the ladies in our church!'***

One further thing to mention on this.

Our **Presbyterian denomination** has been **working hard** in the **last couple of years** – **to encourage women to have a voice in our church.**

**I want to assure the women this morning** – if you speak to myself or the elders – **we will listen** – and **we do appreciate you!**

(pause)

### Diversity and Unity in a Church (vv1-16)

#### [Slide-Heading]

The 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson we can learn from these personal greetings of Paul – is **the diversity and unity in the church in Rome**

#### [Slide-Diversity]



There is **ethnic diversity** – there are **Jews** – there are **Roman names** – there are **Greek names** – and of course they **speak different languages**

There is **gender diversity** – **male and females working together** – like **Priscilla** and her husband **Aquila** (v3) – who worked closely with Paul many times. Out of **26 people that Paul names, 8 are women.**

There is **social diversity** – there are people from **different social backgrounds and occupations.** Some may be **slaves or servants** – others **business men and women.** Names like **Aristobulus** (v10) and **Narcissus** (v11) who seem to be **royal or high ranking** – having **households or estates.**

There are others that Paul describes as **hard workers** – like **Mary** (v6) and **Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis** (v7)

Others like **Andronicus and Junias** (v7) are described as “***outstanding among the apostles***”

What a **diverse bunch** they are.

Not unlike our church

As we said last week – here at Toukley we have – **Aussies, Kiwis, English, Scottish, Irish, South African, Chinese and Montenegrin**

Yet we all have the **common bond of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus** – that binds us together

(pause)

### [Slide-Unity]

Which brings us to the **Unity** of the church in Rome

Despite the diversity of backgrounds and roles mentioned, **the common thread running through all these greetings is their shared faith in Jesus Christ**. They are **united in their belief and commitment to the gospel**, which transcends any differences they may have had.

Paul's greetings show a **mutual respect and recognition** among members of the church. He acknowledges their **labor, dedication, and service in the Lord**. The efforts of **every person mentioned are valued and appreciated**.

What struck me as I read Paul's words – were:

- Things like - how **Priscilla and Aquila risked their lives for Paul and the Gentile churches (v3)**. Remember they are **living in times of Roman persecution!**
- Things like – how **Andronicus and Junia were in prison with Paul** for the sake of the Gospel
- Things like – how **Rufus' mother, mothered Paul (v13)**
- And the way **Paul refers to the members of the church as his brothers and sisters (v14)** – and they **greet each other with a holy kiss (v16)**
- And how they have to **meet in each other's homes (vv5, v10, v11)** – presumably **in secret because of persecution**

### [Slide-family]

The overall sense we have from these greetings is that the **Church in Rome** – is a **CHURCH FAMILY**

Isn't that what we **try to foster here at Toukley** – we are **brothers and sisters** – **mums and dads** – we are a **church family**.

Remember what Jesus said:

***"For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*** (Matthew 12:50)

And what's the **will of the Father**?

***The Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and will be raised them up at the last day*** (John 6:40)

So, we're joined together in unity as a **Church family** – to look to Jesus, The Son of God, and **believe in Him** – so we **gain eternal life!**

That's what **binds us together!**

### **The Danger a Church Faces (vv17-20 and Genesis 3:13-15)**

Now if a church **IS** **together in unity with the common bond of Christ**

Then Satan **is not going to like that** – is he?

**[Slide-heading]**

Which brings us to 3<sup>rd</sup> lesson we can learn from Paul's greetings – that is – **the danger a church faces** – that's in verses 17 to 20

Look at v17

### [Slide-divisions]

Paul **warns** - *watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned*

Examples of things that might cause division or put obstacles in people's way are:

- Someone might **push a prosperity gospel** that teaches if you follow Jesus, you will be wealthy, and all your troubles will be gone – that's false teaching!
- People might **engage in debates on non-essential issues** – [frequency of Lord's Supper, music, food we eat] – and push their point so much that it **leads to arguing and division – and disunity**
- People might **gossip or talk about someone without knowing all the facts** – and this **leads to disharmony and disunity**
- People might **show disrespect to the leader of a ministry group** – and make **unfair, hurtful and over-critical comments**

Paul **warns** in verse 18 that when people do these sorts of things – they are not serving the church family or our Lord Jesus – but serving themselves and their own appetites – **serving their own ego**. And there's **no place for ego in a church!**

*A couple of weeks ago – I attended the NSW Annual Assembly for Ministers and Elders of the Presbyterian Church.*

*One of the topics under discussion was the Government's changes to the Work Health & Safety (WHS) Act.*

*The major change is that people who are “volunteers” in businesses, organizations and churches – are deemed as being “paid employees”. Therefore, when changes are made – even in churches – the volunteers have to be consulted before the changes are made – to ensure there is no potential physical harm done – and ALSO – to ensure no psychological or social harm is done.*

*If there is no consultation – then it’s actually a breach of the Government's Act. It seems like common sense really – the government is telling organizations to be loving – and isn’t that what Jesus told us to do – love one another?*

*As various people spoke at Assembly – several women – and some men – shared how they have been hurt by: – changes made in churches without consultation – and also hurt by – negative, rude, disrespectful and unkind comments. Many of these speakers were in tears – as they shared their stories.*

*It was compelling – and saddened me.*

Why am I **telling you this?**

Well – that’s what Paul is warning about here – things like lack of consultation – and disrespectful and hurtful comments and actions – cause disunity in a church family – and Satan loves it. Satan doesn’t have to cause any trouble – because people are doing it for him!

(pause)

How do we prevent this **potential harm and disunity?**

Paul tells us in verse 19

We need to be **obedient to God** and **His Word** as evidently the Church in Rome was – which Paul had heard about

### [Slide-good]

And Paul says – they and we - need to be wise and keep learning more about how to be good and resolutely refuse to have anything to do with evil, and resolutely deny anything that is not in agreement with the Gospel.

### [Slide-Satan]

Paul finishes off this section in v20 with great encouragement. He says:

*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*

Remember **Satan is a great liar and deceiver.**

We saw that in our **Old Testament Reading** from Genesis 3:13-15 [if you want to turn there now – and keep Romans 16 marked – as we will come back to it in a minute]

The **context** of Genesis 3:13-15 is that **Adam and Eve have been deceived by Satan and disobeyed God's rule** – not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – and **God is dishing out punishment**

**God speaks to the woman** (Eve) and the **serpent** (aka Satan/Devil).

The woman explains to God how the **serpent deceived her**.

So, God dishes out **His punishment to the serpent**.

V14-*The serpent will be cursed above all livestock and all wild animals. The serpent will crawl on its belly from now on* (suggested before this; it was upright?) *and eat dust all the days of its life.*

Then in v15 – God gives an amazing promise – it's often referred to as – **Proto-evangelium** – the **first mention of the Gospel**

*Verse 15 unpacked says: And I [God] will put enmity between you [the serpent/Satan] and the woman [Eve], and between your offspring [Satan] and hers [Eve's offspring]; he [Eve's offspring, that's Jesus] will crush your [Satan's] head, and you [Satan] will strike his [Jesus'] heel.*

In pictorial form – it would look like this

**[Slide-Picture]**



**Satan thinks he has defeated Jesus on the cross – by striking Jesus' heel – but Jesus has crushed Satan's head by being the once and for all sacrifice for sin on that cross – and - by rising from the dead on the third day – **to defeat the final enemy – death itself. So, Satan is powerless!****

What we need to understand is - **Satan was defeated at the Cross and at Jesus' resurrection**, and **Satan will be removed completely when Jesus returns**. In the meantime, *Satan prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*

– *so we need to be alert* (1 Peter 5:8) – because *Satan knows his time is short* (Revelation 12:12) – **so he's having a last hurrah now.**

That's why Paul warns the Church in Rome and us – that **Satan can even use people in churches to disrupt things and cause disharmony and disunity.**

Remember though – **we have three things to fight off Satan**

**God's Word** – the **Holy Spirit** – and **God's Armour** (Ephesians 6) to protect us.

But we have to read God's Word and apply it to our lives

**We have to walk in the Spirit** – and **keep in step with the Spirit** – and **exhibit the fruit of the Spirit**

And we have to **actually put on God's Armour** and not **leave it on the shelf!**

### The Purpose of a Church (vv21-27)

#### **[Slide-heading]**

Which brings us to the 4<sup>th</sup> lesson from Paul's greetings – **the purpose of a church** - in verses 21 to 17

Paul finishes his letters with some **final greetings** from

- From - **Timothy** – his protégé – whom Paul will pass on the baton to
- From – fellow Jews – **Lucius, Jason and Sosipater**
- From – **Tertius** – who **wrote down Paul's words** in this letter as Paul dictated them



- From – **Gaius** whose **house** Paul is writing from in Corinth
- And from – **Erastus** – who is the **director of public works in Corinth**

Then Paul finishes with a **powerful prayer of praise** – in verses 25 to 27

What we learn from this prayer is that

- God is able to establish people with the power of the Gospel**
- This **Gospel of Jesus** is something that was **hidden in ages past** – but then **God revealed and made known the Gospel of Jesus through the prophets in the Old Testament** – even making **Jesus known** in the **first book of the Bible** – in our **OT reading from Genesis 3**
- And it's God's plan to make **Jesus available** - not just to **Jews** – but to **Gentiles**

And so, the **purpose of the Church of our Lord Jesus** is two-fold

**[Slide-saved]**

- So that Gentiles [as well as Jews] **might come to obedience that comes through faith in our Lord Jesus** – so that they are **saved for Heaven**

**[Slide-glory]**

- And so that **the only wise God is given glory forever** – through Jesus Christ

**[Slide-not about us]**

You see, being a church family is ultimately **all about bringing glory** to God – not ourselves!

*To God be the glory, great things he has done,  
So loved he the world, that he gave us his Son,  
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,  
And opened the door the life-gate that all may go in!*  
AMEN.