

R &amp; R BIBLE STUDY 2019-20



# *breath-taking grace*

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

## LESSON 18

Well, here we are. Lesson 18. I'm excited and sad at the same time. I like "endings" for some reason; I like completion of things. Maybe it gives me a sense of accomplishment, I'm not really sure. But I'm also sad because I'm going to miss Paul. As difficult as it has been to write these lessons, I also have loved every minute of it. I feel like Paul and I have become really good friends. I understand him a little bit better; I see what makes him tick, so to speak. I see him as a hero of the faith, an example to follow, but also, he's just a man. A man with a past, a person like me who struggles with sin, and a man who has allowed himself to be transformed by the Gospel.

Paul often closes his letters with personal greetings, but the greetings in this letter are longer than in any of his other writings. He seems to know a lot of people in Rome for not having been there, so he must have met them on one of his various journeys. He greets them in verses 1-16, throws in a warning in verses 17-20, then sends greetings from those he's with.

You may be tempted to skim over the long list of names. Sometimes people get bored with the names, or aren't really interested in long lists of people, as in genealogies and the like. But we need to remember that each name is a person, with a face, and a story. There's a reason the Holy Spirit directed Paul to list them. Each was important to Paul, and he felt they were worthy to mention. We know he dictated the letter to his scribe Tertius (vs 22), and I wonder if a sweet smile crossed his lips each time he said one of their names.

For some reason it reminded me of when someone wins an Academy Award and they give their "thank you" speech. Many of them have this huge list of people to thank. Those who believed in them, those who helped them along the way, those who inspired them, and those who helped them become better actors or actresses. I hate it when they go too long and the music starts to play to send them a signal that it's time to be done. So often they just start to talk faster and faster because they want to make sure they give a shout out to all who deserve it. To the audience, they are just names, but to them, they are extremely significant. This is

Paul's shout-out to those who helped him, encouraged him, supported him, and loved him along the way. We are NOT going to play the music ... we want to hear every name and give them the honor they deserve. What if it was our name that people wanted to blow past? 😞

### **First Day**

1. Read Romans 16:1-27. Write your first impressions of the chapter. List any questions, thoughts, or comments you have.
2. Does Paul include any women in his list? How many? How does that encourage you, as a woman?
3. Do you recognize any of the names?
4. What "churches" does Paul specifically greet?
5. Why do you think Paul ends his letter to the Romans this way?

I love that Paul gives us so many names. It makes the letter more "real," I think. He's talking to real people, with real names and faces, and real lives. I think it's great that although the letter contains so much theology and doctrine, it ends with an emphasis on people, relationships, and love.

6. Does this chapter encourage you in any way? Challenge you?



4. Has anyone ever “risked their own neck” for you? Can you share?
  
5. Have you ever risked your own neck for someone else? What do you think that means?
  
6. We meet Epaenetus in verse 5. What does Paul say about him? What do you think that means?
  
7. In the list (ending in verse 16), what are some other ways Paul describes his friends?
  
8. Do any of the other names jump out at you or intrigue you? Who and why?

Timothy Keller wrote, “We don’t know about all 26 individuals that Paul names in Romans 16:1-16, but it’s clear that the Roman Church was a diverse body.

Notice:

- A. **Race.** We have both Jewish (i.e.: Aquila and Priscilla, fellow Jews in verses 7 and 11), and Gentile believers.
  
- B. **Class.** Some of the names on the list were probably of royal or high rank: Aristobulus (vs 10) and Narcissus (vs 11). Notice that both are said to have been the head of a ‘household’ or estate.
  
- C. **Gender.** Eight or nine of the 26 people named are women. Paul singles out many of them as having ‘worked very hard.’ This shows that women were active and influential in the ongoing ministry and mission of the church.”

9. Swindoll wrote, “There were also those who occupied the lowest echelon of society. Ampliatus (vs 8), Urbanus (vs 9), Hermes (vs 14), Philologus, and Julia (vs 15) were common names for slaves. Yet Paul gives them as much honor as everyone else.” Why do you think this is significant?

One other thing I read that I found so interesting was about the women. Paul gives high praises to them. Of four of them, he says they were “workers” or “worked hard” in the Lord. The Greek term for “worked” means “to work till one is weary.” Why doesn’t that surprise me?

10. How should we see unity and diversity within the church? How did they in the early church?

We’ll end here for now. Can’t wait to meet some more of Paul’s friends. Spend some time reflecting on who you would name if you had to write a “list” of people you are thankful for that have helped you in your walk of faith.

### **Third Day**

**Work on your memory verse. Are you wise in what is good?**

1. Read Romans 16:1-16 again. There is one name I wanted to point out. (We discussed this lady last year in our *Life Lessons From the Ladies* study.) In verse 13, who did Paul refer to as someone who was “like a mom” to him?
2. Did you have someone who was “like a mom” to you? Have you ever thanked her for that? How did she influence you or help you?

3. Are you “like a mom” to someone else? How can this be such a great opportunity to disciple someone in their faith or win them to Christ? What are some of the “costs” in doing this?
  
4. Now it’s your turn. Make a list of people who would be on your list if you had to write one. Is yours one of diversity? Do all the relationships have to be the same? Have you ever acknowledged the impact they’ve had on your life?
  
5. Read verses 17-20. What warning does Paul give? Why do you think he felt it so important to throw that in there, right at the end?
  
6. How does Paul say you can recognize the false teachers?

After all his teaching on unity, Paul makes sure they remember not to allow those who are teaching false doctrine to come in and cause contention and division in the church. He is adamant about keeping God’s truth pure and holy and the church unified.

7. How does today’s emphasis on “tolerance” regarding beliefs make it difficult to uphold God’s truth?
  
8. I love the phrase “wise in what is good and simple concerning evil.” How would you explain what that means in your own words? (How did Jesus put it in Matthew 10:16?)

Although we are to be simple concerning evil, that doesn't mean naïve. I believe we should be continually learning how to do "good" as we love and obey God and resolve to have nothing to do with evil. There's no place for complacency or compromise. It takes strength to distance ourselves from sin and sinful people, as well as to stand up for what's right. Where we get our definition of what is "good" is crucial. Sound doctrine, the fruit of the Spirit, the character traits taught in the Beatitudes of Christ ... all truths that help us walk God's path of life (1 Timothy 4:16). Evil, on the other hand, brings brokenness, fear, violence, shame, heartache ... the list goes on. It's the path of death and we need to stay clear.

9. Are you practicing this principle in your life? Do you flirt with evil in some way, or stay as far away from it as you can? Are you pursuing good?

10. Paul assures them that the author of evil, satan himself, has his limit. What does Paul say about that in verse 20?

Swindoll wrote, "Does Paul's image of crushing ring any bells with you? It should ... it's an allusion to the first glimmer of the Gospel, given way back in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve, remember, had succumbed to the serpent's seduction and brought God's curse upon humankind. God also cursed the serpent, but in the midst of it, He promised deliverance for the man and woman: 'And I will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.' (Genesis 3:15)" Life under grace is a spiritual battle, but God promises that grace will win (vs 20).

I want to jump back to his warning about false teachers for a minute and the issue of tolerance. The word "tolerance" used to mean that we made room for others' different views, believing our own truth but not attacking those who disagreed with us. Today, however, it seems to mean that we must accept all views as equally valid, and thus, no belief system can claim to be right. (I wonder if Paul saw this coming?) Today, as well as in Paul's day, we don't get to interpret the Word of God however we want. We don't get to twist it to make it mean what we want or pick and choose the parts we want to believe. Swindoll reminds us of four principles to remember as we seek the meaning of various Scriptures:

- A. See how the passage relates to similar passages.
- B. Keep the passage rooted in its Scriptural context.
- C. Seek to understand the author's original intent for his audience.
- D. Make sure the interpretation is consistent with sound doctrine.

11. Are you ever guilty of trying to make a verse say what you want? How careful are you to keep it in context, etc.? Do you remember this when you read "Daily Devotions" from books or online? Do you check context, author's intent, etc.?

#### **Fourth Day**

##### **Work on your memory verse.**

1. Read Romans 16:21-23. Paul now sends greetings from those who are with him, most likely in Corinth. Do you recognize any of these people? Choose one and do a little research on who they are.

As in Paul's first list, we have a diverse group; slave and free, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile. Paul was a great team player, wasn't he? They truly were partners in the ministry.

2. Are you a good team player or are you more of a lone ranger? It seems like Paul really put to practice what he preached; that we are all one body, different parts that should work together to accomplish great work for the Kingdom of God. Do you play well with others? If not, how does this chapter challenge you? What changes can you make?
3. Read verses 25-27. Paul saved the best for last! How are Paul's closing words such an appropriate way to end this letter?



After everything Paul's taught them, reminded them, and encouraged them to do, he now wants to move them to give glory to God!

4. How does God "establish" us or make us "stable"?

John Stott wrote, "The word 'establish' in the Greek is almost a technical term for nurturing new converts and strengthening young churches ... So, the vision conjured up by the doxology's opening words is of God's ability to establish the multi-ethnic church in Rome, of which Paul has been dreaming, and to strengthen its members in truth, holiness, and unity."

It's only through God's grace that we can accomplish anything, especially things like unity and harmony. Relationships are tough, life is hard, and our limitations and weaknesses make us prone to wander. But God, through the Gospel of Christ, can establish us.

5. What is the "mystery" Paul is referring to, in verse 25? And who has it now been made known to, according to verse 26?
  
6. Paul refers to the "obedience of faith." Our obedience no longer springs from the law, but from what?
  
7. Paul closes his letter with praise to God for His wisdom and a desire for God's eternal glory. All throughout his letter, Paul talks about giving God the glory due His Name. How can a concern for God's glory help us walk according to the Spirit and down the path of righteousness? (Is bringing Him glory on your mind often?)
  
8. Paul reminds them that "God alone is wise." How would you describe God's wisdom? Give verses to support your answer.

9. In light of this, how often do you (we) seek to gain wisdom from other means rather than God? (It doesn't mean that we can't learn from others, etc., but that God's wisdom is above all including our own.)

10. What specifically spoke to your heart in this chapter? Encouragement? Challenges?

11. What did you learn, or how were you challenged, by Paul's lists of friends and the ability to love people and build lasting friendships?

That's it for today. Tomorrow we're going to take a look back on the Book of Romans to wrap everything up. Are you ready?

### **Fifth Day**

**Write out your verse from memory.**

1. What do you feel like you've learned about God's breathtaking grace?



**It's been a wonderful 18 weeks with you all. Thanks for hanging in there and seeing it through to the end. Thank you for bearing with my mistakes, typos, and sometimes redundant questions. I love and appreciate you all and thank you for your prayers, comments, and sweet words of encouragement during the writing process!**

**To God be the glory!**

