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HALL OF FAITH

Hebrews 11 is often referred to as the “Hall of Faith” or “Faith’s Hall of Fame.” I do not dispute this description, for it truly fits when we consider the great Old Testament heroes named in the chapter. Yet, I would suggest there could very well be another “Hall of Faith” found in Romans 16:1-15. This “hall” describes many faith heroes from the first century. These Christians are noted for their faith and obedience during the early days of the church. Let me suggest the apostle Paul, by the inspiration of God (I Cor. 14:37), opens a “window” for us to see some of the many faithful people living in the first century. Their examples continue to shine today! Who were these people and what can we learn from them? **The Saints Named: Phoebe** (v. 1-2), who was known by Paul and helped many brethren. Perhaps he met her after leaving Corinth (Acts 18:18). **Aquila and Priscilla** (v. 3-5), who Paul met at Corinth (Acts 18:2), and who had risked

their lives and suffered much for the cause of Christ (Rom. 16:4). **Epaenetus** (v. 5), who was described as “*the first convert to Christ in Achaia*.” Does this mean he was of the household of Stephanus, I Cor. 16:15? Perhaps he was. This thrills me to think of this brother who was willing to follow the Lord and stepped out in true faith to become a Christian and serve God. **Mary** (v. 6), who was another hard worker in the Lord, like Phoebe, and Priscilla. **Andronicus and Junia** (v. 7) stand out as being “*fellow prisoners*” with Paul. They had been Christians longer than Paul, and were “*well known to the apostles*.” Why are they only mentioned here? Only God knows the reason. Yet, they stand out as noted servants of God whom the apostles knew! **Amplias and Stachys** (v. 8-9), who stand out for having the same commendation, “*my beloved*”. In addition, “Stachys” was a name found on the register of the

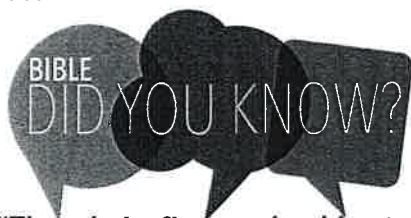
Imperial household! In other words, some who were converted were those close to Caesar himself. **Urbane** (v. 9), was a “helper” just as Aquila and Priscilla! In contrast with some others, “Urbane” was a common slave name. Imagine, one from Caesar’s house, and a slave mentioned in the same verse (Rom. 16:9)! Truly, there is equality in Christ (Gal. 3:28-29; Rom. 10:12; Col. 3:11)! **Apelles and Aristobulus’ family** (v. 10), give us insight into how the gospel has the power to soften hearts regardless of the “pedigree” of the person. Apelles is another name found in the Imperial register, and some understand this Aristobulus to have been the grandson to Herod the Great, and brother to Agrippa I. **Herodian and Narcissus’ household** (v. 11), is suggested by some to show a master and slave connection, that perhaps a master and slave was listed in the same verse. This cannot be proven 100%, but what can be proven is that Paul says Herodian was a “kinsman” or “countryman” to him. **Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Persida)** (v. 12) are all female names. They were worthy of note as they served God faithfully! **Rufus and mother** (v. 13), are relatively unknown people. However, if there is a connection between this verse and the “Rufus” of Mark 15:21, then this man’s father was Simon of Cyrene! What an amazing thought if he was! His mother obviously treated Paul well, and this is the crux of this statement. I do not

believe he is saying he and Rufus had the same mother, but was calling her “mother” in a similar way that he called Timothy and Titus his “sons” (I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 2:1; Titus 1:2). **Ten more saints are named** (v. 14-15), but there is little else we know about them. Some suggest these are but “slave names,” and perhaps they are. What got my attention were names such as “Hermas,” “Hermes,” and “Olympas.” These folks’ parents named them after the gods of the day! Yet, those who had been named after gods, and named after the abode of the gods (i.e., Mt. Olympus) were Christians and took His name (Acts 11:26)! What can we learn from this listing of names in Romans 16:1-15? Let me suggest first that several could be linked together because of their similar qualities. For example, Phoebe, Aquila, Priscilla, and Urbane were called “Helpers”. Epäenetüs, Amplias, Stachys, Persis (Persida) were noted by Paul as “Beloved”. Andronicus, Junia, and Herodian were “Kinsman/Countrymen”. Stachys, Apelles, and Aristobulus (if he be Herod’s grandson) were of Royal households. Finally, Urbane and the last ten Christians might be listed as “Slaves”. As I thought about these folks, I wondered, “Which category fits me?” After some thought, I realized that in a spiritual sense, I’d want to be in every category! I want to be a “helper” for the Lord. I want to be a “beloved” of Christ (I Jn. 5:2-3), considered “kin” to Jesus (Rom.

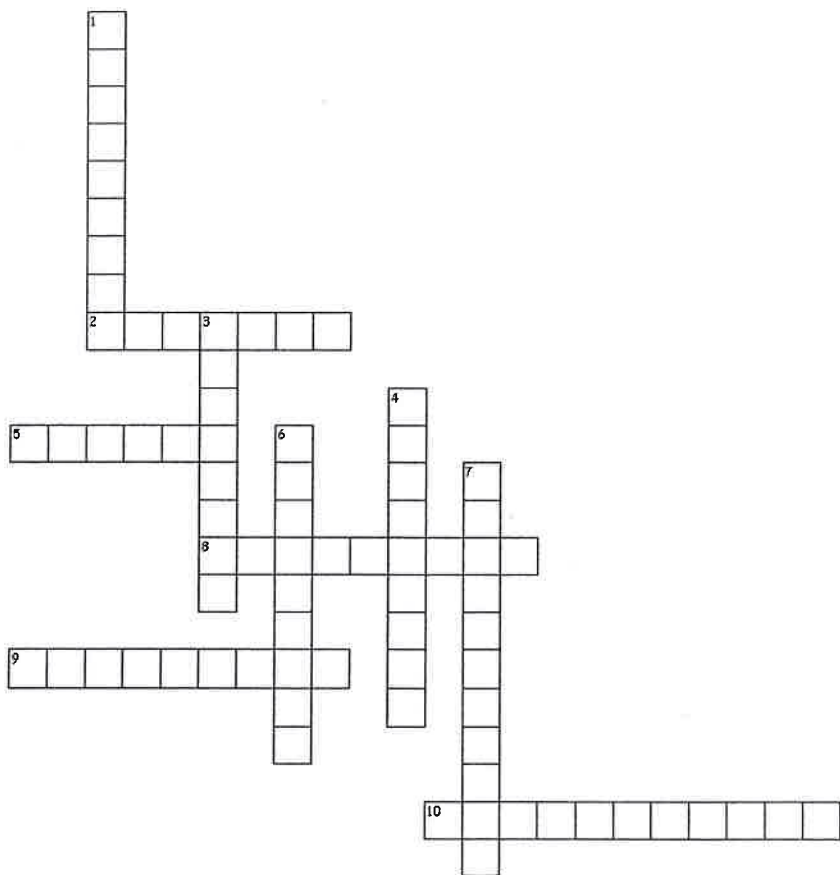
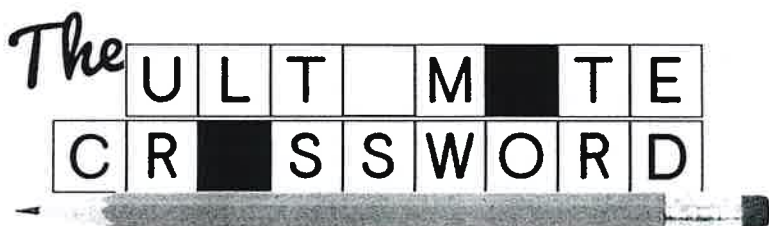
8:16-17), a part of “royalty” (1 Pet. 2:9), and at the same time, a “slave” to the Lord (Rom. 6:16-18, 12:1-2)! All this is possible when you are a Christian (Mk. 16:16; Acts 11:26; Eph. 1:3). Are you a Christian? Another thing we can learn from a study of Romans 16 is that males and females are treated with equality and respect in this passage (Gal. 3:28)! Each person played an important role in spreading the gospel in the first century and God recognized them for their labor! It ought to be clear that such passages show Paul is not a misogynist, nor does the Bible somehow subjugate or oppress women! Men and women are God’s creation (Gen. 2:18-25) and God through Paul honors men and women equally for their service to Him in this passage! May we learn dedication and faithfulness to God when reading Romans 16:1-15. No doubt, in addition to imprisonment, each person had problems they had to face and conquer as Christians. With some, for example, the church met in their house (Ex: Ananias and Sapphira - v. 5). Did this draw undue attention? Did some get in trouble for this? I know this happens today in various places. I imagine they faced such problems back then as well!

May we learn to ask: “Does God know me?” I recognize that folks such as Andronicus and Junia were “*of note*” among the apostles (Rom. 16:7), yet what do we know about them? The greatest thing in their lives was not that the apostles knew them, but that God knew

them! Friend, does God know *you*? May the words, “*I never knew you*” never be said of us (Matt. 7:23). Finally, may a study of Romans 16:1-15 show to us that all of us are in need of the gospel. When reading this passage, we see a true “melting pot” of cultures who have come together because they learned the truth and wanted to be children of God (Acts 2:38; Rev. 22:14). We see that some Christians in this chapter were in Caesar’s household. Others had positions of power. In contrast, some were mere slaves. Some were Jews who became Christians like Aquila and Priscilla, while others had ties to the pagan gods like Hermes, Olympas, and others. Yet, the common factor was that these folks needed the same gospel to save them (Rom. 1:16).
— Excerpt from article by Jarrod Jacobs



***“Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds’ feet, and makes me walk on my high places.”
Habakkuk 3:17-19***



ACROSS

2. Do not ____ rebuke an older man, but appeal to him as a father. (1 Tim. 5:1)
5. The church is the ____ and support of the truth. (1 Tim. 3:15)
8. Those who do not agree with sound words of Christ are _____. (1 Tim. 6:3-4)
9. Some have turned aside to _____ discussion. (1 Tim. 1:6)
10. Godliness is gain when accompanied by this. (1 Tim. 6:6)

DOWN

1. Law is not made for a ____ person, but for the ungodly. (1 Tim. 1:9)
3. An overseer and deacon must be above _____. (1 Tim. 3:2,10)
4. Paul told Timothy to discipline himself for this purpose. (1 Tim. 4:7)
6. Accusations against elders require 2 or 3 _____. (1 Tim. 5:19)
7. Myths and genealogies give rise to this. (1 Tim. 1:4)