

Opportunities in a New Church

Romans 16

Introduction

We're in Romans chapter 16. I want to preach tonight on the subject of **opportunities in a new church**. This is a newer church—you haven't even been around a year yet. I remember when we were there. On one hand, it feels like it was forever ago, and on the other hand, it doesn't seem like that long ago.

We are in our 14th year at Liberty Baptist Church—at least, I think it's the 14th. I'm losing track! I remember those early days, and as I thought about what to preach, I was reminded of something I've preached at our church before. I hope it will be a help and a blessing to you.

Phoebe: A Model Servant

Romans 16:1-2 says:

“I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.”

Phoebe is someone who served. She delivered the letter of Romans. That's no small task. This is one of the most impactful letters ever written—one that has helped lead countless souls to Christ.

We often focus on Paul, but think about it: if Phoebe had lost that letter, we wouldn't have the book of Romans. Of course, God wouldn't let that happen, but He used **people** to preserve His Word. Phoebe was one of those people.

The Need for Servants in the Church

Phoebe wasn't trying to be in charge. She was an assistant. She helped others. She saw work that needed to be done and did it. Every church needs people like that.

Especially in Baptist churches—we fellowship, we eat, and we make messes. There are kids everywhere (praise God for that!), but it takes work to care for the church. We need servants—not people seeking to boss others around—but those asking, “Pastor, how can I help?”

The Impact of Kindness and Faithfulness

Paul said Phoebe was so good at helping others that the church should assist her. She was a blessing. You can be that kind of person—someone who makes church better by being kind, helping someone struggling, and showing care.

People don't always come to church for doctrine at first. Sometimes they're just looking for friendship. While doctrine is most important, it often takes time for people to realize that. Let's not scare them away by being cold. Let's be **too friendly** rather than not friendly enough.

Paul Was Surrounded by Great People

Paul is often seen as one of the greatest Christians—and rightly so—but he was surrounded by great people. A church isn't great because of its pastor alone. A pastor needs a congregation of servants.

Paul constantly acknowledged people in his letters. These weren't just names. They were **helpers**. People who assisted him, supported him, and made his ministry possible.

Starting a Church Is Hard Work

When you're just starting out, it can feel like a one-man show. You're competing with established churches that have programs, buildings, and helpers. That's why those who assist in the beginning are such a blessing.

Paul was rarely in prison alone—he had Barnabas, Silas, and others. Great men of God were surrounded by great people.

The Power of Small Things

It's often the **small things** that make the biggest difference. Someone greeting a visitor, helping with seating, or handing out bulletins—that's what builds a church. When the pastor sees people spiritually and emotionally invested, it motivates him to keep going.

You may feel like you're "just sitting and listening," but your presence encourages the pastor. It motivates him to preach harder and study more.

Faithfulness Matters

Romans 16:3-4 speaks of Priscilla and Aquila:

“Who have for my life laid down their own necks...”

They were willing to risk their lives for Paul. They were helpers, not just to Paul, but to other churches as well. They helped Apollos become more effective. Their service made others better. You can do the same—your pastor, your church family—they can be better because of your presence and help.

Unity and Respect in the Church

Romans 16 mentions others like Andronicus and Junia, who were in Christ before Paul. Though they had seniority, they followed Paul’s leadership. That’s humility. Some of you may be older than Pastor Tapp. But respecting his office and serving under his leadership is powerful.

Pastoring isn’t about rank—it’s a **job**. Support the pastor and others with roles in the church. Don’t be jealous or critical—be **supportive**.

God Rewards the Humble

1 Peter 5:6 says:

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

If you feel overlooked, God sees what you do. Would you rather be promoted by man or by God?

Every Member Matters

Paul continues in Romans 16 to list many names. Each one mattered. These people were faithful, present, helpful, and motivating to others. You may have a gift for recognizing needs others overlook. That’s a **spiritual gift**. Be that person who encourages, helps, and shows care.

You Can’t Serve Sitting at Home

You can be saved and stay home, but you can't be like the people Paul described unless you're **plugged into a local church** and serving faithfully.

This church is your church. Get invested. Make it succeed. Some people make a difference in ways that can't even be explained—it's just their **presence** that encourages others.

Laboring and Encouraging

Romans 16:6 mentions Mary, who “bestowed much labor.” You don't have to be flashy—just **faithful**. Hard workers motivate others. I've worked with people like that—it's contagious.

Honoring Leadership with Humility

Others Paul mentioned had been saved longer than him, yet they followed him. Some people might be smarter or more educated than their pastor, but humility means recognizing the **office** God has given.

Don't create pecking orders in the church. Every role is a **job**, not a status symbol. Support those doing the work, and be willing to help wherever needed.

Be Sincere in Your Love

Romans 16:16 says:

“Salute one another with an holy kiss...”

We don't do that in our culture, but we shake hands, hug, and greet one another. Make sure it's **genuine**. People can tell if your kindness is fake. If you're struggling to love someone, ask God to help you. Be sincere and warm.

Guarding Against Division

Romans 16:17-18 warns about those who cause division:

“Mark them which cause divisions...and avoid them...”

Unity is precious. Don't let someone come in and divide the church. If someone challenges the doctrine here, they need to be corrected gently and guided to the truth—but **division cannot be tolerated**.

Stay united around God's Word. If you're not sure about the doctrine, talk to Pastor Tapp. Let him guide you through the Bible. But get behind it—support it—stand together as a church.

Encouraging Faithfulness Through the Storms

Not everyone will stick through the hard times. Thank God for those who do. When the pastor looks out and sees faithful faces who went through storms and stayed—he's encouraged to keep going.

You never know how much your faithfulness helps your pastor.

Closing Thoughts

You have a **great opportunity**. Get behind Pastor Tapp. Learn. Grow. Get plugged in. Serve.

I hope that when I come back years from now, I see some of the same faces—still faithful, still serving. I've visited churches where the same people were still in their spots 25 years later. That's encouraging.

Let's build something that lasts—not just for today, but for generations.

Final Prayer

Lord, help them take these things to heart. Help them realize how much they matter, how much they can help, and what an impact they can make in this community. Strengthen this church. Make it a lighthouse in this area. Let them succeed and do great things for You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.