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Romans 16: Salutations and Final Warning

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Chapter 16 Salutations and Final Warning

In spite of being a huge Empire and limitations in transportation and communication, the Christians knew each other remarkable well. Rome attracted people from everywhere, so many of the people named here were known to Paul from Jerusalem and his travels in Asia and Macedonia. How many of us know ten or twenty people in a church in the capital city of our country? Do we even keep track of other Christians we know or have known in our own church? This chapter is an amazing testimonial to how much people mattered to Paul.

I. Personal Greeting (16:1-16)

- ^{NET} **Rom 16:1** Now I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,
- ² so that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and provide her with whatever help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many, including me.
- ³ Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
- ⁴ who risked their own necks for my life. Not only I, but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.
- ⁵ Also greet the church in their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.
- ⁶ Greet Mary, who has worked very hard for you.
- ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my compatriots and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.
- ⁸ Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.
- ⁹ Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my good friend Stachys.
- ¹⁰ Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.
- ¹¹ Greet Herodion, my compatriot. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.
- ¹² Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, laborers in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.
- ¹³ Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother who was also a mother to me.
- ¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters with them.
- ¹⁵ Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the believers who are with them.
- ¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.



16:1-2 Paul sent an official “**commendation**” (*sunistano*, “to place together, bring or band together,” (i.e. by way of presenting or introducing someone,” THAYER) of Phoebe, who was a “**servant**” (*diakonos*, “helper, agent” or official or semiofficial capacity as a deacon” or a “deaconess”)¹; however, this does not appear to be an official position, rather a commendation for her service to others as the end of v.2 confirms. No one needs an official

¹ If this term refers to deaconess, then she would fit the descriptions as 1 Tim 3:11, which does appear to be an official position of a deaconess. This would hardly make sense to be the wives of deacons, since there is no such requirement for the wives of elders (Tit 1:5). The connector “likewise” ties v. 11 with the requirements of elders and deacons.

position to serve others. The second title she is called is a “**great help**” (*prostatis*, “a woman who renders service, protection and help”) to many people. When this word is applied to men or a patron, it refers to a wealthy person who encouraged or financially supported individuals or causes. She served in the church at Cenchrrea, 8 miles from Corinth on the Aegean Sea (Corinth is on the Adriatic Sea). How was this practice of “commendation” used in the early church as seen in 2 Cor 3:1?

- Whatever her business in Rome, Paul asked the church to give her whatever help she may need, “in a manner worthy of the saints.” What is the key understanding for the motivation for such service in Matt 25:35-40?
- This service of hospitality is common and necessary around the world. What are some principles from 3 John 5-8 that would be applied by Paul’s request?
- Phoebe was entrusted to transport the first original copy of this epic changing letter to the Roman church leaders. Who could have imagined the overwhelming impact of this letter she carried? How would you choose someone to hand-carry a document of this importance?

16:3-5 Although Paul had never visited Rome he sent a greeting that is the longest of any of his epistles. He lists 26 names of people by name and made reference to a number of others (vv. 5, 10-11,13-15, e.g., members of the household of Aristobulus and Narcissus). To be known and recognized by the Apostle can only mean that this is a list of believers who had risked their lives for the kingdom’s sake.

- **Priscilla and Aquilla met Paul in Corinth**, where they had fled from the persecution of Emperor Claudius against the Jews, when they lost everything. In the synagogues the men sat according to professions, and both Aquilla and Paul were tentmakers. Paul stayed in their home while he began his ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3). When Paul left Corinth they traveled with him (Acts 18:18), but stayed in Ephesus when they team stopped there (18:19). They helped Apollos understand the gospel (18:26) and ministered to Paul during his lengthy stay in Ephesus on his third journey (they were part of the greeting to the Corinthians (1 Cor 16:19) written from Ephesus). Soon afterward they must have moved back to Rome (reference in our text) probably after Claudius died, then later back to Ephesus according to 2 Tim 4:19.
- **One of the congregations was meeting in their house** (16:5). There were no church buildings until after the Edict of Tolerance in AD 315 when it was permitted to be Christian. The only references to the church buildings are the following texts. Where did Saul (Paul) find the churches in Acts 8:3? How would these types of churches function today?
1 Cor 16:19
Col 4:15
Philemon 2
- **One of the most admirable qualities** of Priscilla and Aquilla is that they “risked their lives for me.” Who knows what this meant! However, there were others who risked their lives for the gospel. Look these verses up and ask yourself the question: “What have I, or am I willing to risk for the gospel?”
Acts 15:26
Phil 2:30
- **Epenetus (only mention)** was especially loved by Paul, because he was the first “convert” (*aparache*, “firstfruit”) from Asia (modern Turkey). He became part of Paul’s offering of the Gentiles to our Lord (see 15:16). Paul kept track of Epenetus from Asia until he arrived in the Roman church years later. Paul cared about his

converts. Can you name anyone you have led to Christ? Do you know where they are? How they are doing? Do we have anything to learn by this example? Can you see how an example can have imperatival force if you let it?

- A historical note: Paul was able to reach all of Asia vicariously through his disciples on his third journey (Acts 19:10), several years after he had been prevented from entering Asia on his second journey (Acts 16:6). God's timing and plan are perfect.

16:6-7 Mary was a hard “**worker**” (*kopiao*, “grow weary or exhausted, strive, struggle”) “for you,” that is, the church at Rome. The implication is that this service was over a long period of time. How would Paul describe your work for the believers in your church?

- **Andronicus and Junias, could be husband and wife** (although “Junias” is masculine; “Junia” is feminine, as some translations). They were “**well known**” (*episemos*, “having a mark, of note, illustrious”), which can either be an implied comparison (“prominent, outstanding”) or an elative sense (“well known”). The context does not imply that these were the “prominent or outstanding apostles,” but rather that they were “well-known to or among all the apostles.” This would make sense if they were relatives to Paul and thus probably from Jerusalem, since they became believers before Paul (about 25 years previous to this writing). At that time most of the believers were under the ministry of the 12 apostles to whom they became well known for their “outstanding” service. What leaders would recognize us for our service to the church people and the kingdom?

16:8-11 Ampliatus is simply called “**beloved in the Lord.**” This was a common name among slaves, yet this eulogy is born out of great respect for his walk with God. In the catacombs near Rome there is a decorated tomb with this name. Roman citizens usually had three names which indicated their family background. Slaves only had one name. Such honor given to a slave reinforces the ideal of the Early Church where social status outside the church carried little importance inside the church. Paul wrote, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female” was an important principal because they saw themselves as “one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). How does this principle work today?

- **Urbanus, a fellow-worker, and Stachys, a “good friend”** were descriptions that imply being previously known to Paul, since he had never been to Rome. These names were common names (*Stachys* means “ear of corn”) which could lead us to believe that Paul made friends with common people, no matter how insignificant.
- **Apelles was trusted and “approved” in Christ** (*dokimos*, “tried and tested”). Whatever Apelles did he did it as to the Lord. This is stated as though there were an approval process or an official recognition of what he had suffered for Christ, yet remained true no matter what it cost him. Approved as a servant meant whatever he did, he did well.
- **Unnamed members of the “household of Aristobulus”** would imply that Aristobulus was not a Christian. This refers either to his family or his servants, or both. The name “Aristobulus” appears in the historical record as the brother of Herod Agrippa I and the grandson of Herod the Great. If this is the same Aristobulus, due to his close ties to Emperor Claudius, when Aristobulus died his family would become the property of the emperor, thus part of the imperial household. Later from Rome Paul refers to “those who are of Caesar’s household” (Phil 4:22).

- **Herodian, Paul's relative.** As such he was a Christian Jew who was somehow related to the Herod family, thus in some way may have been associated with the Aristobulus household.
- **Narcissus, was probably not a believer,** but some in his household were “in the Lord.” This name appears in the historical record as the secretary of Emperor Claudius. Since he controlled access to the Emperor he became wealthy from bribes or other benefits to his position. His household also would be considered “Caesar’s household” as was Aristobulus’.

16:12-13 Paul greets three women, the first two, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who may have been sisters or even twins. Their names mean “delicate” and “dainty,” respectively. They were “**workers**” in the Lord (*kopiao*, to grow weary, hard-working, diligently labor”). **Persis,** means a Persian woman, who was likewise noted for their work for the Lord.

- Rufus was commended as a “**choice**” man in the Lord (*eklektos*, “excellent, special”)². It should be noted that this word is not focusing on etymology of the word “chosen out of,” but on the usage of the word in the language: someone very special. It is used by John to address the “chosen” or rather, “*special*,” lady (2 John 1,13). The same term is used of our Lord, “**choice** and precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 2:4; see also Luke 9:35; 23:36), but it does not mean he was chosen out of a group. Theologians tend to put too much meaning into this word to prove their deterministic theology, but the meaning is simply how special someone is, not that his is privileged by being choose from among others not so privileged. This was a person of great “eminence” in the church.
- Rufus is mentioned as the son of Simon of Cyrene (a N. African city) who was forced to carry Jesus’ cross (Mark 15:21). Mark was written in Rome after Paul wrote Romans, so this inclusion would only have meaning if they were the same person. If Simon converted to Christ he would have been honored, and thus his wife and sons.
- **Rufus’ mother** somewhere had taken care of Paul as a mother would her son. Assuming Simon and his wife would have stayed around Jerusalem for a few years, perhaps they knew Paul after his conversion, then for some reason migrated to Rome.

16:14 The next five names are mentioned together along with the brethren with them, which sounds like a house church Paul knew about. These are all common names, particularly among slaves that are mentioned without comment: **Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, and Hermas.** The “brethren with them” indicates a small congregation or house church. Perhaps these names are the multiple leaders of the house church.

16:15 Evidently Paul is addressing another house church leadership with the unnamed brethren who participate: **Philogus, Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas.** One name appears in the historical record, a certain Nereus was the chamberlain of Flavius and Domatilla, who were two of the most important people in Rome condemned for being Christians. It was possible that the slave Nereus led his masters to Christ who paid for it with their lives. Do we have such a reputation with our boss that we could lead him/her to Christ?

² The word *exlektos* translates the word for “costly” in Isa 28:16 in the Septuagint.

16:16 Paul closes this section with the command, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

This was an affectionate (1 Pet 5:14), non-romantic kiss of loyalty and acceptance usually done on the forehead or cheek. Notice the following greetings or farewells and compare them with what is customarily practiced among believers in your church:

Acts 20:36-38

2 Cor 13:12

Luke 7:36-45

- Why is this so important to Paul that he would reiterate it (1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thes 5:26 and Peter did the same, 1 Pet 5:14)? Can you see a correlation with John 13:35 and Romans 12:9-10?
See also 1 Thes 4:9

II. Final words of warning to the church (16:17-20)

Love without correction or rebuke is not love at all, only a selfish relationship. “Reprove a wise person and he will love you” (Prov 9:8). A wise person loves to be warned and rebuked, because he cherishes the wise way of life. Jesus said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rev 3:19). Paul shows his love to the church as much by giving commendations as he does by giving this warning. Paul concludes his epistle with a strict command to separate from anyone who teaches contrary to Paul’s teachings.

¹⁷ Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them!

¹⁸ For these are the kind who do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By their smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of the naive.

¹⁹ Your obedience is known to all and thus I rejoice over you. But I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.

²⁰ The God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

16:17-18 Warning against dissensions and obstacles. Paul is not saying that there cannot be disagreements over minor interpretations, but immature leaders wish to gain a following by insisting on their personal preferences, creating confusion and divisions. This was a common problem in the churches as he later wrote, “Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels” (2 Tim 2:23). Paul was not just another teacher, rather a divinely-inspired apostle giving them infallible truths. They were to “**watch out**” (*skopeo*, present tense: “continually...”- “to mark, observe, direct one’s attention to”) anyone that provoked “**dissensions**” (*dichostasia*, “standing apart, divisions into opposing groups,” LOUW-NIDA) and “**obstacles**” (*skandalon*, “the trigger in a trap, a snare” and metaphorically, “what causes a person to sin, stumbling block, enticement to sin, or arouse opposition,” FRIBERG). Some people always want to add to the Scriptures their special insight, practices or revelations, usually with disrespect for others, so that they become the source of God’s revelations. How common was this in the early churches?

Gal 1:6

Gal 1:8

- The correct response to false teachers, especially pseudo-Christian teachers, is not to debate or dialogue, but rather to “**turn away** from them” (*ekklino*, present imperative: “keep on...”- “to deviate, shun, avoid, purposely avoid association, have nothing to do with...”). The objective is not to correct the false teachers as it is to protect the other believers, especially the new converts and the unlearned in the Scriptures. Paul would debate with the unsaved Jews and Gentiles on their ground, but not give them a

platform among the believers. How subtle is their false teaching for young believers in Eph 4:14?

What did Paul say would happen after he left in Acts 20:27-32?

What did Jesus warn that would happen in the end times in Matt 24:24?

16:18 Paul will give two reasons for avoiding false teachers: First, their motives are wrong – though they may seem sincere and caring (usually their strong point), but they are motivated by selfishness and self-satisfaction (fame, power over their followers and financial gain, etc.). They often are knowledgeable in the Bible, but only to prove their false ideas. Much is written on this subject in the NT. How are they described in these passages?

Phil 3:18-19

Jude 12-13

2 Pet 2:21-2:3

2 Tim 3:7-8

- The **Second** reason for avoiding false teachers is their “**smooth talk**” (*chrestologia*, plausible address which simulates goodness, deceptively friendly words,” FRIBERG) and “**flattery**” (*eulogia*, “praise , eulogy, fine discourse, polished language, benediction, invocation of blessing,” FRIBERG). With these skills they are able to deceive the “**hearts**” (synonym of “mind”) of the “**naïve**” (*akakos*, “no + evil” or “harmless, unsuspecting, innocent, without guile”). Beware of anyone who minimizes the priority of God’s revealed will in the Word of God, insinuating their “fresh Word” is somehow superior, or that God is continuing to give a new revelation through them. What are some characteristics of these false teachers in 2 Cor 11:13-15?

16:19 On a positive note Paul quickly asserts that the Roman church is not considered “naïve” because their obedience is well known, not just obedience to their leadership, but specifically obedience to the Word of God. What had to be their attitude towards what Paul wrote them according to 1 Cor 14:37?

- In Romans 15:18 this obedience was to include “word and deed,” thus required a major focus of their lives (See Acts 2:42, What did they persevere in?). Since this was their disposition, Paul rejoiced on their behalf. In the context of false teachers, Paul gives the exhortation to be “**wise**” (*sophos*, “skilled, acquired intelligence characterized by the ability to use knowledge for correct behavior,” FRIBERG) concerning “**good**” (*agathos*, “useful, productive, profitable,” THAYER). On the other hand, to be “**innocent**” (*akeraios*, “without a mixture of evil, pure,” THAYER) concerning “**evil**” (*kakos*, neuter, thus anything false or wrong or contrary to good, “wrong, harmful, troublesome, damaging, worthless,” THAYER). It is a false notion that believers should be wise in what is evil in order to understand the sinner or false teacher. How are the following verses good guidelines in our exposure to evil?

Matt 10:16

Phil 2:15

Rom 12:9

Col 3:16

16:20 For those who turn from false teachers and are wise in what is true, beneficial and practical, the **God of peace** (15:33; Heb 13:20) **will soon crush Satan under your feet**. God is the key to spiritual warfare. He will destroy Satan, it is not our task though we may be a participat. Paul refers to the promise of Gen 3:15 where Satan will bruise the heel of

the seed of the woman, but he will fatally bruise Satan's head. The word "**quickly**" is *tachei*, "speedily, without delay" and secondarily, "unexpectedly." It is used three times in Revelation 22 in relation to Christ's coming. Since the cross did not crush Satan, nor did it occur in the first century, and is not promised until the second coming, so we are still waiting for this to happen. When we return to earth with Christ at the second coming we will join him in this defeat. How do these verses describe this climatic event?

Jude 14

Rev 20:1-6

- Is "grace...be with you" just a salutation or is this a key to spiritual growth? Even with their obedience, the Spirit-filled "grace" is required. This is not the grace of God in salvation, but the grace that empowers the inner man to overcome and be victorious in the midst of chaos, persecution and calamity. What did Paul mean about this special grace in these verses?

2 Cor 12:9

Heb 4:16

James 4:6

2 Peter 3:18

2 Tim 4:17

III. Final Salutation from Paul's Team and Benediction (16:21-27)

²¹ Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my compatriots.

²² I, Tertius, who am writing this letter, greet you in the Lord.

²³ Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus the city treasurer and our brother Quartus greet you.

²⁴ ^{NKJ} The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

16:21 Timothy, Lucius, Jason and Sosipater were companions of Paul in Corinth and presumably known by believers in Rome. **Timothy** was a responsible team member with Paul (Phil 2:22). **Lucius** of Cyrene was a formerly a co-elder with Paul in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). **Jason and Sosipater** were "**compatriots**" (*suggenes*, "related by blood, kinsman, relative") to each other, either as family or fellow Jews.

16:22-23 Terius was Paul's secretary or stenographer for this epistle. **Gaius**, was Paul's host and the site of the house-church in Corinth. He was probably from Macedonia (Acts 19:29) or he might be the Gaius from Derbe (Acts 20:4), and was one of only a few that Paul ever baptized (1 Cor 1:14). **Erastus**, director of Corinth's public works or city treasurer, sends his greetings. And **Quartus**, a spiritual brother, was evidently another influential and known church member at Corinth who knew believers in Rome.

16:24 This repetition of 16:20b is omitted in a number of early Greek manuscripts, thus in some translations verse 24 is left blank.

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that had been kept secret for long ages,

²⁶ but now is disclosed, and through the prophetic scriptures has been made known to all the nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—

²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be glory forever! Amen.

16:25 Paul concludes this epistle with praise to God who can "**establish**" us (*sterizo*, aorist, "set up something so that it remains immovable," or metaphorically, "to strengthen, confirm or stabilize"). In this context it refers to being firmly grounded in the truth of the gospel, not on experience or feeling but on the revealed Word of God. How does Paul describe the normal (established) Christian perspective in Eph 3:16-18? How does Peter in 1 Peter 5:10?

This establishing or strengthening is done through the instrumentality of two key elements:

1. Through the gospel one's mind and heart is established or strengthened in truth. On the true believer can be certain about God and ultimate acceptance before Him (see 2 Tim 1:12).

Note: "**my gospel**" is not a personal view, but that he was the one to whom the clarity and full implications of the gospel message was given for the church. How did Paul define "my gospel" in Gal 1:11-12?

The power (to establish) of the gospel (Rom 1:16) is initiated through the "**preaching**" (*kerugma*, "proclaimed by a public crier," an announcement of salvation) of the gospel. The gospel is powerless sitting on a shelf in written form or in the understanding of a silent believer. The power of the gospel is unleashed as it is proclaimed to the unsaved. The establishing process takes place as a person recognizes true reality from God's perspective in His Word (Rom 10:17) as the Spirit brings conviction and understanding (2 Cor 4:5-6). When a person rests in the light of his sinfulness and the grace of a caring Savior who paid his full debt, at which point doubts are dissolved, peace and assurance fills his soul. What are the ways the gospel can establish a person?

2. Part of this establishing power is understanding of the "mystery," which is self-defined in the text as what "has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested by the Scriptures of the prophets" (16:25). A mystery is not something that can be figured out as a detective, but can only be known when it is revealed. What is this mystery in Ephesians 3:3-6? (see v. 9 also).
 - The *mystery* has been defined in 11:25, "that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in," that is, until there has been a full exposure of the gospel to the Gentiles as there had been to the Jews God's purpose is not complete. In chapter 12 both Jews and Gentiles are to minister to each other; chapter 13 all believers are to respect their respective governments to not hamper the spread of the gospel; chapter 14 the Gentile or Jewish believers are not to offend one another's conscience in order to build unity; chapter 15 the purpose of the Church is to extend the gospel to all the peoples of the world; chapter 16 the greetings of both Jew and Gentile believers exhibits their unity in Christ. Now God's secret is out. His plan has always been that all the Gentiles would hear of this amazing Gospel of the grace of God. The purpose of the "established" believer is to be a part of this life-purpose of reaching the world for Christ.

16:26 The Scriptures of the prophets "has been made known or revealed" to all the nations is an aorist tense participle, specifically, an inceptive aorist, that could be translated "has begun to be made known" to all the "**nations**" (*ethne*, "people, ethnic people groups"). Today, 2008, there are just over 2000 unreached people groups who have never heard of this amazing Gospel that God commanded that all people be informed or enlightened and persuaded to believe. The writings of the Scriptures were the beginning of the announcement, now believers must take those writings to the people and languages of the

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world, in order that they might have a “faith that is obedient” or an “obedience of, or to, the faith.” Either way, the faith must be obedient or submissive to the revealed Scriptures. What is the “eternal purpose” in Eph 3:8-11?

16:27 The wisdom of God is primarily and exceptionally displayed “through Jesus Christ” is followed by the phrase “be the glory forever” (as Rom 11:36). For all that was written in this epistle His glory is rightly deserved. Someday we will see it. Now we acknowledge that He deserves it because of what we have seen in Romans. “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matt 16:27). Whatever we do to tell all the people of the world about the grace of our God, will never be forgotten... never!