

Title: **COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS,**
 AND GOD

Text: Romans 16:1-27

Subject: *Romans Conclusion*

Date: Sunday Morning — September 9, 2018

Reading: *Romans 16:1-27*

(1) I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

(2) That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

(3) Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: (4) Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

(5) Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

(6) Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. (7) Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. (8) Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. (9) Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. (10) Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' *household*. (11) Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the *household* of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. (12) Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. (13) Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. (14) Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. (15) Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

(16) Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

(17) Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. (18) For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. (19) For your obedience is come abroad unto all *men*. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

(20) And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

(21) Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. (22) I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in the Lord. (23) Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. (24) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

(25) Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, (26) But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: (27) To God only wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

Introduction

There are three people you can be sure you will find in the house of God, three people you will find everywhere the saints of God gather to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. You won't find these people in every church. You will only find them in true, gospel churches. But you will always find them in true, gospel churches. — Have I got your attention? — Who are these three people? — **COMPANIONS,**

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

DIVIDERS, AND GOD. That is the title of my message. — **COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD.** My text is the 16th chapter of the Gospel of Romans.

Sadly, if you are like I am, as we read this chapter, we tend to simply quickly skim through it like we might lightly skim over a list of names in a footnote. At best, we read these twenty-seven verses with little thought, as concluding remarks of insignificance. — What a shame! These last twenty-seven verses of this great epistle are also inspired by God the Holy Ghost and have been “*written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*” (Romans 15:4).

Proposition: Because it is Satan’s determination to destroy the church and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, wherever the Good Shepherd gathers his sheep the Devil puts goats, wherever the Lord God plants peace Apollyon plants division; but the cause of Christ is perfectly safe, because God our Savior is with us.

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

Only the Lord God knows the sheep from the goats; and only he can separate goats from the sheep. Only the Heavenly Husbandman, our Lord Jesus, knows wheat from tares; and only he can separate the tares from the wheat. But separate them he does and separate them he will.

- By the Preaching of the Gospel
- By His Wise, Unerring Providence
- In the Day of Judgment

Companions

1st — In the first sixteen verses of this chapter Paul was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to specifically name twenty-nine people as his **beloved companions in the cause of Christ.**

- Loved of God
- Chosen by Grace
- Redeemed by the Blood of Christ
- Born Again by the Holy Ghost Sent Down from Heaven

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

• Believers

(Romans 16:1-16) I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: (2) That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. (3) Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: (4) Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. (5) Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. (6) Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. (7) Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. (8) Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. (9) Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. (10) Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus'

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

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Every gospel church is a body of companions in the cause of Christ. God's saints are all companions, men and women devoted to Christ, his gospel, his church, and to one another. God's servants are all companions, seeing "eye to eye." And all are equal (Matthew 20:1-16). And God's servants and his people are companions, co-laborers in the cause of Christ, one with Christ and one in Christ. Paul demonstrates this fact beautifully in this portion of

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

Holy Scripture. **What a thoughtful, tender, caring preacher Paul must have been!** He made the effort required to remember the names of the men and women in different places, the names of their husbands, wives, and children. He care deeply for them. And they cared deeply for him. — Look at the companions Paul names in the first sixteen verses of this chapter.

In the church and kingdom of God rank, status, social position, wealth or poverty, education or lack of education, race, place, and face mean nothing. God's people are one in Christ. — **Only here, in the church of God, are all social barriers broken down** (Galatians 3:26-29; Colossians 3:11).

(Galatians 3:26-29) Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (27) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

(Colossians 3:11) Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

Some here named by God's servant as his beloved companions were rich, very rich. Some were men of great civic, political power and influence. Others were unknown and poor. Some were men. Others were women. Some were Jews. Some were Gentiles. At least one was a black man (Rufus — The Son of Simon the Cyrenian — v. 13). Paul adopted Rufus' mother as his own.

- Pricilla and Aquila were wealthy enough to host a local church in their house (v. 5).
- Narcissus (v. 11) was one of Claudius Caesar's most powerful appointees in Rome.
- Erastus (v. 23) was the chamberlain of Corinth, appointed by the emperor to oversee the city.

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

WOMEN NAMED — Among these companions, fellow-helpers and co-laborers, Paul names at least nine women. None of these were pastors, preachers, teachers, evangelists, deacons, or missionaries. The Scriptures forbid women holding such offices in the church. They were not usurpers of authority over their husbands or over other men. These women were genteel, godly ladies. There wasn't a "women's libber" among them. Rather, with the meek and quiet spirit of regenerate women, they devoted themselves to the cause of Christ and were co-laborers with the apostles themselves for Christ and his kingdom.

- They entertained God's servants and God's people in their homes.
- They accommodated local churches in their homes.
- They taught the younger women (by word and by example) not to be "career women," but chaste keepers at home.
- They taught them to love their husbands and to love their children.
- They did not presume to write books and teach doctrine. — They lived for Christ and served

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

him by serving his people. — They were always busy, but never busybodies!

- I thank God for these much serving Marthas! The church of God cannot function without them.

PROPER COMMENDATION — It is always proper to say thank you, privately and publicly. While all praise and glory for all things is to be given to God. We are nothing. It is God who gives the increase. It is God who makes our work helpful to others. Any gifts, talents, abilities, or graces we have are God's gift to us. Yet, it is Christ-like and commendable to be grateful for one another and to one another for every work of faith and labor of love. It is always right to say, "Thank you. I appreciate you. And I appreciate your faithfulness to our Lord and to me" (2 Timothy 1:16-18). **The commendation of good work is always right and encouraging.** Our Lord Jesus himself gives us the example (Mark 14:6-9).

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

HOLY KISS — People who love each other ought to seize every opportunity to express their love and affection to one another. Our Lord Jesus tells us plainly that all who are born of God love one another. He does not tell us we ought to love one another. He tells us that all believers love one another. If you do not love God's people you do not know the Lord, you are not saved, you are not born again (John 13:35; 1 John 3:14-18; 4:8). Paul tells us to show that affection (v. 16).

(Romans 16:16) Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

Four times he exhorts us to greet one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). Peter says the same thing in 1 Peter 5:14. He calls it "*a kiss of love.*"

- Not a Kiss of Passion
- Not a Kiss of Pretense
- A Kiss of Love
- A Holy (Sanctified) Kiss

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

Believers are more to one another than people who hold the same doctrine. We are brothers and sisters in the family of God. We genuinely love each other with a deeper affection than natural men can know. If you are a stranger to this affection, you are a stranger to grace!

OUR RESUME — Pause for just a minute or two, and look at how Paul describes these beloved companions. What he says of one may be said of all. Here is every believer's resume.

- *“In Christ”* (v. 7)
- Receive One Another (v. 2)
- *“Helpers in the Lord”* (v. 3)
- *“Firstfruits unto the Lord”* (v. 5) — The First in His Place — The First in Her Family — The First in Their Sphere
- *“Beloved in the Lord”* (v. 8).
- *“Approved in Christ”* (v. 10)
- *“Labor in the Lord”* (v. 12)
- *“Chosen in the Lord”* (v. 13)

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

Wherever God is worshipped, wherever the gospel is preached, when God's people gather for worship you will find companions, beloved companions gathered in the house of God. And you are sure to find...

DIVIDERS

2nd — Wherever you find beloved companions laboring together for the glory of God and the furtherance of the gospel, **in the house of God you are sure to find dividers, men and women determined to divide God's church, separate friends, and turn you away from Christ** (vv. 17-19). Paul warns us to always be on guard concerning those who create dissension and division among God's people in opposition to the doctrine of Christ which we have learned of God.

(Romans 16:17) Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

The doctrine from which Satan would divide us is the gospel, the doctrine of Christ. Specifically, Paul is talking here about the doctrine he has taught in this epistle.

- The Gospel of Christ (1:1-17)
- The Universal Depravity, Guilt, and Inability of Man (Chapters 2 and 3)
- Free Justification by Justice, Righteousness, and Grace, through the Blood of Christ (3:19-5:21)
- Believers' Baptism, Sanctification, and Freedom from the Law (6:1-23)
- Two Natures of the Believer (7:1-25)
- Life in the Spirit (8:1-27)
- God's Sovereignty in Predestination, Providence, and Grace (8:28-11:36)
- Consecration to God and His People (Chapters 12-15)

Paul tells us to do two things with these dividers of the saints.

1. Mark them.

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

2. Avoid them (2 John 10). — Shun their ministry, their company, and their conversation!

All such people, men and women, all who seek to divide friends by their oily words and fair speech do so only from self-serving pride (v. 18). All gossip, slander, and evil speaking comes from the poisonous venom of a proud heart.

(Romans 16:18) For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

YOUR OBEDIENCE — Paul encourages these saints at Rome and us to remain steadfast in the gospel, by telling us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16; v. 19).

(Romans 16:19) For your obedience is come abroad unto all *men*. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

- Your obedience of faith, your faith in Christ, is known throughout the world. — Let no one turn you away from him (2 Corinthians 11:3).
- See to it that you are well-versed in the things of God and wise in kindness, charity, and doing good.
- In evil matters, be utterly naive, artless, simple, and honest. — In other words — Don't be crafty, dubious, two-faced, hypocritical, and self-serving (Romans 12:17).

Yes, dividers are always around to harass and vex us. There are always snipes and gossips, little devils, to make noise. But they can do no harm, because there is a third person always in our midst.

GOD

3rd — **God our Savior is always in the midst of his people.** Zion is his dwelling place (Psalm 76:2). The Lord Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, walks in the midst of his churches and holds the angels of the

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

churches in his right hand (Revelation 1:20). That means all is well, always!

VICTORY SURE — Be assured, children of God, that even when surrounded by those who would divide and destroy God’s church God’s church is always safe. Triumph is sure (v. 20).

(Romans 16:20) And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

Were it not for the sovereign, overruling power of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would never have any rest or peace in this world. But the Lord Jesus rules and gives his people peace in the midst of their enemies. The battle is not ours but the Lord’s. The thing for us to do is “*Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord!*”

- “*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet **shortly**.*”
- “*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet **suddenly**.*”

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

- “*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet **unexpectedly**.*”
- “*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet,*” **silencing your foes**.
- “*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet,*” **destroying your dividers** (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).
- “*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet*” **in the last day**.

GRACE SUPPLIED — “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*” — This is repeated in verse 24. There is a constant supply of grace communicated from Christ to his people at all times.

- Electing Grace!
- Redeeming Grace!
- Regenerating Grace!
- Preserving Grace!
- Sufficient Grace!

Our Lord Jesus says, to you and to me, “*My grace is sufficient for thee*” – right now!

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

TERTIUS — In verses 21-24, we see that Tertius, one of our Lord's original 70 disciples (Luke 10:1) wrote this epistle for Paul, as he dictated it to him. What a remarkable fact this displays. Tertius was himself a preacher of the gospel. He was pastor at Iconium. But he served Paul as a secretary and counted it not a condescension but an honor!

(Romans 16:21-24) Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. (22) I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in the Lord. (23) Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. (24) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

- Timothy, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, Gaius, Erastus, and Quartus all served the Lord with the apostle as his companions in labor.
- Tertius wrote out this letter.
- Phebe carried the letter to Rome.

COMPANIONS, DIVIDERS, AND GOD

Romans 16:1-27

- By all, Christ and his people were served.

Knowing that it is God, the Triune Jehovah, who is our Savior, knowing that the battle is his and not ours, knowing that it is he and he alone who “*causeth us to triumph in Christ*” (2 Corinthians 2:14), we gladly ascribe all praise, honor, and glory to him alone.

(Romans 16:25-27) Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, (26) But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: (27) To God only wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

Amen.