

Rom. 16:1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

Rom. 16:2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

Cenchrea = the seaport for the city of Corinth.

As Paul closes his letter, he begins to send greetings to specific people. Phebe is a sister in the faith who is evidently on the way to Rome since Paul asks the believers there to receive her in the Lord. It would be logical to conclude that she is delivering this letter from Paul to the church at Rome. Paul not only describes Phebe as a fellow believer, but as a servant of the church. The Greek for the word *servant* is a reference to a deacon/deaconess. Although women were not to usurp the authority of men in the church, there were obviously female leaders needed to operate under the authority of the men, especially in ministry to other women. Paul's recommendation of Phebe indicates that she was one to be trusted and her friendship desired. Evidently Phebe's business in Rome would require some assistance, and Paul was urging the body of believers there to provide her the help that she needed. Not only had Phebe been of great help to Paul, she was known for helping many in the body of Christ.

I would love to be known as a Phebe.

Rom. 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

Rom. 16:4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Paul had met Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth according to Acts 18. They had moved to Corinth from Rome when Claudius commanded all Jews to leave Rome (Acts 18:2). Like Paul, they were tentmakers. They traveled on to Ephesus with Paul after he left Corinth. Evidently, they had since been able to return to Rome.

This couple seemed to work in great harmony together both in the home and in ministry. They are acknowledged as teachers of Apollos, a man who had established a reputation as an effective speaker, but who needed more complete instruction in "the ways of God" (Acts 18:26). I found a quote from Spurgeon regarding this couple: "When two loving hearts pull together they accomplish wonders."

While in Ephesus, Paul faced great opposition from many of the merchants of that town whose businesses were dependent upon the worship of Diana. His ministry was evidently producing such results as to make quite a negative impact on their profits. It might have been during Paul's time in Ephesus that Priscilla and Aquila protected him at their peril. Paul is very grateful for the ministry and commitment of this couple, not only to him, but also to all the churches of the Gentiles. We know of their specific ministry to the churches in Rome, Corinth and Ephesus; but we also know that they had part in the ministry

to other churches through their investment in Apollos and probably others who took the gospel and the ways of God to other Gentiles.

Rom. 16:5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

Priscilla and Aquila allowed their home to be used as the physical meeting place for a body of believers in Rome. It seems that they gave of their all in their service to God.

Achaia was the region in which Corinth is located in Greece. Epaphroditus was evidently one of Paul's first converts in the area. I think every person to whom one is privileged to lead to faith in Christ is "wellbeloved" by the messenger; but often we have a special soft spot for "firsts" in our life experience.

Rom. 16:6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.

Rom. 16:7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Mary is obviously a very popular name of that time. This Mary, much like Mary Magdalene, was a willing servant of the Lord in ministry to Paul and his companions.

Andronicus and Junia are identified as Paul's kinsmen (relatives by blood or fellow Jews) and fellowprisoners. Paul notes that they accepted the Savior before he did. (I wonder if they ever felt threatened by Saul the persecutor before he became Paul the apostle.) These believers had evidently been imprisoned with Paul at some point because of their testimony for the Lord, but the scripture does not provide us the circumstances. Their reputation was one of great respect among the apostles.

Rom. 16:8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

Rom. 16:9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

Rom. 16:10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.

Rom. 16:11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

Rom. 16:12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

Rom. 16:13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

Rom. 16:14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

Rom. 16:15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

As Paul continues to send greetings, it is obvious that he has made many friends throughout his journey that have ended up in the city of Rome. This group of believers does not appear to be referenced elsewhere in scripture. Of note is the fact that Paul treasured the friendship of those who had assisted him in ministry,

both men and women. He describes them as beloved, approved in Christ, and laborers in the Lord.

In looking for further information regarding these people, I made note that some believe verse 11 is a reference to Narcissus as an unbeliever, but who had many in his house who were believers.

Paul again references a kinsman, Herodion (v11), and then his mother (v13). I tend to think that those identified as kinsmen are his blood relatives. The commentators will reference Philippians 3:8 to affirm that Paul had no family connections still intact. I'm just not sure I concur with that conclusion.

Philippians 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: **for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ....**

Rufus is mentioned as the son of Simon the Cyrene, the man who was compelled to carry the cross of Jesus, in Mark 15. There is no proof, however, that this is the same man. The mother of Rufus was either a good friend of Paul's mother, or enjoyed such a relationship with Paul that he considered her his mom as well. (That is a relationship I like to foster with younger women to whom I feel I can contribute to their lives in some way.)

David Guzik gave some information about a man named Nereus that was interesting:

"In 95 A.D. two distinguished Romans were condemned for being Christians. The husband was executed and the wife was banished. The name of their chief servant was Nereus - this may be the same **Nereus** mentioned here and he may be the one who brought the gospel to them."

Verses 14 and 15 appear to be referencing different groups of people, which would fit in with the idea of the home churches in that culture. How Paul came to know all these people will be an interesting bit of trivia to learn in eternity.

The NIV Commentary had an interesting side note.

"In summary, two observations concerning the greetings should be made, especially since the church at Rome eventually became the strongest in all Christendom. (1) Several of these names appear in inscriptions at Rome in reference to slaves of the imperial household. If many of Paul's acquaintances were actually slaves, this may seem a rather inauspicious beginning for an influential church. But slaves in Roman times were often people of education and outstanding ability. Frequently they were able to gain their freedom and play a larger role in society."

Rom. 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

Greeting with a kiss is a custom of Eastern peoples. A "holy" kiss would seem to reference the idea of guarding your testimony and recognizing the wonderful

bond among the body of believers in Christ. Paul also wants the churches in Rome to know that they are wished well by the other churches at which he has ministered.

That is something I am working on in my prayer life—a concern for other churches, especially those with whom I have been connected in ministry and those with whom I am familiar with their leaders or some in their congregation. It's natural to focus your prayers on the ministry of your own church, but we need to be concerned about the body of Christ as a whole. I am trying to stay knowledgeable about persecution in the church through the Voice of the Martyrs weekly newsletter. I keep a prayer map posted in my room to remind me of the areas of the world in which Christians need extra prayer protection and support. Progress in this area is not at all to my satisfaction, but I am asking the Lord to help me in this part of my prayer life.

Rom. 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. Rom. 16:18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Paul has written a whole section greeting people who are dear to him in the church at Rome. Suddenly he is impressed with the thought to warn them regarding those who would try to promote discord and division among these believers. There are many people who seek to use churches as a base to promote themselves and their businesses. Their words may be charming and their actions kind, but their motives are to serve self and not the Lord Jesus Christ. Subtly they will begin to promote ideas that are not scriptural. If the Christian is not alert and tuned in to the leading of the Holy Spirit, they will find themselves being deceived. These men/women will woo one person at a time until suddenly there will be groups of believers at odds with one another in the church. Oh how the enemy rejoices at those times because he knows that unity in the body of faith strengthens the effectiveness of its witness. These thoughts bring to mind Paul's words to the Corinthians:

2Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Rom. 16:19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

This thought is directly connected to the preceding verses. The church at Rome had a reputation abroad of obedience to the Lord. Obedience in the body is a sign of unity. The biggest threat to that body would be anything that would break that unity by encouraging disobedience. Paul is very happy to report to them they have a good reputation in the community of believers. He also knows that this makes them a more obvious target of attack in the eyes of the enemy

and those who reject the gospel. Paul's advice: Be wise concerning what is good and simple (innocent) concerning evil.

This is important advice for all believers, but especially for new believers. I understand the benefit of knowing enough about evil/wicked/false teachings to be able to effectively dialogue with people about the truth, but I think it is far more important to be totally immersed in understanding the truth of the Word of God. There are many who advocate that we need to be knowledgeable in the things of the world to be able to minister the truth to the world. I used to use some of that logic myself.....and now I wish I never had. I believe it is far more important to fill my head with the things of God. There are so many verses of warning in the scripture.

Psalm 101:3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes...

Proverbs 4:27 ...remove thy foot from evil.

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil...

1Thessalonians 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Ephesians 4:27 Neither give place to the devil.

I have to remind myself that the effectiveness of the message is not dependent upon the abilities of the messenger. The power is in the Word itself and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the individual.

Rom. 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Paul was looking forward to the coming of the Lord and the final defeat of Satan. The mention of those who would attack the church and the reference to evil naturally turns to thoughts of Satan. Satan is the father of sin.

1John 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.

He delights in attacking the believer.

1Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour....

Paul knows that the promise to destroy Satan given way back in Genesis will be fulfilled.

*Genesis 3:14-15 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; **it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.***

The Greek in verse 20 for the word *bruise* is a reference to “crushing completely,” and the Hebrew for the word bruise in Genesis references “to overwhelm, break.” In the context of both the reference is to defeat and destruction. Note that a head wound would be fatal as opposed to having a wounded heel.

The wording is clear that it is God who will defeat Satan, but He will do so under the feet of the believers. It is the church that will provoke to jealousy the Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah and call for His return. Though Satan will try everything in his power to disrupt the ministry of the church and to eliminate the Jewish people, his defeat is certain. God’s word will never fail.

Isaiah 14:24 The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:

Isaiah 46:9-10 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure....

Paul was always quick to ask that the body of believers experience the grace of God. *Grace* in the Greek is defined as “the divine influence upon the heart.” Recognizing Jesus as Lord is the first step to responding to that divine influence. If every believer were living life in submission to “the divine influence on his/her heart,” the church would be a mighty force in this world. This is a prayer we should continually offer up for those we love as well as for ourselves.

Rom. 16:21 Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

Rom. 16:22 I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in the Lord.

Rom. 16:23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

I believe Paul has some of the longest closings to letters ever. He now begins to send greetings to the believers at Rome from those who are ministering with him at this time—Timothy, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, and Tertius. On a personal note, I wonder if this is the Jason referenced in Acts 17. We named our son Jason because of the reference to his being one of those involved in turning the world upside down through service to the Lord.

It would seem that Gaius is the one providing hospitality for Paul and his crew at this time. He is identified in 1Corinthians as one of the few people Paul personally baptized. I wonder if this is the same Gaius to whom John wrote his third epistle.

An interesting sidenote: Archaeologists have discovered an inscription of the name Erastus as one holding this position in the city of Corinth around that time.

The chamberlain of the city would seem to be equivalent to the mayor of our cities, but the Greek makes a specific reference to treasurer. It is always a good when government leaders respond to the gospel.

Rom. 16:24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

Again Paul pronounces a blessing of grace on the believers.

Rom. 16:25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

Rom. 16:26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

“Now to *him*” = “God only wise” in verse 27.

“stablish” = set fast, turn resolutely in a certain direction, confirm, strengthen

“my gospel” – Paul summarized his gospel in his letter to the Corinthians in what I have always heard referred to as “the gospel in a nutshell.”

1Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, **how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:**

“and the preaching of Jesus Christ” – Paul’s gospel was no different than that which Jesus proclaimed. Jesus directed his teaching to the Jews, while Paul directed his teaching to the Gentiles.

“according...made manifest” – Paul’s message of salvation to the Gentiles would result in rapid growth of the church, the body of Christ. This was always part of the plan of God, but was not revealed until taught by Paul and the other apostles through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf chapters 9-11). He is more specific in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 3:1-7 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) **Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:** Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

The key phrase is found in Ephesians 3:6, “of the same body.”

“by the scriptures of the prophets” – Although this mystery had been kept secret, not understood, the prophets had taught this truth. Peter tells us that the prophets didn’t even have complete understanding of their own teachings.

1Peter 1:10-12 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

I think it is important to note that although they did not fully understand the revelations given to them, they did not doubt the truth of those revelations because they received them through the Holy Spirit. They knew that there was truth in their prophecies that applied to the people of their day, but they also recognized that they were giving a message that would be more revealing to those who lived after the Messiah had come.

“according to the commandment of the everlasting God” – Paul’s preaching of the gospel message and of the revelation of the mystery of the church is being done in response to the direct commandment of God the Father, the God of eternity past, present and future.

“made known to all nations....” – From the beginning God’s plan of redemption was to include all nations, just as He first promised Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Rom. 16:27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. Written to the Romans from Corinthus, and sent by Phebe servant of the church at Cenckrea.

Paul finally concludes his letter with a word of praise to God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. He describes God as “only wise.” This doesn’t mean that we can’t obtain wisdom and put it to use. It emphasizes that God embodies wisdom and is the source of wisdom. We know that we can pray for wisdom to use according to God’s will, and He will answer that prayer with liberal provision.

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Paul offers the Father glory through Jesus Christ, because it is only through the provision of Jesus the Son that we can approach God for praise and prayer.

Proverbs 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

1Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

The key word in the above verses is *righteous*. We are only righteous as seen through the blood of Jesus. Jesus imputes His righteousness to the believer.

Romans 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:

2Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

“forever” – Again, that reference to eternity; I’m not even sure I’ll fully comprehend that when I get there.

“Amen” – This is a word of affirmation of the truth being declared.

The footnote stating that this letter was written by Paul to the Romans from Corinth and delivered by Phebe was found only in the King James of the nine versions I checked. These are logical deductions from the content as stated in the journal notes on this book at different points in the narrative.