

Dr. Craig Keener, Romans, Lecture 18, Romans 16:21-27

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Romans. This is session 18 on Romans 16:21-27.

We've been looking at Paul's closing and now we're getting to the closing of the closing, which will also be our closing of this session.

And by the way, I was talking earlier about how I don't like to talk about demons, and then I went on and talked about Satan, but it's still not a pleasant topic. But here it's going to be pleasant for a while. Greetings from his colleagues, chapter 16, verses 21 through 23.

That was a common epistolary custom. Geoffrey Wyma at Calvin College has written on epistolary closings, the closing of letters in antiquity, and this was just common to have greetings. Greetings to people and greetings from your colleagues and so on.

Well, they didn't have a mail service back then. The Roman military had the only kind of mail service, and that wasn't for civilians. So, if you wanted to send a letter, you'd send it by somebody who was traveling.

So, you have like this one letter from Cicero. He had a letter ready to send, and then he was going to write something else. He said, no, no, I have to hurry because he's about to leave.

Or I had a letter sealed, ready to send you through the next traveler. Somebody came, so I'm writing this one to you now. So, it was people traveling all the time from one city to another.

Well, this letter is going to Rome. People are going to take advantage of this and send their greetings too. Some of them would have been known by some of the people in Rome who had been in Corinth.

And also, some of them probably just wanted to send their greetings to say, you know, we're in on this too. Some of them may travel to Paul with Rome later or may be thinking of doing that. Anyway, he sends greetings from Timothy in verse 21.

Well, Timothy was a major protegee of Paul. 1 Corinthians 4:17 talks about him as his son. In the context, he's saying, you have many pedagogues.

You have many people who can lead you to teaching and give you some elementary teaching, but you only have one father. You don't have many fathers. I begot you in the gospel.

And so be imitators of me, like a child would imitate their father. And Timothy, who walks in my ways, you can learn from him how to imitate me. And then he goes on to talk about, you want me to with a rod of discipline like a father to discipline them.

16:10, he talks about Timothy. 1 Corinthians. Philippians 2:19-22, we talked about that before.

None like him. 1 Thessalonians 3:2. So Timothy was somebody who was really close to Paul. He was to carry on his mission.

And Timothy is there with him because Timothy is part of the group that's going to be traveling with him to Jerusalem. Acts 20:4, also in 16:21, also sending greetings from Corinth. Our Jason and Sosipater.

Well, we know from Acts 17:5-9 that Jason, presumably it's the same Jason. It's a Macedonian Jason. Jason was Paul's host in Thessalonica.

Sosipater, is another one of the names where you can have it in both ways. The shorter version is Luke-Sopater. Actually, the longer version is the more technical one.

I'm sorry, the shorter version is the more technical one. But Sosipater, also known as Sopater, was from Berea in Macedonia in Acts 20:4. These are Macedonians who've come, as Paul has come down from Macedonia, he's come to Corinth. They've come with him to Corinth for the collection that they will be taking to Jerusalem.

They'll be going back through Macedonia and then on to Jerusalem. Acts 20:4. Also, we read about the Macedonians involved in this who'll be coming with him to Achaia. Corinth is the capital of Achaia.

2 Corinthians 9:4, 1 Corinthians 16:13. Also, he mentions Lucius. Now, that name doesn't appear among the envoys in Acts 20:4. Is it Luke or is it maybe not an envoy? Maybe it's a local believer in Corinth. Well, Luke apparently rejoins the group in Philippi in Acts 20:5-6. Then again, he may have sent greetings on ahead of himself.

But then again, here, Lucius is Jewish. And in Colossians 4:14, in the context of Colossians 4:11, Luke is a Gentile. Luke, the physician, is a Gentile.

And that fits, that passage fits the we narrator of Acts being with Paul later on in Rome. So, who is Lucius here? Maybe he's Luke, but maybe he's just a believer in Corinth. Maybe he's not part of the traveling team.

I'm inclined to think that when I try to put all the evidence together. Chapter 16, verse 22. Greetings from Tertius, the scribe.

He says, I'm the one who wrote this letter and I'm sending you my greetings. This was the third born male in the house, in his family. So, we know some odds and ends.

There are a lot of things we don't know about some of these people, but in this case, we know he was the third-born male in this household. That's how you get the name Tertius normally. Illiterate people needed scribes, a village scribe to help them.

Sometimes the village scribes themselves were barely literate, but they needed scribes to help them to write. People in between often would still depend on scribes who were more literate than they were. The wealthy were normally trained in reading and writing.

Some people have said that only about 10% of people in antiquity could read, but there were different levels of reading ability. So, there's some debate about that. And plus, it varies from one place to another.

It was higher in urban areas where they had more schools. It was also higher for men than it was for women and so forth. So maybe in Corinth, it's maybe 30%.

And what do you mean by reading and writing? Most people couldn't write. Sometimes actually when they're supposed to sign their names, it's kind of like an X to sign their name in some of the papyri. But you'd have these warning inscriptions or you have these laws posted and probably a lot of people could make out enough to know something of what was going on.

But to read something like Romans, most people couldn't read the letter. They'd have to hear it being read to them. Reading the Gospels, they would have to read to them.

The book of Revelation has to be read to them. So, the wealthy, however, normally could read, but they also could afford their own scribes. They could use some highly educated slaves.

There were a lot of highly educated slaves who were scribes, most of them Greeks. But then again, there were also free scribes who were professionals. We don't know

in Tertius's case exactly, but he was undoubtedly a believer and that's why he sends his greetings.

At this point, I'm just going to mention Quartus from verse 23. Presumably, he's the fourth-born male in the family, maybe Tertius's brother, but probably they'd be mentioned together in that case. So just a fourth-born male, again, a Roman name like Tertius.

Roman names weren't that uncommon in Corinth, which was a Roman colony and had a lot of Roman citizens as well. Gaius, the church's host, 16:23 at the beginning. Undoubtedly, he's the same Gaius as in 1 Corinthians 1:14, although he doesn't have to be the same Gaius that we run across everywhere in the New Testament.

Gaius was an extremely common Roman name. Now here's Gaius in Corinth. He's the church's host.

What does it mean he's the church's host? This is also a matter of debate. When I say it's a matter of debate, I'm just trying to be fair to some of the different sides. But sometimes, as in this case, I don't have a firm opinion about what is absolutely true.

Maybe he owned a large villa outside of Corinth. I mentioned the apartments in Rome. There were a lot of those probably in Corinth as well.

There were some homes that had been excavated in Corinth that were good Roman homes with a banquet hall, a triclinium, and also a larger atrium outside that with the impluvium where the rainwater from the roof would collect in the center. You had places like that. And those could maybe get 40, 50 people, but there were a whole lot more people by this point in the church in Corinth than 40 or 50 people.

So, if he's the host of the whole church, some think, okay, it's outside of Corinth proper. It's maybe in a large villa where you can have a whole lot of people on the estate at once, which would be a significant walk for many people. It wouldn't be something that they would do all the time.

But sometimes maybe the church was able to meet together. That's one of the theories about what's going on. As opposed to the usual meetings, usually, the largest homes that they would deal with were in the cranium, which was a wealthy suburb of Corinth.

And those places you could get 50 people in maybe. But another possibility is by the church's host. He says, host to the church and to myself, may mean the original host.

Acts 18.7, Titius Justice. Now, Titius Justice gives us two of this Roman citizen's names in his trianomena. What was his first name? Well, Gaius was a first name, a prenomen.

So, he could have been Gaius Titius Justice, in which case he was the original host of the church after they moved out of the synagogue. By the way, if you've heard the interpretation in 1 Corinthians 14, that the issue was that the women were yelling questions from the church balcony, keep in mind that we don't know that synagogues had balconies back then. There's some debate as to whether they had a second floor or not.

But the architectural evidence we have at the moment, the archaeological evidence we have at the moment, doesn't suggest it. It suggests that it was a later medieval custom, but that's debated too. But the church wasn't meeting in a synagogue at this point.

At the time that he wrote 1 Corinthians, it was meeting in homes and they did not have balconies. Normally, they overlooked the atrium or something like that. So maybe it's the original host of the church before they grew further, Gaius Titius Justice's house.

Or maybe it's just hyperbole. Maybe it just means that he hosted many, including Paul. Hyperbole was very commonly used by a range of ancient writers.

We know Jesus used it a lot. If you don't believe that, try squeezing a camel through the eye of a needle. Actually, they meant literal needles back then.

If you've heard the idea that it wasn't a literal needle, it was just a gate in Jerusalem, that may be helpful for the Israeli tourist industry, but that's not actually what it was back then. The gate that some people talk about is a medieval gate. It didn't even exist in Jesus' day.

Okay. Erastus, also in verse 23. He may have been an aedile or it may have been pronounced in Latin back then, a-dee-lay.

But I'm just going to pronounce it, well, probably I should pronounce it ideal, but then you'll mix it up with idealism. So let me just say aedile. But aedile or aediles were wealthy.

They had to pledge funds like, if you elect me, I will donate this to the city. That was part of how they got elected. We have an inscription that probably most scholars think of from this generation about Erastus, the aedile, this high public official.

Well, here in Romans 16:23, we read about Erastus, the city treasurer or the city manager. Could it be the same person? Well, it seems like it would be an extraordinary coincidence if it's not the same person, but this is very, very debated. Some say that *oikonomos*, the term can translate aedile or likelier it was a stepping stone to when he later became an aedile.

It was a leader role for him. Others say that the aedile Erastus was a different person than here. If this is the one who became an aedile, it may be that he's actually not a Christian, but he sends greetings just as the patron of the Christian community, that he's sponsoring some of the teaching there.

The same as we read about the Asiarchs in Acts 19:31, where they were friends of Paul. Well, friends could be used for peers, but it also could be used for somebody who was a patron or a sponsor, like a sponsor of the arts or a sponsor of some very popular teacher in Ephesus. That may be what was going on in Acts 19.31. That may be what's going on here.

He may just be a sponsor. The community is doing well, and he sends his greetings to the parallel community in Rome of this group that he likes. But in Acts 19:22, we read about a believer named Erastus.

He seems to be sent from Ephesus there, so he presumably was somebody who traveled with Paul. If he was from Corinth, he'd already traveled a long way with Paul. So, if that's the same Erastus as here, then he had to have some ability.

He had to be able to travel. Normally you'd think of a city manager. The office might be for a year.

Sometimes a person could be a public slave and fill that office. And certainly, you would think of an aedile as somebody who would be there in Rome, or I'm sorry, in this case in Corinth, who wouldn't be traveling a lot because they'd be campaigning for office or they'd have a lot of duties as they were there unless he fell from favor from the community for being a Christian. Or maybe he just was so independently wealthy that he could travel.

He could do what he wanted, and leave other things. But that would make Erastus a very exceptional individual because that would mean that he was willing to travel in the company of people of lower social class and so on. Paul would have approved of that, but the question is whether Erastus was that exceptional or not.

If he were an aedile, maybe not, but maybe. We don't know. He also is somebody who stays in Corinth.

Paul leaves him in Corinth in 2 Timothy 4 and verse 20. Well, we have a lot of questions about this. So, I'm going to leave you with questions rather than with answers.

My thinking is probably it's the same Erastus who was the city manager, who was an aedile, but he may have been a patron. Maybe he became a believer. But then harmonizing this with the Erastus of Acts, I don't know.

But there were other people named Erastus, so that could solve our problem. Maybe these are three different Erastuses. We don't know.

The final praise, verses 25 through 27, is the real concluding of the book of Acts. Just like he concludes Acts 9 through 11, especially 11:1 to 32 with a doxology of praise, 11:33 to 36, he's going to conclude the whole letter with a final praise. That's not something un-Pauline.

He does it earlier in the letter. But there's a textual question where scholars debate, was this actually the original ending of the letter to the Romans or was it added later? I like to think it's originally from Paul. It seems to fit Paul's own thinking.

It seems to fit the way Paul could design things rhetorically. It's not likely added by a later scribe. Maybe Paul decided to add it later on after he got to Rome himself.

I don't know. But it seems to me to be more Pauline. Chapter 15, verses 14 to 33, repeat ideas earlier from the letter in chapter 1, verses 8 through 15.

Well, 16:25 to 27 here recalls earlier ideas, especially from chapter 1, verses 2 through 5. We'll look at those later. But first I want to deal with the textual issue. Was this an original part of the letter? Scholars are actually divided on this.

But to do that I have to first explain something about textual criticism. Copyists can make mistakes and these mistakes can multiply over time. Say Paul writes a letter to the Romans.

Well, somebody copies it and they make a couple mistakes. Somebody else copies it, they make some different mistakes. Somebody else copies it, they make a different mistake.

All the copies based on the first copy are going to likely include the first copy's mistakes if they can't check the original and so on. So as time goes on, you're going to have more and more mistakes in the copies. Now, for those of you who aren't familiar with textual criticism or haven't noticed textual notes in your Bible, there are scholars who work on this and they figure out what's the likeliest reading on this.

There are people who say, well, if it's really true, it should have been copied exactly right, and we have other things that are copied exactly right. Well, all you have to do with those other things to show that they can be copied wrong is to just copy them and make some mistakes. There's a difference if you copy something in royal courts and you make a mistake, you destroy it.

You're going to have it standardized. People who talk about a certain document being standardized in that way in royal courts are often thinking of a document that was standardized in the third caliphate, that is, maybe a generation after the book existed orally, so it was standardized a bit later. But in the case of the New Testament, it wasn't copied in royal courts.

It was copied under conditions of persecution. We have the substance of the message. For us, for certain groups, a text being sacred means that they can recite it in the original language and so on.

For Christians, we think of the textuality in a different way. We see it as the message of the text, what it has to say to us, and the message of the text is normally not impaired. Now, sometimes I've not been able to explain to you the message of the text in some detail, regardless of the textual issue.

That wasn't a textual issue, and that happens with other kinds of documents too. People will disagree on the uncertain levels of interpretation. But most of the textual variants that we have in the New Testament are minor.

They deal with minor kinds of issues. There are only two long ones in the New Testament, and we know what those are. In both cases, we know Mark 16, 9-20.

Almost any New Testament scholar will tell you that's probably not part of the original text. I actually am a bit more optimistic about that one than the other one, John 7-53 through 8-11, where it totally changes the subject. It interrupts the context, not as a digression, but it actually interrupts the context in terms of the last day of the festival, some things that we see in the following context.

It's not just textually suspect, but it uses terms that are not used anywhere else in John's Gospel, terms that were used from the Synoptics. Now, it may be a true story. In both cases, they may reflect early traditions, but we know what those are.

Normally, if you have a translation other than the Old King James, you'll find that in the notes of your translation. 1 John 5:7 in the King James is there because the King James was translated mainly from a certain edition of Erasmus' Greek text. Erasmus originally left it out.

Some people who read the Latin Vulgate, they said, look, it's here in the Latin. You left it out of your Greek text because you don't believe in the Trinity. He said, I do believe in the Trinity.

Well, actually, maybe that was in question. I don't know if he believed in the Trinity or not, but I believe in the Trinity. But in any case, Erasmus said, it's not in any of my manuscripts.

If you can show me one manuscript that has it, I'll put it in. Well, they found a manuscript. It seems to have been written for the very occasion.

So, he put it in there with a lengthy footnote explaining that he suspected foul play, but he promised he would do it, so he did it. In his next edition, he left it out, but the King James is translated from that edition. But that's like one verse.

You have some minor things like that. Translations today, actually, I think the earliest King James actually had some textual information, but it was left out because it was expensive to print it that way, and so on. But in most translations today, it's a significant textual divergence, they'll let you know.

The textual question here, I don't think is very significant. It's there in the vast majority of manuscripts, but let me go on and talk about it anyway. Some manuscripts have it, this final praise to God, some manuscripts have it after 1423, or they have it here and after 1423.

Well, they may have it after 1423 because of some confusion of the manuscripts back in the early period. Marcion ended in 1423, but Marcion was an extreme lone voice. I mean, he didn't speak for the majority of the church in the Roman Empire or anywhere else.

Some manuscripts omit this, but most of the early ones include it, and it has wide geographic support. If you don't know a lot about textual criticism, one of the things is if you have it in a lot of different places, it can't be any later than those different places that it appears because these didn't copy it from the church in Georgia or Armenia didn't copy it from the church in Rome or the Coptic manuscripts didn't copy it from certainly the Byzantines or something like that. So anyway, wide geographic support.

Scholars are fairly evenly divided in the question, but Roman scholars are more than text critics, I think, but the letter probably didn't end with the greeting to Quartus in 16:23. 16:24 actually is a later edition, but in any case, 16:25 through 27. Here I'm taking this chart from my commentary, especially because it was two in the morning when I finished these PowerPoint slides.

This is my third course in two weeks, so that's why at the end I quoted my commentary in the last couple of slides. But God is powerful to establish you according to my gospel. This evokes earlier points in Romans, like where he said, I yearn, I long to share some grace gift by God's spirit so you may be established.

He speaks of my gospel in 16:25. Well, earlier he said, God will judge people according to my gospel. Paul serves the gospel and wants to share it with them.

The preaching of Jesus Christ, 16:25, he spoke of his preaching earlier in the letter. The revelation of the gospel mystery in 16:25, well, earlier he spoke of God's righteousness being revealed in the gospel. The mystery of Gentile inclusion in 16:25, he spoke earlier about the mystery of how Gentiles are included.

God's mystery is now revealed, phanerao, from the scriptures of the prophets. Well, God's righteousness is now revealed from the law and the prophets, 3:21. And Paul's good news was already promised in the prophets 1:1, and 2. We talked about it more there and his use of apocalyptic for revelation in 1:17.

The objective that Paul wants to bring about is the obedience of faith among all the nations in 16:26 and the objective in 1:5 and in 15:18, although it has slightly shorter formula, the objective is the obedience of faith among all the nations. And he does talk a lot about obedience in some of the chapters, especially six through eight. And then in particular details like in 12 through 14.

To the only wise God be glory forever, 16:27. To God be glory forever, 11:36, for his incomparable wisdom. Glory to God was an appropriate praise, including at a work's ending.

We see that in 4 Maccabees. We see that at the end of Jude. Of course, amen was a natural close to praises, a natural close to some books.

Sometimes scribes added it as just a way of saying, yes, I agree with what's written here. Amen. But in any case, Paul's frequent concern for God's honor and name in this letter climaxes in a final praise to God for the wise way that God has arranged history so that the Gentiles as well as the Jewish people may come to obey Israel's God through faith in Jesus the Messiah.

In this doxology, on some points even more obviously than in 1:16 and 1:17, Paul ties together some of the main themes that bind this renowned letter together. In this letter, Paul summons both Jew and Gentile to recognize the one God. And if we are reconciled to the one God through Jesus Christ, we're also reconciled to one another.

Amen.

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