

Romans 16:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

Analysis

Likewise greet the church that is in their house—Kai tēn kat' oikon autōn ekklēsian (καὶ τὴν κατ' οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίαν). Kat' oikon ekklēsian (κατ' οἶκον ἐκκλησία, church in their house) describes the house church model—believers met in homes (no church buildings until 3rd century). Priscilla and Aquila hosted house churches wherever they lived: Corinth (implied, Acts 18:2-3), Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:19), Rome (Romans 16:5). Opening their home for worship, teaching, fellowship was ministry—requiring hospitality, financial resources, leadership, and risk (harboring illegal religion).

Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ—Aspasasthe Epaineton ton agapēton mou, hos estin aparchē tēs Asias eis Christon (ἀσπάσασθε Ἐπαίνετον τὸν ἀγαπητόν μου, ὅς ἐστιν ἀπαρχὴ τῆς Ἀσίας εἰς Χριστόν). Aparchē (ἀπαρχή, firstfruits) designates Epaenetus as the first convert in Asia (province including Ephesus). Eis Christon (unto Christ) indicates conversion. Being 'firstfruits' carried special honor—first converts often became leaders (1 Corinthians 16:15, household of Stephanas).

Historical Context

House churches were 20-40 people meeting in insulae (apartment blocks) or wealthy patrons' homes. No clergy-laity distinction existed; leadership was organic, gifts-based (1 Corinthians 12-14). Hosting required resources: space,

food, risk (Christianity was illicit religio). Women like Priscilla, Lydia (Acts 16:15, 40), Nympha (Colossians 4:15) hosted churches, implying leadership roles. Epaphroditus as Asia's 'firstfruits' suggests he evangelized others after conversion—first converts typically became evangelists, establishing the faith in new regions.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to host 'kat' οικον ekklēsian' (house church) today—how can you open your home for gospel ministry?
2. How does the house church model (organic, gift-based, relational) differ from institutional church structures—what are the trade-offs?
3. Who are the 'firstfruits' (aparchē) in your area—first converts who became evangelists—and how can they be honored and equipped?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	τὴν	κατ'	οἶκον	αὐτῶν	ἐκκλησίαν	ἀσπάσασθε	
Likewise	G3588	that is in	house	their	greet the church	Salute	
G2532		G2596	G3624	G846	G1577	G782	
Ἐπαίνετον	τὸν	ἀγαπητόν	μου	ὃς	ἐστίν	ἀπαρχὴ	τῆς
Epaenetus	G3588	wellbeloved	my	who	is	the firstfruits	G3588
G1866		G27	G3450	G3739	G2076	G536	
Ἀχαΐας	εἰς	Χριστόν					
of Achaia	unto	Christ					
G882	G1519	G5547					

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 4:15 (Parallel theme): Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

Philemon 1:2 (Love): And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:

1 Corinthians 16:19 (Parallel theme): The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

1 Corinthians 16:15 (Parallel theme): I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

Matthew 18:20 (Parallel theme): For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.