

---

# The People of our Union with Christ

## Romans 16:3-23

Being in Christ unites us and builds fellowship, partnership and ministry with people. We are connected at a spiritual level through the sharing of the Holy Spirit within us. We are also deeply connected as being “in church” too. The New Testament writers and Paul, in particular reflects how important this is.

Paul is champion of Christ...

Paul is a fighter for truth...

Paul is deeply connected to people...

A great deal of our study on being *in Christ* has focused on its truths and principles. We have look at practical implications as they came up in texts. In our study together now, I would look at the intensely personal aspect of being in Christ.

I hope that little of what I say this morning is new. Some may be. But my prayer and aim is to stir you up to greater love for one another and more passionate ministry to one another.

## Romans 16:3-23

One of the truly surprising things to realize with this longest section of greetings - Paul had never been in the church at Rome.

<sup>3</sup> Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup> who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. <sup>5</sup> Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. <sup>6</sup> Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. <sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. <sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. <sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. <sup>11</sup> Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. <sup>12</sup> Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. <sup>14</sup> Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. <sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. <sup>16</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

<sup>17</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. <sup>18</sup> For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. <sup>19</sup> For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. <sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

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

<sup>23</sup> Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

We will focus on (v.9-10) to provide us some structure...

<sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. <sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.

## Fellow Workers in Christ (v.9)

Paul often mentions people who are working together with him in many different ways. He was connected to them in a vast network of relationships that were both partnerships and personal.

### Traveling with Him

Paul had a team of partners (fellow workers) who traveled with him. They are in Christ and in the church, but often are with Paul. Sometimes they are sent on behalf of Paul to deal with issues. Sometimes they are sent to spend as much time as necessary to reverse trajectory and lead churches. Timothy was tireless in his traveling with Paul, his ministry in Ephesus and elsewhere. All of the following show us people who were with Paul and sent greetings to the recipients of his letters.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you.

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

Philemon 23-24

<sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, <sup>24</sup> and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

Colossians 4:7-9; 12-13

<sup>7</sup> Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. <sup>8</sup> I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, <sup>9</sup> and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

<sup>12</sup> Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. <sup>13</sup> For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

Ephesians 6:21-22

<sup>21</sup> So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. <sup>22</sup> I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

## Serving in Churches

Many of Paul's partners are specifically commended for working hard in the ministry.

Philippians 4:2-3

<sup>2</sup> I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Colossians 4:13

<sup>13</sup> For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

Some of Paul's partners were hosting churches in their homes.

Philemon 1-2

Paul is writing to Philemon in Colossae. Philemon is hosting the church there and may be an elder there as well.

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved fellow worker <sup>2</sup> and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

2 Timothy 4:19-21

Paul is writing to Timothy who is serving in the church at Ephesus. Look at the interactive engagement of people in Paul's network.

<sup>19</sup> Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. <sup>20</sup> Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. <sup>21</sup> Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers.

Colossians 4:15-16

Paul is writing to the church at Colossae probably meeting in Philemon's home. But there is also an assembly in Nympha's home and a church comprised of people from Laodiceans.

<sup>15</sup> Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. <sup>16</sup> And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.

## Traveling on their Own

In Christ and throughout the churches were people who traveled in ministry on their own. They seem to have corresponded with Paul and had some face to face contact. Unlike Timothy and Titus who were assistants to Paul, these people served God in the church with their own itinerant ministries.

### Apollos

Apollos was a prominent preacher and teacher. I want to spend a moment tracing him through Luke and Paul's writing just to show how these leaders interacted with each other.

#### Entre into Ministry (Acts 18:24–28)

<sup>24</sup> Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. <sup>25</sup> He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. <sup>26</sup> He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. <sup>27</sup> And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, <sup>28</sup> for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

#### Significance in Ministry (1 Corinthians 3:1–9)

<sup>1</sup> But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, <sup>3</sup> for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? <sup>4</sup> For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

<sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup> He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. <sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

#### Independence in Ministry (1 Corinthians 16:12)

Apollos apparently had some independence in his ministry. Paul may have the authority, but at least here chose to recognize Apollo's choice.

<sup>12</sup> Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.

I love Paul's relationship with Apollos. There is no sense of competition. There is deep appreciation for what God is doing through him. And there is a respect for his decisions.

## **Others Connected**

Paul also speaks of people to whom he is connected. Here are people we know and a lawyer who is only mentioned here.

Titus 3:12-14

<sup>12</sup> When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. <sup>13</sup> Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. <sup>14</sup> And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.

## **Beloved in Christ (v.9)**

People in Christ we have a special love for...

### **As Sons in the Faith**

Philippians 2:22

<sup>22</sup> But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

### **As Partners in the Work**

Paul's partners in the work are not merely connected as workers. There is a relationship with them that is embodied in the word, "beloved".

Romans 16:3-5

<sup>3</sup> Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup> who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. <sup>5</sup> Greet also the church in their house.

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

<sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ...

<sup>12</sup> Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa.

Philippians 2:25

<sup>25</sup> I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need,

Colossians 4:10-11

<sup>10</sup> Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), <sup>11</sup> and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

## As Special but Unknown

Personal love expressed publicly

Philippians 4

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

## As Special by Name

Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.<sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. <sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. <sup>11</sup> Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.

## Approved in Christ (v.10)

People in Christ who have been tested, examined and approved...

The New Testament consistently views people as being "approved" for ministry and leadership. This approval is placed in the hands of those in authority in the church. The approval is based on belief and behavior. The leadership is responsible, with those who are in Christ and in the church they are responsible for, to assess the person's doctrine and life.

And, there is a responsibility to serve in the church. There is gifting and enabling to do so. But there is no right to do ministry. There is a Biblical obligation to serve; there is no Biblical right to serve. If a person disqualifies themselves from being able to serve, then the inability to serve is their own fault. So the disqualifying belief or disobedience leads to compounded disobedience, that is, cannot serve. The responsibility of the Christian is to repent of their disqualifying sin, to seek to approve and recognized and then to serve God acceptably.

I have the gifts of teaching and administration, primarily. I am commanded to use my gifts. The Elders at the Chapel (as well as in other churches all over the world) have looked over my doctrine and life and have recognized the abilities and approved me for ministry. If I depart from sound doctrine or I am in substantial disagreement with the Truths We Teach, then they will disqualify me from teaching and preaching ministry here. If I fall into sin and do not or will not repent of it, then they will disqualify me from all ministry until I repent. I have an obligation to exercise my gifts. But denying truth or not repenting of sin removes my "right" but not my obligation to minister. This is one of the points in Galatians 6.

Now, Paul and Peter identify two basic categories for ministry in the church: serving and speaking.

## For Service

Colossians 4:12-13,17

<sup>12</sup> Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. <sup>13</sup> For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

<sup>17</sup> And say to Archippus, “See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.”

Note that Paul commends these approved people for their hard work in the ministry. And he challenges to fulfill, to complete what they were given to do.

## For Leadership

Timothy was both Paul’s son in the faith and a fellow servant. Paul entrusted difficult and sometimes dangerous ministry to him. In the course of those assignments, Paul commended, counseled and corrected Timothy. We are familiar with these words but hear them again. Here is Paul giving instructions to Timothy who is going to and serving in the church at Ephesus.

1 Timothy 4:11–16

<sup>11</sup> Command and teach these things. <sup>12</sup> Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. <sup>13</sup> Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. <sup>14</sup> Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. <sup>15</sup> Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. <sup>16</sup> Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Timothy 6:2–5

Teach and urge these things. <sup>3</sup> If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, <sup>4</sup> he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

1 Timothy 6:11–14

<sup>11</sup> But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup> I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, <sup>14</sup> to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Timothy 2:15

<sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 3:10–11

<sup>10</sup> You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, <sup>11</sup> my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

## For Restoration

Paul's relationship with John Mark is very interesting. Here is Barnabas' cousin who Barnabas has brought on the team, has failed and becomes the focal point of breaking up the team.

Acts 12:24–25

<sup>24</sup> But the word of God increased and multiplied.

<sup>25</sup> And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.

Acts 13:4-5, 13–14

<sup>4</sup> So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup> When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

<sup>13</sup> Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

Acts 15:36–41

<sup>36</sup> And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." <sup>37</sup> Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. <sup>38</sup> But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. <sup>39</sup> And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, <sup>40</sup> but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup> And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Colossians 4:10–11

<sup>10</sup> Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—**if he comes to you, welcome him**), <sup>11</sup> and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

Philemon 23–24

(Most likely the same Mark because of his identification in Colossians.)

<sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, <sup>24</sup> and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

2 Timothy 4:9–12

<sup>9</sup> Do your best to come to me soon. <sup>10</sup> For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup> Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. <sup>12</sup> Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.



---

## **Reflect and Respond**

Are you in Christ?

How do you connect to others who are in Christ?

Name some people who you could call, "beloved"...