

Where do you fit in?

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Date: 08 December 2013

[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Take your Bibles and turn with me, if you would, to Romans chapter 16. The Apostle Paul is yet to be to the city of Rome, but he has had a great deal of influence over people, and other people have been moving to the city of Rome, and it's an exciting time.

As he ends this chapter, he starts talking to all these people that he loves very much. And this is like, I love this part of the book. I think you could probably real quickly skip over it, and you might easily say, hey, it's just a story, a list of a bunch of names of different people in the story, but I think it says a whole lot.

I've been a pastor almost all of my life. You may say you were a missionary in Peru, but when you're a missionary, you're a pastor also, and I still know those people and love those people, and my wife is in Peru right now, and she sends messages, and they had graduation last night, and six people graduated, and she started telling me about all the families that came, and everybody saying hi, and all the sweet relationship that you have with different people, and that's what's going on in Romans chapter 16.

And I think there's a big lesson here in Romans 16, and this is the lesson. Where do you fit in? I think sometimes when you hear the Bible preached, I think sometimes when you hear about apostles and preachers and prophets and men who wrote the Bible, I think when you see missionaries in a church like ours, and there's always all these missionaries around, and there's pastoral staff, and you can easily begin to think, where do I fit in?

Romans 16 is a list of where you fit in. Romans 16 is a list of these wonderful friends and family and special people to the Apostle Paul, and I believe that if you'll go along with me as we read these stories, as we read about them and think about them, you'll find out where you fit in, and I hope if you're not already fitting in, I hope if you're using it as an excuse, the fact that you're not called to be a preacher, I hope that this morning that ceases.

[1 : 58] So read with me, if you would, Romans chapter 16, and we will read just verses 1 and 2, and then we'll have a word of prayer. The Bible says in Romans 16, 1, I commend unto you Phoebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church, which is at Sincrea, that you receive her in the Lord as becometh saints, and that you assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you, for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also.

Father, please work in our lives this morning. Please draw us close to you. Please help us understand where we fit in. Please help us see how we need each other as a church.

And that we work together for your honor and glory. And I pray, God, that we would grow spiritually and personally. And I'll give you praise for it all in Jesus' name. Amen. As Paul finishes the book of Romans, he names, he greets at least 25 individuals by name, and several without their name, but everybody else seems to know who they are.

He uses the word greet five times, the word salute 13 times. He greets several churches that are meeting in the different people's houses. Paul loves people.

Paul loves people. The church is about Jesus, and the church is about people. And the first thing I'd like you to look at here, number one, we should write it down and work your way through verses one and two with me, and that is, where do we fit in?

[3 : 21] We fit in serving people. We fit in serving people. That's what Phoebe did. If you're a lady in the church, you probably quickly notice that you don't get to be the pastor, and you don't get to be the deacon, and you don't get to be the leaders in the church.

And sometimes you might come to church and say, well, church is like a male chauvinistic pig type place. You know, it's only the men that get to be the leaders. But here in Romans chapter 16, as Paul gets ready to end the book, he talks to a lady, a sister.

Not only is she just a lady and a sister, she is a servant of the church. She is, in all essence, a deaconess of the church, though there's not a title for that. She's a servant of the church.

Not only that, he is sending with her in her hand the letter he wrote to the Romans, and she's delivering that letter to the church at Rome. So, I mean, he is trusting a lady to carry the word of God with her up there.

So he sends Phoebe to deliver the letter to the Romans, and he sends a letter, and in the letter, as they end reading it, if they find out from Paul, you need to treat her right.

[4 : 26] Look, if you would, if you would, verse 6, chapter 16, I commend you Phoebe, our sister, a servant of the church in Sincrea, and y'all need to receive her in the Lord as becometh saints.

Assist her in whatever business she has need of. She's been a patron, a helper, a succorer, an assistant of many, and of myself also.

Now, first thing I want you to notice, would you underline in verse 1, there was a church at Sincrea. Here's church doctrine for you right here. There was a local assembly that met in a place called Sincrea, or however you pronounce that word.

It's at different churches. Churches are local to an area. Churches are places where people know each other. Church is an assembly. It's where people get together to worship and serve God.

And you should be in your place, and your brothers and sisters should know you, and they should be able to depend on you. Paul sends a recommendation letter for this lady.

[5 : 27] He sends a letter to Rome, and it's literally a recommendation letter. He says, Hey guys, I'm sending you Phoebe. By the way, she's our sister in the Lord.

This is the church she works in, and she is a good lady, and she does a lot of good stuff. He said, Y'all should assist her, or help her in whatever business she has.

I mean, if this lady comes into church, and she has a need of something, if she's thinking of something, if she's got some ideas, you need to get on the bandwagon. This lady is a servant of the church. Whatever her business is, y'all need to help her.

She's a great trust, a lady of great trust. I doubt seriously they had a photostatic copy of the letter Paul wrote to the Romans saved back at the place where Paul's writing a letter.

I doubt seriously they had another one on file. I doubt seriously it was backed up in the cloud. It was backed up in heaven. God had a copy of it, but the only picture they got of this letter, she has it.

[6 : 24] She travels a great distance. She's trusted to get there and deliver the message. She should be treated in a way that the saints should, and ought to be proud of how they treat her. Paul says, Ladies and gentlemen, I am sending Phoebe, our sister, a servant of the church, and y'all take good care of her.

Now I want you to notice this about Phoebe. She was a servant of the church. A servant of the church. Now, I don't know if you ever think about that word. That word servant, there's the same word as deacon. It's a servant or a deacon.

She took care of people. She took care of people. She met the needs of people. Look, if you would, at the verse and see what it says in verse 2. Chapter 12, verse 2.

Receive her in the Lord as become a saints that you assist her. You assist her. She's going to be doing some stuff, and she's going to need some help. In whatsoever business she has need of, she has been a suckerer, a helper of many, and of myself also.

She's helped a lot of people. She's helped me. She's helped a lot of people. So, serving God means serving people.

[7 : 34] Did you ever think about that? Serving God means serving people. This word servant refers to someone who runs errands. Someone who works in the dust. Obviously, this word's not about authority, but service, as it would be with any deacon.

Synonyms of the word servant here are slave or attendant. But then he uses another word about her. He calls her a suckerer. That is a word none of us in this room really understand.

When is the last time you said, I'd like to introduce you? I'd like to introduce you to Latasha. She's a suckerer of the church. I doubt seriously that anybody has called her that. Here's Rhonda.

She's a suckerer of the church. I mean, we just don't talk like that. How many of y'all talk like that? Say amen. I know very few people do, but it means someone who gives help in time of distress or need or difficulty.

It is somebody who gives help in time of need or distress or difficulty. It's the idea of giving assistance from her resources. This lady, this suckerer, it's like she's a patron of the church.

[8 : 39] That means she's like a person who has money. She has financial ability and she's meeting the needs of the church. She was wealthy, but she did not allow her wealth to give her a superior attitude.

It did not get her out of doing menial jobs. She's a suckerer, a patron, a leader in the church, and she doesn't walk in the church saying, everybody here knows I give big money here.

So y'all take care of me. Y'all get your hands dirty. Y'all do the other jobs. I'm the money person here. No, she is a servant of the church. She is a servant of another church.

She's showing up in Rome. And here's what he basically says. You can mark her down, buddy. That lady serves her church back at home. And while she's in Rome, you can mark her down. She'll be serving there. So y'all get involved.

If she comes in and says, Hey, we need to help with this person over here. Hey, we need to do this over here. He said, y'all just help with her because this lady knows what she's doing. She's a helping lady.

[9 : 36] Now I'd like to ask you, where are you in your church right now? Do you serve? Do you serve? Are you willing to take on menial jobs?

Are you concerned that people that know who you are and how important you are? You know, some of us would be like, we're not going to be. I mean, this lady didn't come in in her fur coat.

This lady didn't come in and look for her preferential seat. This lady wasn't concerned that people knew she had money. This lady was a servant. Do you sacrificially give to make sure your church can do the ministry that it's called to do?

Phoebe served Paul. Phoebe served many others. She wasn't trying to get preferential treatment because she worked with the apostles. She served everyone.

I think that right there is a message and a half. In my first church, I used to give an award. I later got criticized for it because it said I caused competition. But every year I gave away the Phoebe award.

[10 : 35] And I would go through the church and I would find the lady, I thought, who worked the hardest all year long serving. I gave away the Phoebe award. And I did it every year while I was at that church. The Phoebe award.

Would you be the person that everybody in the church would say, buddy, that's the lady who takes care of everybody. That's the lady who's here early, stays here late, works at taking care of everything.

That's the lady, buddy. When she has money, she's taking care of you with money. When she don't have money, she's taking care of you with time. This lady is a servant, buddy. Everybody in the church knows it. And by the way, the apostle Paul would say, she sure has been a big help to me, but not just to me, to a whole lot of people.

Are you serving in your church? Number two, look at me, look at, look at me, look with me at Romans 16. Don't look at me. That would be scary. Romans chapter 16 and verse three.

You should risk your life for the men of God. That's our next lesson. The first lady is a servant of the church. The second people, they risk their lives.

[11 : 34] They hung it all out there. Just like, just like the apostle Paul did. They risked their lives. Verse three, greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus.

We have for my life laid down their own necks, unto whom I, not only I give thanks, but also all the church agenda. Everybody knows about these two. Everybody gives thanks for them.

They greet the church that meets at their house and salute my well-beloved, Apanthus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ. Aquila and Priscilla.

They are a well-known couple in the Bible. Well, not extremely well-known, but well-known if you've studied your Bible. They're mentioned several times. He finishes the book to Rome.

Evidently, Aquila and Priscilla have migrated to Rome and they're now there working in Rome. And when he finishes up a letter, he says, man, everybody be sure and tell them I said hi. If you got your Bible open, underline this. This ought to be me.

[12 : 30] He said, say hi to Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus. My helpers in Christ Jesus. Are you a helper in Christ Jesus?

They had been there for Paul when the church in Corinth wasn't taking care of him financially. Like they should have. You remember, Paul showed up in Corinth and when he got to Corinth, he didn't have, the church wasn't giving offerings like they should.

The church wasn't paying his expenses like they should. They turn out to be an inferior church because even Paul didn't press on them the need of taking care of the pastoral staff like he should have and they turn out to be an inferior church.

But when he was there, Priscilla and Aquila said, hey, we got a place where you can work with us. You can take part of our business away from us. We want to make sure you make it and he worked with Aquila and Priscilla.

They welcomed him. They helped him financially. They helped him spiritually. They helped other people spiritually. Do you remember a young preacher named Apollos? He comes through town and he's preaching and he doesn't understand that the Holy Spirit of God has come on people yet.

[13 : 32] He doesn't understand a whole lot of the gospel yet. But buddy, when he found out what he found out, he got busy preaching and he was eloquent and he had a great way of getting the message across and people loved to hear him and when he got through preaching that Sunday at their church, Aquila and Priscilla said, hey, how about coming over to the house for a hamburger with us?

And they went over to the house and when they got there, Aquila and Priscilla sat him down and said, let us explain to you more fully the things of God. And they did it in a humble way, in a sweet way. They weren't church splitters.

They weren't church fighters. They weren't standing to get the preacher and when Apollos went on his way, he was like, I have learned and I've grown. These people were helpers. They might not have been apostles, but they were helpers in the gospel.

They were helpers to other people. The second thing it says about them, go back to chapter 16 and verse 4, they laid down their own necks. They risked their lives.

They risked their lives. They had given him part of their business so he could be able to make it financially. I'm sure they're risking their lives talks about witnessing for Jesus when he knew it could cause them harm.

[14 : 41] You know, the name of Jesus caused problems. I mean, it's against the law to talk about Jesus. The apostle Paul willingly goes into places knowing he's going to get in trouble.

He puts himself right in the middle of the mess. And we kind of say, all right, that's good. Let the missionaries do that. Let the guys in Egypt and Tunisia and Africa and China, let those guys risk their lives and share the gospel.

But Paul says, hey man, Aquila and Priscilla, they're helpers, but they don't just help. They run risks themselves. They are careful to go ahead and speak about Jesus even if it might get them in trouble.

They risk their lives. They met Paul's needs when he was in jeopardy or in prison. Can you imagine? Sometimes a preacher's in jail. He is locked away in jail.

And while he's in jail, here comes Aquila and Priscilla. You can imagine them, buddy. They are helpers. They're going to come down there and they're going to bring a sack lunch. They're going to bring something to drink. They're going to meet him. In the city of Lima, years and years ago, there was a guy named Pinsote, Francisco Pinsote.

[15 : 41] He was an Italian who had been raised in Paraguay and he heard the gospel and he got saved. And Francisco Pinsote is one of the very first people to arrive in Peru, the country I used to live in with the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

And when he got there, he was a coal porter, a Bible salesman. And he arrived there with the Bible Society and he started selling Bibles. And when he started selling Bibles, it was against the law in the country of Peru for anybody to get together outside of the Catholic Church.

Against the law to have any meetings. The Catholic Church would not allow anybody to meet. And so you could have meetings in your own home, obviously, with your doors shut. So Pinsote began having meetings in his home and having people in.

And before long, he was running 200 adults and they were reusing a warehouse. And one night, a Catholic priest came to his meeting house where he was, a warehouse, only had one door in and one door out, and he wrapped a chain around the outside door and put a lock on the door and then left.

And when he did, he had locked all the Christians in there with Pinsote preaching. He knew he was going to get them in trouble. They didn't have a sign up. The doors had been closed, just like he said. And one of the church members was late, kind of like some of us.

[16 : 53] Amen. Some of us need a new rooster. Say amen. Because it never wakes us up on time to make it a church on time. So one of them showed up late and locks weren't as sophisticated as they are today.

And they began trying all the locks they had. And one of them unlocked the lock and got into church. And he unlocked the lock, went on into church. And so later, the Catholic priest took him on trial before the Peruvian government and they arrested Pinsote for having open door services.

They put him in jail. They locked him up. And in a Peruvian jail, they don't exactly have cable TV and three squares a day. That's not the way it works. And so they kept bringing him food.

And he kept bringing him food. And while he was in prison, the mayor of Callao, the city where the prison was, he came to visit him. And he would sit outside his cell in Pinsote. He would preach the gospel to him.

And they said, You're such a nice guy. Sign this piece of paper and say you'll quit preaching and you'll move out of town. He said, If I ever reach my hand out to sign that piece of paper, cut it off because I ain't quitting.

[17 : 52] I'm not quitting. And other people came. He used to preach outside the windows of his jail cell. He didn't care. He preached the gospel. And others, and others came. That's what Aquila and Priscilla would do.

They would have gone to Paul. They risked their life. They said, It doesn't matter what people think of us. We're going to go help. They helped other Christians that were in danger. They gave to the point that it may have risked their own security financially.

You know, sometimes if you get really involved in church, you might become a giver. I mean, that's a disease. It might just creep up on you. You might be one of them people that says, I quit tithing and I started giving a lot more than a tithe.

And all of a sudden, it might even cut into some of your own resources. It might cut into some of your own comforts. It might risk. That may be what had happened. They had a church in their home. Now, that's a real problem. Look, if you would, at the verse.

If you would, at the verse. In chapter 16 and verse 5, it says, likewise, greet the church that's in their house. They had a church in their house.

[18 : 49] Having a church in your house is a risk. The first lady, Phoebe, was a patroness, a strong financial backer of the church. This family had a church in their house.

So they were also carrying a heavy load for the church. Having a church in your house causes additional expense, additional risk, and inconveniences. They had a church in their house.

You know, do you have any idea what it's like? You've got nice furniture and every Sunday all these people come in and sit on there and then some people throw their feet up on the coffee table and others put their boots up on your couch while they're sitting there listening to you preach.

We even had a guy in Prue who was famous for a while I would be speaking. He would stick his finger in his nose. He could get his finger good and nasty and then he'd rip it on my couch and I was sitting there looking at him across the room thinking, I'm going to cut that finger off, buddy.

I never said a word. I just watched him wipe his finger on my couch but I didn't like it. I'll just be honest with you and I'm bitter about that still just teasing. Not bitter. So he had a church meeting in their home.

[19 : 48] They were helping. They were carrying a load. Some of you might say, I don't like being in a church where I have to carry so much of the financial load. Really? Why don't you talk to Phoebe about that?

I don't like being in a church where I have to carry so much of the load. Why don't you talk to Aquila and Priscilla about that? They did. Can I remind you something about a church? A church again had a meeting place. They met in Aquila and Priscilla's house.

Guess what? They had an assembly. They got together and they knew each other. What lessons can you apply to your life here? How much of your life is dedicated to helping others do the work of God?

How much of you? You may not be a preacher. You may not be the Apostle Paul. You may not be the leader of the church but maybe you could open your house for a Bible study and maybe you could invite others.

Maybe you could give financially. How much have you been willing to risk for the sake of the gospel? Are you willing to risk your reputation or do you keep your love for Jesus quiet?

[20 : 43] I think it's really interesting. They risk their necks. They put out their they risk their necks. They risk their life. And yet most of us go to church. We come to church on Sunday. We're pretty open about that. We drive up in our cars and we pull up to church.

We even got a sign there and we pull up and we go to church but everybody goes to church but on Monday we're 007. You know we hide our Christianity. We hide our Bible. We hide our testimony.

Jesus doesn't come up and the only ones that bring him up are the Pentecostals and the Charismatics. Amen. Us Baptists are moms of the word. That didn't go over too good but it's the truth.

You know the Peruvians were always so funny. When I first got to Peruvian when churches were first getting started you would see them coming down the road and they would be walking down the road and they'd be walking like this. And they'd come up to the church and I'd see them and by the time they'd get about 10 feet from the church they'd reach down and pull out their Bible.

I'm in church. They didn't want anybody seeing it while they was walking because if they saw it people said hey brother that's an insult down there. Hey brother going to church brother we know about you brother and the people that sat at the bar about 50 feet down from the church have really had a good time.

[21 : 54] They risked their life at additional expense. How much do you support your church and the work that God's doing there? How versed are you in the scriptures? Could you help a young man grow and be more greatly used of God in the ministry?

If there's a young Apollos here on his way through our church to become a missionary are you in a position in your life to say let me help you let me grow you let me groom you let me help you do more?

There's exciting results in that verse 5 look at it and I include it here because it's really kind of hard to divide these verses up but look at verse 5 they had the first fruits that's a beautiful word look at verse 5 likewise greet the church that's in their house salute my well beloved Apatheus who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ first fruits first guy that got saved first guy that started serving God first guy that's doing something for God in that church Paul's like I ain't forgetting that guy we have a young man here at this church who as far as I know is the first fruits of this church I wasn't even here and some of our young men led him to Christ here his name is Miguel he's upstairs he's involved in the Spanish ministry and I often remind him you know you're the first fruits boy you better walk right you're the first fruits you're the number one guy that got saved here I didn't have hardly anything to do with this ministry he got I think Mike Shane led him to Christ and Trent and Mark and some others worked with him John Pearson spent long hours with him going over discipleship and helping him to grow and now he's a preacher in the first fruits first fruits that's pretty good stuff amen first person you see saved first person you see serving God first person in that ministry go to the third thing you find in this passage you find out where to fit in yet you could be a you could be a helper of the church a servant of the church a helper of the church you could risk yourself and risk your finances third thing I notice in this list of people they were working helpers working helpers look if you would at verse 6 greet Mary who bestowed much labor on us would you underline that greet Mary hey y'all say hi to Mary when you're talking when you get this letter and can you just imagine they're all sitting in the room listening as their letters read and I don't know if the people sitting over everybody waved out or not in Peru that would have been a way of doing it up in the mountains up in the mountain churches way above my city but when I'd go up there to preach it was always funny there was a big pastor's fellowship they didn't introduce all the pastors the pastors would walk up on the platform and they would say

I bring greetings from my church in the jungle and they'd wave their hand like this and all the other people would wave back at them and the next guy would go up and say I bring greetings from my church and he'd wave his hand the funny side I was like man I'll just say you'll bring greetings we all ain't got to wave but you waved all night long 200 preachers everybody waving I was like let's just all greet at once amen but he said say hi to Mary Mary look at what it said bestowed much labor there was a lot of work old Mary did in the ministry look at verse 7 salute those two guys my kinsmen they came to him my fellow prisoners who are of note among the apostles verse 8 greet I am Ampheus my beloved in the Lord salute Urbane our helper in Christ others are mentioned here and notice the words that are used to describe them would you notice the words number one word labor that's the most frequent word used labor labor verse 6 bestowed much labor verse 12 who labored salute who labored verse 12 it takes a lot of hard work to have a church many have worked hard to help Paul be the man of God as God was using him the labor was in the Lord now I want you to look this way just to say do you understand something nothing just happened this morning

I know you you know Betty's gone that really has changed my house it's changed my perspective you run out of towels a lot quicker than you think you do amen I use a towel a day it's just one of my false luxuries our towels always magically appear I open the door and there they are sometimes they go down three four five towels it starts looking like I might run out of towels and the next day magically they are all back there the bath cloths are in this certain place the soap I never get out my own bar of soap I just get in there and if it starts running out I'm like what the soap's running out there's something wrong here the other day I got in there and I looked I said man that soap is so thin I can't even hold it so here I am getting out and find me a bar of soap I never have to do that it just magically appears amen Betty washes them Betty folds them dries them and folds them and sticks them there and some so in a way things are just magical at my house I come out of the shower not this week but my clothes I picked out this tie say amen and I picked out this shirt you know why it's white don't you because it goes with everything and this suit

[26 : 44] I picked it out because it's the only other suit I hadn't worn already and I and I I mean I'm feeling real good about things but you know I come out of the shower and it's just all late on the bed I walk out I'm the most spoiled man you've ever met there's my underwear there's my t-shirt there's my shirt there's my pants and there's my coat still on the hanger so I can bring you to church on the hanger Joe don't you wish you had a wife like that say amen don't say it Joe you'll be in trouble and Betty's gone and all of a sudden it's like I woke up this morning I said okay what am I going to wear never think I never even consider that never crosses my mind I got to go find the towels I washed them I have not folded them I just threw them on a bed in another room I just run across there and get them why fold them you fix it and throw them in the dirty clothes anyway say amen did you know church doesn't just happen these chairs didn't get in place just by accident the floor didn't get vacuumed the bathrooms didn't get taken care of did you know what's going to happen on Christmas on the north side there are some guys that have invested heavy labor that's the word the Bible used that's the hey we started with a servant we started with people that are risking their lives and teaching others and they're laboring takes a lot of work to have a church many worked hard to help Paul the labor was in the Lord verse 12 salute

Trephina and Trephosa whoever they are who labored in the Lord it's not a labor in the church it's not a labor for the people it does all that but much more it's in the Lord you may be in the music ministry choir special music or sound ministry or you may be involved in cleaning at our church a hundred other things it takes a lot of work might shock you to know that the music people put in probably five five hours outside of church or more just to get the music ready for you you're serving everyone else but your real service is to the Lord Jesus to the Lord Jesus there are people that come to church on a Saturday clean the bathrooms there are people that pick up stuff outside there are people that get the grass mowed there are people that are discipling other folks preparing Sunday school lessons really coming to church and worshipping God are not passive spectator activities they require great work are you involved in the ministry of your church do you labor to get the gospel out make the blessings of service win souls and worship Jesus labor by the way you know

Thanksgiving Thanksgiving is a labor intensive day well not for me I mean I just work hard for about 45 minutes eating it but it's pretty hard for other people who get it all ready to eat and I have figured that out since Betty's been gone do you have any idea how hard it is to get food out of the refrigerator and heat it up even if people fix it for you I mean I went to that microwave and I stood there staring at it and I said okay which buttons do you push and I noticed one said reheat so I said I think I'll try that so I hit reheat and it started flashing I said I wonder what that's for so I hit one it said something like vegetables I said these ain't vegetables so I hit two and it said meat and I said Lord to God figure that one out I'm getting smarter all along evolution is taking place labor labor where do you fit in helper that's another word used verse 9 salute Urbane our helper in Christ not all of us are going to do the same work not all of us will sing in the choir or do special music not all will teach

Sunday school not all will have any particular ministry but all can be involved in helping notice that helpers got special mention verse 3 greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers Urbane my helper fellow prisoners what's another word he used salute these guys my fellow verse 7 my fellow prisoners who are of note among the apostles what he was saying was when the apostles were sitting around talking they say hey we know those guys they've been in jail with us they've suffered with us Paul said I know those guys some were paying a much stronger price they were in jail also they had preached and taught they had been arrested and held captive away from their family I just want you to notice as I finish this chapter we got one more message out of it there's wonderful love and fellowship between them and the man of God look at the words he uses I don't have time to go through it now we're out of time he talks about the first fruits in verse 5 that's the first guy that got saved he calls him beloved in verse 8 9 and 12 verse 10 is a fantastic verse

I don't know how in the world this guy got this it says salute a palace approved in Christ approved in Christ in verse 11 he said family verse 13 he said chosen verse 14 brothers verse 15 saints never forget the first ones you see saved or those that lead you to Christ how many of you remember the guy you led to Christ the first one I still remember on the road Terry Foster he was in my truck he was about two years younger than me and I was driving dad's truck we were going to the ball game on Friday we were both in the marching band and on the way up I was talking to him and trying to witness to him for the first time and he was acting interested so I pulled the truck over the side of the road and I witnessed to him and he prayed the prayer I don't think he probably really got saved but I'll never forget that night first time I shared the gospel I'll never forget the first guy led to Christ in Peru I'm not sure he got saved either Luis but he was at the Bible college graduation the other night and sent greetings to me and he told Betty he said you tell your husband you guys made a big difference down here you don't forget that don't forget the guy who led you to Christ

[32 : 16] I'll never forget Carlton uh Carlton Flowers who led me to Christ there was a great deal of love going around among the church they were the chosen they were the saints Paul had lots of family getting saved most beautiful of all is that guy approved unto God approved in Christ there was this famous preacher named Jim Elliott he dies before he turns 30 years of age killed by the Alka Indians in Ecuador and somebody asked him what kind of degree he was trying to get and he said AUG and they said we've not heard of that we've heard of BAs and BS's and we know what THD's and PhD's are what's the AUG degree and he said approved unto God that's the one I want approved unto God we can all get that one say amen and look at this guy he got approved in Christ more important than anything else is know that God's pleased how do you apply this to your life are you certain of your relationship to Christ before we close he uses the word saint and chosen do you know for sure that you're saved and you're on your way to heaven are you certain of that that is the absolute most important thing that could possibly take place we're finishing a great book we've gone through and seen how we said we've gone through and seen how wonderful his grace is and now as he ends the book he says by the way hey say hi to all my friends the saints say hi to all my friends the chosen ones that belong to Jesus say hi to them would he have been saying hi to you are you born again do you know you'd go to heaven if you died are you certain of your salvation is that where you are are you how's your relationship with the family in other words how's your relationship with people here at the church man we ought to come in this church did you read Romans 16 we ought to be coming in here going like hey brother how you doing kids man hey saint hey chosen hey helper

I love you man I'm glad to see you it's good to be here with you you're my family that's what's going on in Romans chapter 16 Paul hadn't even been there yet he just knew a bunch of them had been moving up there every time somebody moved there Paul said I know where they are I keep up with my friends say amen I keep up with my family they moved up there Paul said verse 16 salute one another a holy kiss the churches of Christ salute you do you feel the love do you feel the love well I love it I travel to these places around the world and I've got to know many of these leaders and when I get to Burkina Faso a couple of the guys they'll come up to me and this might shock you to know the way they do so but they'll come up to you and they'll stick their head in and they'll take their head and they'll push my head here and then they'll put their head in there and we just sit there and go back and forth like that that's their way of saying I'm greeting you with a holy kiss I love you every time they lean forward I know what's coming I'm ready for it I want to do it too I love those guys and I get over I get over and they in northern Africa and they kiss you

I get to South America and the men lay their cheek on your cheek and they make a kissing sound you get down to Chile or Bolivia or Peru and you walk up and you shake hands like this first time it can be this or this then you hug then you back up and you give another handshake I mean it's a ritual everybody knows buddy you know what to do and here's what he said he said feel the love greet invite to church with a holy kiss don't you come into church like hey how you come in here like man glory to God I'm with my family I'm with those that love Jesus and I'm happy to be here are you fitting in do you know that you would go to heaven if you die have you found your place of service are you actively working to fulfill a ministry in the church and in the family here are you a giver to help meet the needs of the church and other members in its ministries are you helping others or are you just seeking help for yourself would you say God approves of your service and your worship and loving your brothers and sisters are you just sitting soaking and souring are you actively participating last question are you in

I don't mean are you saved I mean are you in I'm in I love you we had a blast in my Sunday school class I love them people are you in you care do you fit are you working are you helping are you getting something done are you just coming to watch the show on Sunday Romans 16 ends and Paul says shared a lot of doctrine with you but let me just go ahead and tell you hey guys hello hello 25 of you by name churches that meet in people's houses other names hey guys I didn't forget you I know you I know you I know you I care about you where are you Father I pray your name would be glorified and honored I pray you'd draw us closer to you I pray you'd help us to build a church that would be like the church here at Rome in the book of Romans I pray God that you'd help us to love each other and carry out the ministry and I pray God your name be glorified and honored this message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia for more information log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times location contact information and more audio and video recordings