

<b>Series:</b> Romans	<b>Reference:</b> Romans 16:5-16/21-23	<b>Title:</b> Building Something Great!	<b>Date:</b> 3.19.17
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
Building the church means we need materials. And God's house is built with people. In Romans 16 Paul gives us a long list of names whom are the building blocks of the church at Rome and other places. People who had an affinity towards one another, and worked well together. People building while under tribulation, but working towards the hope of the future Cathedral of God, which is the Body of Christ to be built as seen in Revelation 5 & 7!			

## Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

I've always wanted to design my own home. Which has recently led me to watch a show called *Grand Designs* about people building their own homes in the UK. Sometimes they rehab an old house. Sometimes they begin from scratch. Sometimes a little of both. It's really interesting to see the property owners work together with architects, project managers, builders, window guys, concrete layers, brick layers, the surrounding neighbors & community groups, all to finally see their dream come about. There's always an effort to think through how the building will work with its surroundings, the existing neighborhood, reflect history, and still be forward thinking. They strongly consider how it improves on the surrounding neighborhood & community.

It's interesting how one small house build incorporates & affects so many people - particularly, how many people it takes to build a home. On one show it took upwards of 25 people just to put in large glass panes at the back of a house in South London. The sheer number of bodies working together to see something which was once only in concept progress from drawing to brick & mortar is incredible. Architecture has always interested me...

The first stone was laid at La Sagrada Familia in 1882. A large cathedral located in Barcelona, Spain. It's architect, Antoni Gaudí, died after he was hit by a tram in 1926. As of today, it's only 70% complete, and builders hope to finish it by 2026. That's nearly 150 years after work began. 2026 would be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gaudí's death, who famously joked that "...his client, God, was in no hurry to see it finished." With new masonry techniques speeding up the work, builders say the Almighty will only have to wait another 9 years to see its final spires & main façade in place.

Gaudi only witnessed the first tower go up in 1925 before his death. The structure has seen its setbacks. In July 1936, after the military uprising and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, revolutionaries set fire to the crypt, burnt down the provisional school (whole schools were built for the workers children!) & destroyed the studio workshop. Original plans, drawings & photographs were lost and many large-scale plaster models were broken. However, they repaired, rebuilt & kept going.

150 years of builders, architects, families, teachers, financiers, tour guides, community officials, bankers, brick layers, concrete workers, sculptors, artists, stain glass workers,

dreamers, lenders & setbacks. All working to see this incredible piece of architecture rise from the surrounding neighborhood. If you ever get the chance to see it, you won't be disappointed. A great building designed by a great architect.

I kind of wish this were my last sermon in Romans given that Haggai & Nehemiah are about building & rebuilding, and this would be a nice segue.

In Romans 16 Paul gives us a glimpse as to the house of God which was being built in Rome & elsewhere. It's foundations being laid, and walls being erected. God as the architect, Paul, Apollos, Timothy, Priscilla, Aquila and many others, as his workforce. Notice as we read, these are people, as well as greetings to whole households & house churches. Again like last week, this is a greeting to who knows how many...

*5 **Greet** also the church that meets at their house. **Greet** my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. 6 **Greet** Mary, who worked very hard for you. 7 **Greet** Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. 8 **Greet** Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. 9 **Greet** Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. 10 **Greet** Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. **Greet** those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.*

*11 **Greet** Herodion, my fellow Jew. **Greet** those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. 12 **Greet** Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. **Greet** my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. 13 **Greet** Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. 14 **Greet** Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them. 15 **Greet** Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them. 16 **Greet** one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send **greetings**.*

Then he sends greetings to them from some of the people in other areas they would, or might know...

*21 Timothy, my co-worker, sends his **greetings** to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews. 22 I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, **greet** you in the Lord. 23 Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his **greetings**. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their **greetings**.*

This final list includes me in v21, bet you didn't know Paul & I were buds!?! It also includes Tertius, apparently Paul's scribe. He's the Apostle Paul for goodness sakes! Pretty important guy, he doesn't pen his own letters! He dictates! Aren't I important enough to warrant a scribe?

Of all these individuals, only Priscilla & Aquila are mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament for certain; yet Paul knew them all individually, sending personal greetings

to them & their associates. The truth is we don't know much about many of these people he mentions at all. They're just names on a page to us. But it does tell us, Paul can be charged with being a true people person. This is where a pastor has to be creative in preaching, hope I've done that! Notice...

- He uses the term Greet 21 times just in this set of verses (not the whole chapter).
- He uses beloved for four persons in this chapter.
- Andronicus & Junias are called *kinsmen*, which may mean blood relatives of Paul, or only that they too were Jewish, possibly of the tribe of Benjamin like Paul. At one time they were in prison with him. Did ya ever notice we follow a bunch of convicts, or people whom others have labeled as criminals? Paul loosely equates them among the apostles which would mean they were great preachers of Christ and/or ministers of the Gospel.
- Rufus who's mentioned in v13 could've been the son of Simon, the same man forced to carry the Cross of Christ for him through the streets (Mk 15:21). This would mean that Simon's experience at that time caused him to accept Jesus, and that this is an ongoing familial legacy.
- Paul uses the term house or household 5 times (again, just in this set of verses).
- He uses the term church 3 times (again, just in this set of verses).
- He uses the term friend 4 times (again, just in this set of verses).
- And he used the very intimate term *Holy Kiss* once, which connotes people & churches who care for each other deeply.

This is an intimate loving picture of the local church....a familial image. Families are strange. They're built on years of joy, pain & intimate familiarity. Some break apart. Some don't. Some simply survive, but the hope is that they would thrive. I would hope ours would, like the image we see Paul paint here.

If La Sagrada Familia is a beautiful piece of architecture designed by a great architect, built through the blood sweat & tears, as well as joys, of so many people over 150 years, then we see the same here in Rome. The local church being built up in it's early decades. These are the names of both its builders, as well as its stones & mortar. These people, as we have seen in Phoebe, Priscilla & Aquila, Epenetus, Apollos, and all these others, are those who've worked alongside Paul & on their own to build up the church. They're gathering building materials from the nations surrounding them to form what was at the time the foundation of God's great cathedral - the Body of Christ.

They are family, and a thriving family stays at the table even through all the outside & internal pressures they face. They forgive, and in the end, they often love each other for the things they hate in each other, as family does. They exhibit grace & mercy towards one another given they can't hide their faults, sin & shortcomings. They're laid bare before each other, and that's when love withstands its truest test - the test of loving one another when you don't want to any longer!

You think about La Sagrada Familia, the first stone laid in 1882. They built just the crypt first, then off that it slowly rose over 141 years so far - it wasn't until 1925 before the first

tower had been finished. It's a long history. You'd want that building to be done, but there's something beautiful in that it has taken so long. That it's that important & grand to see it worked out to completion with so many people paying so much attention to detail over the years! Experiencing so much together along the way, even seeing some pass, and new folks added.

Thinking about the Church of God, built up over the centuries...of believers hewn out of the ground of history & brought into the builders plot. A cathedral with the architect as God himself. As Paul has taught us well over Romans, we're called to reach all nations with the Gospel of Christ. All unreached people groups still out there are the materials on order from God. These are the builders stone & mortar with which we build the church; every language, tongue, people & tribe.

We're called to *not* allow the setbacks, pressures, or the length of the build to discourage us, it's worth the time & effort. We long for it to be done, but we also know that, like in 2026 when the La Sagrada Familia is finally finished, it will be a sight to behold to say the least.

John gives us a picture in Revelation first in Chapter 5 of the church in finality built & completed - in speaking of Christ as the Lamb he says...

*"You are worthy to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
because you were slain,  
and with your blood you purchased for God  
persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.  
10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,  
and they will reign on the earth."*

He continues in that passage with the thousands upon thousands of angels & others who fall in worship of Christ before the throne. Then in chapter 7 he continues with this wonderful picture...

*9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:  
"Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb."*

These are all the people groups of the world; the nations gathered before & worshiping Christ! Those whom we've been praying for Sunday mornings. The Lampungese. The Uzbek. The Hazara. The Uygur. The Achenese. The Dubla. The Gadaria. The Bhotia. The Bishnoi. The Chamar. Etc.... will all be there!

Then at the end of that chapter he describes how these people who make up the Church are those who've been through the great tribulation, they've washed their robes making

them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev7:14). Think about the stories I told you last week of martyrs who stood their ground even when fed to lions, stripped & hung to poles only to be scourged & drowned, burned alive, shot, decapitated - from the most horrific stories, down to internal church conflict, or someones snicker in your office given the fact that you are one of those 'silly backwards Christians' - these are the tribulations we face.

We've washed our robes in Christ's blood & they've come out white. A visual image of giving our lives to Christ. That due to his substitutionary death on the cross we can be made clean, made righteous & made right before God once again! His sacrifice pays the price for our sin, our God loves that much, He would die for the nations though they persecute him.

Bill Mallonee of the *Vigilantes of Love* writes in his song, *Something to Hold on to...*  
*Nicodemus had his questions*  
*Thomas had his doubts*  
*We have not been left in the dark to work the whole thing out*

Christ's story recorded in the Scriptures is not only our current guide, but our future hope as well! Then as the song continues & referring to the dead church, he says...

*This clinical environment*  
*(where) To believe is just to fake*  
*I would thrust my hands inside the wound if it will bring you all to faith*

He calls us in those lyrics to a vibrant church life reflective of the price Christ paid for our redemption... And returning to Revelation 7, what do they do with the true nature of the Gospel? They worship, since all that we've ever longed for in life is satisfied in Christ (Rev 7:16-17) **even though we experience tribulation now...**

*'Never again will they hunger;*  
*never again will they thirst.*  
*The sun will not beat down on them,'*  
*nor any scorching heat.*  
*17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne*  
*will be their shepherd;*  
*he will lead them to springs of living water.'*  
*'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"*

There is future hope! And remember...you'll be standing there that day. Along with all the other people groups of the world. Worshiping... so our Sunday morning worship is a small glimpse into the future full kingdom of God established here on earth! Our prayer ministry which brings healing is a taste of the great physical & emotional healing to come! It should not be a clinical environment where to believe is to fake - it should be filled with gratitude & life in response to Christ & our future hope!

We will be there since we've been overcome with the Gospel like Bill Mallonee also writes in another song, *Judas Skin*:

*Hound of heaven on your trail  
Keen sense of direction and smell  
Knows your need before you do  
And when you bleed, He does too*

Christ is the Suffering Servant; the Lamb sacrificed for the the Church! He loves us enough to pursue us. He's paid the price to redeem us back into the family of God, building us into a great cathedral which has taken millennia to build! And like a pit-bull, once he's latched on he will not let go. He knows your need more than you do. He's using this local church to build his kingdom as He did in Rome, to take this wonderful news of His love to the nations - and the final construction of His Cathedral, which is the Body of Christ, will be absolutely glorious! Full of worship, gratitude & joy.

So, as we go into our worship & prayer time this morning, let's have hope for the future, and be grateful for what we have now in the Gospel. And if you're experiencing some sort of tribulation, come up and have someone pray for you, so that we can continue to build on this foundation which is the Church of God!

## Questions for Community Group Leaders

1. How do you react to Bill Mallonee's words in his song, *Something to Hold on to...*

*Nicodemus had his questions*

*Thomas had his doubts*

*We have not been left in the dark to work the whole thing out*

*This clinical environment*

*To believe is just to fake*

*I would thrust my hands inside the wound if it will bring you all to faith*

1. Read John 20:24-29

1. Do you have your doubts & questions? What do you do with them?

2. Look up verses on perseverance in tribulation (Romans 5/2 Thessalonians 1 & 3/ Hebrews 12/James 1 & 5/2 Peter 1, for instance)

1. Do you have your tribulations?

3. How do we 'be real' about these doubts & tribulations while still having a passion to bring others to faith as Bill says in the last line of his lyric?

2. Bill also writes in *Judas Skin*

*Hound of heaven on your trail*

*Keen sense of direction and smell*

*Knows your need before you do*

*And when you bleed, He does too*

1. Describe to each other the first time you felt God's pursuit of you as Bill describes here?

2. Was there any avoiding Him?

3. Describe what it means to you that he knows your need and bleeds along with you.

4. Read Revelation 5:7-14 & 7:9-17 and discuss the hope this brings us, using your imaginations, what will it be like on that day when the world stands before Christ and the kingdom is fully established?

5. Spend some time praying for our Community Partners, that we would see people come to faith this year through them.

6. Spend some time praying through the Unreached People Group (The Dubla in India) featured in the beginning of the sermon this week - [https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/16748/IN](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/16748/IN).