

Romans 16

Intro:

--In this section, Paul greets 18 men and 8 women and two households. He also sends greetings from 8 men and 1 woman with him.

--How he knew so many Christians in Rome was simply through his travels and from the fact that "all roads lead to Rome".

--What should immediately strike us is the incredible diversity in the body of Christ. We see a wide range of men, women, Jew, Greek, culture, status, etc. and all of them *helpers in Christ*.

--There is a noble blessing in *the fellowship of the gospel* that you cannot find anywhere else in the world. Take note of all the: ***In the Lord + In Christ Jesus + to Christ + in Christ***. The divine work of Jesus Christ is the foundational reality of this fellowship. And it is eternal!

Verses 1-2:

--He begins by sending a commendation for Phoebe who was from the Corinthian seaport city of Cenchrea. Her name means *bright or radiant* and is another form of the goddess Artemis. So she is likely a Gentile.

--We know Paul passed through Cenchrea with Priscilla and Aquila in **Acts 18:18** and made a vow there. So maybe that is where he met Phoebe and was helped by her.

--Most believe that she is the one who carried this epistle to the church at Rome and that is why Paul mentions her first and gives her an official commendation. *Likely a woman of some means to travel so but we don't know.*

--A lot of the connections we can make are speculation but we do know a few things about her.

--First, Paul calls her ***a servant of the church*** and the word is that used of a deacon. So we see here the clearest Biblical reference to a deaconess. The qualifications for women deacons are also mentioned in **1 Timothy 3:11** where what is translated *wives* is really just *women*.

--This is one Biblical reason that we may not have women elders here but we do have women deacons.

--Second, Paul says she has a history of living as a faithful ***helper of many***. When Paul was looking for someone to carry this important letter he was happy to find Phoebe because of her known character.

Verses 3-5:

--We know quite a bit about Priscilla and Aquila. Paul had met them in Corinth in **Acts 18** and they were also Jews and tentmakers. It seems they became fast friends and partners in ministry after that.

--When the Scriptures reference them as a household Aquila is mentioned first (**Acts 18:2 + 18; 1 Corinthians 16:19**) but when generally speaking it seems that Priscilla is mentioned first as in (**Acts 18:18, 2 Timothy 4:19**) as she may have had the more recognizable personality.

--They were a couple that was a gift to Paul the apostle as they risked their lives for him—we don't have any details of this as the *full* story is yet to be told!—and they were a gift to ***all the churches of the Gentiles!*** What an incredible testimony of marital fruit! Serve God together!

--Also we see they had a church in their house at Rome and had also had a fellowship in their home in Corinth (**1 Cor. 16:19**) and likely in Ephesus as well.

--***Epaenetus***: Now we don't really know much about him. His name means *praiseworthy* and he was the first convert of Achaia.

Verse 6:

--***Mary***: Was most likely a Jewess per her name. We only know she ***labored much***. . . as some labored but others the more.

Verse 7:

--***Andronicus + Junia***: We know that they were Jews as Paul's fellow countrymen. We know that they were also saved before Paul and shared at least one of his imprisonments—some places in the world this is how you know who the real Christians are!

--The debates in these verses circle around two things. First, is Junia a man or woman as the name could be used either way based on the language—think our modern Casey/Pat. It could also possibly make them a husband and wife team.

--The second contention is around Paul's reference to them as ***of note among the apostles***. This could mean that they were known and respected among the apostles or they were themselves apostles.

--Even though ***the twelve*** were also recognized as unique the Bible clearly states that there were other apostles such as the Lord's brethren (**1 Cor. 9:5 {Mt. 13:55}**) and Barnabas (**Acts 14:14**) and even possibly such as: Timothy, Silvanus, Apollos, etc.

--Some want to claim that this is speaking here of a woman apostle which we don't have anywhere else in Scripture. I don't think you can make that argument at all. The language and the rest of Scripture lead us to two previous conclusions:

--1) Most likely Andronicus and Junia are both men who are themselves also recognized as apostles. The article in the language can make them a member of the class named as it is used in Scriptures such as **Lk. 1:28; 7:28; Acts 15:22**, etc. Also, it seems unlikely for Paul to be thrown in prison together with another male and a female.

--2) The second easiest explanation would simply be that this is a well-known married couple that was saved early in Christian history and was known and respected by the twelve.

--Either of those explanations fit the clear text better here *and* with the rest of what we have in Scripture than Junia being a female apostle.

Verse 8:

--**Amplias:** Was a Latin name that was common among slaves and means *amplified or enlarged*. Paul describes him as **my beloved** in the Lord. *Sometimes you just really get along with certain people—So too in heaven?*

Verse 9:

--**Urbanus:** Is another Latin name that means *elegant or polite* and was apparently more of a high society name. He was recognized as a **fellow worker in Christ**.

--**Stachys:** Was an uncommon Greek name that meant *ear of grain*. Paul loved him as well.

Verse 10:

--**Apelles:** Was Greek but often also used by Jews. Paul calls him **approved** which has the idea of having proved dependable in difficult circumstances. *Seasoned vets are great to have!*

--Paul also greets the **household of Aristobulus**. Some think he may have been the brother of Herod Agrippa I but we don't know. It is possible that he had died and Paul is greeting his household slaves who had been passed on as property?

Verse 11:

--**Herodion:** Was a Jew.

--Paul again greets another household, that of **Narcissus**. Some think this Narcissus was a wealthy freedman executed at the command of Nero's mother to have his goods confiscated. Again the household is being greeted as he is gone. Here though, Paul greets those that are **in the Lord** as all may not have been saved and therefore wouldn't be in Christian fellowship.

Verse 12:

--**Tryphena + Tryphosa:** Are likely sisters or twins as it was common to give them similar names. Their names mean *delicate + dainty*. They too have done their part and **labored in the Lord**.

--**Persis:** Means *Persian lady* and Paul says that she has **labored much in the Lord**. More than the last two but also in past tense as if she no longer can.

--O that we might serve the Lord and labor for Him while we still have strength! We all only have so much time to work and so much energy to work. *As we ease into this life so God also causes us to ease out of it*

Verse 13:

--**Rufus:** This is perhaps the same Rufus of **Mark 15:21** which would also make him the son of Simon the Cyrene. Paul calls him **chosen in the Lord** which has the idea of some notability.

--He also greets his mother and calls her **his mother and mine!** What a wonderful testimony to this woman and to motherhood in general. God the Holy Spirit is honoring a motherly heart extended beyond the immediate home—even to an apostle!

--Her motherly care of Paul may have come when Barnabas went and brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch. We don't know for sure. *We do know people need mothers in the Body of Christ!*

Verse 14:

--We don't know much about these brethren. They could be all a part of the same house church—Brochurch.

Verse 15:

--This seems to be a husband and wife with their two children. Olympas is also part of the fellowship.

Verse 16:

--This command of a holy kiss is given five times in Scripture! (**1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14**). *I have been in a few wonderful gatherings where this is still practiced.*

--The point here is the love of the brethren in *greeting* not just the kiss. This greeting was to be for *all brethren* and they were not to ignore those they didn't like. *You are a part of this. Shake hands!*

--Paul went even wider than individuals and gave greetings to whole churches from whole churches. There ought to be connection and love and care between us as we will one day meet our contemporary brethren and all of these guys.

Verse 17:

--How does this exhortation fit? Because these people are trying to tear down the fellowship of the gospel that the Spirit is building on Christ's foundation.

--First, do not so easily give up the ***doctrine which you learned*** that was taught to you by people who actually love you! *Vs a friend you just met or a professor you like who gets paid to take advantage of intellectually vulnerable 18 year olds.*

--Second, mark or ***note*** anyone who is seeking to divide you from others to themselves. There are so many voices out there! *Weird pastors who are elitest (only us/only real church/only learn from me); beware Youtube and TV prophets!*

--Third, the godly response is to ***note*** them—see what they are and then leave! ***Avoid them!***

1 Corinthians 14:38: But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

Titus 3:10-11: Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

Verse 18:

--Why do we need to avoid them? Because they do not serve Christ. They serve themselves.

Titus 1:10-11: For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

Philippians 3:18-19: For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

--They don't *sound* evil or *look* evil. But they do deceive from the simple truth of the Word of God. The Bible was written for normal folks. Pick it up. Read it. Believe it. Choose God over every man.

Verses 19-20:

--Paul was blessed these believers were known for their obedience to Christ. Obedience is our clearest measure of love to Christ. He has made it so Himself. ***If you love me, keep my commandments.***

--We don't need to be experts in evil and sin. Paul would tell the Corinthians: ***in malice be babes.*** If we personally keep inspecting other peoples' trash we will soon smell like.

--Instead, grow wise in what is good.

--Why become an expert in evil when it is soon to be crushed by the God of peace!? Notice as well that Paul says under ***your*** feet and not simply *His* feet. We are going to participate. You might feel like Satan is kicking you right now but soon your foot will be on his neck.

--Until then, we have God's grace.

Verses 21-24:

--Paul sends greetings from the other men that are currently with him.

--Timothy we know well (**Phil. 2:19-22; 2 Tim. 1:2**); Jason may be the Jason of **Acts 17:5-9**; and Sospater may be from **Acts 20:4**. They are Jews.

--Tertius was copying the epistle for Paul. His name is Latin for 3 while Quartus is Latin for 4. Brothers maybe? Primus and Secundus out there?

--Gaius is likely from Corinth.

--What do we take from all these names and relations? I think that what we are to see is that when we reach heaven our sweetest memories of this life are actually going to be our life and love in relation to our brothers and sisters *in Christ* and the service we shared together *for Christ*.

--What is it that we want to hear? ***Well done, good and faithful servant.***

Verses 25-27:

--Paul ends here with a unique doxology. He speaks of that mystery which he mentioned in **11:25** of God working in this time in the Body of Christ made up of Gentiles and Jews with a heavenly calling to be glorified like the resurrected and glorified Christ!

--It was a mystery because it was not revealed in the OT as Paul clearly states in **Eph. 3:8-10 + Col. 1:24-27**. And this revelation was entrusted by Jesus Christ Himself to the most bigoted Jew on the face of the earth—to bring to the nations in the power of the Holy Spirit. *Only God!*

--Now being manifest by the prophetic Scriptures is likely a reference to NT prophecy. The OT had its prophets and it would not have been strange for these Jewish believers to expect the same of the NT dispensation.