

Romans

When someone mentions “Romans” we usually think of the Book. Let us not forget that Paul was writing to a church, and a church is people. It is not a building. It is not an organization. It is people. The Apostle includes what amounts to a short list of its members in the sixteenth chapter of his letter. If there is any significance and meaning attached to the names themselves, this list constitutes a fascinating study of church membership. If each lived up to, or reflected the essence of their name, the Church at Rome must have been a beautiful one. Yet every true church of Jesus Christ is made up of men and women of like spirit.

Each Christian has their own testimony and history of salvation. Each has their own spiritual gifts, ministries and influence. Paul recognized each saint in a final tribute before he said farewell to these Romans.

The first mentioned is **Phoebe** which means “shining or radiant.” Every assembly has its Phoebes. They just glow like a sunshine of their own. They would be quick to tell you that they are not the light, but bare witness to the light, like John the Baptist; but they shine none the less. We love to see them and their smile is infectious and needed in this dark world. Praise God for the Phoebes of your assembly.

Next there is **Priscilla** or the “Ancient one.” What would our churches be were it not for the dear older saints. They grace the

congregation with a wisdom that can only come from time and experience. They, like Enoch, have walked with God. They have endured the tests of time. They have seen the battles of many world wars and have lived to tell us about them. Their silver hair crowns the congregation with a certain dignity and stability that allows the church to keep on course.

Aquila means “eagle.” These dear souls are known to mount up with wings to great heights. They are known to bow their heads in prayer and lift the whole assembly nearer God. These precious saints carry us to the very peaks of the mountain top and we are all the richer for it. Thank God for the Aquillas.

Epenetus means “praised.” Every church and assembly has certain individuals that are indeed worthy of praise. They have earned their stripes in the trenches of service. They quickly come to mind as deserving thanksgiving and accolades for others. The true servants however, are quick to turn over any applause given to themselves to the Lord Jesus, and “his praise is continually in [their] mouth.” Their life is a constant song of thanksgiving to God. They are a reminder of the one who is “worthy to be praised.”

Mary, the name, so special in the annals of Christianity that it deserves a sentence of its own. Mary! The name means strong. While this Mary most certainly is not mother of our Lord, she shares this blessed name. Who is stronger than a mother? While having a heart of gold, mothers have a constitution of iron which endures untold trials and hardships for those they love. Theirs is a love that will not let you go.

Romans



Saints we all
Have Known

THE CHURCH
AT ROME

by: Ingimar DeRidder

Andronicus is “conqueror.” Just what he conquered, we do not know. Every assembly has such battle tested saints who have fought the world, the flesh, and the devil. Perhaps he emerged from a valley of Elah carrying the head of some first century Goliath. Perhaps he was the living trophy of God’s grace who survived the holocaust of some personal Armageddon. We can look around our assemblies and see the faithful soldiers that have earned the battle ribbons of conquest. They are the survivors.

Junia means “youth.” What would our church be were it not for the young ones, the babes in Christ? The church can echo the words of Rachel, “give me children or else I die.” A church that does not have her Junias should weep at the altar like Hannah and pray for her Samuel. It should invoke the assistance of heaven to give her children. Thank God, the next time you are confronted with the youthful enthusiasm of the new convert. Thank God for Junia.

Tryphenea and Tryphosa mean “dainty and delicate” respectively. These remind us to all be careful. These gentle souls keep us from being spiritual bulls in a china shop. They, like the lily of the field, bring a sweet and refreshing spirit to our fellowships. These are sensitive souls that feel for us and with us. We thank you, Lord for the ministry of these two dear sisters.

Amphias sounds like the name itself “large.” She is the opposite of small. We all have met “small” human beings. Small in mind, and small in heart. This is not Amphias. She has a heart large enough for any that need her. The guiding star finds her no matter how

dark the night. There is always room in her inn.

Urbane means “pleasant.” He is gracious and kind. He is a breath of fresh air and we love to visit with his pleasantness. He does not take the center stage, but always has words that are “apples of gold in pitcher of silver.”

Stachys is the “ear of corn.” One plants, another waters, but God gives the increase. He is the blessing of the harvest. He is the grain. He is the seed, and like the seed he is willing to fall into the ground and die for our Lord. He is the witness and his power is the Word. He is ready to give an answer to every man that asketh him the reason of the hope that is in him. Oh, how we need Stachys.

Apelles is a name derived from the pagan god of mythology. His name is a reminder of what he once was and it is all the more transformed on the mountain of transfiguration. Let us never forget the pit that we were rescued from.

Aristobulus means “best counselor.” Poor is the church that does not have him. Impoverished is the congregation that does not have a counselor. We knock on his door at the midnight hour. We sit at his table and listen as he untangles difficult problems, like an angler does to a knotted fishing line, so we can soon get our hook back in the water again.

Herodion means “heroic.” Not everyone is a hero. Not everyone wears a bronze star or silver star. While we do not build shrines to mortal men, we all have our heroes. Every congregation who has

burn for God. He is forever on fire. No one will put this light under a bushel. Get close enough to him and he will ignite your own heart.

Hermas is the “interpreter.” He answers hard questions, comparing Scripture with Scripture. He is the teacher and the scribe. He is one who can pluck a lily from God’s field and teach us how to trust in the Lord. He cares for the truth entrusted to the Church and makes wise the simple.

Philologus is the “lover of learning.” If Hermas stands up to teach, Philologus is first to sit at his feet. He loves to learn. He has a hunger and thirst after righteousness. Philologus always sits in the front row lest he should miss a single word. His Bible is marked and worn. He is the true disciple of Christ.

Julia means “soft haired.” She is a beautiful one. She is adorned not with gold, but with a meek and submissive spirit. Like all the sisters of her assembly, she covers her glory with the veil “because of the angels.” She would have no one behold her glory when they have gathered to behold God’s Glory.

Nereus means “lamp.” His name evokes a hundred stories and illustrations for the believer. Were we to see him sitting in his place among the saints at Rome, at first we might remember the admonition of our Lord to “Let your light so shine before men, that they might see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Then on greater reflection, we would remember the wise and foolish virgins and be encouraged to keep our lamps full and our wicks trimmed,

one is blessed indeed.

Narissus was a famous family name. Paul is obviously speaking to slaves who have somehow obtained the name along with their freedom. While we were all once slaves who have been given our freedom after having been bought with a great price, some seem to have obtained a greater freedom. Their chains were heavier, so in their liberation their songs are louder. If the Son shall make them free they are free indeed.

Persis comes from the oriental Persia. Here is the stranger and foreigner. In Christ there is no Jew or Greek. “God so loved the world.” Persis is evidence that the Gospel is for everyone and no doubt longs in his heart for the day that all his people shall hear and believe the Gospel. What church is without those with a heart for missions? Such a church, is a church without a heart.

Rufus means “red.” “Come now let us reason together saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” He could very well have been the son of the very man of Cyrene who carried the cross of Jesus to Golgotha. If he was, he was a constant reminder of the cross. Let us fellowship, socialize, eat and play together; but give us men that will never allow us to forget the cross.

Asyncitus, the “incomparable one.” Stands like Saul head and shoulders above his fellows in the spirit.

Phlegon means “burning” He helped the congregation at Rome

for who knows, perhaps the bridegroom will come for his bride even today.

The Bible tells us that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.” That included the Romans. God even loved those who physically nailed Jesus to the cross. If God could love these then he loves everyone. Even the armies of Rome could not hold back the love of God.

The same God who raised the Savior, raised up a church in Rome. One by one sinners became saints through the power of the cross.

The church has many members. Each is special, and each important. Look around your own assembly and thank God for each one God has allowed to touch your life. Paul began his letter to the Romans by saying “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all.”

Dear Lord, we thank thee for the dear people of God who have blessed our lives and brought us closer to thee and thy perfect will.