

Time Audit Chronicles: Personal Greetings and Final Warnings (Romans 16:1-27)

Prologue: Recognizing Faithfulness and Guarding the Gospel

The Presswood family gathered around the dining table, reading the final chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. Ariel had been struck by the long list of names Paul mentioned and was curious about their stories. Alice, hugging Mr. Fluffernutter, was imagining herself walking through ancient Rome, meeting the people Paul described.

"Daddy," Ariel asked, "Why does Paul take so much time to list all these people by name? It's like he's writing a bunch of thank-you notes."

Ryan smiled. "That's a good observation, Ariel. In this chapter, Paul is showing **gratitude** and **recognition** for the people who helped him in the mission of spreading the gospel. It wasn't just Paul doing the work—he had a whole **community** of faithful believers who worked alongside him. By mentioning them, Paul was not only thanking them but also encouraging the Roman church to **value one another** and the contributions everyone makes in God's mission."

"But why does he also warn them about people who cause division?" Ariel asked.

"That's an important part too," Ryan said. "Paul knew that the church needed to be **united** to stay strong. False teachers and divisive individuals could harm the church, so Paul warned the believers to stay grounded in the truth of the gospel. Let's use the **Time Audit Machine** to step into ancient Rome and see how these faithful workers and Paul's warnings helped shape the early church."

The Journey Begins: Commending Faithful Workers (Romans 16:1-16)

The **Time Audit Machine** hummed to life, and in a moment, the family found themselves in a gathering of believers in ancient **Rome**. A woman named **Phoebe**, carrying a scroll, was being welcomed by the Roman Christians. She had traveled from Cenchreae, a port city near Corinth, delivering Paul's letter.

Ryan pointed to the woman. "That's **Phoebe**, the one Paul mentions in verses 1-2. Paul calls her a **servant** of the church and commends her to the Romans. She was likely the one who delivered this letter to the Roman church."

Ariel watched as the believers greeted Phoebe warmly. "So, Paul trusted her with something really important—bringing this letter to the church?"

"Yes," Ryan said. "Phoebe was highly respected, and Paul referred to her as a **helper of many**, including himself. Her faithfulness shows that women played an essential role in the early church's mission."

As the scroll was read aloud, the names of other faithful workers were mentioned. **Priscilla and Aquila**, who had risked their lives for Paul, were greeted warmly. **Epaenetus**, the first convert to Christ

in Asia, was mentioned with honor. Others like **Mary, Andronicus, Junia, and Rufus** were also recognized for their hard work and faithfulness.

Ariel was amazed. “Paul really cared about all these people. It’s like he knew their stories and wanted everyone else to know how important they were too.”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “Paul’s greetings show us the **personal connections** and the **teamwork** that made the early church so strong. Everyone played a role, and Paul wanted to encourage them by recognizing their contributions.”

Final Warnings: Guarding Against Division (*Romans 16:17-20*)

After commending the faithful workers, the tone of the letter shifted as Paul issued a strong **warning**. He urged the Roman believers to **watch out** for those who caused division and taught contrary to the gospel. “**Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.**” (Romans 16:17).

Ryan pointed to the words being read aloud. “Paul knew that the church would face challenges from false teachers and divisive individuals. He didn’t want the believers to be **deceived** by smooth talk or flattery, so he warned them to stay grounded in the **truth** of the gospel.”

Ariel listened carefully. “So, Paul is telling them to be careful about who they listen to, and to make sure everything lines up with what they’ve been taught about Jesus?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Paul wanted the Roman Christians to stay united and to guard the **truth**. He reminded them that **obedience to God** would protect them and that the **God of peace** would soon **crush Satan under their feet**—a powerful promise that evil would not prevail.”

Ariel’s eyes lit up at the promise. “That’s so encouraging! Even when there are challenges, God’s victory is certain.”

Doxology: Glory to God Forever (*Romans 16:25-27*)

As the letter came to a close, Paul offered a beautiful doxology, praising God for His wisdom and the **mystery of the gospel**, now revealed to all nations: “**To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.**” (Romans 16:27).

Ryan turned to Ariel and Alice, his voice warm. “Paul ends with a reminder that everything—our faith, our work, our unity—should bring glory to **God**. The gospel is God’s plan of salvation for all people, and Paul wanted the Roman Christians to never lose sight of that.”

Ariel smiled. “So, even though the letter was full of instructions and warnings, Paul ended by pointing everyone back to **God**. It’s like he’s saying, ‘Remember, this is all about Him.’”

“That’s exactly it,” Ryan said. “Paul’s final words are a reminder that the **mission** of the church is to glorify God by sharing the gospel and living as a faithful, united community.”

Key Lessons: Faithfulness, Unity, and Truth

As the **Time Audit Machine** powered down, the family sat quietly, reflecting on the lessons from the chapter. Ariel looked at her father thoughtfully.

“Daddy, Paul really cared about people, didn’t he? He wanted everyone to feel valued, but he also wanted them to stay strong and united.”

“Yes,” Ryan said, “Paul’s greetings show us the importance of **recognizing the contributions** of others in the church. He knew that everyone had a role to play, and he wanted to encourage them to keep going. At the same time, he warned them to guard against anything that could cause **division** or lead them away from the gospel.”

“So, it’s not just about doing good things,” Ariel said, “it’s about being united in the **truth** of the gospel.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “The church is strongest when it’s **united**, when it values everyone’s contributions, and when it stays faithful to the **truth** of God’s Word. And no matter what challenges we face, we can trust in the promise that the **God of peace** will ultimately defeat all evil.”

Takeaway: The Mission of the Church

In **Romans 16:1-27**, Paul demonstrates the importance of **recognizing faithfulness** in the church, commending individuals who worked tirelessly for the gospel. This chapter reminds us that everyone has a role in God’s mission and that the contributions of each believer are valuable. Paul also warns against **divisive individuals** and false teachings, urging the church to remain united in the truth of the gospel.

The promise in **Romans 16:20**, that “**the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly**,” assures believers that God’s victory over evil is certain. This passage calls us to **value one another**, to stay faithful to the **truth**, and to give all **glory** to God, who is the source of wisdom, salvation, and peace. The church’s mission is not only to share the gospel but to live as a united, faithful community that reflects God’s love and truth to the world.