

The people who make a difference

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Date: 22 June 2014

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[0 : 00] So in Romans 16, verses 1 to 16, it's a rather unusual passage.! If you're here for the first time, we don't usually find passages full of funny names.

It's just the one that we've come to. We've worked our way through Romans. This is the passage that we're at at the moment. And some people here have been on the ministry training course. Which takes place in Haywood's Heath. And they tell you the proper way to do a sermon. Which is to have a theme sentence and a name sentence and everything else. I couldn't make that work at all for this passage.

So I'll just give you what I've got. And that's what we're going to do. We'll look at this passage together this morning. So I think you would say it's a list of funny names.

That the names are each people that matter deeply to God. I looked at the interpretation of some of the names.

[1 : 08] Interpreting names is always a bit risky. If you've ever done it with baby names, you look at different books and they always say different things about what the meaning of the name is.

But anyway, in what I looked, Narcissus means stupid. Ampliatus, anybody like to guess? Ampliatus, it's a little bit like big. It could be loud, couldn't it? It means large or larger. So this is large, yes.

Rufus is mentioned there. Anybody like to guess Rufus, the meaning of Rufus? You would have heard this. Rufus the red.

It does mean red, red. It means red. Red. And Tryphena and Tryphosa. Whoops. Well, yeah.

[2 : 05] Well guessed, Arsema. Luxurious or Luxuriating? Luxuriating or I looked in another source and it said dainty and something very, they're very similar words.

It makes you wonder whether they were actually twin sisters. So you think, well those are funny names. Are we supposed to draw anything from those funny names? And then I thought, I can think of another church and there's names like this.

Killer of animals. Cooking hot fat. Small alcoholic drinks. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Unfortunately I haven't brought my pen with me because we could fill that, fit in what it was. A killer of animals? For food? A killer of animals for food? Jamie. I was thinking butcher actually.

Cooking hot fat. Fry. Small alcoholic drinks. Tipples. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[3 : 18] All times. Player of stringed instruments. Harper. Person of few years. Young. Yeah.

So that's my sort of light-hearted introduction. In fact you can take a sort of any group of people and if you actually think about their names they mean all sorts of strange things. And I'm sure the church in Rome, you know, you're not meant to look at it and say, oh that's a funny name, that's a funny name.

So that's one introduction. And then my other introduction, a little bit more serious, that if you follow local politics you will see that Jason Kitkat, the leader of the Green Party, announced he's not standing as councillor in the 2005-2015 elections.

And if you know anything about the Green Party, there's a community which is on sort of public observation. And the leader is Jason Kitkat.

And if you know anything about the history of it, you think, what sort of community is it? What sort of pressures do they experience? What sort of tensions are there?

[4 : 31] What characterises that group? I mean there are many groups, I just happened to pick on this one because it's in the news. And why is it that the leader has decided to step down?

What are the characteristics of that group? So I'll just offer that as a sort of real life example of another group with people that you could name and things that go on.

And perhaps we might have that in the back of our mind as we compare with the church at Rome that Paul is writing to, as we shall see. So, with that as a sort of introduction, let's look at the words of the text.

Romans 16, 1-16, in Douglas Moo's commentary, he's got a great big fat commentary like that, it's very, very helpful, but he says of this, it is not the most edifying part of the letter, which I suppose might be true, but it still ought to be edifying, shouldn't it?

Because all scripture is useful to us. All scripture gives us edification. So let's look at it and see what it contains, what is actually being said.

[5 : 46] What does the passage contain? So I've got some statistics for you here. So there are 16 greetings, or 16 uses of the word greeting, with one other at the end.

Let's just count them. So, verse 3. Paul, writing this letter, he's probably based in Corinth, so he's writing to this church in Rome, greet Priscilla and Aquila, number 1.

Verse 5, the greet there ought to be in brackets, because it doesn't actually say it, it just says also, so it's an applied greet. Greet my friend Eponetus.

Greet Mary. Greet Andronicus and Junius. Greet Ampliatus. Greet Urbanus.

Greet Apelles. Greet those of the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodian. Greet those in the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.

[6 : 49] I've got 10 so far. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa. Greet my dear friend Persis. Greet Rufus. And his mother, although it doesn't have a separate greet for her, interestingly he says, she's been a mother to me as well.

Greet Rufus. Greet Asyncritus. Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobus, Hermas, the brothers with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister.

Greet one another. All the churches of Christ send greetings. Now I lost count as I went through there. It's full of greetings, isn't it?

And that in itself is, you're picking something up from that. There's a sort of warmth going on. Greet, greet, greet, greet.

It doesn't say greet them. Don't greet them. There's a place in *Pride and Prejudice* where, what's that posh lady? She says, I send no greetings to your mother.

[8 : 00] This is full of greetings. And it says, greet one another.

And I deduce from that, that people matter. Even as Paul's been writing this huge blockbuster of theology, although he did say, he had just written a few things to remind them, is what he said. But at the end of it, he takes time to say, and there's people at the receiving end of this. And some of them I know by name. And I want you to greet them.

And I want you guys to greet one another. And, he says, all the churches. And I presume he's not just saying this in a sort of editorial way, that he's guessing that all the churches send greetings. I suspect every church he'd visited, he might have said, by the way, I'm hoping to write to Rome. I'm hoping to see them. Is there anything you'd like me to say to them? And all the churches said, yeah, greet the people in Rome.

[9 : 07] So, I deduce from this that the Apostle Paul had time for people. And he wasn't like the CEO at the top of a great big industrial corporation, to whom the minions under him are just numbers.

Paul is somebody who cultivated relationships. Greet them, greet them, greet them. He had time for people, and he valued individuals.

And I think he got this from his master. Because the Lord Jesus, although he was an immensely popular preacher, and at various times in his career was thronged by thousands of people, we read that Jesus had time one evening to speak to a man called Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council, who came to Jesus at night.

And Jesus had time to talk to this posh, probably posh man. He was able to talk to him. And then in the next chapter in John, in John chapter 4, Jesus is making a journey.

He's walking, and he comes in the heat of the day to a well, and there's one woman there. The woman has led a pretty shady life.

[10 : 34] Jesus knows this. He's not fazed by it. And he says to this woman, will you give me a drink? And the woman's very shocked. He says, you're a Jew, I'm a Samaritan, and we don't usually have this sort of conversation.

So Jesus had time for individuals, and I think Paul was reflecting the qualities that came from his master. So there are 16, 17 greetings.

There are the names of 18 men and 10 women. So let me go back to Romans 16. I think probably not all the names refer to people in the church.

So it's quite possible, chapter 16, verse 11, those in the household of a Narcissus who are in the Lord. There is a record from the time of a high-up official called Narcissus who would have had a big household.

The person, Narcissus, actually came to a sad end. But I wonder whether what he's saying is, you know, Narcissus has a butler, and he has, his wife has a maid, and there are people who work in the kitchen, you know, like in Downton Abbey, and they have a prayer meeting because a number of them are converted, and greet those of the household of Narcissus who were in the Lord.

[12:04] So maybe the name doesn't mean that they're in the church necessarily, but he does mention the names of 18 men and 10 women. It's worth noting that there's a proportion there, isn't there?

Maybe that reflected the proportion of converts, or what, I don't know. You can draw much from the proportion. But he certainly valued the contribution that the women were making.

He valued teamwork, including women and women workers. So one of the urban myths about the Apostle Paul was that he didn't like women.

But that myth is blown out of the water by the personal greetings that he gives in this chapter. Let's look at some of them. The first person he mentions is a woman.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe. She is a diakonos, which is deacon. Normally you translate that deacon. She's a deacon of the church in, well, we say Keshria, although it's actually a hard k, Keshria, is what it would say in Greek.

[13:20] She's a woman. He says, first thing, I want to commend this sister to you. Receive her, and so on. And then, next stop, verse 3, greet Priscilla and Aquila.

So Priscilla sometimes gets her family name, Priscilla, or sometimes her more formal name, Prisca, and I presume that one is a sort of sweetened version, what do you call it, I can't think of the word, where you change a name if they're a member of the family.

Diminutive, yes. Well, so Priscilla and Aquila, husband and wife team. Interestingly, the wife's name gets mentioned first, and always seems to be actually.

Greet these people, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, these guys, literally, stuck out their necks for me.

And not only I, but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet, which verse we got, verse 6, Maria, well we've got a Maria, haven't we?

[14:36] Translated as Mary. Greet Mary, she worked very hard. for you. And then we've got another, looks like a husband and wife couple, verse 7, Andronicus and Junius.

Junius, you can't dogmatically tell whether it's a man's name or a woman's name. The more common one would be Junius, the woman's name.

It could possibly be a man's name, in the same way that we get Alexander and Alexandra or something like that. But it seems most likely to be a woman.

Another, we presume, a husband and wife team. They've been in prison with me, says Paul. They're outstanding among the apostles. See how he values these people.

And then, Tryphena and Tryphosa in verse 12. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, Tryphosa. Luxurious and Luxuriating or Dainty or Daintiness or whatever their names mean if you were to take them literally.

[15:47] But, there's nothing luxurious about them in his description. These are women who work hard in the Lord. So, greet them.

And, verse 12, Greet my beloved Persis. Persis. The name means, it probably means Persian woman. Whether she was from Persia or not, I don't know.

Greet my friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. And then, this rather touching description, verse 13, for Rufus.

Chosen in the Lord. Greet him and his mother. She's been a mother to me as well. That's very, I find that rather moving that this tough apostle Paul could say, Rufus' mum has treated me like a, you know, like I was her son.

I mean, what did she do? Tuck me up in bed, came and looked after me when I was ill, fed me, cooked for me, told me I should jolly well ease up a bit.

[17:00] All sorts of things that mothers might do to their grown-up sons. He, Rufus' mother, did to him. And then, we have in verse 15, Philologos, which means, I think it means I love the word.

And Julia, oh, we've got a Julia as well. Possibly another husband and wife, Philologos Julia, and possibly now her children, Nereus and his sister.

So it might be husband, wife, and then son and daughter, Nereus and his sister. We're not told anything else about them, but it's a greeting to, presumably, mother, Julia, and including the sister as well.

So there's 18 men and 10 women. And I just find that interesting. And I think that as we ponder that, we enter into the world of the Christian community.

The Christian community where people are valued and known and there is a role and a value in the work of women and the role of women which Paul is describing for us here.

[18:26] So we had 16 greetings, 18 men and 10 women and we've got four beloveds, four people who are said to be beloved.

It gets translated in different ways. Let's look at them. Now I put, so verse 5, Eponetus. Greet beloved Eponetus.

NIV says dear friend, but it's agapetos, loved. Loved with agape love. He was the first, incidentally, he was the first fruit to Christ in the province of Asia.

He was the very first Christian who came to faith in the province of Asia. Remember him well, says Paul. Dear chap, Ampliatus, Mr. Big, you might say, whom I love in the Lord.

We love Ampliatus. Maybe he is a big man, maybe he's very skinny and just happened to be given a name that said Mr. Big. But he, we love him.

[19:36] Stachys, verse 9, that's all we're told. Beloved Stachys. Love that guy. And Persis, verse 12, my beloved Persis, it's time it's a woman described this, wonderful sister, wonderful Christian.

Love that dear sister. So there are four beloveds. I don't think it's that the other ones aren't loved, it's just that that's the particular description he gives on those four occasions.

And it seems to me that there is something very characteristically Christian about saying this is a group of people where they love one another.

That comes from the Lord Jesus, doesn't it? He says, by this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. And we get our idea of loving one another from the fact that Christ loved us.

Herein is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and gave his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Christ loved us and gave himself for us.

[20:55] And I wonder, I'm just sort of thinking of the Green Party, when they send all their letters to Jason Kitkat to say how sorry they're going, does he write back to them and say, beloved, beloved, beloved.

I'm not sure whether you could count on that in a political party, but in the Christian church, that is the currency.

That's what it ought to be. So and so, loved, loved, loved. and I notice there's quite a number of descriptions that aren't there.

I looked, I did look carefully to see whether he said any of them was a good laugh. You know, this is the sort of thing you get in the office, so and so is a great laugh. Greet Herodian, my relative, he's a good laugh.

He doesn't say that at all. You look in vain to see him saying so and so is famous. You look in vain to find so and so is clever.

[22:03] You look in vain so and so is good looking. But what he does say is they're loved. So there's four loveds and there's four hard work, hard work.

So there is a word for hard work, which I am told, and I didn't check it, but I'm told, is the word for a labourer. So at some point we're going to have some digging done in our back garden to lay some, to get some foundations and that sounds like pretty hard work to me.

And the chap is going to do it, they said he's called Chris the Dig. Of course he just loves digging apparently, that's what I've told. And that is hard labouring work.

And this is the verb that's used for these people. They did the hard work and it's used of Mary. Greet Mary.

She got her gospel shovel out and she just dug in the gospel. She did the gospel work. I mean, what did that look like?

[23 : 20] It might have meant that she trekked miles to help missionaries. It might have meant that she was day in, day out visiting people and doing Bible study with them.

It might have meant that she was up early in the morning praying. It might have meant that she was out there setting out chairs. I don't know what it was that she did. But it said of Mary, she worked very hard for you.

And then Tryphena and Tryphosa, whom you could imagine giving their name to a brand of luxury soap or something like that. But what he actually says is, these are women who worked hard in the Lord.

We value their hard work. And the same of verse 12, Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

So it literally says something like she's made many labours or much labour in the Lord. She's dug out lots of trenches, she has. So here's a thing that is characteristic of this community.

[24 : 39] love and labour. He values people who have really put their backs in, really made an effort, really served conscientiously.

And if you are thinking to yourself, well, shall I bother doing that? Because it's such an effort. And sometimes Christian work can be an effort. I remember talking to our dear sister, Janet, who was a deaconess here, and she said she laboured really hard, and each week she would come down to do a boys and girls club on a Thursday evening.

And she said, oh, Phil, sometimes I used to come down and think, oh, no, I've got to prepare another Bible study, I feel so tired, but I'll come anyway. And she would come, and she would do the time with the boys and girls who absolutely loved it, and she would go home again, and she worked really hard.

And sometimes that's what Christian service is like. It isn't necessarily a breeze, it is hard work. And Paul valued that, and I believe the Lord Jesus values that.

there are some other descriptions translated, no, I haven't done, I think three times, perhaps three times, my relatives, 16 verse 7, my relatives, so it's co-something.

[26 : 18] In English, it would be something like co-generated. How are we to translate it? Well, in Romans 9, 3, the same word is used, is this correct?

It says, I wish I could, I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.

And that's the same word that he uses here. I don't think we're to think of Andronicus as Junius as his cousins, or his auntie and uncle. I think he's saying they're my fellow countrymen, they're my fellow Jews, and I think that on the other references too.

So, let's not get ahead of myself. These are fellow Jews, so Andronicus and Junius, they were in prison with me. I've only met one Christian who's been in prison for the Lord, and that's Mark Pickett, who when he was in Nepal, went out giving tracts, and he got arrested and put in prison for 24 hours, and then he was released.

He's the only person I've ever, that I'm ever conscious of meeting, who's been put in prison for being a Christian worker. But Paul says, oh, I've done that loads of times, and these guys that were in prison with me, it's a bit more of a harsh reality for him than it tends to be for us.

[27 : 49] Herodian, verse 11, greet Herodian, my relative, his name means hero. He's a fellow Jew, I think that's what's being said.

So, they're co-generated, people of the same race as myself, and then another co-word, co-workers, co-workers.

So, on Facebook, you don't get the hyphen between, and it always looks to me like cow workers, but it's co-workers, worked with, and he noticeably says this about Priscilla and Aquila, verse 3, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

we worked together. There were times when we were in the same situation and we helped one another, we prayed with one another, we went out with one another, we got things thrown at us together, and so on.

We were fellow workers. And Urbanus, verse 9, greet Urbanus, our co-worker, together. We worked together in Christ.

[29 : 05] And he also says it in verse 21 about Timotheus, whom we'll find out next time, all being well. Timothy, my co-worker, my co-worker.

And again, it just gives you a little insight, doesn't it, into Paul's, the way Paul saw things. He wasn't a lone ranger, he was doing everything himself. He worked with people.

He got alongside people. People got alongside him. They shared it out. They did it together. They were like comrades in arms. I remember the time we did a mission back in the days of Christina, and we'd had a hard few days, busy few days, going out on the street, having people back into the building here, and I had a time of prayer at the end, and I thought, isn't this a great privilege to be working together, with Mark, Christina, there was other people as well, but I thought, this is a great thing.

We've experienced this together, we've prayed together, we've supported one another through the good times and the difficult times, and this is the same experience that Paul has.

What else can we say about these names? Well, a few more things. Some of the names seem to be the names of ex-slaves, so there are records from that time with these names, and they are people who used to be slaves but have been freed, so Ampliatus might well be an example of a slave who'd been freed, Urbanus might be a slave who'd been freed, Hermes whose name incidentally is the god Mercury, it doesn't seem to have put him off being a Christian does it, and Philologus and Julia I believe are also names of people who might well have been freed slaves.

[31 : 16] Interesting the way that we're all embedded in a culture, so in Sri Lanka you meet Christians with the name Sri Raj which means something like holy king or Sri Rani which means holy queen, you think I think those are probably Hindu names aren't they?

But okay it's just a name, don't get too worried about that, that's the name I was given, that's what my name is, don't believe any implications of it, but you get the same thing here, Hermes. etc. And we could also say that it's quite possible that there is some connection with the emperor, some imperial connection here, so Narcissus, I've just written Narc on the screen because I ran out of space, Narcissus as I already said was, is recorded at that time as being an official who would have met in imperial circles, who would have met the emperor perhaps, and maybe he's saying, you know, well there are believers, like you might hear, have believers who work in the palace, or believers who work in the houses of parliament, or perhaps believers who cook Mr.

Cameron's breakfast, or whatever it is like that, Paul, it may well be that Paul's saying, greet those guys, they're in a very strategic place, they're in a very special place, they have a front line if you like, and there they are, greet the people in the household of Aristobulus, verse 10.

And I draw from this, that there are a range of different people in the church, some of them are slaves, some of them are free, some of them are noble, but perhaps not many, there are Jews and Gentiles, there are some colleagues who work in the same place, there are people there who are active, and serving, and working, and participating, at least they're the ones that Paul knew of, so I suppose the ones that didn't do that, he might not have come across.

[33 : 31] So it's a rather significant snapshot of the sort of church it was in Rome, and the sort of people that Paul knew of, and I don't know whether you think I'd like to be part of that sort of church, I'd like something like that to be said of me, I'd like that sort of greeting to come to me, if the opportunity arose.

Let's look at another few things here, we have, certainly in verse 3, the church that meets in the house of, that's verse 5 actually, isn't it?

So verse 5, greet also the church that meets at their house. So we get a little insight into how perhaps the churches were arranged, so it may well have been that if you had a substantial number of Christians, you wouldn't expect to put them all in one building, you would have somebody who meets in the front room of so and so, or somebody who meets in the stables of so and so, somebody who meets in the backyard of so and so, and that's where you put them.

So this is the church that meets at their house. Now I don't know whether we could say any more than that, but that seems to be the sort of thing. And were there little clusters of Christians?

So in verse 10, those of the household of Aristobulus, or actually those of Aristobulus I think is what it says, is it the church that meets in the house, or is it the people employed there?

[35 : 07] We don't quite know, but they do seem to cluster together. And verse 11, those who are in the household, those who are Narcissus, and verse 14, the brothers with them.

They seem to be a little group, maybe they live in the outskirts, I don't know, but that lot over there, the Hermas lot over there. And verse 15, all the saints with them, Philologus, Julia, son, Nereus, daughter, and Olympus, and all that gang.

So they seem to cluster together, all the saints with them. So here are some more Christian characteristics. Love, and affection, and care. Service is mentioned.

One of them is said to be chosen, that's Rufus who's said to be chosen. Several of them are said to be holy, the saints means the holy ones. This group is characterized I think by courage.

They stuck out their necks for me, and by grit, if you know what I mean, by the ability to grab a task and get on with it even if it's difficult and time consuming and annoying and whatever.

[36 : 30] Grit, sacrifice, the idea they stuck out their necks for me, well that was a sacrifice, it was a risk. And it's also characterized by team and community rather than consumerism, rather than greet so and so, he pops in every now and again and sometimes he doesn't, we don't see him for weeks.

It's not that sort of community, it seems to be a community where people are bonded in together.

I'm not making that up, I'm just reading it out of the passage.

I think again, the keynote comes from the leader of the community. You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and the high officials exercise authority over them, not so with you.

Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all for, and this is Jesus speaking, even the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

If you think of the qualities that I've mentioned in the church, how much more does Jesus Christ epitomize those qualities. He's the one who loves.

[38 : 04] He's the servant who serves. He's the chosen of the Lord. He's the holy one. He's the one with courage and grit who sacrificed himself for us and in doing so he builds together his community.

humanity. Well let's just spend a few more minutes looking at a few people who are mentioned with a little bit more focus and then we'll finish.

So I was quite interested in this lady Phoebe. She starts off with her, I commend to our sister Phoebe, a diakonos of the church in Kentria.

I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, the holy people, and to give her any help she may need from you for she has been a great help to many people including me.

One of the things Paul does, seems to me that he puns on the idea of standing because there's several words there that come to do with standing. So I want to commend her, I want to stand her in front of you, there she is, there's Phoebe, say hello to Phoebe, welcome Phoebe.

[39 : 20] I don't know whether you give people a round of applause in your church but if you did she definitely deserves one. Here she is, she's come from Kentria, she's probably the person carrying the letter.

In the authorised version I think it says that in the footnote that we don't know for sure but it's a good thought isn't it? So when you get the letter guys I want you to really welcome Phoebe and I want to as it were stand her before you and I want you to stand by her.

I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and give her any help she may need from you. That's the standing by is translated in that way.

I want you to help her. She might well need somewhere to stay. She'll certainly need some food. there's a matter now what is it translated as any help she may need in the original there is a matter a needy matter could be that she is also on her way to Rome to sort out a legal issue a pragma a matter help her with that it might not mean that but whatever it is she needs please don't let her be on her own on this stand by her because she she has been a great help to many people well what he says is there she's stood in for or stood up for that's been a help she's been a protectoress she's been a helper to many people says Paul including me now what did she do

I don't know but she stood up she said Paul needs help I'm going to go and do it perhaps she visited in prison I don't know perhaps she stayed up with him when he was ill perhaps I don't know what she might have done but isn't it rather amazing Paul can say I'm standing her in front of you as it were you stand with her because she stood with me she stood with lots of people she did including me says Paul I'm Deaconess from the church of Cancria which was just around the corner from where he was so there's somebody to think about Phoebe and we think about this couple Priscilla and Aquila they stuck out their necks for Paul all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful

to them it's quite a thing to say isn't it they've clocked up the miles they've been there they've been there they've been there they've been there they were wondering whether they'd ever visit them and they did and they were really delighted and they helped there and they helped there and they brought a blessing there and they really helped there and they did some really significant stuff there if you want to see the sort of thing that they did in

[42 : 21] Acts 24 in Acts 18 verse 24 for example this hot headed young Acts 18 verse 24 native of Alexander came to Ephesus he was a learned man with a thorough knowledge of the scriptures he had been instructed in the way of the Lord and he spoke with great fervor though he taught about Jesus accurately he only knew the baptism of John he began to speak boldly in the synagogue and I could imagine him if he was actually from Northern Ireland although it doesn't say he was from Northern Ireland he was telling them the truth about Jesus and he was declaring it to them like that and Priscilla and Aquila say he's a great chap he hasn't quite got the hang of some of it and in verse 26 they say don't shout at us just come along and have why don't you come and have some supper with us Priscilla and Aquila heard him they invited him to their home and while he was saying they said hold on a sec had you ever thought that what it actually says in the

Bible is something something something and they explained to him the way of God more adequately what a wonderful gift to be able to do that take some really zealous fiery preacher and say hold on a sec you haven't quite got this right but that's what they did Priscilla and Aquila and let's just take finally one look at Andronicus and Junia verse 7 fellow Jews they'd been imprisoned with Paul and it says they were outstanding among the apostles and that causes a certain degree of interest and it causes interest in various ways as the centuries have gone by so because Junius is probably a female name earlier commentators would have said when the apostles think of people Andronicus and Junius they say oh they're outstanding so they're said to be outstanding by the apostles so because we couldn't have had a female apostle that's how the earlier commentators looked at it and then the newer commentators say ah a female apostle is on the cards here so she must be a female apostle and we should have female apostles and I think probably the helpful thing to consider is that you could have apostles as it were with a capital

A so these apostles just means sent one so that you have the sent ones of Jesus Christ who if you imagine it has a capital A they're the ones who write scripture they're the ones who authoritatively give the gospel the word apostle is used in other occasions for people who are just sent so 2 Corinthians 8 verse 23 says well the NIV says as for Titus he is my partner and fellow worker among you as for our brothers they are representatives of the churches and an honour to Christ or what it actually says they're apostles of the churches so they're sent but they're not sent by Jesus Christ with his full authority they're sent as messengers from the churches what we would sort of say more like missionaries and you get the same thing in Philippians 2 25 and maybe that's maybe that's what what

Andronicus and Junius are of all of all the people that the churches have sent out on various missions these are outstanding they're outstanding missionaries well just a thought about Andronicus and Junia I think all I've done this morning is just paint us a little picture of these people what it would have been like to be part of this community and if I may finally just to contrast it again with the community that's in the news with the leader JK and to think what what what can communities of this world produce what sort of characteristics do they produce what sort of people do they produce and you can answer that for the Green Party as you see fit but what I want to say is that the church of Jesus

Christ who has a leader whose initials are JC very different characterised by their leader who sacrificed and loved and served and laboured what a privilege to be part of that community and if you want to be part of that community and you're not please don't go to Mr.

[47 : 30] JK go to Jesus Christ let's close by singing together let's sing number 585 which reflects on the saints the Christians who have laboured in the past and have now finished their labours Jesus was their rock their fortress and their might and perhaps one day we will actually find out from Andronicus and Junia themselves what Paul meant by that as all the saints and all the church of Jesus Christ one day is united on the great day when we will see the Saviour face to face let's sing 585 5