

The Epistle of Paul to the *Romans*

Conclusion, Greetings and Benediction (15:14 - 16:27)

In the following (and last) chapter ^{Romans 16:1-27}, Paul wrote extensive lists of (mostly unknown) fellow believers/coworkers who he loved/appreciated as vital partners in the early church. There are 2 possible exceptions, men who were mentioned only for those in their households.

16:1-2 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me. Paul first mentioned his "sister Phoebe" (Phoebe: "bright, radiant") (a "servant") would be arriving in Rome and he requested they "receive her in the Lord" and "give her...help", because she was a "great help". Phoebe was from Cenchrea ^{Acts 18:18}, a seaport 9 miles from Corinth, where Paul wrote Romans. The Greek word for "servant" ^{v.1} (*diakonos*) is at times transliterated "deacon" ^{1 Timothy 3:8-10}. In the early church, women were the instructors for other women and the children ^{Titus 2:3-5}. In addition, women servants cared for sick believers, the poor, strangers and those in prison.

16:3-16 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings. Paul expressed deep love for (A) some of his "fellow workers" who are noted elsewhere in the Bible: "Priscilla and Aquila" ^{Acts 18:1-3} and "Rufus" (possibly a son of

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Simon of Cyrene ^{Mark 15:21}) and (B) some "dear friends" whose only Biblical mentions are here: "Epenetus" (the "first convert" in Asia), "Mary", "Andronicus and Junias" (probably a married couple), "Ampliatius" (possibly a slave in "Caesar's household" ^{Philippians 4:22}), "Urbanus", "Stachys", "Apelles", "Herodion" (a relative of the Herod family and possibly a Jewish relative of Paul), "Tryphena and Tryphosa" (possibly twin sisters, "delicate" and "dainty"), "Persis", "Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas", "Philologus, Julia, Nereus...and Olympas". The individuals "Aristobulus" and "Narcissus" could have been believers or simply heads of households containing saints. Paul encouraged all to greet with a "holy kiss" ^{1 Thessalonians 5:26}.

Paul met Priscilla & Aquila in Corinth on Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey. They had arrived in Corinth after being forced to leave Rome when Claudius commanded all Jews to leave Rome. Paul, Priscilla and Aquila were all tentmakers, so Paul stayed and worked with them ^{Acts 18:1-3}.

Paul noted Epenetus was the first convert in Asia (sometimes referred to as Asia Minor or Achaia). Perhaps Paul led Epenetus to the Lord on his 3rd Missionary Journey ^{Acts 18:23}, having been prevented from going into Asia by the Holy Spirit on his 2nd Missionary Journey ^{Acts 16:6}.

One scholar believes Aristobulus was Herod the Great's grandson and a friend of Claudius.

It is believed that Narcissus was a slave who later became the personal secretary for Emperor Claudius, placing Christians within the palace. It is also alleged that shortly after Claudius was murdered, his successor (Emperor Nero) forced Narcissus to commit 'suicide'.

It is assumed that Paul's reference to the mother of Rufus having also been a "mother to [him]", indicated that Paul stayed in their home in Jerusalem and received motherly care.

A "holy kiss" was a common way of greeting a friend: a kiss on the forehead, cheek or beard.

16:17-20 I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. In the midst of his greetings of love for many of his coworkers in spreading the gospel to 1st century Gentiles, Paul considered it vital to give a stern warning to "watch out" ^{Matthew 7:15} (keep away from) people in the church who were teaching ideas and practices that undermine Christianity's base of truth ^{Matthew 24:24, Galatians 1:6-9}. People serving "their own appetites" are

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not motivated to please God, but by self-interest & self-gratification ^{Philippians 3:18-19, Jude 1:12-13}. And these people ^{2 Corinthians 11:13-15} were deceiving the “naïve” (“weak” ^{Romans 14:1}) Christians. The saints were both encouraged for their “obedience” and warned to be “wise” ^{Revelation 3:10-11}. Paul also assured them “Satan” (and his work) would be “crushed” ^{Genesis 3:15} “soon” (in God’s timing, this will happen “quickly” ^{Acts 22:18, Revelation 22:7}) by the “God of peace” ^{Romans 15:33}.

16:21-23 Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives. I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city’s director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.

Paul continued his listing of “fellow workers” (A) who had been mentioned in other parts of the Bible: “Timothy” ^{1&2 Timothy}, “Lucius” (either a native of Cyrene ^{Acts 13:1-3} or another form of “Luke”, the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts), “Jason” ^{Acts 17:5-9}, “Sosipater” (a longer form of “Sopater” ^{Acts 20:4-6}), “Gaius” ^{1 Corinthians 1:14} (“Gaius Titius Justus” ^{Acts 18:7}) and (B) those only noted here: “Tertius” (Paul’s secretary and the actual ‘writer’ of Romans), “Erastus” (treasurer of Corinth), “Quartus” (the final brother-in-Christ listed here by Paul).

It seems certain Paul utilized others to pen the many Biblical texts which bear his name, for example: Sosthenes ^{1 Corinthians 1:1}, Timothy ^{2 Corinthians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, Philemon 1:1}, Silas and/or Timothy ^{2 Thessalonians 1:1} and Silas ^{1 Peter 5:12}.

Note: Most modern translations do not include verse 24 (*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.*), because it is not found in the earliest Greek manuscripts and it seems to not fit just before the longer, more complete benediction that follows ^{v.25-27}.

16:25-27 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations believe and obey him – to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. Paul praised God (the Father and the Son) and the gospel that had been a “mystery”, but was “revealed” through the life of Jesus the Christ and the “writings” of the NT.

Paul’s letter “to all in Rome who are...called to be saints” ^{Romans 1:7} is the collection of the essential aspects of the message he had been spreading throughout the civilized world. While he called this “my gospel” ^{v.25, Romans 2:16, 2 Timothy 2:8}, Paul was not denying these principles were all from a divinely-revealed message of Jesus Christ through His Spirit ^{1 Corinthians 2:6-16}.