

35. ROMANS SERIES: Concluding Comments

Romans 16:1-27

We have now reached the concluding section of the epistle to the Romans. This passage gives an interesting insight into the church at Rome during the days of the apostle. We get to see the make up of the church, with its mix of both Jewish and Gentile believers.

Please Read Romans 16:1-27

Verses 1,2: It would seem that Phoebe was the person that carried this letter to the Roman Church. She was probably moving there, or visiting there for some reason. The church in Rome had not previously met her, so the apostle commends her to the church through this epistle, requesting that they receive her in the appropriate manner. The name Phoebe is another name for Artemis, the bright and radiant moon goddess, the name having the meaning of bright and radiant. She came from the eastern port region of Corinth, that of Cenchrea.

Phoebe seems to have exercised some considerable gifts within the Cenchrean (or Corinthian) church, being described by Paul with the word used for deacons. But does this mean the appointment of female deacons within the New Testament church? The New Testament nowhere mentions specifically any female deacons. Perhaps verse two provides the solution to the question.

The church in Rome is to assist Phoebe in every matter where she may need help, thereby recognizing 'the body.' They are especially called to this because Phoebe had proven herself to be a helper to so many - including the apostle.

Verses 3-5: From verse three to verse sixteen the apostle Paul passes on greetings to those that he knows within the Roman church. In doing so he begins with two people that have come to mean a lot to him personally - Priscilla and Aquila, whom he had met at Corinth (See Acts 18).

Priscilla and Aquila were regarded by Paul as fellow workers in Christ, sharing his mission of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 18:2,18,26; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim

4:19). Both were of Jewish background, sharing in this ministry with Paul. They had even risked their lives for him, possibly during the riot at Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41; 1 Cor 16:9,19; 2 Cor 1:8-10). Because of their ministry alongside Paul, all the Gentile nations were grateful, for Paul had been the means of these nations embracing the gospel.

Greetings were also sent to the church meeting in the home of Priscilla and Aquila (1 Cor 16:19).

Verse 5b: Epaenetus (meaning praiseworthy) was the first convert for Christ in Achaia (1 Cor 16:15), and as such he meant a lot to Paul. He was the firstfruit of that region, meaning that he was the promise of many more to come.

Verse 6: Mary (Semitic - Miriam) was a woman who had also done much for the apostle Paul and his team.

Verse 7: Andronicus and Junia were Jewish men who had been fellow prisoners with Paul at some time (2 Cor 6:5; 11:23). These men were highly respected among the apostles, and had been Christians for longer than Paul.

Verses 8-12: Greetings from Paul also go to Amplias (means amplified, enlarged - a common name among slaves), Urbanus (means belonging to the city), Stachys (means ear of corn - probably from a country background), Apelles (Greek name common among the Jews) who had proven to be faithful (2 Tim 2:15; 1 Cor 11:19; 2 Cor 10:18), those who were probably slaves in the household of Aristobulus (possible grandson of Herod the Great), Herodian (a possible Jew of Herod's family), those of Narcissus' household (probably slaves), Tryphena (meaning delicate) and Tryphosa (meaning dainty), and also to Persis (meaning Persian).

Verse 13: Rufus may have been the son of Simon of Cyrene (Mk 15:21). His name means red (possibly he was redheaded). His mother had been as a mother to the apostle.

NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE: Explain the significance of Romans 16:13?

Verses 14,15: The names mentioned in verse 14 were common slave names, and these may have been part of the house church in Rome. Philologus and Julia were names common within the Imperial household. Another house church appears to have been operating from the home of Olympas.

Verse 16: Paul called upon the church at Rome to greet one another with a holy kiss (1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14). This holy kiss was a symbol of genuine affection among believers, and an expression of unity.

QUESTION: What place does greeting one another with a holy kiss have in the modern

church? Explain.

Verse 17: In verse 17 Paul brings a warning to bear upon the church at Rome, that they must watch out for those that would destroy the unity of the church. These are to be marked out, and the church was to have no contact with them whatsoever. This seems to have been especially through the propagation and dispersion of false doctrines and teachings. What is true doctrine? Paul says that true doctrine is that which had been taught to them through faithful men, that which is according to the truth. In fact, in this epistle they now had the epitome of the Biblical gospel.

QUESTION: What practical implications does this verse have for the church today?

To remain in fellowship with those that teach a contrary gospel than that taught in the Bible is clearly spiritual folly, but it is also disobedience to the Lord. Such passages as this one make that point abundantly clear. We must not be tolerant of that which is contrary to the true gospel of the Bible. Such prophets of falsehood are to be clearly identified and expelled from the assembly, with the church being instructed to keep away from them.

Verse 18: Those warned against in verse 17 do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but serve their own agendas, indulging their own sinful appetites and interests at the expense of the body of Christ. They speak in such a manner as to deceive the more gullible and unestablished believers in the church, in order to lead them away from Christ (Pr 14:15; Jude 16). They may use similar terminology to us, sound orthodox in their views, yet be meaning and teaching damnable heresy - be warned about this common occurrence.

Verses 19,20: The obedience of the Romans to true doctrine is known throughout the world, and Paul is glad that they obey so readily. But the Roman church must be careful that they give no room for the entertainment of evil, but only for that which is good.

Satan and his enterprises will soon be destroyed by God, thereby bringing to an end the deceit of his wickedness. Paul prays that the Roman church might be provided with the grace and aid of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 21-23: These three verses mention those that pass greetings on to the Roman church, and who were probably present with Paul during the writing of this epistle. These men included Timothy, Lucias (Luke), Jason (Acts 17:6-9), Sosipater (Acts 20:4), Tertius who wrote as Paul dictated, Gaius (Acts 18:7; 1 Cor 1:14) whom Paul was staying with, Erastus (treasurer of Corinth), and Quartus.

Verses 24-27: Verse 24 essentially repeats the prayer of verse 20.

These verses conclude Romans with a fitting doxology to God. It is God who is able to

establish the Roman church in the gospel through the proclamation of Christ (1 Cor 1:21). The gospel is described as a mystery, which is to say that it was once hidden, but later revealed by divine revelation at the command of God to all nations, that they might become obedient to the faith (1:5). Praise rightly belongs to the Author of the gospel, as the only wise God who displays His wisdom so wonderfully in the gospel.

‘Although the prophets had formerly taught all that Christ and the apostles have explained, yet they taught with so much obscurity, when compared with the shining clarity of the light of the gospel, that we need not be surprised if these things which are now revealed are said to have been hidden.’

John Calvin.

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