

Romans 16

Whom did Paul commend (v. 1)? Phoebe. Paul certainly knew the value of what women could do in serving the church. Apparently Phoebe was on her way to Rome (probably entrusted with this precious letter) and Paul sent an advance recommendation of this sister in Christ so the Romans would receive her and support her during her stay in their city.

What did Paul commend her for? For being a helper of many including himself. Paul gives Phoebe one of the best compliments anyone can give. This sort of practical help is essential in doing the business of the gospel. Phoebe could be considered to be today's equivalent of a deaconess.

What did Paul ask the Romans to do for her and what reason did he give (v. 2)? To receive her in a manner worthy of a fellow believer helping her in every way possible. Because she had given herself to the ministry of helping others including Paul himself.

Verses 3-15 list many other people whom Paul greets. What did he say about them that was noteworthy of mention?

1. Priscilla and Aquila had a prominent role in Paul's ministry (Acts 18:2, 18-19) even risking their lives for him. They also had a church in their house (1 Corinthians 16:19).
2. Several of those mentioned had common slave names (vv. 8-11) which serves as a reminder that in Christ all social distinctives are obliterated.
3. Paul's acknowledgement of his co-workers (vv. 3, 6, 7, 9, 12) shows that he was not a "lone ranger" minister. He had strong personal connections with several of the people whom he named.
4. The significant number of women (nine) mentioned in these verses argues against the view, of some, that Paul was a "woman-hater." Obviously women played important roles in the ministry of the early church, and Paul held them in high esteem.¹

Leon Morris explains that this section (vv. 3-15) demonstrates that the Letter to the Romans "was a letter to real people and, as far as we can see, ordinary people; it was not written to professional theologians."

"They were like the most of us, commonplace individuals; but they loved the Lord, and therefore as Paul recollected their names he sent them a message of love which has become embalmed in the Holy Scriptures. Do not let us think of the distinguished Christians exclusively so as to forget the rank and file of the Lord's army. Do not let the eye rest exclusively upon the front rank, but let us love all whom Christ loves; let us value all Christ's servants. It is better to be God's dog than to be the devil's darling." (Spurgeon)

How did Paul describe their manner of greeting (v. 16)? Greet one another with a holy kiss. This might sound strange to us, but Luke 7:45 shows how common a greeting kiss was. Jesus rebuked a Pharisee because he did not give Jesus a kiss when He came into his house. This mode of greeting was similar to the handshake of today.

What warning is given (v. 17-18)? Against those who divide, place obstacles and deceive the believers. False teachers were a danger to all the churches. Paul urged his Roman readers to avoid them.²

The warning is necessary because these dividers and deceivers do not announce themselves. They use smooth words and flattering speech and always target the simple – usually those who are young in the faith.

What good does Paul praise the Romans for (v. 19)? Their obedience which everyone had heard about. Yet they must remain diligent against the attacks of the dividers and the deceivers.

In what should they be wise (v. 19)? Be wise about what is good. This is the best defense against dividers and deceivers. It is of far more use to know the good than it is to know the evil, to learn about the genuine rather than the counterfeit.

About what should they be innocent (v. 19)? That which is evil.

What will the ultimate outcome be in this conflict between good and evil (v. 20)? The prophecy that God would crush the head of Satan will come to fruition (Genesis 3:15). Satan is behind all evil ultimately, but falls under God's sovereignty. "Soon" does not imply that Jesus Christ's return was necessarily imminent.

List the people in vv. 21-23 who sent greetings to the Romans. For each one tell something you know (if anything) about him.

- Timothy rightly rates a first mention, being one of Paul's closest and most trusted associates.
- Gaius had such a reputation for hospitality that Paul can say he was regarded as the host of the whole church.
- Tertius was Paul's writer as the apostle dictated the letter. This was Paul's normal practice in writing letters to churches, but this is the only letter where Paul's secretary is mentioned by name.

What can God do for the Romans (v. 25)? With all the dangers facing the Romans – and every church – Paul fittingly concludes by commending them to Him who is able to “establish you.”

In what sense is the gospel a mystery (v. 25)? Paul means gospel as the whole plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. Though God announced much of the plan previously through prophecy, its final outworking wasn't evident until revealed by God through Jesus. The message of the gospel was “hidden” in the Old Testament but is revealed in the New Testament.

For what purpose has it been revealed (v. 26)? So that people of all nations might believe and obey.

What is Paul's conclusion (v. 27)? In this conclusion Paul reflects on the wisdom of God's plan in the gospel and the fact that such wisdom is beyond man. God had a plan no man would come up with, but the wisdom and glory of the plan through Jesus Christ is evident.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Romans, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 217

² Ibid.