

Episode 133

Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. Give my greetings to Mary, who has worked so hard for your benefit. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did. Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

- Romans 16

Reading through the closing chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans is like reading through a list of heroes, and Paul makes it clear that in his eyes, and God's eyes, they were.

It's helpful to read through this chapter slowly, taking note of what is celebrated, seeing what was recorded in scripture for generations to model themselves after. There are treasurers, prisoners, mothers, sons, sisters, and brothers, but the label Paul uses time and time again is "friend." What a joy for Paul to have been surrounded by such like-minded people, who loved God and loved his people.

Paging through the rest of the New Testament, Paul always took a moment to honour those who had served alongside him, even referring to Epaphroditus as a co-worker, brother, and fellow soldier! You get the sense that heaven has given a standing ovation to each one of the people listed here as a celebration of Christlike acts of service that were poured out as a living sacrifice to the God they served.

Such servant-hearted selfless leadership is exemplary. What a privilege to be part of a church that follows this example!

We have seen friends service cars and return them full of groceries, heard how parents were willing to drive 9 hours to help someone else's child settle in at a new university, and been humbled by stories of finance managers settling single moms' outstanding debt. We've been moved by prayer-vigils held outside hospitals for weeks on end, seen restaurant bills being paid even before we could reach for our wallets, holiday homes made available to those on the brink of burnout, cars given away by the dozen, and prayers being prayed for names and faces we barely know. Children have been babysat so parents could rebuild their lives, the gospel has been shared on crooked stairs to crooked people, funerals have been arranged, meals provided, struggling restaurants supported, homes have been opened, lives have been changed, hope restored, faith renewed, sonship strengthened, purity protected, the gospel advanced - and that's just feedback from the last few weeks.

Thank you for the privilege of doing life with you, in this family, at this time. We could never have dreamt that a season like this could be underpinned by a community like ours.

In the words of Maggie Mashigo, "my dear, dear friends - thank you."

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