

## “Junia Who?”

Preached on August 16, 2015 by Pastor Sherry Keiper

This morning we are celebrating the birth of Pastors Luke and Carey’s baby daughter. So I thought it would be appropriate to finally look at the woman she is named after, “Junia”.

Most of us, including me, had never heard of her. She is only mentioned once, in Romans 16:7. And she’s in a list of names, something we usually skip over, or don’t really think about.

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among<sup>[a]</sup> the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

**Andronicus and Junia.** Early commentators understood these to be a husband and wife, or possibly a brother and sister. They were fellow Jews, and had been converted (“in Christ”) before Paul himself. They had apparently been in prison at some time with Paul (cf. [2 Cor. 11:23](#)) and had served with distinction as special envoys (“apostles”) of the churches.

Okay, that’s interesting. What does it have to do with me today? I believe if we look closely at Junia and the other people mentioned in this chapter, we will find “Characteristics of a Christian”.

## **The Believers' Ministry to Paul ([16:1-27](#))**

The book of Romans is actually a letter that Paul had written to the people at the church in Rome. These were new Christians who had not received the teaching of an apostle before, and he wrote to present the basic system of salvation. God's plan of salvation is for all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike.

He gives a conclusion to the letter in Chapter 15.

Then, in Chapter 16 we find commendation and greetings. It is here we find Junia mentioned. This chapter is remarkable in itself!

In it Paul greeted at least twenty-six people by name, as well as two unnamed saints, and he also greeted several churches that were meeting in homes. He closed with greetings from nine believers who were with him in Corinth when he wrote the letter.

Here we find the first characteristic of a Christian. **Being a friend.**

To Paul, this was a list of his friends.

He mentions Phoebe, a deacon. She was a benefactor, someone who had the financial means to support the ministry monetarily.

Priscilla and Aquila were co-workers. They risked their lives for Paul and the Gentile churches. They held meetings in their home. This, in itself, was cause for arrest, imprisonment and possibly death.

In verse 21, he mentions several people who assisted him. Paul was not alone in his ministry, he had helpers.

Tertius – wrote down this letter (secretary)

Gaius provided hospitality for Paul and the church

Erastus was the city's director of public works (not in ministry – had a secular job)

Timothy – was Paul's assistant

+ 3 others

If anyone could have survived ministry on his own, it was Paul. He was specially anointed and called by God. He had a strong personality, able to withstand adversity and continue ministry. However, he used the people around him to assist him.

Although unknown and unimportant to us, these were Paul's co-workers and friends. They were known and esteemed by Paul. Women are included.

Although they had no status in their society, they are recorded by Paul.

Try to imagine Paul here in the present time and Pocono Lake being a church where he came to minister. After leaving and moving on, he would think of us and possibly write us a letter, as he did the Christians in Rome. Would there be a book named Pocono Lakeans? In his conclusion, he would mention a list of people in our church. This would not be a list of unpronounceable names we've never heard before, but our common names—names we would recognize. Your name may be mentioned. What would be the description he would give you?

Paul, here, is seen as a friend maker, as well as a soul winner. He did not try to live an isolated life; he had friends in the Lord, and he appreciated them. They were a help to him personally and to his ministry. Throughout history, we see that the servants whom God has used the most were people who could make friends. They multiplied themselves in the lives of their friends and associates in the ministry. While there may be a place for the secluded saint who lives alone with God most of us need each other. We are sheep, and sheep flock together.

The second characteristic of a Christian we find is to **Be a Saint**

In verse 15, he sends greetings to "all the saints that are with him". Today, when we think of saints, we think of ordinary people who have done extraordinary acts for God. The Catholic Church actually has a system where a person's life is examined and can be selected for sainthood, and

declared such by the Church. Although, we do not officially name saints, there are people we admire and we call them saints. But, a saint is not a person who lives an extra special life, or who has demonstrated their faith in God.

A saint is a person who has been saved by grace and is in the family of God. Every person in this room that has repented of sins and trusted Christ by faith is qualified to bear the name saint of God.

It is not what WE do, but what CHRIST did, that causes us to be saints. We cannot earn our way to heaven. The price has already been paid. It is a gift. We just need to reach out and accept it. In doing so, we become accepted into the family of God. We have his DNA inside of us.

A family where we're fully accepted, not for what we've done, but because of whose we are.

Behind every name in this chapter, there is a special story. In every life, there is a something that makes that person great in the kingdom of God. The same could be said of you! When the Lord saved you, He made you special. There is nobody else in the family of God who is like you!

In Romans 1:9, Paul spent time in prayer for these folks. They were special to Paul. They were in his heart! What a challenge that is to the church of

God in this day! Do we really pray for one another as we should? Do we pray for one another, by name, on a daily basis?

When we pray for people, those people begin to become special to us. We enter into their lives and into their burdens. We develop a heart for them! God's will for the church is that we be one with Him. The saints around us should become part of our lives.

In 2 Cor. 11, Paul is describing the difficulties he faces: prison, floggings, exposed to death, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, danger from rivers, dangers from bandits, dangers from my own countrymen, gone without sleep, known hunger and thirst, been cold and naked. Yet he says in verse 28, "Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." He felt their needs and burdens.

There are three ways we can face the needs and burdens of others:

Apathy: the absence of any wish to do anything; emotional emptiness: the inability to feel normal or passionate human feelings or to respond emotionally.

Unfortunately, some saints just don't care about the battles others are fighting.

Sympathy: capacity to share feelings: the ability to enter into, understand, or share somebody else's feeling.

We hurt with them. But, it still isn't what a hurting saint needs.

Empathy: understanding of another's feelings: the ability to identify with and understand another person's feelings or difficulties."

Imagine a man who stumbles and falls into a ditch. Apathy, Sympathy, and Empathy walk by and see him lying there. Apathy says, "**I don't care!**" Sympathy says, "**I am sorry that you have fallen and that you are hurting.**" Empathy says, "**I fell into a ditch myself once and I will help you get out.**" Do you see the difference? Empathy is what the human race got when Jesus came into this world and went to the cross for our sins. Empathy is what the church needs to be strong in these days. The saints need to know that they are loved.

The burden of the church **cannot be borne by one man alone**. We are to work together, as a family. I have my load to pull and you have yours. If we will all do our part in loving the church and carrying their burdens, it will not all rest on the shoulders of just a few.

### 3. As Christians, we must **Embrace diversity**

In this chapter, men and women. There are Jews, Romans, and Greeks. Households are addressed and churches mentioned. There are those who are wealthy and those who are poor. This is a diverse group!

All of us serve a special place in the body of Christ. God saved us like we were, warts and all, so that He might take us in our differences and use the church as a body for His glory.

There are two ways we are diverse--in our **humanity**. When Paul mentions those who are special to him, he says a word about each.

Epaenetus – “praiseworthy” – v.5 He was the first one saved in Achaia. He was special for that reason.

Mary – “rebellion” - v.6 she worked hard to be a blessing to Paul.

Then, here we find, Andronicus “Man of Victory” and Junia “Youthful” – v.7 They may have prayed that Paul would get saved. They may have been the only family he had left. We should assume that Paul’s parents probably ostracized him and wrote him off as being dead after he received Jesus! [Isn’t it strange how the family of God sometimes becomes closer than one’s natural family?]

Amplias – “large” beloved in the Lord

Urbane and Stachys – the original **Odd Couple**. **Urbane** means “**of the city**” while **Stachys** means “**head of grain or corn.**” Here is sophisticated Urbane the city slicker with old Stachys the hayseed. Yet, in Jesus, they are brought together!



Each person is special to Paul. Yet they are as different as they could possibly be.

There are differences in our backgrounds, our educational levels, our economic levels, etc. Yet we are brought together in the Lord Jesus as one family. Praise the Lord for the ways in which we are different!

When God made you, He threw away the mold. You are special and you are unique. You bring things to the family of God that no one else can. You bring things to the family of God that no one else has. You can do things that no one else can do. There are people that you can reach, when others cannot. God made you with a purpose in mind. Do not be ashamed of who you are in him!

The second way we are diverse is in **our heritage**.

Paul greets Jews, Greeks, Persians and Romans. He greets people from all kinds of racial and societal backgrounds. In Christ, these people, from these varied backgrounds are all made one!

If our world followed Christ, there would be no more racism and hatred in our world. In Christ there is but one race: the human race. We love one another simply because God loves us.

Look at verse 23. A man named **Erastus** is mentioned. He is called "**the chamberlain of the city.**" He is the town treasurer! Probably a wealthy politician. Then, there is a man named **Quartus**, his name means "Four". They just called him "**Number 4**". This may indicate that he is or was a slave. In Jesus, all the barriers are broken down.

#### 4. **Be dedicated**

The people Paul mentions are busy in the things of the Lord. Notice the kinds of service that are mentioned: workers, toilers, writers, givers, administrators. They all served in various capacities, but they served.

We cannot all do everything, but we can all do something! They is something for which the Lord has specifically gifted you. Find that area and use it for the glory of the Lord.

Be there for the long-haul. These people served Jesus under the most difficult of circumstances imaginable. They lived in a time when to be a Christian could cost a person his life! Yet they stood firm.

We are to be **Steadfast and unmovable**. I Corinthians 15:58 says, "Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Don't let petty grievances or annoyances deter you from following Christ. We want to receive the divine stamp of approval and blessing from him and allow the watching world to see our faith.

**Conclusion:** I hope that seeing Paul's words to these saints this morning are an encouragement and a challenge to you. I see traits in these people that I want in my own life.

Unfortunately, our names will never be on one of Paul's lists. The canon of Scripture is closed and what is written is written. However, there is another special list that is being written.

**I may not have a name of renown,**

**But there's a book in Heaven where it's written down.**

**Even in the midst of life's trials and strife,**

**My name is written down in the Lamb's Book of Life!**

Regardless of where your name is recorded down here, be sure it is written in the Lamb's Book of Life! If you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, it is! If not, it can be! Having your name on that list makes all the serving, all the sacrificing and all the steadfast living worthwhile.