

ROMANS 16:1-16

Introduction:

*As Paul closes out this last chapter of his letter of Romans, he wants to acknowledge many of the believing saints that helped him in most of his missionary journeys.

*In the first 15 verses, Paul mentions 27 names and refers to others. At least 9 mentioned are women, and one woman was chosen by Paul for the important task of delivering this letter to the faithful believers in Rome.

*It was Paul's heart, full of love, that embraced the people of God. By these saints, he was able to keep himself informed of the state of the church in Rome.

Romans 16:1-2 - 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.

1. The first name Paul mentions here is a woman from the church in Cenchrea (a seaport city just outside of the city Corinth in Greece), whose name is "Phebe". Paul has put into the hands of Phebe this letter to the Romans to be delivered to the churches in Rome.
2. Paul identifies Phebe as a sister and servant of the church. He asks that she be welcomed as a true believer and for them to assist her in every possible way, as she has given herself to the ministry of helping others.
 - a. Notice she has been a "succourer" to many and also to Paul. A succourer means that Phebe was a protector, guardian, or helper in the church - looking out for others.
 - b. Some believe Phebe was a widow lady with some wealth. She would use her wealth to help and protect the church at Cenchrea, where Paul and others were staying.

*Next Paul sends greetings to Priscilla and Aquila. They had been such courageous fellow workers of his in the service of Christ Jesus and even risked their lives for the grace gospel.

Romans 16:3-5 - 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. Rom. 16:5 Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

1. Paul mentions Priscilla's and Aquila's names next because of their vast importance in Paul's life and his ministry. When Paul came to Corinth, it was this couple that gave Paul employment - the same trade that Paul knew as a tentmaker.

Acts 18:1-3 - After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; Acts 18:2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. Acts 18:3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

2. Apostle Paul was so grateful for Priscilla & Aquila as they had risked their own lives at times, though we don't really know what the details were.
3. This Jewish couple graciously opened their house at Corinth to learn about the Grace Gospel. When the couple were at Ephesus, they also enlightened a man named Apollos of Alexandria - a person already mighty in the scriptures.

*Houses were used as churches so believers could meet freely, until the late 2nd century.

4. Paul mentions a man named Epaenetus in verse 5, who became one of his first converts in Asia. Being Paul's first convert here, it seems that Epaenetus had a special place in Paul's heart and in his memories.

*"Epaenetus" means "praiseworthy" and that is fitting for Paul's "wellbeloved". Paul never forgot his first convert in Achaia.

*In verses 6 through 15, we won't find most of the people mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, except perhaps a couple. Evidently though, these people must have played an important role in Paul's ministry for him to acknowledge them here in Paul's closing letter.

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

1. "Mary" was a very common name in New Testament times. We are not told who this Mary was, but she worked hard to help Paul's ministry.
2. There are at least 6 Marys mentioned in the N.T.: Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of John Mark; Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha & Lazarus; Mary, the wife of Cleophas; and this Mary mentioned here.
3. What is important here is that Paul shows the importance women played in Paul's ministry and their usefulness.

Romans 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.

1. These are two of Paul's close associates who had spent time in prison for Christ's sake. They were in Christ before Paul.
2. Paul introduces them as "my kinsmen", meaning they were Jews. Paul refers to all Jews as being his kinsmen in the flesh.
3. They were prominent and distinguished among the apostles. Even though they were a big part in the Kingdom Program, they came to understand Paul's message of grace being in Christ.

*In Verses 8-12, Paul acknowledges some of the unknown people that played a role in his missionary journeys -the ones behind the scenes.

Romans 16:8-12 - 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.

1. "Amplias" - we don't know much about this person except that Paul had a great appreciation for him (beloved in the Lord).
2. "Urbane" - he had worked with Paul personally in the ministry.

3. "Stachys" - his name means "an ear of corn". Perhaps he was a farmer or country boy.
4. "Apelles" - Paul says he was approved in Christ and had been proven faithful.
5. "Aristobulus" - his name means "wise counselor". Some believe he was the grandson of Herod the Great. Even the gospel had reached the household of a wicked family.
6. "Herodian my kinsman" - he too must have been connected to Herod's royal family. It is also possible that he could have been a Jewish slave who may have adopted Herod's name.
7. "household of Narcissus" - the meaning behind this name is a type of poppy flower. Narcissus could have been a wealthy and powerful freed man, serving as a secretary in Caesar's household. Unfortunately, later on Nero put him to death because of his connection with Apostle Paul.
8. "Tryphena and Tryphosa" - these were more than likely twin sisters who served in the ministry for Christ and must have made an impact on Paul for him to mention them here in scripture.
9. "Peris" - this was another woman (probably Persian), who labored much in the Lord.

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

1. This person named "Rufus" is said to be the Lord's special servant by God. This Rufus may have been the son of Simon the Cyrenian - the man who helped carry the cross of Christ to the place where Christ was crucified - Golgotha.

Mark 15:21-22 - And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. Mark 15:22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

2. This reference here, "Rufus...his mother and mine" possibly refers to Paul's days in Antioch where he was a guest in their home. Rufus' mother treated Paul so friendly and gracious at times that Paul considered her as his away-from-home mother.

Romans 16:14-15 - 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.

1. Paul mentions five men in verse 14 and four men and one sister in verse 15. It must have been important to Paul to mention these names and all saints with them.
2. More than likely these brethren, households, and saints were involved in these church houses. Maybe, these were some of the people that Paul had won to Christ. Therefore, they played a role in Paul's ministry.

*As Paul brings his salutations to these Roman Christians to a close, Paul adds one more way to show his appreciation in verse 16.

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

1. This was the practice of that time and continues today in some countries of the world of kissing on the cheeks. This would be like an action here in America of a hearty handshake or hug.
2. The holy kiss was a demonstration to show formal love, warm and affectionate. In those times, a kiss was a sign of respect to a person.
3. It is not an encouraging romantic kiss among believers. Paul intended greetings to be warm and to show courtesy among the believers. Paul's desire was to have the Body Churches not to become cold and uncaring.
4. "the holy kiss" can be found in several other books of the New Testament.
 - a. Paul's benediction to the Corinthians in II Corinthians 13:12 - "Greet one another with an holy kiss."
 - b. Paul's closing remarks in I Thessalonians 5:26 - "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss."
 - c. Peter mentions the kiss in the last verse of I Peter 5:14 - "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity (love)..."
5. "The churches of Christ salute you" in the last part of verse 16 defines the other churches in Achaia. They also send their greetings to the believers in Rome. Though they never have met, they were brothers and sisters in the Lord.