

Romans 16:21-27: The Final Greetings and Doxology of Romans

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Session 18

Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Keywords

Romans 16, Timothy, Erastus, Tertius, Doxology, Textual Criticism, Craig Keener, Greetings

Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener covers the final greetings and doxology of Romans in Romans 16:21-27. Dr. Keener discusses the greetings sent by Paul's colleagues, including Timothy, Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, Tertius, Gaius, and Erastus, exploring their historical and social backgrounds. He then addresses the textual issues surrounding the doxology (verses 25-27), explaining principles of textual criticism and defending the Pauline authorship of this final praise. Finally, the lecture highlights how the doxology synthesizes the core themes of the letter, focusing on God's power to establish believers and the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles through faith.

Outline

- I. Introduction to Romans 16:21-27 (Session 18)
 - A. Focus of the Lecture: The final greetings and closing doxology
 - B. Scope of Passages: Romans 16:21-27 (the "closing of the closing")
- II. Greetings from Paul's Colleagues (Romans 16:21-23)
 - A. Ancient Epistolary Customs
 1. Greetings to and from colleagues were common in ancient letters
 2. Letter delivery was dependent on traveling individuals (no civilian public mail service)
 3. Letters were prepared and sent with travelers moving between cities
 - B. Greetings from Specific Individuals

1. Timothy
 2. a. Paul's key protege, described as his "son in the faith"
 3. b. Entrusted with carrying on Paul's mission and traveling with him to Jerusalem
 4. Jason and Sosipater
 5. a. Macedonian companions who traveled with Paul to Corinth
 6. b. Participating in the collection effort for the Jerusalem church
 7. Lucius
 8. a. Identified as a Jewish believer and kinsman of Paul
 9. b. Likely distinct from Luke the physician, who was a Gentile
 10. Tertius (the Scribe)
 11. a. Paul's amanuensis/scribe, likely the third-born male of his household
 12. b. Role of scribes in ancient literacy, where many could not write or read extensive documents
 13. Quartus
 14. a. Believer sending greetings, likely the fourth-born male of his family
 15. Gaius
 16. a. Host to Paul and the entire local church in Corinth
 17. b. Debate on whether his household was a large villa or if he was the original host (Gaius Titius Justus)
 18. Erastus
 19. a. Described as the city treasurer or manager (oikonomos)
 20. b. Debated identity: whether he is the same high public official (aedile) mentioned in Corinthian inscriptions
 21. c. Could have functioned as a wealthy patron/sponsor of the Christian community
- III. The Final Doxology and Praise (Romans 16:25-27)

- A. Textual Criticism and Integrity
 1. Debate among scholars over whether the doxology was part of the original letter
 2. Understanding manuscript copyist variations and how minor errors multiply over time
 3. Minor nature of most New Testament textual variants (e.g., Mark 16:9-20, John 7:53-8:11, 1 John 5:7)
 4. Placement variants: found after Romans 14:23 in some manuscripts, but widely supported in early versions geographically
 5. Theological and rhetorical coherence indicates Pauline authorship
- B. Theological Themes Recalled in the Doxology
 1. God's power to establish believers according to Paul's gospel
 2. Preaching of Jesus Christ and the revelation of the mystery of Gentile inclusion
 3. The role of prophetic scriptures in confirming God's righteousness and plan
 4. The objective: bringing about the "obedience of faith" among all nations
 5. Incomparable wisdom and glory due to the only wise God forever
- IV. Conclusion
 - A. Climactic ending emphasizing God's plan in redemptive history
 - B. Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile under the one God through Jesus Christ