



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 16:1-24

"Paul's Friends - Romans"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] We are studying through Paul's letter to the Romans and we have reached the 16th chapter and I want to read the first 24 verses as they are found in the Authorized Version for our Scripture reading. If you have another version you may have noticed that in your version there is no verse 24. The reason for that is simply this, that in some of the ancient manuscripts there is a verse 24 or there is that material which is our verse 24 here in those manuscripts and in some of the manuscripts it is not found. The reason for that, most likely, is that some early scribe copied the doxology of verse 20, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen," again. And consequently it appears twice.

So we're going to read verse 24 but you understand that probably it's not genuine at this point. There are some other things about the last two chapters of Romans that are somewhat strange, it does not affect the inspiration of the Scriptures but it does affect the form in which the Epistle to the Romans has come to us. Some scholars think that in the light of the mention of the large number of names in Romans chapter 16 and the identification of many of them with the city of Ephesus and Asia Minor that this is likely to

be a part of a letter that Paul wrote to Ephesus which has been attached to the Epistle to the Romans.

You'll notice chapter 15, verse 33 ends, "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." Why would Paul write a chapter in which there are so many names mentioned when he's never been to the church at Roman? On the other hand he did go to Ephesus, spent much time there, and when he wrote them he did not mention very many names at all. It may have been simply because he had never been to Rome that he mentioned so many names, making an identification of himself with that church.

Suffice to say that most orthodox scholars have concluded after consideration of these arguments for an Ephesian provenance of chapter 16 that it is still a bit better to regard chapter 16 as part of Paul's letter to the Romans and therefore a chapter that contains salutations addressed to his friends and some others at Rome. We're taking it that way and with those words I'll drop the matter. It could be discussed in great length but now we are going to begin with verse 1 and we're going to come to a lot of names and I'm sorry that some of you undoubtedly mispronounced a lot of these names. I want to give you the official pronunciation [Laughter]. And I hope I don't disappoint too many of you.

Now you will notice that I am very definite in the way in which I pronounce them, that's because I'm right [Laughter]. And if you've stumbled over them and mumbled a bit as you read the verse well it's because, of course, your pronunciation probably was not the correct pronunciation. So my definiteness is, of course, because I'm right and I want you to understand it fully on those grounds. Now if I were speaking to you privately I would say this, I learned a long time ago when you read the Scriptures publicly and there are a lot of names be definite and the audience will say, "I thought it was the other way but he seems so sure of himself [Laughter] that perhaps it is that way after all." That's how I've managed to survive to this day, however [Laughter] and that's why I hope

through the other three hundred and sixty-four days that I managed to survive, too, with that philosophy. It has brought me so far, I want to stick with it.

Now that's a lengthy introduction to the reading of Scripture and I hope that it will serve to enable you to understand my assurance. I do know Phebe is pronounced Phebe [Laughter], so let's begin with verse 1,

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a helper of many, and of myself also. (Cenchrea was one of the two ports of the city of Corinth. Paul, remember, is writing from Corinth to the city at Rome, to the church at Rome, and so therefore the mention of Phebe and the church at Cenchrea is the mention of a church about as far away from Rome as Richardson is from downtown Dallas.) Greet Prisca (that was probably the name of Priscilla but Priscilla is a diminutive, a more familiar name. Sometimes in the New Testament her name is given as Priscilla, sometimes Prisca. Here Paul writes Prisca but the English translators have generally given Priscilla as its translation.) Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 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. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ, (some of your texts have Achaia, that's a confusion with the statement made concerning Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 16 who was the firstfruits of Achaia, Greece, part of Greece. But firstfruits of Asia is correct at this point.) Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Greet Andronicus and Junias, (some of the texts have Junia. This name may be a reference to a male or a female, it's impossible to decide.) Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. (So these are Christians who became Christians a considerable number of years before the

writing of Romans.) Greet Ampliatus my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Greet Apelles approved in Christ. Greet them who are of household of Aristobulus, (sometimes this is given the pronunciation of Aristobulus. In fact the version I'm reading has it that way but this Greek word, this proper name, really should be accented on the syllable Aristobulus and so we are reading it that way, Aristobulus.) Greet Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that are of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord. Greet Rufus, (Rufus means 'red' but this is a proper name,) chosen in the Lord. (Now that of course does not mean an elect person in the Lord because all Christians are elect. It rather means that he's a choice person in the Lord just as our word choice sometimes means elect, sometimes it means highly regarded, choice person.) Greet Rufus, a choice one in the Lord, and his mother, ('and she's also mine,' Paul says.) Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, (Phlegon was a name that was often given to dogs in Paul's day. You can see that these are just ordinary people.) Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobus, (rather than Patrobas, Patrobus,) Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. Greet Philologus, (now that's a name that means 'lover of the word,' what a nice name for a Christian to have, Philologus,) and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you, (that would be very fitting, incidentally, for the church at Rome since Paul had never been there speaking for the other gentile churches which he knew so well. He said, 'They greet you.' That would not be nearly so suitable for Ephesus because writing to them there would be no need to say, 'The churches of Christ greet you,' since there are certain churches that Paul did not have acquaintance with, as Rome. So it's very suitable for Roman provenance but not as suitable for Ephesus.) Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. (Now one might ask the question, if Paul did not know Romans how is it that he knows about the

heresy there? Well that's an argument for an Ephesian destination, because he would know Ephesus. On the other hand the apostle had a large and wide acquaintance with the church and consequently a warning of this character concerning doctrine which was found in all the churches, that kind of warning would be very suitable for any church. And so the apostle may well have anticipated what he knew would be there. He writes verse 18,) For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own body (or belly,) and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the innocent, (now we have seen this happen so often in churches in the 20th Century, the 19th, the 18th, this is a general principle the apostle is speaking about. There are always people moving around among the saints, seeking to ingratiate themselves by flattery. And the simpleminded among the saints often fall for it. Paul, however, is more confident of the Romans, he says verse 19,) For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you to be wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. (Now he speaks of those who are with him,) Timothy my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, greet you. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord. (Right at this point Paul evidently said, 'Now Tertius, you can say a word,' and so Tertius writes. He was Paul's amanuensis, his secretary.) I Tertius, who wrote the epistle, greet you in the Lord. (I used to often ask students, 'Who wrote Romans?' They would all say, 'Paul.' I would say, 'No, Paul didn't write Romans,' they'd all look shocked. And I'd remind them, 'Romans 16:22 says, 'I Tertius, who wrote the epistle, greet you in the Lord.'" Well Paul did write it but he wrote it through Tertius. Isn't that a name, third. And here in the next verse or two there will be a fellow named Quartus, that means fourth. Let's say something about that, how would you like for your name to be First? Come here First. Well that's better than second, come here Second. Or fifth, I'll say something about that in a moment.) Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, greeteth you. Erastus the

chamberlain of the city, (that's interesting because there has been found a piece of pavement in the city of Corinth dated in the 1st Century with a man by the name of Erastus who was kind of commissioner of public works in the city of Corinth. It may be that that individual is this individual here, which would indicate that there were some people of noble, perhaps significant birth, in the church as well as the poorer and unknown. But the chamberlain of the city means something like the treasurer of the city, it's not the same as the commissioner of public works. So it has been suggested that by the time Paul wrote Romans Erastus who formerly was commissioner of public works has now been promoted to treasurer of the city. On the other hand some others have said no, he was probably treasurer of the city and then later demoted to commissioner of public works because he became a Christian and was associated with that man Paul. Well you can take your pick of those interpretations.) And Quartus a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. (We've said that that's likely to be not genuine at this point, but of course the sentiment is a true one.)"

I can imagine myself in a class in homiletics, which is the study of preaching, when the professor has asked the members of the class to select a passage for a sermon and I can imagine the class responding with, "Well I'm going to preach on Romans 3:21-26 and the professor saying, "That's a good passage." Or John 3 in our Lord's interview with Nicodemus, "Yes that's excellent." Or 2 Corinthians chapter 5 in the doctrine of reconciliation, "Yes that's outstanding," for a church like Believers Chapel that understands biblical doctrine. Or Revelation, "Yes, anything in Revelation is interesting because it has to do with the future." And then I can imagine the student saying, "Well I'm going to preach on Romans 16," and the professor's face turning a little pale, blanching, and saying, "Well I think you better rethink that." Romans 16 contains simply a list of names, it is thought, and therefore it is commonly ignored. Genesis 36 and the generations of Esau is usually ignored. The generations of our Lord Jesus Christ, his genealogy in

Matthew chapter 1 is generally ignored. But here is a list of names, it is true, but in my opinion this is rather an intriguing and might even be called an exciting section of the Epistle to the Romans.

There are a lot of things that immediately come to my mind, Griffith Thomas in his commentary says when he approaches this chapter that what it contains is a galaxy of saints. Well that means it's simply a list of names of unusual, perhaps different individuals. It does illustrate for us the fact that the church was in Rome before any edifices were there. We know from history that in the middle of the second century there is still no church building in the city of Rome, they were still meeting in homes, such as is mentioned here in the home of Aquila and Priscilla. But I think that as we look at this chapter and think of the many names, for there are over thirty of them mentioned here in the verses that I've read for you in the Scripture reading, the thing that stands out immediately is that they evidently were individuals known to the Apostle Paul but largely unknown otherwise.

Now what does that signify? Perhaps it signifies the fact that God is interested in these individuals even though they do not have anything unusual about them to be reported. It seems to me that perhaps these individuals here embody the fulfillment of the prophet's words. He spoke for God saying, "Fear not for I have redeemed you, I've called you by name, you are mine." So here are the names of individuals, individual believers, little else is said about them but they are evidently very important to God. That's a comforting thing for most of us, or just ordinary people, we are not unusual people. Most of us don't even have the opportunity to stand up in front of a group like this and say any words. Very few of us are able to stand up and reach many, many people with the things that we have upon our hearts.

Here are some individuals, we know them as names with just a brief phrase or clause that describes them. One of the commentators said he was out walking with his family one afternoon and as he walked along he looked over and saw on the ground, he

was in Switzerland, he saw on the ground a small coin, he called it a farthing, it's a small part of a franc which wasn't much. And he pointed it out to one of his children and one of his children hesitated before he reached over and picked it up. It was clear he was saying, "Is it worth the bother?" And then he went on to say, "It's clear from Romans chapter 16 that the Lord God might have had the same attitude toward these individuals, are they worth the bother? But they evidently were worth the bother. There are Eastern names, Western names, Jewish names, Latin and Greek names, but Jesus Christ found in each one of them something that was important.

Now the thing that he found that was important was not any latent goodness in them. The thing that was important was they were the objects of the divine determination. It wasn't anything in them that he saw, it wasn't the dignity of man, it was just the opposite. What he saw in them was what he would make of them by his grace. And so he lifted them up, they were coin, a farthing worth nothing else, worthless really, worthless only because of what he would make them. These individuals didn't even have their names in Scripture because they liked to have their names there, if you go to Natural Bridge you see a lot of names of people who've come to Natural Bridge and they've carved their names in. If you'll look carefully you'll see up near the top of the names George Washington, the father of the country, carved his name in order that it might be there for posterity. If you ever noticed a football game, TV camera moves around and these goons out there who want to be on camera they lean over [Laughter], you know, anything to get on camera. Well here are individuals I'm sure they had just the opposite attitude but they are on camera now. They're in the word of God, in the inspired word of God. I imagine that they still have a sense of amazement at what God has done through the apostle, my name has gone sounding down through the centuries as one of the faithful in Christ as they carried out their little tasks which they thought probably didn't amount to a whole lot.

There are some interesting lessons in this chapter. There is one important section, the concluding three or four verses, we'll talk about them next week, the Lord willing. God speaks through Paul of the purpose of this age. Have you ever noticed the fact that the apostle neglected to mention the most important person in the church in Rome? He didn't mention the pastor. He didn't send any greetings to the pastor. A lot of people would be happy over that. As a matter of fact the apostle doesn't send greetings to the pastor anywhere for the simple reason that in the early churches there was no 'the pastor'. That's why. What we have here is simply a church. A church of people who have spiritual gifts, various spiritual gifts, certain men undoubtedly had some office. But so far as the pastor is concerned, Paul doesn't know of such an office. He knew of such a gift but not of an office. The idea of a man as the head of a congregation as a kind of president of the corporation is unknown in the Bible. One of the reasons for the failure of our churches today is a failure to recognize that fact.

There are some ethical lessons here too. What a variety there was in the early church; men, women. Great percentage of these saints are women, about thirty percent. There were slaves, there were free men, there were some who were evidently fairly well off and there were some who were poor. There was a remarkable unity, however, the apostle speaks of about ten or eleven times of individuals who are in the Lord. And so he acknowledges the fact that they are united together in a common faith. What he said in Romans chapter 6 about union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection is played out here in their daily lives and their relationship to the Lord as they served him from their union with Christ. He saw a union with Christ not simply as a theological truth, but a theological truth that had its practical manifestation. And of course there is a great stress on humility here, too. Because as you look over this church in Rome, an important church no doubt because of the importance of the city, they're primarily helpers, not leaders. They are individuals who are in the Lord and they can sing, "Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love, the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that

above," but they are simply simple people. A.B. Simpson who wrote many years ago had some words to say about the needs of the church. He said, "The church of God is overrun with captain, she's in great need of a few more privates, a few rivers will not run into the sea but a far larger number run into the rives. We cannot all be pioneers but we can all be helpers and no man is fitted to go to the front until he has learned well how to go second."

Some years ago I was on a platform in a theological seminary and one of the professors got up and spoke and he was talking about leadership. He told an interesting story, he said that he had read an account of a president of a large educational institution, a university in this country, one from the East. And this president had said that they had received a letter from a family that was seeking to have their son enrolled in the institution. And he said the letter was passed on to him because it was so unique. The parents gave a fairly straightforward description of their son, and then they made this significant statement, "Our son is not a leader, but he is a good follower." And then the president went on to say, "In all of my years of experience in reading applications for entrance into our institution and reading and listening and hearing and reading letters from thousands of parents this is the first set of parents who ever said their son was not a leader but a follower." That's amazing, because most of us are really followers. Not leaders. Some of us like to be leaders but we're not too good at it.

I got a letter, well it was really a card, I have it before me, I have a card from a lady in Dallas. She had heard a message that I gave, this was some years ago, and so she wrote me a card. She evidently was a member of a Pentecostal church where she had an opportunity to stand on her feet. She said, "I am an elderly lady whose spirit is keyed high by memorizing and reciting before a congregation long passages on subjects from the Bible. I'll contribute generously for a composition of your origin, subject: The church ordinances, baptism, and the Lord's supper. Not in the form of a sermon but an article suitable for memorizing and reciting." So what she wanted was something from me and

then she would pay well for it, she said. And she could memorize it and she could stand up in the congregation and give it. Yes we do have people like that in the congregation.

Well this is a chapter of names, there are about thirty of them. Nine are with Paul, twenty-four of them in Rome, two households are mentioned, two unnamed women, some unnamed brethren, they were all known to Paul. Someone might say, "How did these people get around? I thought they all stayed in one place in those days." No, no, that's not so. They got around then. They traveled all over that area, and Aquila and Priscilla are first in Rome, then they're in Corinth, then they're in Ephesus, now they're back in Rome. They lived all over the Roman Empire. And they served the Lord wherever they were.

Well the section that I've read is very simple and what I would like to do is also simple. What Paul does is give a commendation of Phebe and then salutations from himself to those in Rome whose reputations he knew or whom he knew personally. He salutes them and then interjects a warning concerning a particular kind of heresy and concludes with some greetings from the people who are around him in Corinth. So he commends Phebe and greets the Christians in Rome, warns them about a certain doctrine, certain type of doctrine, then sends greetings from others who are with him in Corinth.

Now what I'd like to do is simply go through the chapter, just hit a few high points, I've made already some comments in the reading of Scripture and this way pick out some things here that are very useful. Actually we could have made three messages out of this section but I know that people would think Dr. Johnson had a birthday, he's gone around the bend [Laughter], he's preaching not once on that chapter of names but three times, it's obvious his mind is no longer clear. Well when I first arrived on the scene people said my mind was not clear so I'm not disturbed by that sentiment. But I do know that your patience is important to me.

Paul begins by commending Phebe. He says, "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, who is a servant of the church which is in Cenchræa." That's an interesting

statement. Phebe evidently was not only an important person, she evidently was a businesswoman. She had business in Rome, like Lydia from Thyatira, but she also was a servant of the church. And the word that is used to describe her is the word that the apostle uses in other places of a church deacon. Now the word is both masculine and feminine in its use and so it could be that she is being called an official of the church in Cenchrea, that is a deacon, or we would say a deaconess. Later on in ecclesiastical Greek the expression diakonos comes diakonissa, which is the feminine form that was not used in the New Testament. So it is possible that she was regarded as a deaconess, as an official in the church.

We have a lot of interest in the place of women in the church today, this is a passage to which some appeal for support for ordaining women, at least as deacons or deaconesses. Some churches have deaconesses like the Methodist church. In the early church there were some deaconesses in some of the churches but generally speaking the Evangelical church has denied that this term is used in the official sense. If we were to simply say, "He's a servant of the Lord," this is the term that would be used. So it's a word that may be used in an official sense, or in an unofficial sense. The apostle when he gives the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy chapter 3, in the 11th verse, says, "And their wives also should be grave," and so on. And some have thought that that really is a reference to deaconesses. There are some exegetical reasons for that, it's not simply a wild guess, and therefore it should be translated, "They say their wives, deacons," that is deacons, deaconesses, their women deacons should be this.

On the other hand in the verses just preceding Paul's speaking about the masculine deacon and in verse 12 following he speaks also about the masculine deacons and so it would be strange to have women deaconesses referred to in one verse in the midst of verses that have to do with the masculine deacon. And so historically the Evangelical church has generally taken the viewpoint that that should be rendered, "And their wives," for the word is a word that is a word for wife as well as woman, so, "The

wives of the deacon." Because the deacon had contact with the congregation in a special way they were responsible for the sick, for helping the needy, and their wives would be associated with them, particularly in helping women, and so their qualifications are set forth there.

At any rate, regardless of Phebe's place I rather incline to the view of the New English Bible which translates 1 Timothy 3:11, "Their wives," as well as the New International Version which has, "Their wives," I'm therefore inclined to the view that there were no official deaconesses in the early church and that this is a reference to Phebe's informal work of a servant of the church. And she obviously was an outstanding Christian woman, and not only that found it very significant to be a servant of the church in the church at Rome and did her job extremely well. The apostle says, "That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints." So can you not imagine here arriving in the church in Rome and handing her letter of commendation, they used letters of commendation then when they traveled from place to place and they met with the saints they carried a letter of commendation from the elders in another city. I used to do that, I had letters of commendation from elders in the church of which I was fellowshipping. If I went to Houston and I was in a church there I would give them my letter and the letter would say, "Greetings in the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom it may concern, our brother S. Lewis Johnson Jr. is a Christian man in good standing in our assembly, receive him in the Lord." And it would be signed by all the elders, four or five elders. You pass that around, letter of commendation.

Paul said to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians, he says do I need a letter of commendation to you, why you came into existence through my gospel preaching, I don't need any letter of commendation to you. So they used letters of commendation. Can you not imagine Phebe arriving in the church in Rome and they said, "Who are you?" And she said, "Well my name is Phebe, I'm from Cenchrea." "Do you have a letter of commendation?" "Yes I do," and she pulls out this big scroll, 16 chapters you know, and

they say, "Typical woman, what a letter of commendation [Laughter], we have to read all of this?" She said, "Well you don't have to read it all just read the last part of it." And she hands it to them and all their faces changed and they said, "This is from the Apostle Paul, she has a letter of commendation from Paul, come up here and sit in the front seat Phebe." [Laughter] So Paul's commending here.

Now after having commended Phebe and she's the one who carried the letter, evidently, so when she get over to the Adriatic and got on that boat that was one boat that no storm would ever sink. And finally she reached there with the inspired Epistle to the Romans. Well there were lots of salutations to people in Rome. They opened up that 16th chapter after reading the other chapters and they must have been pleased with what they saw.

The apostle has a number of names, he begins with Prisca and Aquila. They were old friends, they had been in Rome and in Corinth where he met them. They were Jewish tentmakers and that was Paul's occupation. So when he arrived in Corinth he stayed with them. And in the ministry there they were with him in the ministry. Later they went with him over to Ephesus. There they had a church in their house. Now they're back in Rome where they had been originally before Claudius's Decree made it necessary for them to leave. And so here they have a church in their home again. So these Jewish tentmakers, friends of Paul. The names and the order of the names is interesting. Six times their names are found in the New Testament, four times, I think, it's Priscilla and Aquila, not Aquila and Priscilla. And some have thought, well perhaps her name is first because she was the one who had the gift of teaching. When they heard Apelles, remember, they were impressed by the eloquence of Apelles's preaching but they saw he didn't know anything but the baptism of John. And so they perhaps Priscilla or Prisca said to Aquila, "Aquila, invite him home for dinner." And so he came home to dinner and there they got him this very eloquent Alexandrian who was might in the

Scriptures and they instructed him more accurately in the world of God. And it may well have been that Priscilla took the lead in that.

On the other hand, by the way someone met me afterwards and said, "What do you mean by that? Woman having a gift of teaching?" Yes, women may have the gift of teaching. The sphere of their teaching is concentrated upon the women but they may have the gift of teaching not only may, but do, and sometimes a better gift than men. I've known more than one pastor and his wife and the wife has a more significant gift than the husband. But the sphere of ministry is to be guided by the word of God.

Others have said that the reason that Priscilla's name is mentioned first is simply because she was from the gens Prisca, a very noble Roman family, and her social status was higher than Aquila and that may be the reason that her name is mentioned first. But wherever these two were they had churches, a church in their home in Rome, a church in their home in Ephesus. They were people who went out and if they did not gather the church themselves they invited the church to come and meet in their house. There was no evidence of any church edifice until the 3rd Century, Bishop Lightfoot said, so early churches met in homes. What a relief, someone has said, not to be bothered by church building program those early churches had.

Now the apostle goes on and speaks of some of the others. He comes down to Apelles who's approved in Christ. Rather for that he mentions Andronicus and Junias, they were Jewish Christians, it said they were of note among the apostles. When Paul says, incidentally, they were kinsmen he doesn't mean they were his relatives in the sense that we mean it but rather they were Jewish as he was Jewish. These are of note among the apostles, now that does not mean that they were apostles any more than Euripides when he said, "Aphrodite is illustrious among mortals," meant that Aphrodite was immortal. She was not immortal, but she was illustrious among mortals. That is, in the estimation of mortals. That's the force of this expression here.

They are of note among the apostles, not apostle in the informal sense in which Barnabas was an apostle, a messenger of the churches, a sent one of the churches. But they are of note in the estimation of the apostles. Incidentally when the term apostle is used in the informal sense as a messenger from a church to another church the article is not used but the article is found here with apostles. He means the technical apostles, twelve. So they were of note, Andronicus and Junias, in the estimation of the apostles. Furthermore they were fellow inmates of the Apostle Paul, they were in prison together. You kind of get next to people when you're in prison with them, there's no escaping. And so these people got acquainted with Paul, he got acquainted with them, they were fellow inmates in prison because of their testimony for Christ.

Apelles in verse 10 is called, "Approved in Christ." And Bengel, the German premillennial commentator, one of the first of the modern premillennialists adds at this point, "Oh Lord Christ, let me also be approved in Thee." What a good comment.

He mentions also the household of Aristobulus who has been thought to be the brother of Herod Agrippa I, he was not a Christian himself but many of his slaves evidently were. He mentions Tryphena and Tryphosa, what nice names for ladies. Do you know what they mean? Dainty and delicate, something like that. So here is Ms. Dainty and Ms. Delicate. But notice how Paul describes them, in the New International Version he describes them as, "Those women who work hard in the Lord." So they are dainty and they are delicate but they work hard in the Lord. They remind me of our tape ministry women, our publications ministry women. I forgot them at 8:30 and they reminded me that they too carried on ministry. Our Bible class women, the women in our church who are responsible for the Junior Girls Fellowship, this type of thing. Tryphena and Tryphosa, they labor in the Lord. By the way, this is a rare form, this participle feminine plural. And some masculine commentators who might suggest this is a rare feminine plural participle because you rarely every get two women together on anything [Laughter]. But these two are together in work, that's a chauvinistic comment,

but it is striking that it is rare form [Laughter] in the New Testament. I think it should be interpreted differently. But anyway, you see this is an interesting section of the word of God. I wish it were possible to spend three messages on it.

He mentions, "Greet Rufus," whose name means 'red'. That's interesting too because who's Rufus? Well in Mark chapter 15 there's an interesting comment concerning a man named Simon of Cyrene, let me just tell you what happened, remind you. You remember the Lord Jesus Christ was going out to Galgatha, he was carrying his cross. And evidently the cross was large and heavy and he'd been up for hours and hours, he had been scourged, he was weak, and there was also a man from Libya. It is possible for something good to come out of Libya [laughter], not much today, but something good may come out of Libya, Simon of Cyrene. He was a Jewish man, evidently, and all Jews wanted to go to Passover time in Jerusalem one time in their life and here he is in Jerusalem, wants to have fellowship with other Jews, wants to enjoy the feast day time, it's like a big vacation for him. He got up early in the morning, he evidently was staying out in the fields in a tent because many thousands of people were in Jerusalem at the time. He came in from the country, it says, he walked into the city and here's a crowd of people. He stops, what's the crowd about? They're moving out toward the north part of the city of Jerusalem and he discerns in the midst of it some Roman soldiers and then he looks carefully and he sees a man who's carrying his cross, evidently to be crucified.

He's standing over on the corner waiting for the crowd to go by so he can go meet his friends and as he's standing there the man carrying the cross stumbles a bit under the weight and one of the Roman soldiers reaches out and impresses him into service. He puts his hand on Simon and he couldn't refuse. He puts his hand on him and says, "You carry the cross." Of all the things that he did not want to do it was to carry the cross of an unknown man out to Galgatha. It's kind of like sometime when everything's cleared away, it's wintertime, it's nice, you've got a new book you just got from the Book of the Month Club you want to read. Nothing tonight, you don't have

anything to do, so you light the fire, you get your book, you get a cup of coffee, and you sit down and you open the book and the doorbell rings [Laughter]. And you go and there is cousin Sddie with her seven children [Laughter]. The bludgeonings of chance. Chance? Well for you Armenians yes, the bludgeonings of chance.

But no, it was no chance. You see when Simon began to carry that cross just a few moments later the text says the women were following and they were weeping and wailing and this person whose cross he was carrying turned around and Simon looked in his face for the first time, evidently saw something there striking. He must have, anyone who looked in our Lord's face would have seen something striking. And he heard this man say, "Don't weep for me, weep for yourselves, and for your children." What a different kind of thing for a man going out to be crucified to say. Usually when they got to that point they were cursing the Romans, cursing everybody else, and finally the Romans occasionally had to cut the tongues out of people that they were crucifying so they wouldn't have to listen to the insults and curses that these men would fling out.

Well let's assume that he was deeply impressed, he then heard about this man Jesus, he told all of his friends he carried his cross out and was greatly impressed by those things that he said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit." A few weeks later he said Pentecost, we read there were some Libyans there, men of Cyrene, and there he heard the Apostle Peter preach the Old Testament and when Peter said, reaching his climax, "God hath made this same Jesus, both Lord and Christ." He didn't give the invitation, the crowd gave the invitation, they rushed forward and said, "What shall we do that we too might be saved?" And evidently Simon was among them. He had a wife, he had two children. Mark says he was the father of Rufus and Alexander, isn't that interesting?

Mark's gospel, orthodox scholarship has believed, was written for Romans. And here we read of a Rufus in the church at Rome. It's likely he was the son of Simon of Cyrene. Now Paul says, "Greet Rufus." Alexander by tradition was martyred for the sake

of Christ. Paul calls Rufus his mother, his own mother. What evidently happened, then? Well Simon was converted. Not only was Simon converted but his wife was converted. His children were converted. One of his children it seems became a prominent member of the church. The other one was a prominent living member of the church in Rome. Here is a man gripped by the bludgeonings of chance but really by the sovereign determination of a God who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, who in his wonderful, determining, distinguishing grace laid his hand upon Simon and he was converted. His wife was converted, his children were converted. They ministered to the Apostle Paul probably in Antioch, in Syria. They ministered to him, their names have gone down in the word of God. I say, sounding down through the centuries as the servants of God. What a magnificent story in, "Greet Rufus."

He says, "Greet one another with an holy kiss." I'm going to take just a minute or two more because we started a little late and we need a few minutes for the radio broadcast one of these days. "Greet one another with an holy kiss," that was the custom. It's still the custom in the East, in fact it became part of the liturgy of the Eastern church, to greet one another with a holy kiss at a certain point in the celebration of the Lord's supper.

I have a preacher friend, he preached to the River Brethren in Pennsylvania one time. They're associated somewhat with Mennonites though not directly, but indirectly. At one time they were together. They believe that you should let your hair, your beard grow, they're in style now. They also believe you shouldn't wear a tie, that's worldly. Well my friend was invited to be their speaker at their pastor's conference. He said that one day they came in after he'd spoken a few times, two or three of the brethren knocked on his door, came in and said, "Mr. Sugden we'd like to say to you that in spite of the fact that you're wearing a tie we've been blessed by your ministry." And he told me, he's a man with a keen sense of humor, he said, "Lewis, you know they practice greeting one another with a holy kiss. And they also have long beards and I want you to know it was

a very ticklish situation." [Laughter] Well it was a ticklish situation in these days but Paul said, "Greet one another with an holy kiss."

In the 17th verse he begins his warning. It's a warning against Antinomianism. That is, those who are professing to be Christians nevertheless live indulging the flesh. That's not uncommon. The apostle speaks in anticipation, perhaps, of what is going to happen there, or perhaps he has some indication of that tendency already there. But there are men who are not part of the church because he doesn't say that they should be excommunicated but he says they should be avoided. They seek to advance themselves he said, by smooth, plausible talk, by flattery. They flatter the simple saints and in flattering the simple, guileless saints they make inroads. You see you are the simple saints, it's very easy for someone who has ulterior motives to pat you on the back, to speak smoothly and plausibly to you, and to make you their disciple. That still goes on today, that goes on in Believers Chapel. From time to time we have people who come in, after awhile it becomes evident they don't really want to meet with us and enjoy the things of the word of God together and the things that mean that much to us. What they really want to have a few disciples. And so they come in and with smooth plausible talk it's not long before some of our simple minded people, guileless, are misled by them. And sometimes they leave. And sometimes they come back wiser.

These warnings are very important. Paul said, I deceive the simpleminded, mind you, because I know you are not simple, you in Rome. We know about you and furthermore we know that God will sustain you. And he concludes with a few salutations from his companions, from Timothy, his fidus Achates. Achates was the old companion of Aeneas in Virgil's Aeneid. And so that term Achates has become known as a faithful companion. Well this is Paul's fidus Achates, Timothy, my workfellow.

He mentions Tertius, the slave. He's called the third. You know why he's called the third? Because he was a slave, evidently. People didn't give slaves names, they gave them numbers in those days; number one, number two, number three, fourth, fifth.

Reminds me of a census taker who was in Brooklyn one day and he was taking the census and he asked a woman about how many people lived in the house. She said, "Well there's my husband, and there's James, and John, and Frank, and Phil, and Mary, and Martha, and Tryphena," and so on. He said well, he got impatient, he said, "Don't give me all their names, just give me their numbers." And she said, "They've all got names, we haven't got to giving them numbers yet." [Laughter] Well in those days they did give them numbers.

And so Tertius was the third. And here is Quartus in verse 23, he's called the brother. Well everybody's a brother so he must mean the brother in the physical sense. Of whom is he the brother? Well he's the brother of Tertius who's the third. So the third and the fourth, they were both Christians. The first and the second, Pentacostalists maybe, I don't know. I was just kidding, I don't know about the first and the second, they evidently were not Christians. There is Gaius, Gaius is a man who took a stand, he lived right next to the synagogue and when the saints in current were cast out of the synagogue he said you can come in my house. There is such a thing as taking a stand for Christ and he did.

I read recently of a church, a denomination, I won't name it. I was sad when I saw it. Many years ago there was a large debate in the Christian church over whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son or simply from the Father. The Eastern church believed he preceded from the Father only. The Western church, from the Father and the Son. And so they added a clause to their creeds, the filioque clause 'and from the Son'. Well this church, were a very well-known church, has decided that they're going to drop the filioque clause from their doctrinal statement. Why? Because they've studied the Bible and they've come to understand that it's not scriptural, I would certainly honor that. No, you know why they're going to drop the clause? Because they don't want to offend the brethren from the East. That's called not taking a stand for Scripture.

Well let me just say this in conclusion, what we have is a picture of steady, faithful service by common, ordinary individuals such as you and I are. They're characterized by several things. Number one, they belong to Jesus Christ and they know it, they know also that life is a battle for human souls and they're willing to go to prison for their faith if necessary. Francis Patton, president of Princeton college, a university, a generation or so ago said, "The only hope of Christianity is in the rehabilitation of the Pauline theology. It is back, back, back to an incarnate Christ and the atoning blood or it is on, on, on, to Atheism and despair." I'd like to change that and relate it to Pauline life. The only hope of a vital Christianity is in the rehabilitation of the Pauline life in Christ. It is back, back, back to a risen Christ, the authoritative head of the body, first born from the dead, supreme over all men, including the saints and the judge of all men, and the sharing of his cross, or it is on to shallowness, weakness, and the folly of fruitlessness. That is what our Evangelical church is headed for.

And then they also believed they had talents and gifts. And they believed that their simple talents and their simple gifts could be used for the glory of God and they used them. And the result was that though we know little about them their names are in the word of God. Forgotten by men, not forgotten by God. I'm sure there are some of you in this audience that are just like these saints here. Your talent, your spiritual gift, it's useful, it's needed, it's an opportunity for you to have a significant ministry in the program of God. May God help you to realize it. May God lay his hand upon some of you men and some of you women to help the women who already have seen their gifts and talents and are using them. May God lay his hand upon you, may he use you for his glory. You are significant for the Lord God. He has redeemed you, you are his.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the privilege and opportunity of the study of the word of God. If there are some here who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ,

may they reflect upon these faithful 1st Century believers who gave everything for him.

May we.

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]