

# Romans

## Chapter 16

### Romans 16:1-2

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.”

## Paul's Heart

- In all of Paul's writing's **Romans Chapter 16**, stands apart by showing us that Paul was not a cold and calculated theologian but a loving and affectionate follower of Christ.
- He emphasizes by name 25, of his **beloved friends**, the **first convert in Asia, fellow workers in Christ**, and **fellow prisoners**.
- The first person Paul draws attention to is **our sister Phoebe**.- **Vs.1**
- Paul introduced **Phoebe** to fellow believers in Rome. Paul's words established **Phoebe's** high standing in Cenchrea, her home city located near Corinth.
- Paul announced Phoebe to the fellow believers in Rome as a **servant** of the church at Cenchreae.

- **Servant** is the same word that is often translated as **deacon** in other places in the Scripture.
- **Phoebe** seems to have been a **female deacon** in the early church either through formal recognition or through her general service.
- Paul gave to **Phoebe** one of the best compliments anyone can give to a servant of Christ: **she has been a patron of many and of myself as well**.-**Vs. 2**
- The word for **patron** is in the feminine form in the Greek and describes a woman set over others, a female guardian, protectress, patroness, caring for the affairs of others and aiding them with her resources.

## Romans 16:3-5a

“Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. Greet also the church in their house.”

## Priscilla and Aquila

- Paul had met **Prisca** i.e., **Priscilla** and her husband **Aquila** in Corinth (**Acts 18:2**).
- They both had **risked their necks** for Paul. When Paul left for Ephesus he took them with him (**Acts 18:18**), but he left them in Ephesus when he moved on to Jerusalem (**Acts 18:19**).
- At Ephesus, **Priscilla** and **Aquila** helped Apollos by taking him aside and explaining to him the way of God more accurately (**Acts 18:24-28**).
- They eventually returned to Rome where they had lived previously (**Acts 18:2**).

- Although they will in time go back to Ephesus (**2 Tim. 4:19**).
- Priscilla and Aquila had a **church in their house** (**Rom. 16:5a, 23; 1 Cor. 16:19**).
- The early church would meet in houses . In a city with a community of believers there would be several worship services meeting in different houses since there was not any church buildings at this time.
- "There is no decisive evidence until the third century of the existence of special buildings used for churches. The references seem all to be to places in private houses, sometimes very probably houses of a large size." -Simmons, William

## **Romans 16:5b-16**

“Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.

Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.”

## Various Salutations

- **Epaenetus:** This man is noted for being the first **convert to Christ in Asia**. **Epaenetus** was also apparently special to Paul since he calls him **beloved** a term of endearment.-**Vs. 5**
- **Mary:** Scholars are not clear which Mary this one was but we are told that she **worked hard** for the Roman Church.
- **Andronicus and Junia:** They were apparently both Jews (my kinsmen) and had been imprisoned for the sake of the gospel (my fellow prisoners).
- They were both regarded among the apostles as having become **in Christ before** Paul of which he noted in **verse 7**.

- **Amplias:** There is a tomb dating from the late first or early second century in the earliest Christian catacombs of Rome which bears the name **AMPLIAS**. Some suggest that this is the same person mentioned in **Romans 16:8**.
- **Aristobulus:** It is interesting that the **family of Aristobulus** is greeted but not Aristobulus himself.-**Vs. 10**
- "Although **Aristobulus** was a common name, there is certainly a strong plausibility in the suggestion that the **Aristobulus** here mentioned was the grandson of Herod the Great and brother of Agrippa I."-Dunn, James
- Spurgeon thought that **Aristobulus** was unconverted but that his family members who lived within his household had become believers.

- **Urbanus and Stachys:** All we know for sure of them is that **Urbanus was fellow worker in Christ** and **Stachys was beloved** by Paul.-Vs.9
- **Apelles:** We are told that he was **approved in Christ**.-Vs. 10
- **Herodion:** My **kinsman** most likely Jewish.-Vs.11
- **Narcissus:** **Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.** Again he may not have been a believer. **Narcissus** name means **stupidity**.-Vs.11
- **Tryphena (Dainty) and Tryphosa (Delicate)** may have been sisters. Both names derive from the verb **truphao**, meaning to live delicately or luxuriously.-Vs. 12

- **Rufus:** Greet him and **his mother and mine**.
- **Chosen in the Lord** has the idea that **Rufus** had some distinction among the Believers in Rome.-Vs. 13
- "Let Christian mothers find here a great field for that wonderful heart of instinctive loving care given by God to mothers,—that they extend their maternal care beyond their own family circle, to all Christians, and especially to all laborers for Christ." -Moo, Douglas
- **Nereus:** In 95 AD., two eminent Romans were condemned for being Believers. 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.

- The rest of the names listed Paul had something great to say about almost every one of them by recording their **labor**, his special regard for them as **beloved**, their standing in the Lord **approved in Christ ...in the Lord ... chosen in the Lord**.
- This is such a tremendous pattern here for us today to follow. Paul was here casting away from himself by placing the highlight of the Lord's work upon others by using uplifting words in a way meant to build up God's people.
- Paul was generous in paying compliments that were both sincere and wonderful. Tributes that have stood throughout history as testimonies to the workers in the early church.

- **Greet one another with a holy kiss:** This might sound odd to us culturally but **Luke 7:45**, shows that a **kiss** was a normal greeting. Jesus rebukes a Pharisee because he had not given Jesus a **kiss** when He came into his house.
- Notice the women mentioned in this chapter: Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, the mother of Rufus, and Julia. These women are said to have **worked for the Lord**.
- “Ministry in the Spirit by a woman is different altogether from her taking over authority, or infringing upon the order of the assembly of God.”-Newell, William
- Out of the **25**, names mentioned here **13**, occur in early writings or documents connected with the Emperor's palace in Rome. We know that there were Believers among Caesar's household (**Philippians 4:22**), so Paul may be addressing many of the servants who worked for Caesar who became Believers.

## **Romans 16:17-20**

“I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

## A Warning Against Dividers

- In **Romans Chapter 14**, Paul had begun his discussion about the **proper attitude** that we should have as we interact with fellow believers.
- “Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others. Adopt the **same attitude as that of Christ Jesus...**”-**Philippians 2:4-5, CSB**
- “As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but **not to quarrel over opinions.**”-**Romans 14:1**
- The word used for **opinions** in Greek is ***dialogismos***, which describes the thinking of a man deliberating within himself, a thought, or inward reasoning that is burning to be expressed.

- Paul seemed to be well aware that there is always before us in the church the possibility of people having an attitude that causes division; people who are only concerned with their own interests and the need they feel to express it and the need they feel to convince others to accept their opinion.
- “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in **expressing his opinion.**”-**Proverbs 18:2**
- The question should be: What does the Lord think about issues of controversies?

- “Woe to those who are **wise in their own eyes**, and shrewd in their own sight!”-**Isaiah 5:21**
- “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be **quick** to hear, slow to **speak**...”.-**James 1:19**
- “The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.”-**Proverbs 18:17**
- “**Live in harmony** with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. **Never be** wise in your own sight.”-**Romans 12:16**
- If we as believer's have thoughts of superiority over others it is neither realistic nor appropriate for those who owe all to God's grace.

- Have nothing to do with **foolish, ignorant controversies**; you know that they breed **quarrels**. And the **Lord's servant** must not be **quarrelsome** but **kind** to everyone”.-**2 Timothy 2:23-24a**
- In this also we must recognize where God has been very clear and where God has not been clear and know that in all of His revelation whether its obvious and clear or whether it is obscure and vague He has revealed it and purposed it to man perfectly.
- We recognize there are **essentials** and **non-essentials** to our faith and we should understand where we do and where we do not have the liberty to make decisions regarding our own lives, the lives of other believers, and the life of our own church.
- We can be rigid about what is clear and flexible about what is not clear.

- Here in **Romans 16:17**, Paul issued a warning for the Church: ... **watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught.**
- The word for **watch out** in the Greek is one word and describes **fixing ones eyes upon intently**.
- “Therefore **be careful** lest the light in you be darkness.”-**Luke 11:35**
- It is imperative that we are **watching out carefully** for either those people in the church or the things in our own heart that **cause divisions and create obstacles** to the work of Jesus.

- **Cause divisions** is a Greek word meaning to **stand apart**. It seeks to produce or **cause a standing apart** which is the opposite of the unity.
- **Causing Division** is listed among one of the works of the sinful nature in **Galatians 5:20**, “idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, **dissensions, divisions**”.
- **Create obstacles** is a Greek word meaning **to bait and to trap by using a snare to trap an animal and kill it.**

- “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”-**2 Corinthians 11:3**
- This can be a death trap to the spiritual life. The trap is baited, the victim falls in, the result is an end to the abundant spiritual life the Lord desires for us and others.
- Mad dogs are shot; infectious diseases are quarantined; but [people] who would **divide to their destruction** and **draw away the saints** with [opinions] contrary to the doctrine of Christ and His Apostles are everywhere tolerated!”-Newell, William

## Avoid Them

- The Bible advises believers to **avoid** those who **cause division** and **create obstacles** in the church.
- The main reason is for **such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites.**
- The word for **avoid** literally means to **turn away** and it is in the present tense which means to keep on doing it continually every day.
- As believers we **turn away** by not allowing ourselves or the church to be influenced by anyone who causes division or anyone who creates an obstacle birthing a death sentence for the work of Christ in the life of the church and our own life as well.

- These people are very dangerous because they are not **serving the interests of Christ** but their **own appetites and** they **deceive the hearts of the naive**.-**Vs. 18**
- “The dogs have a **mighty appetite**; they never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, **each to his own gain**, one and all.”-**Isaiah 56:11**
- “For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as **enemies of the cross** of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with **minds set on earthly things**.”-**Philippians 3:19**

- There are some people who seek to feed their own appetites by receiving the glory and honor that comes from people; there are also some people who enjoy praising and glorifying man or a personality because their **hearts have become deceived by smooth talk and flattery**.-**Vs. 18**
- “for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”-**John 12:43**
- “I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be **no divisions among you**, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”-**1 Corinthians 1:10-13**

- “But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person **who stirs up division**, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that **such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.**”- **Titus 3:9-11**
- This separation is for the believer’s spiritual health and also for the overall preservation of the spiritual life of any given church.
- “And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”-**Revelation 12:10-11**

## Satan Crushed

- “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between **your seed and her Seed**; He shall **bruise** your head, and you shall **bruise** His heel”.-**Genesis 3:15**
- God’s judgment on Satan is that he will always know defeat. He will always reach for victory but never achieve it; even in his most victorious moment he will be defeated.
- “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”- **Romans 16:19**
- Satan’s head was crushed at the Cross by the work of Jesus. Satan’s head is crushed every time a sinner believe and turns and follows after Jesus with his whole heart; Satan’s head will finally be crushed at his wicked rebellion against God will be defeated.