

Romans Chapter 16
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This closing chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans is a very personal one in which he simply commends his greetings to many of the saints, Christians that he knew in the city of Rome.

Many of the names that appear in this chapter were friends of Paul. He had met them and had worked with them in years previous - all around the Roman Empire. They were special to him – fellow believers and saints.

Paul penned (actually dictated) this letter from the city of Corinth, just south of Athens in Greece. Far across the sea to the west was the city of Rome, the great capital of the empire. Although he had never visited it, he had a great host of friends there because, among the Christians of that day. It is some of these that Paul writes this letter as he addresses them in a personal way in this closing chapter. These are "the saints which are at Rome" to whom he addresses this letter.

They are called saints because they are sanctified people. Sanctify simply means, "to put something to its intended and proper use." Here were people who, by coming to grips with Jesus Christ, by having received the fullness of his indwelling life, and by believing the message of the gospel, had now entered into a relationship in which their whole lives were put to their proper and intended use. That is why they were saints. They were sanctified -- being used, at last, in the right and proper way. May we all be someday sanctified.

Romans Chapter 16

Greetings and Love Expressed

¹I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; ²that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.

From what Paul writes, Phoebe is the person given the task of delivering the letter to Rome. Obviously, since there were no post offices then, letters were hand delivered and this is what Phoebe did – she delivered what has become a priceless document, from Paul to the believers in Rome. She carried it – most likely by land and sea - from the church at Cenchreae, a little village south of Corinth, over to the great capital of the Roman Empire – an incredible journey and task with an outcome that still rings out with importance almost 2000 years later.

As she came to Rome with his letter, Paul urged the people there to receive her because, he says, she has helped him and many others. Phoebe evidently is one of those who will take on whatever challenge needs to be done.

Some translations refer to Phoebe as a Deaconess one who carries on the work of the church – selected to perform certain tasks for the church. In reality that is what all deacons (Servants) should be doing – the work of the church. In fact, that is what we all should be doing – the servant work of Christ's church.

³Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; ^{5a}also greet the church that is in their house

From Luke's account in Acts, we know that Paul first met Priscilla and Aquila when he arrived in the city of Corinth. They were tentmakers there, who had been kicked out of Rome during the expulsion of Jews by the emperor. Evidently, when he encountered the couple he was newly arrived, broke and probably hungry. I can imagine a situation where Paul walked into the tent maker's shop and said, "I see you are tent makers. Well, I am a tent maker too. Is there any way you might give me a job?"

Everything in their lives changed at that point and for the rest of their lives remained changed. I have no doubt that as Paul worked, he preached the Gospel. What else would Paul of Tarsus do? The fruit Christ gave Paul for his evangelism was Priscilla and Aquila.

There is no record of how the couple "risked their own necks" for Paul. However, they were with Paul during his time in Ephesus, when he wrote as "having fought with wild beasts in the city of Ephesus," {cf, 1 Cor 15:32}.

Of the time in Ephesus, Luke writes that the whole city was brought to a riot and Paul and the other believers barely escaped with their lives. Perhaps it was at such a time that Priscilla and Aquila had risked their lives for him.

This couple was a mighty influence for Christ wherever they went. Do you notice what Paul says about them here? Greet "also the church in their house." Wherever they went, they soon had a church meeting in their house.

Unless Christianity is lived in the heart and the home, it is of no use at all. This is the way the Gospel spread during Paul's times and what carried it across the world. Christians were not interested in trying to get people to come out to church, but, instead, invited them into their homes. In their homes they talked to them about Christ, and there it was that they won their neighbors to the Lord. The church in Rome consisted of house groups meeting in homes throughout the city.

^{5b} Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.

The first convert that Paul won to Christ in the province of Asia, where the city of Ephesus is located. What a special place Epaenetus must have occupied in Paul's heart. He was the first one for Christ from Asia. He was Paul's beloved.

⁶Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.

Mary was a hard worker for the church in Rome. This small amount of information makes her special in Paul's eyes. Everyone knows someone who has worked hard for the church. What special people they are.

⁷Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Perhaps these two men were brothers. Paul says they were relatives also. He also says they were fellow prisoners with him and that they were outstanding (notable Christians) among the apostles. Then he says something interesting. The two kinsmen were Christians before Paul was a believer! Is it OK to wonder if they prayed for Paul to

have a meaningful encounter with Jesus while he was out and about persecuting early Christians? Could his encounter on the road to Damascus have been the answer to prayers by Andronicus and Junias?

⁸Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. ^{10a}Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ.

Ampliatus – beloved in the Lord.
Urbanus – Fellow worker in Christ.
Stachys – beloved (of Paul).
Apelles – Approved in Christ.

I would take any of these descriptions on my tombstone.

^{10b}Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.

Evidently the family of Aristobulus were Christians. We can only speculate about Aristobulus and hope he was also.

^{11a}Greet Herodion, my kinsman.

Here is another relative of Paul. My hope is that there is more to Herodion than this.

^{11b}Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.

Again, here is a group of unnamed Christians whom Paul greets as a body, but the head of the household to whom they belong, Narcissus, is not included.

^{12a}Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord.

These are two females. Thank the Lord for women who work in the church and for the Lord.

^{12b}Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.

Another lady – Persis – who is a hard worker for the Lord. Again, Thanks be to the Lord for hard working women.

¹³Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.

Evidently Paul knew this man well and also his mother.

¹⁴Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them.

These are a group of men with Greek names, perhaps men Paul had met on his missionary journeys. Perhaps these man had a house church because Paul knew there were other brethren with them.

¹⁵Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

This is likely another house church, since a group of people are mentioned. It is interesting – Philologus means “Lover of the Word”.

¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

We are hand shakers, high fivers, and fist bumpers. In Paul’s time and throughout much of that part of the world, a social embrace and kiss is common as a greeting. Paul asked for the greetings to be Holy.

All the churches of Christ greet you – Strange times when there aren’t many churches to greet people. Hopefully our times will not become so strange.

¹⁷Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. ¹⁸For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. ¹⁹For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. ²⁰The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Paul takes time here to offer a warning to his brethren to be careful of any who seek to cause dissensions and hindrances to the teaching. We should do the same and also be careful around such people. As Paul writes, we should “turn away from them.”

They are not of the Lord, but their own wants. They are deceiving. Many unbelievers are.

Paul warns his friends to be “wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil”. Good advice for then and for now, too.

Satan will be crushed under the feet of the believer. That is Satan’s destiny.

²¹Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

Here are the people who are with Paul in Corinth. First is Timothy - son to Paul and fellow worker, serving the Lord. Along with Timothy are three more kinsmen who are with Paul in Corinth.

²²I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Here is the one who recorded Paul’s letter.

²³Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother.

Evidently Paul was staying at the house of Gaius and the entire church was aware of his letter to Rome. Erastus – a man of some governmental importance sends his greetings along with his brother Quartus.

²⁴[The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.]

A good ending to an incredible letter. What could be better than a wish for the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with us all.

May it be so (Amen)

²⁵Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; ²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

A parting prayer from the Missionary, perhaps written in his own hand. Paul liked to end his letters in his own hand and this may well have been his personal ending.

Here is what he said:

It is God who does the strengthening in our lives, and, Paul says, it will always be along three lines, or by three particular means:

First, "according to my gospel," Paul says, "and the preaching of Jesus Christ." That is, it will be right along the lines that the Holy Spirit has led me to set before you, and no other way. God will not move in different ways in your life than he has recorded in the Scriptures. If you want to know how God will work for you, study your Bible -- that is how he will work with you. It is according to the gospel, and along these lines, and above all, "according to the preaching of Jesus Christ, because he is the one whose life, indwelling us, makes possible strength in our experience.

Then, too, strengthening will be "according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret." What was the mystery? Simply the mystery that God would call out from Jew and Gentile alike the people who would belong to him and to each other. This is important because, if you are going to be strengthened in your Christian life, it means that it will be in connection with other believers as well. It is impossible for a Christian to grow strong all by himself. We need each other, and we need all the others who belong to the body of Christ. This is the great mystery -- as we share together in the life of our Lord Jesus and in each other, we grow strong in the Lord.

The third principle of strengthening is "according to the command of God to bring about obedience to the faith," i.e., the final great foundation upon which all our Christian growth and strength rests is the fact that God has set about a task which he will perform. As Paul writes to the Philippians, "being confident that he who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," {cf, Phil 1:6}.