

## **ROMANS 16:1-16**

*Paul now begins to bring this epistle to a conclusion with a commendation of a special sister followed by a series of names of brethren important to Paul among the brethren at Rome.*

### **I) Commending Phoebe (16:1-2)**

A) Paul commends **Phoebe** (probably carried Paul's epistle to Rome)

- 1) A sister in Christ
- 2) A servant (helper) of the church in Cenchrea
  - a) Cenchrea was a port city about seven miles east of Corinth (cf. Acts 18:18)
  - b) "Servant" *deaconos* – one who serves; no evidence she was in an official capacity of a "deaconess" (office of a deacon could only be filled by a man – "Let deacons be the husbands of one wife" 1 Tim. 3:12)

B) They are to receive her "in the Lord, in a manner worthy of the saints" (loving, courteous)

- 1) Assist her in whatever business she has need of them – a lady of wealth and influence?
- 2) She had been a helper of many and of Paul himself – busy in spiritual work
- 3) We should not hesitate to commend faithful brethren to other faithful brethren

*To the brethren at Rome Paul commends Phoebe, a sister in Christ and servant of the church in Cenchrea. They are to receive her and help her, for she has helped others, including Paul himself. As seen here and in the following verses, women are vital to the work of the Lord in so many ways. Phoebe is probably the carrier of this letter to Rome.*

### **II) Greetings to Various Brethren (16:3-16)**

A) Paul greets (salute, express affection and regard) a large number of brethren at Rome

1) **Priscilla [Prisca] and Aquila** – fellow workers with Paul (Acts 18:1-3, 18-19, 26; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19)

- a) Tells that they risked their own necks for his life
- b) Gave thanks to them and as did all the churches of the Gentiles
- c) Greeted the church in their house (1 Cor. 16:19; cf. Col. 4:15; Philemon 2)
  - i) Could refer to members of their household who are Christians, or that their house was used as a meeting place for saints in Rome (latter is most likely)

2) **Epaphroditus** – firstfruits of Achaia (KJV) Asia (ASV) to Christ

- a) Some manuscripts have "Asia" (household of Stephanas was the firstfruits of Achaia, 1 Cor. 16:15)

3) **Mary** – labored much for Paul (KJV), for the brethren at Rome (ASV)

4) **Andronicus and Junia [or Junias]** – Paul's kinsmen [Jews, 9:3] and fellow prisoners

- a) "Junia" (feminine) or "Junias" (masculine)? Junia found in many contemporary Roman inscriptions, while Junias is not found; likely husband and wife
- b) Of note among the apostles
  - i) Perhaps had distinguished themselves as outstanding in the eyes of the twelve apostles
  - ii) "Apostle" could be used in general sense of one sent out on a mission (Acts 13:4; 14:14; Phil. 2:25; 2 Cor. 8:23 "messenger")
- c) In Christ before Paul was converted (were early converts to Christ)

5) **Amplias** – beloved in the Lord; a common slave name

6) **Urbanus** – fellow worker

7) **Stachys** – beloved by Paul

8) **Apelles** – approved [genuine, tried and true] in the Lord (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15)

9) **Those of the household of Aristobulus** (would have included slaves)

- 10) **Herodion** – Paul’s kinsmen [Jew]
- 11) **Those of household of Narcissus** who are in the Lord
- 12) **Tryphena and Tryphosa** – women (sisters?) who labored in the Lord
- 13) **Persis** – beloved, labored much in the Lord
- 14) **Rufus and his mother** – he is chosen [outstanding, excellent] in the Lord; she was a mother to Paul; this Rufus might be the son of Simon of Cyrene, Mk. 15:21)
- 15) **Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes**, and the **brethren** who are with them
- 16) **Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, Olympas**, and all the **saints** who are with them
- B) Several women are identified by Paul (more than 1/3 of the 27 persons specifically named/identified [Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Junia, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus’ mother, Julia, and Nereus’ sister])
  - 1) Women have good works that they can do (Eph. 2:10; 1 Tim. 2:10; 5:10; Titus 2:3-5; 3:8)
- C) Loving, sacrificial brethren – time, energy, goods, lives (vv. 2, 3-4, 6, 7, 13)
- D) Several names common among slaves, former slaves [freedmen/women], imperial household
  - 1) Gospel is for all regardless of social status (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; Philemon 10, 16; Phil. 4:22)
- E) Paul had a bond to some as fellow Jews (*kinsmen* – vv. 7,11) and some as personal acquaintances (*fellow workers, beloved* – vv. 3,5,8,9,12; 1 Jn. 4:11 – esteem and love)
  - 1) These individuals likely migrated to Rome from areas of Paul’s work and could vouch for Paul’s character and work on the verge of his visit and seeking of aid
- F) True fame and honor are found in being a faithful child of God (“in the Lord,” “in Christ”)
  - 1) firstfruits in Christ (v. 5)
  - 2) in Christ (v. 7)
  - 3) beloved in the Lord (v. 8)
  - 4) fellow worker in Christ (v. 9)
  - 5) approved in Christ (v. 10)
  - 6) in the Lord (v. 11)
  - 7) labored in the Lord (v. 12)
  - 8) chosen in the Lord (v. 13)
  - 9) greet in the Lord (v. 22)
- G) Evidence of small “house” churches rather than one large congregation (vv. 5, 14, 15)
  - 1) Epistle addressed to the saints “who are in Rome” (1:7) not to the “church at Rome”
- H) They are to greet one another with a holy kiss (spiritual affection and fellowship between brethren in the customary greeting of that time, Lk. 7:45; 1 Pet. 5:14; cf. Acts 20:37)
  - 1) “Holy” – sincere, pure, without guile (1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; cf. 1 Tim. 2:8 holy hands)
  - 2) “The churches of Christ greet you” – local congregations from other areas of Paul’s work sent greetings to saints at Rome; faithful brethren should care about one another
    - a) “Church” used in local sense; several local congregations identified as “churches of Christ” *ekklesiai tou Christou* (assemblies of Christ “called out” by His gospel)
    - b) There is one church/body (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4) – used in universal sense of all Christians
    - c) This term honors Christ as the builder and owner of the church – let us wear His name!

*This is a long list of names of those in Rome known to Paul, either personally or through others. Paul wanted the brethren to know that though he had never been there personally, he knew many of them, which might help in encouraging those who did not know him to hear his admonitions and be ready to help him in his further work to the west (Spain).*

*Their customary greeting of a kiss was to be holy – one of spiritual fellowship among those in the kingdom of Christ. They are greeted by other local congregations, churches of Christ, who all follow the same gospel and head, Christ.*