

## Dr. Craig Keener, Romans, Session 18

### Romans 16:21-27

### Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

#### 1. Abstract of Keener, Romans, Session 18, Romans 16:21-27, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Craig Keener's lecture** analyzes Romans 16:21-27, focusing on the letter's closing greetings and final doxology. He **discusses the identities and significance** of those Paul greets, including Timothy, Jason, Sosipater, Lucius, Tertius, Quartus, Gaius, Erastus, and others. **The lecture explores textual criticism**, examining the authenticity and original placement of the final praise. Keener also **connects the concluding doxology** to recurring themes throughout Romans, such as God's revelation and the inclusion of Gentiles. Finally, he addresses scholarly debates surrounding the identities of several individuals mentioned and the integrity of the text.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Romans, Session 18 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → Romans).**



**Keener\_Romans\_Session18.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

#### Briefing Doc: Romans 16:21-27 with Dr. Craig Keener

**Source:** Dr. Craig Keener, Romans, Lecture 18, Romans 16:21-27 © 2024 Craig Keener and Ted Hildebrandt

#### Main Themes:

- **Personal Greetings:** Paul concludes his letter with greetings from his colleagues and mentions various individuals in the Roman church. This highlights the importance of community and personal connections within the early Christian movement.
- **The Role of Scribes:** The mention of Tertius, the scribe, sheds light on the process of letter writing in antiquity. It emphasizes the significance of literacy and the role of scribes in facilitating communication.
- **The Mystery Revealed:** The concluding doxology emphasizes the revelation of God's mystery – the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan – through Jesus Christ. This theme resonates with Paul's overarching argument throughout Romans.
- **Obedience of Faith:** Paul's ultimate goal is the "obedience of faith among all the nations" (Romans 16:26). This echoes his earlier emphasis on faith as the means of justification and reconciliation with God.
- **Concluding Praise:** The doxology serves as a fitting climax to Romans, highlighting God's wisdom and power in orchestrating salvation for both Jews and Gentiles.

#### Key Ideas & Facts:

- Sending greetings through travelers was a common practice due to the lack of a formal mail service. This explains the numerous greetings included in Romans 16.
- The identity and role of certain individuals mentioned (e.g., Gaius, Erastus) are debated, showcasing the complexities of historical reconstruction.
- Literacy levels varied in antiquity, with most people relying on oral communication. Scribes played a vital role in enabling written communication for those who were illiterate or less literate.
- The concluding doxology in Romans 16:25-27 may have been added later, although Dr. Keener argues for its Pauline authorship.

- The doxology connects key themes of Romans, including God's power, the revelation of the gospel mystery, and the obedience of faith.

#### Quotes:

- **On the use of scribes:** "Illiterate people needed scribes, a village scribe to help them...People in between often would still depend on scribes who were more literate than they were."
- **On the "mystery" revealed:** "God's mystery is now revealed, phanerao, from the scriptures of the prophets."
- **On Paul's objective:** "The objective that Paul wants to bring about is the obedience of faith among all the nations in 16:26."
- **On the significance of the concluding praise:** "In this doxology...Paul ties together some of the main themes that bind this renowned letter together."
- **On the overarching message of Romans:** "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."

#### Overall Impression:

Dr. Keener's lecture provides a rich exploration of Romans 16:21-27, delving into historical context, textual considerations, and theological significance. He emphasizes the letter's personal and communal dimensions while highlighting Paul's central message of God's plan of salvation for all through faith in Jesus Christ.

## 4. Romans Study Guide: Session 16, Romans 16:21-27

### Romans 16:21-27 Study Guide

#### Short Answer Questions (2-3 sentences each)

1. What was the common epistolary custom regarding greetings in ancient letters? How did this play out in Paul's letter to the Romans?
2. What challenges existed in sending letters in ancient times? How did this impact Paul's letter?
3. Who was Timothy, and what was his significance in Paul's ministry?
4. What can we learn about the individuals mentioned in verses 21-23 (e.g., Jason, Sosipater, Tertius, Gaius)?
5. What was the role of a scribe in antiquity? How does this relate to Tertius's role in Romans?
6. What different theories exist regarding Gaius's role as the "church's host"?
7. What do we learn about Erastus, and what are the different interpretations regarding his possible roles and identities?
8. What is textual criticism, and how does it relate to the study of the Bible?
9. What is the textual issue surrounding Romans 16:25-27, and what are the arguments for and against its inclusion in the original letter?
10. How does the final doxology (16:25-27) tie together the major themes of Romans?

#### Answer Key

1. **Answer:** Ancient letters commonly included greetings from the sender and other individuals known to the recipient. In Romans, Paul includes greetings from colleagues traveling with him and from other believers in Corinth, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the early Christian communities.
2. **Answer:** Ancient letter delivery relied on travelers as there was no formal postal service. This meant sending letters was dependent on finding someone traveling to the recipient's location, and the arrival time could be unpredictable. Paul's letter to the Romans likely traveled with individuals who were joining him on his journey to Jerusalem.

3. **Answer:** Timothy was a close companion and protégé of Paul, described by Paul as his "son in the faith." He played a significant role in Paul's missionary work and was entrusted with carrying on Paul's mission.
4. **Answer:** The individuals mentioned represent a diverse group within the early church. Some, like Jason and Sosipater, were likely Macedonian believers involved in the collection for Jerusalem. Tertius served as the scribe for the letter, while Gaius potentially hosted the Corinthian church or Paul himself.
5. **Answer:** Scribes were individuals trained in reading and writing, essential in a society where literacy was limited. They assisted those who could not write themselves, including composing and copying documents. Tertius's role as the scribe of Romans highlights the importance of this profession in spreading the Christian message.
6. **Answer:** Some believe Gaius owned a large villa outside Corinth that could accommodate the entire church. Others suggest he was the initial host of the church in his home or that the phrase "church's host" is hyperbole, indicating he frequently hosted gatherings, including Paul.
7. **Answer:** Erastus is described as the "city treasurer" or "city manager," possibly indicating a high-ranking official. Some identify him with an aedile (a wealthy public official) mentioned in an inscription. There is debate whether this Erastus is a believer, a patron of the church, or even the same person as the Erastus mentioned in Acts.
8. **Answer:** Textual criticism is the scholarly discipline of comparing different manuscripts of a text to identify and analyze variations, aiming to reconstruct the most likely original text. It is crucial in studying the Bible because the original manuscripts are lost, and we rely on copies that have been transmitted over centuries, introducing potential errors or alterations.
9. **Answer:** The textual issue revolves around whether Romans 16:25-27 was originally part of Paul's letter or added later. Arguments for its inclusion include its presence in most manuscripts and its thematic coherence with the rest of the letter. Arguments against its inclusion point to its absence in some early manuscripts and its possible placement after chapter 14 in others.

10. **Answer:** The final doxology (16:25-27) brings together key themes of Romans by praising God for his power in establishing believers (connecting to Paul's earlier concern for their growth), highlighting the revelation of the gospel mystery (referencing the inclusion of Gentiles), and calling for the obedience of faith among all nations (echoing Paul's focus on God's righteousness for both Jews and Gentiles).

## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the personal greetings in Romans 16:21-23. What do they reveal about the social dynamics, relationships, and networks within the early Christian communities?
2. Discuss the role of Timothy in Paul's ministry, drawing upon evidence from Romans 16:21 and other relevant New Testament passages. How did their partnership contribute to the spread of the early Christian movement?
3. Explore the challenges and strategies of communication in the ancient world, particularly focusing on letter writing and the role of scribes. How does understanding these factors illuminate our interpretation of Romans?
4. Analyze the different interpretations of Erastus's identity and role in Romans 16:23. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each position? What implications do these interpretations have for our understanding of social stratification and the diversity of leadership within the early church?
5. Critically evaluate the arguments for and against the originality of Romans 16:25-27. What criteria do textual critics use to assess such textual variations? How does this example demonstrate the importance of textual criticism in biblical studies?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Epistolary:** Relating to letters or the writing of letters.
- **Protege:** A person who is guided and supported by an older and more experienced or influential person.
- **Macedonia:** A region in northern Greece.
- **Achaia:** A region in southern Greece, with Corinth as its capital.
- **Scribe:** A person who copies documents, especially in ancient times.
- **Aedile:** A Roman official responsible for public buildings and games.
- **Oikonomos:** Greek for "household manager," used in Romans 16:23 to describe Erastus's role.
- **Patron:** A person who provides financial or other support to a person, organization, cause, or activity.
- **Textual Criticism:** The scholarly discipline of comparing different manuscripts of a text to identify and analyze variations, aiming to reconstruct the most likely original text.
- **Doxology:** A liturgical formula of praise to God.
- **Amen:** A Hebrew word meaning "so be it" or "truly," used in prayers and hymns as an expression of affirmation.

## **5. FAQs on Keener, Romans, Session 18, Romans 16:21-27, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)**

### **Romans 16:21-27 FAQ**

#### **1. What was the common practice for sending letters in ancient times, and how does this relate to Romans 16:21-23?**

In ancient times, there was no formal mail service like we have today. Letters were typically sent with individuals who were traveling to the destination city. Romans 16:21-23 reflects this practice as Paul sends greetings not only from himself but also from those traveling with him and others who wished to convey their regards to the Roman church.

#### **2. Who was Tertius, and what role did he play in the writing of Romans?**

Tertius, mentioned in Romans 16:22, was the scribe who physically wrote the letter of Romans for Paul. It was common for people, even those with some literacy, to employ scribes for writing formal letters. His name, meaning "third," suggests he was the third-born male in his family.

#### **3. What is the significance of Gaius being called the “host of the church” in Romans 16:23?**

There are multiple interpretations regarding Gaius' role as "host of the church." Some believe he may have owned a large estate outside of Corinth where the entire church could gather on occasion. Others propose he might have been the initial host of the church in his home, as the church likely met in homes before it grew larger. It's also possible this is hyperbole, simply signifying that Gaius was known for his hospitality, hosting many believers, including Paul.

#### **4. Who was Erastus, and what is the debate surrounding his identity?**

Erastus, mentioned in Romans 16:23, is described as the city treasurer or manager of Corinth. An inscription from Corinth mentions an Erastus who served as an "aedile," a high public official responsible for public works and games. Some scholars believe these are the same person, while others argue they must be different individuals. Adding to the complexity, Acts 19:22 mentions another Erastus who traveled with Paul, potentially from Ephesus. Whether these are one, two, or three different Erastuses remains a point of discussion.



## **5. What are the key arguments for and against the originality of the doxology in Romans 16:25-27?**

The doxology in Romans 16:25-27 has been the subject of debate regarding its authenticity as part of Paul's original letter. Some scholars argue that it was a later addition, pointing to its absence in some early manuscripts and its placement in different locations in others. However, proponents of its originality note its presence in a majority of early manuscripts, its wide geographical support, and its thematic consistency with the rest of Romans, especially echoing ideas from chapters 1 and 15.

## **6. How does the final doxology in Romans 16:25-27 tie together major themes from the letter?**

The doxology summarizes key themes of Romans. It emphasizes:

- **The power of the Gospel:** God is able to establish believers according to Paul's gospel, which reveals God's righteousness.
- **The revelation of God's mystery:** The mystery of Gentile inclusion, hidden for ages, is now revealed through the prophets and proclaimed in the Gospel.
- **The obedience of faith:** Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, Jew and Gentile alike.
- **God's glory:** The letter culminates in praising God for His wise plan of salvation, bringing glory to Him forever.

## **7. How does textual criticism help us understand variations in the manuscript tradition of Romans, particularly the ending?**

Textual criticism examines the variations in different manuscript copies of ancient texts, seeking to determine the most likely original reading. In the case of Romans, textual critics analyze manuscript evidence to address questions like the placement and authenticity of the doxology in 16:25-27. By considering factors like the age, geographical distribution, and quality of manuscripts, textual criticism helps scholars make informed judgments about the most reliable text.

## **8. What is the significance of the "amen" at the end of Romans?**

The "amen" at the end of Romans serves as a common affirmation, expressing agreement and endorsement of the preceding words. In this context, it underscores the message of the doxology, emphasizing the praise and gratitude directed towards God for His glorious plan of salvation.