

Romans Chapter 16

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

Phoebe means bright and radiant, which fits Paul's brief description of her personality and Christian character.

“Servant”: This is one passage used in support of the office of deaconess. No specific specifications however are given of such an office. Such women are better viewed as being either the wives of deacons, or godly widows who were supported financially by the church. Here it is best to understand Phoebe's role to be that of “helper.”

In the early church, women servants cared for sick believers, the poor, strangers and those in prison. They instructed the women and children.

Whether Phoebe had an official title or not, she had the great responsibility of delivering this letter to the Roman church.

Cenchrea is the little town east of Corinth from which Paul wrote Romans.

Romans 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 succorer of many, and of myself also."

Succorer means a patron. In many of Paul's writings, such as this, we see that many women ministered with him. Paul calls her his sister; she is not his sister in the flesh, but in the ministry.

Notice that Paul says to help her in her business. In the first verse, he had told us that her business was as servant in the church. We see from this that, Paul is saying to help her in her ministry. She had been a great help to Paul, as well as others. Notice in this next Scripture in Jesus' own words what He feels toward these workers:

Matthew 10:40 "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." You see when you receive a servant of God (male or female) you are, in fact, receiving the God that sent them.

Romans 16:3 "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:"

We know that these two had befriended Paul before. In fact, Paul lived with them and worked as a tentmaker while he ministered.

Acts 18:2-3 “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." "And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."

These two had been fellow workers with Paul on several occasions.

Romans 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.'

Here we see Paul giving a glowing report on the sincerity of these two who had helped him. Paul says that they even put themselves in danger to save him.

They had probably risked their lives for Paul at Corinth or Ephesus, but the details are not known.

John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Romans 16:5 "Likewise [greet] the church that is in their house. Salute my well beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ."

Here, we see a mention of the church which was in their house.

1 Corinthians 16:19 "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."

The next Scripture will show that they brought the word in all truth to those who would hear.

Acts 18:26 "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto [them], and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

It seems that Epaphroditus was the first one saved under Paul's ministry in Achaia. It would be a natural thing for Paul to inquire of his convert.

Acts 18:27 "And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:"

We see for certain that Paul ministered in Achaia from this scripture. "Achaia": Located in Asia Minor or modern Turkey.

1 Corinthians 16:15 "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and [that] they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)" This Scripture shows the good fruits of the church that Paul started in Achaia.

Romans 16:6 "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us."

It is difficult to know for sure which Mary this is, since there were so many with this name who were followers of Jesus. This just shows again here that many women helped with Paul's ministry.

The context of this scripture suggests this Mary probably worked to the point of exhaustion, ministering in the church at Rome since its founding and been mentioned to Paul by others, possibly Priscilla and Aquila.

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

Very little is written in the Bible about Andronicus. A history book states that he became bishop of Pannonia. His name means man-conquering. He and Junia seemed to be blood relations of Paul.

"Note among the apostles", just means they were well known to the apostles. The New Testament knows only the 12 apostles plus Matthias and Paul. The office of apostle was not extended beyond this number. Andronicus and Junia (a woman), are not apostles.

Their ministry with Paul, and perhaps with Peter and some of the other apostles in Jerusalem before Paul was converted, was well known and appreciated by the apostles.

Romans 16:8 "Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord."

We know nothing more of this person who was a Christian at Rome, except that Paul particularly loved him or her.

Amplias was a common name among the emperor's household slaves at that time; he may have been one of those in "Caesar's household".

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

"Urbane" means "polite" or "of the city".

Stachys is said by historians (not the Bible), to have been bishop of Byzantium. Tradition also, has him to be one of the 70 disciples. This is an uncommon Greek name meaning "ear of corn." He was obviously close to Paul, but the details are not known for sure.

Romans 16:10 "Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' [household]."

Just the fact that Apelles was approved of Christ tells us that he was probably one of the 70 sent out to minister by Jesus. Some historians believe he was the bishop at Smyrna.

Aristobulus is another that is only mentioned here in the Bible, but seems to have been in the early converts to Christianity. His name means counselor.

Since his household is mentioned, probably some in his house received the Lord as Savior.

As Paul does not greet him personally, some think he was probably not a believer.

Historians say that he was a brother to Barnabas. One noted biblical scholar believes that he was the brother of Herod Agrippa I and the grandson of Herod the Great.

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

“Herodion”: Related to the Herod family and so perhaps associated with the household of Aristobulus.

“My kinsman” meaning he may have been one of Paul’s Jewish relatives.

Narcissus: Some scholars believe that this was the Emperor Claudius’ secretary. If so, two households within the palace had Christians in them.

Romans 16:12 "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord."

Tryphena and Tryphosa are not mentioned anywhere else. All we know is that they worked for the Lord. The only thing we know about Persis is that this woman was a laborer for the Lord. Possibly twin sisters, whose names mean “delicate and dainty”.

Persis seems to be named after her native Persia since her work is spoken of in the past tense, she was probably older than the other two women in this verse.

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

Biblical scholars generally agree that he was one of the sons of Simon of Cyrene, the man enlisted to carry Jesus’ cross and was likely saved through that contact with Christ. Mark wrote his gospel in Rome, possibly after the letter to Rome was written and circulated. Paul would not have mentioned Rufus if that name were not well known to the church in Rome.

“Chosen in the Lord”, meaning he was elected to salvation. This indicates he was widely known as an extraordinary believer because of his great love and service.

Rufus was not Paul’s natural brother. Rather Rufus’ mother, the wife of Simon of Cyrene, at some time had cared for Paul during his ministry travels.

Romans 16:14-15 "Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them." "Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them."

The only thing we know about Asyncritus is that the name means "incomparable".

Phlegon means "burning". Historians say he was one of the original 70 disciples of Christ.

Hermas is celebrated as a saint on May 9th by the Romans. Hermas means "mercury".

Patrobas means "life of his father". Little else is known of any of these Christians that Paul sent greetings to.

Philologus means "fond of talk".

There were many Julias at this time, and no one knows for sure which one she is.

Nothing more is known of Nereus or Olympas.

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

We notice here that this kiss was to be a holy kiss. This was not a passionate kiss, but a friendly kiss. Paul is explaining how the church must be together in Christ. We will list four of the Scriptures that speak of this greeting with a holy kiss.

1 Corinthians 16:20 "All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with a holy kiss."

2 Corinthians 13:12 "Greet one another with a holy kiss."

1 Thessalonians 5:26 "Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss."

1 Peter 5:14 "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace [be] with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen."

Kissing of friends on the forehead, cheek or beard was common in the Old Testament. The Jews in the New Testament church carried on the practice, and it became especially precious to new believers because of the spiritual kinship it signified, as they were often outcasts from their own families because of their faith.

Romans Chapter 16 Questions

1. Phebe was a servant at the church where?
2. What business that Paul mentioned, was she probably involved in?
3. Succorer means what?
4. When a minister of God, male or female, is received who are they really receiving?
5. How did Paul know Priscilla and Aquila?

6. How do we know that they were strong in the Lord?
7. Just how far had Priscilla and Aquila gone to protect Paul?
8. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his _____ for his friends.
9. Who was the firstfruits of Achaia?
10. What good addiction is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:15?
11. What does Andronicus mean?
12. What does Urbane mean?
13. What statement shows us that Apelles was one of the original 70 disciples?
14. Who is a blood relative of Paul in verse 11?
15. What makes it appear that Rufus was Paul's brother?
16. What does Phlegon mean?
17. Who is celebrated as a saint by the Romans on May 9th?
18. What does Hermas mean?
19. What does Patrobas mean?
20. How does Paul tell them to greet the Christians?