

THE GRACE OF JESUS BE WITH YOU

Romans 16:1-27

Key Verse: 16:20

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

As a final greeting of a letter, most people say, "Sincerely yours," or, "Yours truly." In the case of a rejection letter most companies or [universities](#) say as a final greeting, "Cordially yours." The word "cordially" is good, but rejection is painful. But St. Paul's final greeting is not that. short. Paul's final greeting to the saints in Rome covers one chapter composed of 27 verses. In his final greeting Paul also mentions 29 persons, of whom 9 are women. Paul's final greeting to the saints in Rome might be the longest final greeting ever written. In his final greeting we learn of Paul's affection toward the saints in Rome. His affection toward the saints in Rome is so deep and wide that we cannot fathom it. Philippians 1:8 may well explain his affection. It says, "God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus." His affection was the affection of Christ, which transcends time and space. There is a saying, "Out of sight, out of mind." But Paul's affection was not such an emotional affection. It was the affection of Christ, which is overflowing forever.

In his final greeting to the saints in Rome we also learn Paul's faith. Even though the situation of the time was a most unfavorable one, he believed that God would accomplish his plan of world salvation (Php 1:3-6). Why did he have such a deep concern for the saints in Rome? It was because he loved God and he wanted to fulfill God's plan of world salvation, and to carry out the world mission command of Jesus coworking together with the saints in Rome. In his greeting we learn Paul's love for God and deep appreciation of the grace of Jesus Christ and his affection for fellow Christians scattered around the world.

First, Paul recommends Phoebe (1,2). Look at verse 1. "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea." Paul recommends Phoebe, who lived in Cenchrea, which was the port of Corinth, and who was a rich woman. She was bringing this letter to the saints in Rome. But Paul felt a danger that she would not be treated as a precious servant of God but as an ordinary woman of the times, who were traditionally despised and mistreated. As we know well, at that time women were regarded as the property or slaves of men. But Paul asked their favor to receive her in the Lord, in a way worthy of the saints, and to give her any help she may need from them because she had been a great help to many people, including Paul himself (2). There was in Paul true human equality when he recommended Phoebe. Paul urged them to welcome her as a servant of God.

Second, Priscilla and Aquila, founders of the house church. (3-5) Look at verses 3 and 4. "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them." Here, the word "greet" does not mean "say hello" to Priscilla and Aquila. In light of Paul's final greetings it means, the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. I Corinthians 16:23 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you." 2 Corinthians 13:14 says, "May the grace of the [Lord Jesus Christ](#), and the love of God, and the fellowship

of the Holy Spirit be with you all." This final greeting later became the benediction for all the church workers. Galatians 6:18 says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen." Paul's greeting, that is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, was not to our body, but to our spirit. It is meaningful that Paul greeted our spirit. John 6:63 says, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." When Jesus died John said, "...he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." (Jn 19:30) In this case the word "spirit" stands for "life." Again, Philippians 4:23 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen." Therefore, when Paul said "greet" it meant, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Here we learn that we must know personally the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: We must also be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ. We also must help others to come to know the grace of our Lord Jesus and be strong in the grace of Jesus. We also learn we should be men and women of spirit, not of flesh.

Priscilla and Aquila were Jews who had previously been residents in Rome. But Claudius the Roman Emperor, an anti-semitist, had issued an edict to banish all Jews from Rome. So they came to Corinth and settled (Ac 18:2,3). They were tentmakers like Paul. When Paul went to Ephesus they gave up all their business and followed him to cowork with him (Ac 18:18). Priscilla and Aquila met Apollos in Ephesus. Apollos was a Jew, a native of Alexandria. He was a man of great learning with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. But he didn't know the core of the gospel. He only knew the baptism of John. So Priscilla and Aquila invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately through one-to-one Bible study. They taught him the core of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their one-to-one Bible study was so effective that Apollos immediately began to prove from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (Ac 18:28).

Look at verse 5. "Greet also the church that meets at their house." This verse tells us that the early Christians used their houses as meeting places for their Bible study and prayer and worship service. Priscilla and Aquila were an outstanding couple who opened their hearts and house for fellow Christians. They lived an unsettled life. They were born in Asia, (Ac 18:2) immigrated to Rome, and were banished from Rome and settled in Corinth, then followed Paul to Ephesus, then came back to Rome. Wherever they went their house was a center of Christian fellowship and service. These days we see many homes which are nothing but places of physical rest, television watching, complaining centers, sometimes a battleground. But Priscilla and Aquila's home was virtually a church. They gathered Christians or possible Christians and distributed the word of life to them and also treated them with delicious food. Their house was also a place for prayer for coworkers throughout the nations. Through their house we remember Jesus' word in Mark 11:17b, "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." When we review church history, there is no record that there was a formal church building until the end of the second century. So we can say Priscilla and Aquila were the founders of the Christian church throughout their lifetime. The open door, the open hand, the open heart are the characteristics of their lives. So to Paul, Priscilla and Aquila were very important persons in the sight of God, and they were indispensable characters in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. But Paul did not say, "Aquila's family." He said, "Priscilla and Aquila." The church of God began at a house church. Evidently Aquila's wife Priscilla gave her privacy to God so that they might have worship service, and after the worship service she

cooked endlessly to share love dinners. In a house church the housewife's role is very important. Because of this Paul saw them with equal honor and respect.

There are many good examples of the house church. A woman medical missionary invited a college girl student to stay at her home. She bore with her during the long summer vacation time. As a result, the woman missionary could understand "The Taming of the Shrew" better. After the student went back to her dormitory, the woman missionary paid a pretty big telephone bill for one reason or another. But she was very thankful that God used her house as a house church. One American shepherd put beautiful wallpaper in one of his rooms and made it like a room for a princess. He had never decorated the room before. Then he invited a college girl student to stay there and he and his wife served her wholeheartedly. As a result, she decided to marry a man of God instead of marrying a presidential candidate. Her inner person was changed through her life in a house church. After marriage she also invited a girl student to her house. But the girl student went away somewhere she could enjoy funs to gratify her human desires. The young woman missed her sheep so much that she said, "I was not joyful even when I gave birth to a second son." Dr. John Jun's mother became a widow when she was 22 and raised her two sons and a daughter by working as a breakfast cook for the laborers on the bottom of society. His family barely maintained a hand-to-mouth existence. But Dr. Jun, when he was a medical student, invited a classmate and lived with him for two years. As a result, his classmate became a saint of this generation, who helps all the needy he sees with his prayers and medical care. The Christian church was crumbling together with the Roman Empire because of its corruption and hypocrisy. But all the faithful laymen like Aquila and Priscilla restored the Christian church through Bible studies and prayer at their house churches. Paul thought of Aquila and Priscilla with tremendous respect in Jesus Christ as coworkers to whom he owed his life.

Third, Paul remembers their labor in the Lord in his greeting. In Paul's life and ministry, there were many hardships and sufferings and rejections and accusations and misunderstandings from anti-Christians. Paul was old and tired. So he could have been overwhelmed by the sense of loss and suffering. But he was not. He was happy to remember each individual who became a coworker and brother in Jesus in Rome. Look at verse 5b. "Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia." When Paul was engaging in gospel work in Asia, he could hardly find a new convert. It was because the people of Asia were slaves of shamanism under witch doctors. But Epenetus became the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. So Paul praises and thanks God for the great work he had done in Epenetus. To Paul, "the first convert in Asia" was indeed significant. We now have missionaries in 87 countries. The first prayer topic of each missionary of each country is that God may grant them one convert who will be the ancestor of faith like Abraham; like Pastor Abraham Lincoln to Missionary Jimmy Lee in India.

Look at verse 6. "Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you." This Mary was not the mother of Jesus, but one of the Marys. In verse 6, the phrase, "who worked very hard for you," means that she worked to the point of death. Paul was an extraordinary hardworking person. Soto Paul, an ordinary hardworking person was not considered a hardworking person. Paul thanks God for Mary because she knew the grace of God and worked hard.

Look at verse 7. "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was." Andronicus and Junias were senior to Paul in faith in Jesus. They were in Christ before Paul was. But they didn't care about their seniority and lived for the glory of God and coworked under Paul. The place was uncertain but they had been in prison together with Paul for Jesus' name's sake. Paul praises and thanks God that they knew the grace of our Lord Jesus and worked hard. Paul said, "They are outstanding among the apostles." It meant they were better than he.

Read verses 8-10. Urbanus, Stachys, and Apelles were men of faith and soldiers of Christ. Satan tried to beat them but they rather resisted Satan's attack and defeated Satan. In the early Christian days so many Christians stumbled, but they stood firm in Christ as warriors of faith. So Paul praises and thanks God that they knew the grace of Jesus Christ personally and stood firm.

Read verses 11 and 12. Herodion and those who were in the household of Narcissus, and Tryphena and Tryphosa were probably young men and women. Usually people have a regular job for their survival. So when they have to work for God they feel that the work of God is extra work which requires extra strength and effort. The work of God is also spiritual work. So whoever does not give his heart has nothing to do. One sheep has hung around in UBF holding his hands behind his back during the last 40 years. "Why do you always hold your hands behind your back?" someone asked. "I have nothing to do," he answered angrily. But these young people worked hard for God. Paul prays for them that the grace of our Lord Jesus be with them.

Read verses 13-16. Look at verse 13. "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too." In verse 13, Paul mentions Rufus. Paul says that he was chosen in the Lord and that his mother had been a mother to Paul too. Paul worked hard until he had no time to be married. So there is a strong impression that Paul was a superman. But he was not. He was a human being who needed motherly love and affection. He thanks God for Rufus and his mother who knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and cared for him.

Fourth, the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you (17-20). In this part, Paul appeals to the Roman Christians to watch out for those who are a bad influence, causing division and causing weak Christian brethren to stumble. Paul also appeals to them to keep away from those who gossip for their selfish motives. (17-19)

Look at verse 20. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." In this verse Paul prays that Satan may be crushed and the peace of God be upon all men. Paul also prays that the grace of our Lord Jesus be with them. This verse is short but it summarizes, in a sense, the whole Bible. This is also our daily prayer. As God had promised, God sent his one and only Son as the Savior of the world and crushed Satan and gave us final victory. We also pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be with us always. When we look at people of the world we cannot be happy always, even with gorgeous and young people: We see in them all the ugliness that fallen man can possess. We become tired and weary to look at them. But when we look at our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross shedding his blood, we remember his grace that he died

for the sin of the world as a Paschal Lamb. Sometimes we become selfish and our hearts are hardened and we cannot see the grace of God. But when we stand beneath the cross and look at him we realize the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we have the grace of Jesus Christ in our hearts the world looks different and each person looks beautiful. So Paul prayed, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." The final greeting of Paul was, "The grace of our Lord be with you," to 29 individual persons. May God help us to seek the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ moment by moment.

Fifth, Timothy, my fellow coworker. Read verses 21-23. Look at verse 21. "Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives." Paul not only sends his own greetings to Rome but he also sends greetings on behalf of Timothy. It is amazing to know that Paul had such a tremendous respect for Timothy, his assistant. As we know well, Timothy was not the type of person to be Paul's righthand man or a successor of Paul's ministry. But Paul chose Timothy to be his successor because he was a faithful person. Paul did not choose his successor from among able men, among the men of great learning, or among the successful businessmen. But he chose Timothy, even though he looked weak and tearful and fearful, because he was faithful. Faithful people in the Christian fellowship usually look weird. Still we have to choose faithful people to whom to entrust the work of God (2 Ti 2:2). Paul's wisdom was right. Faithful men remain to the end. But all other kinds of men run away at the opportune time. Our God is a faithful God. Our Jesus is faithful. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Great is God's faithfulness. Great is the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Great is the faithfulness of all the saints in history. Paul praises God for Timothy's faithfulness, and greets the saints in Rome on behalf of Timothy.

Sixth, praise the Lord. Look at verse 26. 11 ... but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him." According to his promises, God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ to save men from their sins. The coming of Christ is the consummation of history. The coming of Christ is a unique event in history. The coming of Jesus Christ is God's glory. Through the coming of Jesus Christ all peoples of all nations can believe and obey God through his Son Jesus Christ. Look at verse 25. "Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past." In this verse Paul praises God that he established them in the gospel of Jesus. The process and fulfillment of the gospel was long, so long that it seemed to have been hidden. But through the coming of Jesus, the gospel was proclaimed. Now Paul and his coworkers are established in the gospel of Jesus Christ. To Paul, this was a marvelous grace of God. There is nothing greater than to be established in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look at verse 27. "To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen." This verse is the final doxology in awesome thankfulness.

In this chapter we learn that Paul knew the love of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He praises God for the saints in Rome. Paul hoped to carry out God's plan of world salvation coworking together with them. Most of all, we learn Paul's affection of Christ toward saints in Rome. In his final greeting, Paul's affection of Christ is overflowing toward 29 saints one by one. May God bless us to have the affection of Christ in our hearts toward our fellow Christian brothers and sisters all over the world.

