

Henley-in-Arden Baptist Church  
“Staying Connected” 21 – Sunday 9th August 2020

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*Staying connected to God and each other while not meeting as church in the normal way*

This week, we come to our last session in Romans: Chapter 16

There seems to be a good, healthy sense of ‘church family’ expressed here in this part of Romans. Paul lists names of people, and there is concern for folk and plenty of personal greetings. Names are important; and calling someone by name shows care and respect, affirms that person and confirms dignity. God is big on human dignity; and isn’t it wonderful – and humbling – that He treats us in such a kind and loving way.

Paul was very much interested in individual people as well as the big theological themes he addresses. We can have that same concern for one another.

There is also some interesting study that can be done on the list of names. Some of the men and women listed were clearly leaders, some had interesting roles in support of the functioning of the church..... **All** of them were valued for who they were.

God’s gift of grace to us is twofold (at least). Firstly, He has made us in His image; and then, secondly, He has called us be a part of his family. None of this because of our own merit; but because He loves us freely. The people Paul lists here were recipients of God’s unmerited favour and love.



I think, in addition to this, Paul was aware of their enormous contribution to the church in different ways. As we know, church is actually the people (not the buildings). And the members of the church are indeed the gifts that God gives for the life and witness of the church fellowship to thrive. Now of course, over a season our different gifts and contributions are expressed in different ways; and we can’t always be as active as we may have been in other seasons, perhaps. It depends on our individual circumstances. But we can all carry that sense of being fellowship together: looking out for each other, praying for one another, and the wider needs around us.

*Challenge:*

Who might God be prompting you to pray for or help in some way this week? Similarly, who might you ask for prayer or help from, perhaps?

All this is to God's glory. He is surely pleased when his children devote themselves to service in this way.

Paul closes his letter with a note of praise and worship:

*<sup>25</sup> Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, <sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith – <sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory for ever through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Romans 16:25-27)*

*We start our prayers with a great prayer of old:*  
Create in us, O Lord, a heart forever resigned to your will, a life always mindful of your presence and a devotion eternally dedicated to your glory; through Christ our Lord. Amen.  
[Thomas Ken (1637-1711)]

Lord God, our heavenly Father, You care for all the earth. In love, and by Your power You sustain all things day by day. We pray for our world in its difficulty; and we cry out to You for Your help for those in distress, whether directly or indirectly due to the pandemic, or for other reasons. We pray specifically for those without adequate food or shelter; and for those who are hurting or troubled in spirit. Bring help and wholeness we pray. Lord, in Your mercy: hear our prayer.

We pray for youth workers, yacht designers, young people's advocates...zoologists, zookeepers, zincographers. In these times

of restriction, we pray for Your help and blessing on those whose work is in those areas, and for their families.

We pray for our fellowship, and the differing needs we have at this time. Lord, draw near; and keep us close, we pray

Thank You for your everlasting love.  
We bring our prayers the name of Jesus, our saviour and friend.  
Amen

Church can sometimes feel like a rather close family (in a good way!) – which is what it actually is, of course

*Question:*

Approximately 50% of Baptist churches in England and Wales have fewer than\_\_\_\_\_ (how many) members?

*Answer next week*

For those not online, especially:

Worship services on radio and TV this Sunday include:

- Radio 4 8:10am Sunday Worship
- BBC1 1:15pm Songs of Praise

And finally, please do get in touch with me at any time

May God bless you with His peace.

Mike

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