

## **The Firstfruit Convert** Romans 16:5b

As Paul concludes his letter to the Romans he greets several individuals. We have already seen the story of Phoebe (vs. 1-2) and Priscilla and Aquila (vs. 3-5) and now we come to a man that obviously had a very special place in the heart of the Apostle Paul. Epaenetus is called “*my wellbeloved*” (dear friend NIV), and though he is not the only person with this description in chapter sixteen, he is the first. The Bible clearly indicates that it is healthy to have some friends who are particularly “dear.” Not much else is known about Epaenetus. Some believe he is one of the 70 commissioned by Christ in Luke 10 and later the pastor of the church in Carthage. But the word I want you to focus on is “firstfruits.” Epaenetus was the “first convert” (NIV) in Asia (Achaia; Southern Greece). The KJV has it right when the word is “firstfruit.” What does “the firstfruit” convert in Asia teach us?

### **I. The Firstfruit Offering Actively Reminded the Worshipper of God’s Ownership.**

The Jews celebrated “*The Festival of the Sheaf of Firstfruits*” (Lev. 23:19) and they also had a special offering called “*the firstfruits offering*” or “*the wave offering*” (Numbers 18:12). This firstfruits offering took place on “*the morrow after the Sabbath*” (Sunday) during Passover. This festival and the firstfruits offering kept one major thought in the forefront of the Jew’s mind --- all the grain was God’s grain.

#### **(A). All converts are God’s converts . . .**

He brings about the regeneration of the heart. He gave His Son to redeem His Church. Christians sow the seed (the Word of God), they go out into the fields (the world) and labor, but if a sinner believes on Christ, God gave to him faith.

To call Epaenetus “the firstfruits in Achaia unto Christ” simply means that Epaenetus was the first person Christ saved in that region. Is this important?

(1). Understanding this makes you God-centered in all things.

(2). Understanding this makes your soul secure despite all things.

#### **(B). No sinner is beyond God’s sovereignty . . .**

Epaenetus was the first convert in a region of cult worship. From the Greek gods to the pagan temples, Southern Greece was inundated with false, sexually immoral religion. If God could save Epaenetus, he can save you.

### **II. The Firstfruit Offering Always Represented a Future Greater Harvest.**

Whenever the firstfruit offering was presented, you knew the harvest was coming.

#### **(A). Where one sinner is saved by God’s grace, more will follow.**

This is true in a family, a city, a region and a nation. Lydia “*and her household*” were saved. The Philippian jailor and “*all his*” were saved (Acts 16:15,33).

#### **(B). Since saving sinners is God’s harvest, He will reap a great harvest.**

This is Christ’s teaching in the parables of Matthew 13 (harvest, tree, leaven).

The redeemed are called “*an innumerable company*” (Heb. 12:22). Heaven is compared to a sea, hell a lake; heaven is a palace, hell a pit. Grace exceeds sin.

#### **(C). The outlook of every Christian should be positive and expectant.**

Are you possibly a firstfruit Christian? Do you desire God to save a loved one? Sow. Labor. Pray. The Lord of the Harvest will answer your prayers and save.