

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

“Greet my beloved **Epænetus**, who is the first-fruits of Achaia to Christ. Greet **Mary**, who labored much for us. Greet **Andronicus and Junia**, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet **Amplias**, my beloved in the Lord. Greet **Urbanus**, our fellow worker in Christ, and **Stachys**, my beloved. Greet **Apelles**, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of **the household of Aristobulus**. Greet **Herodion**, my countryman. Greet those who are of **the household of Narcissus** who are in the Lord. Greet **Tryphena and Tryphosa**, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved **Persis**, who labored much in the Lord. Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord, **and his mother** and mine. Greet **Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them**. Greet **Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them**” (Rm.16:5-15).

When it comes to such passages as the above, we often “observe the Passover,” because we see no benefit to them. In our minds, we see no lessons to be learned here. And yet, GOD chose to include this in the Bible! Now, if we truly believe that *“ALL Scripture... is profitable”* (2Tm.3:16), then there must be some reason this is here. So, let’s take a little time to ask ourselves, “Just who are these people?”

Every one of them was a Christian, headed for Heaven! This means that they each *“obeyed that form of doctrine”* (Rm.16:17-18) – i.e. they were baptized into Christ (v.3-4). This, in turn, means that they *believed* Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and *confessed* the same (Ac.8:35-38); and that they *repented* of their sins (Ac.2:38). They arose from their baptism to *“walk in newness of life”* (Rm.6:4; 2Cor.5:17). The very same Jesus who died for them also died for us. The same process by which they were saved is the process by which we are saved. *Indeed, the church of the living God extends around the world, and back through time to “the beginning” of the church* (cf. Ac.11:13-18).

They were known by, and important to, the early church! The fact that Paul is sending them greetings clearly implies that *he* knows them. But they are also known in the city of Rome for their works sake. Notice some of the things he says about these people: One was *“the first fruits of Achaia.”* Another *“labored much in the Lord.”* Some were *“of note among the apostles.”* This means that their efforts to serve Jesus drew the attention of the apostles themselves! They are described as *“beloved... fellow-workers... approved... (and) chosen.”* To illustrate the significance of what I am saying, think of some of the Christians that YOU know. People in this congregation, people in other congregations, who quietly serve the Lord. And yet, their “light” has “so shined” that you know who they are, and what they do for the Lord (Mt.5:16). They are not national leaders, or wealthy owners of massive corporations; but they are servants of the God of heaven! *That alone makes them important!*

They were known by, and important to, God; and were immortalized in Bible! If we truly believe that *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God”* (2Tm.3:16), then it is obvious that God knows who they are. Indeed, it was ultimately HIS decision to have their names included in the Bible! Of course, God knows all things (Ps.139:1-6). *But in this text, we are reminded that He sees every Christian; He knows our works* (Rv.2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8,15). You may think that you are insignificant, but God is well-aware of YOU! Such knowledge should humble us, and motivate us to give our very best in the service of King Jesus. You see, not only are their names written in the Bible; their names (and ours) are *“written in Heaven”* (cf. Lk.10:20). *But do not forget one thing: Just as surely as your name can be written in the book of life, it can also be blotted out!* (cf. Rv.3:5)

There are people just like them living today! All around the world – in big cities, as well as little-known and obscure places – there are faithful saints of God. They are NOT the *“wise... mighty... (or) noble”* of this world (cf. 1Cor.1:26); but they ARE *“the saints... and faithful in Christ Jesus”* (cf. Ep.1:1). They live in Africa, Europe, Asia, North America, South America – perhaps even in Arctica and Antarctica. **They are YOU and they are ME!**

--Lanny Smith