

Start your study here**Read** Read, Record, Reflect, Respond

Prayerfully	Reflectively	Extensively	Creatively	Intensively	Specifically	Effectively
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Repeated
Alike
Different
Accentuated
Related
Think Context!

Romans 16:1-16

- 1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe,
a servant of the church at Cenchreae,
- 2 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.
- 3 Greet Prisca and Aquila,
my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
- 4 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.
- 5 Greet also the church in their house.
- Greet my beloved Epaenetus,
who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.
- 6 Greet Mary,
who has worked hard for you.
- 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia,
my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners.
They are well known to the apostles,
and they were in Christ before me.
- 8 Greet Ampliatus,
my beloved in the Lord.
- 9 Greet Urbanus,
our fellow worker in Christ,
and my beloved Stachys.
- 10 Greet Apelles,
who is approved in Christ.
Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.
- 11 Greet my kinsman Herodion.
Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.
- 12 Greet those workers in the Lord,
Tryphaena and Tryphosa.
Greet the beloved Persis,
who has worked hard in the Lord.
- 13 Greet Rufus,
chosen in the Lord;
also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.
- 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas,
and the brothers who are with them.
- 15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas,
and all the saints who are with them.
- 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
All the churches of Christ greet you. (ESV)

Review: Having stated the reason for his delay in visiting Rome, along with the purpose for his trip to Jerusalem, as in the introduction to the letter, Paul reaffirms his desire to visit the Romans and to be assisted by them in proclaiming the gospel where it has not been proclaimed.
Observations: 1) Affirmations and descriptions of those greeted 2) Repetition of characteristics 3) Key people 4) People, possession, positions and purpose
Question: What are the characteristics Paul values and affirms?

<i>Outline</i>	
Commendation of Phoebe	16:1-2
Greeting of fellow workers	16:3-5
General greetings	16:6-16

“And/Now I...” showing the connection to the previous

Romans 16:1-16

We assume she delivered the letter and this is her introduction and affirmation

1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe,
 a servant of the church at Cenchreae,
 2 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.

διάκονος (*diakonos*)—servant, helper or deacon

Phoebe—deaconess or servant? Hard to determine, either may be correct.

Value: Service and Support to other

Probably wealthy

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila,
 my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
 4 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.
 5 Greet also the church in their house.

Paul met them in Corinth, Acts 18:2-3
 Instructed Apollos, Acts 18:24-28

Value: Sacrifice and partnership

See 16:14, 15, 23 and perhaps 10, 11

Greet my beloved Epaenetus,
 who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.

6 Greet Mary,
 who has worked hard for you.

Value: Hard work for the Lord

7 Greet Andronicus and Junia,
 my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners.
 They are well known to the apostles,
 and they were in Christ before me.

Value: Longevity/loyalty to Christ

8 Greet Ampliatus,
 my beloved in the Lord.

What could be greater than to be “beloved” in the Lord? Position in Christ is worthy of celebrating. The term may also indicate that they were known well by Paul.

9 Greet Urbanus,
 our fellow worker in Christ,
 and my beloved Stachys.

Value: co-laborer, potentially an itinerant missionary like Paul

10 Greet Apelles,
 who is approved in Christ.
 Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.

Could it be that he had a “checkered background”?
 Or that he has been singled out for ministry as one who has been tested and proven faithful?

Value: Families who are following the Lord

11 Greet my kinsman Herodion.
 Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.

12 Greet those workers in the Lord,
 Tryphaena and Tryphosa.
 Greet the beloved Persis,
 who has worked hard in the Lord.

13 Greet Rufus,
 chosen in the Lord;
 also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.

Value: treating each other like family

14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas,
 and the brothers who are with them.

15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas,
 and all the saints who are with them.

Possibly house churches that made up the “church in Rome” those “beloved of God in Roman” 1:7

16 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
 All the churches of Christ greet you. (ESV)

“holy kiss” —the church had adopted a cultural practice for warm greeting and used it to communicate affection. It later became part of the church liturgy.
 See also: 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Pet 5:14

Working Idea (this is to help you see how the main idea was developed)

Paul’s greeting and affirmation of individuals in Roman

Main idea:

Greeting to those in Rome—particularly those who have been faithful in working for the Gospel

Teaching idea/explanation:

This is the kind of section that is either skipped as irrelevant or which becomes fodder for speculation.

I believe there are good reasons not to *skip* this passage. Not only is “all Scripture breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV), there are many good lessons that can be learned about the relationship within the church and the role of affirmation as well.

So we will ask one primary question:

What can we learn from *whom* Paul affirms and *what* he affirms?

Secondly, while trying to avoid “speculation” we will seek to understand some of the biographical information available for several individuals.

We will also be confronted with the issue of the role of men and women within the church and the interaction of believers who are at different economic levels.

Introduction

What character traits do you value in a friend?
What characteristics should you seek to develop?



Talk about it

Greetings:

Notice all the names and the character traits that Paul values and highlights

- What is significant about this list?
- What can we learn about Paul?
- What can we learn about relationships?

- What can we learn about Paul’s relationship to “prominent people?”
- What can we learn about Paul’s relationship to people of means (wealth)?

Implications

How should the “haves” and “have not’s” relate in the church?

Review

The mercies of God motivate us to a consecrated life (living sacrifice) that does not allow the world and its belief system to force us into its mold, but which results in transformation by the renewing of our minds, leading to doing the will of God particularly in humble service within the body of Christ.

Love one another and the things that are good, hate what is evil. And in the midst of evil, seek to live at peace with all, not retaliating evil for evil, bless and minister to those who are against you. Submit to governing authorities who have been given authority by God. Seek to fulfill the Law by loving neighbors and doing good and living right (righteously).

A practical demonstration of love is seen in our acceptance of other believers, differences and all. Seeking to do all we do to the Lord and out of love and humility, we seek the greater good of others to the glory of God.

Not judging their practices and it may require forgoing freedoms for the sake of the weak, so as not to cause them to stumble. Sacrificing our individual rights demonstrates love of others and a submission to God. Seek to maintain peace and build others up.

It is with this kind of love that we are to approach our relationships with other Christians—especially when we disagree on disputable matters—accepting one another for the glory of God.

Having stated the reason for his delay in visiting Rome, along with the purpose for his trip to Jerusalem, as in the introduction to the letter, Paul reaffirms his desire to visit the Romans and to be assisted by them in proclaiming the gospel where it has not been proclaimed.

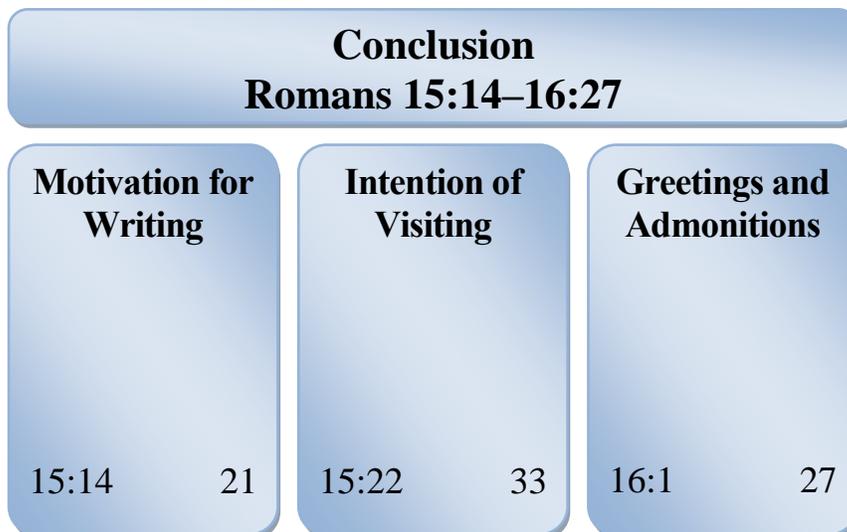
Overview/Summary

The letter to the Romans concludes with a commendation for Phoebe (16:1–2), greetings (16:3–16) to coworkers, an exhortation to be on guard against deceivers (16:17–20a), a grace benediction (16:20b), and a final set of greetings from those with Paul (16:21–23).¹ The only remaining piece is the doxology (16:25–27).¹

Preview

What remains makes up the closing. Paul includes in 15:14 – 16:27 the elements typical of his letter closings:

- Reference to travel plans (15:14 – 29)
- Request for prayer (15:30 – 32)
- Prayer-wish for peace (15:33)
- Commendation of Paul's ministry associates (16:1 – 2)
- Exhortation to greet one another (16:3 – 15)
- The "holy kiss" (16:16a)
- Concluding warning/exhortation (16:17 – 19)
- Eschatological wish/promise (16:20a)
- Concluding benediction (16:20b)
- Greetings from Paul's associates (16:16b, 21 – 23)
- Doxology (16:25 – 27)²



¹ For a more detailed analysis see Weima 1995: 360.

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 785.

² Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 485.

Catch Phrase / Key Phrase:

Greet
Worked hard

Outline

- I. Prologue: Paul's Commission to Preach Christ to the Nations 1:1-17³**
- II. Doctrine: Justification—The Righteousness of God Revealed 1:18–11:36**
God's Gracious Provision of Righteousness is Acquired by Faith in Jesus Christ
- III. Duties of the Justified—Righteousness of God Reflected 12:1–15:13**
The Justified Believer is to Act According to His Position before God
 - A. Duty Toward the Assembly 12:1-21**
“Therefore” Service 12:1
 - B. Duty Toward the State 13:1-14**
 - C. Duties toward the Weak and the Strong 14:1-15:13**
- IV. Conclusion: Paul's Mission to Proclaim Christ where He had not been Proclaimed 15:14-16:27**
Paul concludes his epistle (15:14–16:27) with a brief explanation of his mission, both in general (15:17-21) and specifically with reference to the Romans (15:22-33), followed by final greetings (16:1-27).⁴
 - A. Motivation for Writing 15:14-21
Paul's motivation for writing the letter is to justify his boldness because he was appointed a minister of Christ to the Gentiles
 - B. Intention of Visiting 15:22-33
Paul's intention of visiting the Romans is finally being realized although he must first go to Jerusalem in order to deliver the offering of the believers of Macedonia and Achaia
 - C. Greetings and Admonition 16:1-27
 - 1. Greeting to those in Rome 16:1-16
 - a. Commendation of key Christian worker 16:1-2
 - b. Greetings to individuals in Rome known to Paul 16:3-16a
 - c. Call to mutual greeting 16:16b
 - 2. Final Exhortation 16:17-20a
 - 3. Greeting from Paul's companions 16:20b-24
 - 4. Benediction 16:25-27

Exposition / Key Exegetical Issues to be Aware



Think about it

12–16 “Therefore”

Moving from the more doctrinal to the more practical—keeping the practical anchored in the doctrinal and making sure the doctrinal is practical.

15:14–16:27

Paul's extended conclusion including: his affirmation of the Romans, his personal travel plans in order to continue fulfilling his God-given, grace-driven mission to the Gentiles, his final admonitions and greetings.

16:1-16

Interaction/Question

Group Activity

Read through the section and identify positive character traits—what does Paul affirm?
Give a brief definition for each.

³Adapted from Dr. Harold W. Hoehner's outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes)

⁴Daniel B. Wallace, *Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline*, bible.org

One thing to remember about this section is that Paul had not been to Rome. The people he is greeting are those with whom he already had contact, many on his missionary journeys and most likely a number of them when they had been exiled from Rome for a season.

PAUL CONTINUES WITH items typical of the conclusions of his letters (see [comments on 15:14 – 33](#)): commendation of a fellow-worker (16:1 – 2), exhortations to greet other Christians (16:3 – 16a), and greetings to the Roman Christians from others (16:16b). But what is not typical about this section is the number of greetings. He asks the Romans to greet twenty-six individuals, two families, and three house churches. This number is all the more surprising when we remember that Paul had never visited Rome.⁵

16:1-2 Commendation of Phoebe

Phoebe is most likely singled out because she carried the letter from Corinth to Rome where Paul was (see 16:23; Acts 18:7; 1 Corinthians 1:14).

Primary characteristics affirmed by Paul?

She is also commended as a **servant and a patron—for her support.**

Letters of commendation were common in the ancient world since those traveling were often unknown and needed hospitality and support to carry on their business or ministry (cf. Acts 18:27; 2 Cor. 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 10:12; 12:11; 3 John 9–10; 1 Macc. 12:43; 2 Macc. 9:25).¹ Paul commends Phoebe, who was probably the bearer of the letter, so that the church would enthusiastically render her assistance in whatever way she needs. He indicates that she is worthy of assistance because she has often helped other believers and has even been a benefactor of Paul.⁶

Sister

First, she is “our sister” (τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, *tēn adelphēn hēmōn*). This designation means that Phoebe is a fellow believer, part of the church family. The term “sister” relays the intimacy and warmth characterizing the early church, so that the relationship between family members describes most appropriately the affiliation between Christians (cf. 1 Tim. 5:1–2).^{2,7}

Servant—δῆκονος (*diakonos*)—servant, helper, deacon—one who helps/ministers to the needs of believers

The word is used in the New Testament in both technical (the office of deacon, 1 Timothy 3:8, 10) and general (servant, help, 1 Peter 4:10) sense, the context helps determine the usage. The difficulty is that the context does not lead to a clear determination.

But Phoebe is more than a sister; she is also a “servant [*diakonos*] of the church in Cenchrea.” *Diakonos* can be applied to any Christian, called to “serve” God and his people. This may be its sense here. But the addition “of the church in Cenchrea” makes it more likely that Phoebe holds an official position in the church there. Phoebe is probably a “deacon,” serving the church by ministering to the financial and material needs of the believers (see esp. 1 Tim. 3:8 – 12; cf. also Phil. 1:1).⁸

The New Testament reveals little about the role of deacons in the church, but many scholars suspect that they are particularly involved in visiting the sick, providing for the needy, and caring for the financial and material needs of the church in general.⁹

⁵ Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 500.

¹ Most scholars agree that Phoebe is commended in the letter here, e.g., Fiorenza 1986: 424; Weima 1994: 150–51.

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 786.

² For the use of the term “sister” see, e.g., 1 Cor. 7:15; 9:5; Philem. 2; James 2:15.

⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 786.

⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 500.

⁹ Douglas Moo, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Volume 3, Romans to Philemon*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) p. 91.

tn Or “deaconess.” It is debated whether διάκονος (*diakonos*) here refers to a specific office within the church. One contextual argument used to support this view is that Phoebe is associated with a particular church, Cenchræa, and as such would therefore be a deacon of that church. In the NT some who are called διάκονος are related to a particular church, yet the scholarly consensus is that such individuals are not deacons, but “servants” or “ministers” (other viable translations for διάκονος). For example, Epaphras is associated with the church in Colossians and is called a διάκονος in Col 1:7, but no contemporary translation regards him as a deacon. In 1 Tim 4:6 Paul calls Timothy a διάκονος; Timothy was associated with the church in Ephesus, but he obviously was not a deacon. In addition, the lexical evidence leans away from this view: Within the NT, the διακον- word group rarely functions with a technical nuance. In any case, the evidence is not compelling either way. The view accepted in the translation above is that Phoebe was a servant of the church, not a deaconess, although this conclusion should be regarded as tentative.¹⁰

Patron—προστάτις (*prostatis*) helper, patron in the sense of providing (financial) support

The translation “patron” is appropriate if too much is not read into the term. Other scholars contend that the term is a general one and should simply be translated “helper.” The former translation is preferable, however, because a specific kind of assistance is in view. Phoebe was likely a woman of wealth, since she was a patron, and thus she probably helped other believers and Paul financially by providing hospitality and other assistance (cf. Ollrog 1979: 31). It is probably too much to see the term as carrying the same status as the masculine noun προστάτης (*prostatēs*, patron) since there is some doubt whether women could serve as legal patrons in the same sense as men did. Nor should the concept of leadership be read into the term here (contra Fiorenza 1986: 425–26; Jewett 1988: 149–50; Schulz 1990; rightly Meeks 1983: 60; Ziesler 1989: 350; Mounce 1995: 273; Moo 1996: 915–16).¹¹

Paul’s instructions to the Romans—assist her, because she has assisted others

16:3-16

Determining a specific structure in these greetings is difficult. Perhaps Stuhlmacher (1994: 247) is correct in identifying three segments: (1) those identified with the Pauline mission (vv. 3–7), (2) other friends and acquaintances (vv. 8–15), and (3) a call for mutual greetings and greetings from the churches in the east (v. 16).¹ The greeting of so many people has more than one function. It reveals that warm relationships characterized the Christian community. But Paul also names a number of prominent and respected believers in Rome to indicate the legitimacy of his gospel. Even though he has never been to Rome, the Pauline gospel is already represented in the Roman community. Since the Romans know the character of those who already sympathize with the Pauline gospel, they should embrace the message contained in this letter.¹²

The main purpose of the greetings should not be shoved into the background. **Greetings express the love that was the mark of the early Christian community** (John 13:34–35).¹³

Notice how many of the greetings include a reference to “in Christ” or “in the Lord” or similar reference.

The greetings express the solidarity and affection between those who belong to the Lord. They are not merely secular “hellos” but are rooted in the new life of Christ. Moreover, the Christian gospel was not a cause or ideology that trampled over the personhood of individuals. The very core of the gospel is love for others, and Paul expresses that love through his greetings.¹⁴

16:3-5 Greeting to Prisca and Aquila

Paul

affirms them as **co-laborers**

¹⁰ *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006; 2006), Ro 16:1-2.

¹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 788.

¹ Wilckens (1982: 133) has a similar analysis, but divides the last two sections into verses 8–13 and 14–16.

¹² Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 789.

¹³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 790.

¹⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 790.

commends them for their **sacrifice** for him—risking their lives
affirms their **hosting of a church** in their home

Paul heads up the greeting section by designating Prisca and Aquila as “coworkers” (συνεργούς, v. 3). We know from Acts, where she is called Priscilla (see the additional notes), that they were expelled from Rome because of Claudius’s decree (Acts 18:2; cf. Suetonius, *Lives* [Claudius] 5.25 §4). From there they traveled to Corinth, met Paul, who shared the same trade as they, and ministered with him.¹⁰ Next we find them at Ephesus (18:25–26), where they instruct Apollos more accurately about the gospel. By the time Romans was written they had returned to Rome and a church met in their house (Rom. 16:5). When Paul wrote his last letter, however, they had returned to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:19). Their many travels were probably business related and attest to the mobility that was present in the Greco-Roman world (see La Piana 1927). Since Prisca is named first in some texts (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19), some have suggested that she was more prominent and knowledgeable than Aquila (see BAGD 701). This hypothesis may be true, although it is impossible to verify it. What we do know from this text is that Prisca and Aquila together were vitally involved in the early Christian movement. As coworkers with Paul they functioned as missionaries. What is notable here is that Prisca as a woman was as involved in this task as her husband Aquila. In verse 4 Paul communicates his thanks for Prisca and Aquila because they risked their lives to preserve his. The particular episode in which they helped Paul is unknown. Perhaps they interceded for him when the riot broke out in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:23–20:1; 1 Cor. 15:32; 2 Cor. 1:8–11). Since Paul was consistently imperiled by the authorities, it is impossible to locate the incident with certainty. Paul adds that the remaining Gentile churches are also grateful for Prisca and Aquila. Are they grateful for them because they helped preserve Paul’s life and thereby sustained the Gentile mission? Or were they also grateful because their own ministry was of significant benefit to the Gentiles? Certainty is impossible, but the latter seems more credible (cf. Käsemann 1980: 413; Dunn 1988b: 892; Fitzmyer 1993c: 736; Stuhlmacher 1994: 250).¹⁵

Issue # 1

Much has been made about the fact that Phoebe is identified as a deaconess (possibly) and that Prisca is named before Aquila. So we need to briefly seek to understand what this does and does not teach us about the role of men and women in the church.

Implications

It tells us that women are valued members of the church (as they were to Jesus’ ministry) and that Christianity elevated the status of women in the Roman culture.

It tells us that women were actively involved in the ministry of the church.

It tells us that Paul was not a “woman hater” as many in the modern church claim.

It does not tell us anything about the roles of men and women in the home (see Ephesians 5, Colossians 3).

It does not tell us that the women listed were elders (the description of Elders and Bishops is always masculine). Nor does it indicate that Paul was affirming total equality in ministry (see 1 Timothy 2 and 3).

It does not help us understand the intricacies of ministry roles. Paul reserves those instructions for another time (1 Timothy and Titus for example).

¹⁰ Stuhlmacher (1994: 249) identifies the business as “saddlery,” while Fitzmyer (1993c: 735) thinks they constructed “linen tents and awnings for private citizens.”

BAGD *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979)

¹⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 794.

Issue #2

Observation 1

The first individuals (teams) that are identified (Phoebe and Prisca and Aquila), were not only praised for their service but also affirmed for their financial support.

Observation 2

Many of the names listed are known to be common names for slaves or former slaves (Junia, Ampliatus, Tryphosa, Tryphaena, Stachys, those from the houses of Aristobulus and Narcissus, Herodion, Persis, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus, and Olympas).

Implication #1

Notice that Paul affirms those who are wealthy for their involvement in ministry through financial support. And He equally affirms those who are involved in ministry through the use of other abilities.

What can we learn about the reality of economic differences within the church?

The possessions of the wealthy should be viewed as a gift from God. And within the church the wealth of individuals should not be used for personal gain, power, control or prestige.

Those who are blessed with wealth should not flaunt it. Those without material wealth should not be jealous of those who possess it.

Those who are blessed with wealth should use it to further the gospel ministry. Those without the abundance of wealth are still to give sacrificially.

Implication #2

This would mean—though Paul does not give direct instructions to masters and slaves as he does in Ephesians 6:5-9 and Colossians 3:22-4:1—that the church in Rome had a very diverse congregation. There were many issues that could cause conflict and division:

Ethnicity:

Jew versus Gentile

Romans citizen versus non-citizen

Economic

Wealthy versus poor

Master versus slave

Gender

Male versus female

Age

Young versus old

Length of time as a believer

Seasoned believers versus new believers

And that is without saying anything about preferences or likes and dislikes based on personality.

The church in Rome, as our church, has much that could cause conflict and division, and often does. Along with the clear instruction in Romans 12:1-15:13 about how individuals within the Body should relate, then **Paul's greetings should challenge our understanding of our place and role within the Body of Christ.**

How are we helping establish and maintain unity?

How are we a detriment to unity?

16:6-16a General Greetings

See observations on textual rewrite and below.

16:13

If Mark's Gospel was written in Rome, the naming of the sons of Simon (Alexander and Rufus) by Mark would indicate that they were known in the Roman community. It is difficult to discern what is meant when Paul calls him "elect in the Lord" (ἐκλεκτὸν ἐν κυρίῳ, *eklekton en kyriō*). Perhaps the idea is that Rufus is distinguished and eminent among believers (Sanday and Headlam 1902: 536; Barrett 1991: 260; Murray 1965: 231; Morris 1988: 536; Fitzmyer 1993c: 741). Others say Rufus is designated as "elect" because he was chosen for a special task or agenda, but his unique calling is unknown to us (for the term being used for a special task see Let. Arist. 13; Ign. *Phld.* 11.1; Dunn 1988b: 897). Most likely, as is customary in Paul, the term means chosen for salvation, and Paul simply wants to say something commendatory about Rufus here (Cranfield 1979: 794; Moo 1996: 925–26).¹⁶

Summary

The greetings, then, should be appraised as authentic expressions of love in Christ. It would be reductionistic, however, to say that this is their only function. By greeting so many in Rome Paul has cited many prominent believers who are supporters of the gospel he has explicated in chapters 1–15. The Pauline gospel cannot be individualistically confined to Paul. It has preceded him to Rome through the witnesses named in this chapter. It is because of the people named here that Paul is confident (see 15:14–15) that the Romans already understand his gospel, are able to instruct one another in its contents, and only need reminders to stimulate them. By sending his greetings to well-known and respected members of the Roman churches Paul is also indirectly commending his gospel, for the persons named are in harmony with his teaching (so Gamble 1977: 92; Ollrog 1980: 242; Brown and Meier 1983: 113; P. Lampe 1991: 218; Jervis 1991: 151–52; Fitzmyer 1993c: 734; Weima 1995: 362).¹⁷

Observations

Some other features of the greetings should be observed. **There is little doubt that Paul personally knew the following:** Prisca, Aquila, Epaeetus, Andronicus, Junia, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Persis, Rufus, and Rufus's mother.³ It is quite possible that he knew Mary, Stachys, Apelles, and Herodion. Of course, he may have known all those whom he greeted, **but if he also sends greetings to those whom he heard about**, the following most likely belong in that category: those from the houses of Aristobulus and Narcissus, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas. Paul's commendation of these people is less personal, suggesting perhaps that he was acquainted with them only by way of reputation. **It is also interesting to observe that Greek, Latin, and Roman names are used.** One cannot argue conclusively about ethnic origin from the names given since people from various ethnic groups would often take more than one name, and one of the names would commonly reflect the influence of Greco-Roman culture (cf. Käsemann 1980: 415; Morris 1988: 531).⁴ But one can say that the **list demonstrates the varied cultural background of the early church.** What is striking are the many names of **slaves and freedmen and freedwomen** in the list: Junia, Ampliatus, Tryphosa, Tryphaena, Stachys, those from the houses of Aristobulus and Narcissus, Herodion, Persis, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus, and Olympas.⁵ In the cases of the houses of Aristobulus and Narcissus the greetings are probably directed to the slaves in the house of a master. Since the greeting is directed to the house of the persons in question, it is likely that Aristobulus and Narcissus were not themselves Christians (so P. Lampe 1991: 222). Indeed, both Aristobulus and Narcissus may have been deceased, while their houses continued to bear their names.¹⁸

Let. Letter of Aristeas

Ign. Ignatius, *Letter to the Philadelphians*

¹⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 791.

¹⁷Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 792.

³ P. Lampe (1991: 220) believes that Paul also knew Stachys and Apelles, but he argues that he probably did not know Mary and Herodion. Thus for Lampe Paul knew twelve out of the twenty-six people.

⁴ P. Lampe (1991: 224–25) argues that Gentile Christians predominate among those named.

⁵ P. Lampe (1991: 228) thinks the following were either slaves or freedmen and freedwomen: Nereus, Hermes, Persis, Herodion, Tryphosa, Tryphaena, Ampliatus, Julia, Junia, and Maria. He says we cannot determine the situation of Asyncritus, Patrobas, Philologus, Andronicus, Olympas, Apelles, Phlegon, Hermas, Stachys, Apaeetus, Nereus's sister, and Rufus's mother.

¹⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 792.

Another remarkable characteristic of the **greetings is the number of women:** Prisca, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus's mother, and Julia.⁷ Nothing is known of Julia except what is stated here. Paul states that Rufus's mother was also a mother to him (v. 13). What Paul specifically has in mind is unclear, but presumably Rufus's mother either helped Paul in a specific situation or ministered to him regularly at some point in his labors. It is clear from this list that women were actively involved in ministry. The verb "to labor" (*κοπιᾶν*, *kopían*) is used of four women: Mary (v. 6),⁸ Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis (v. 12). The word *κοπιᾶν* is used to describe Paul's ministry (1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 4:11; Phil. 2:16; Col. 1:29; 1 Tim. 4:10) and others who are involved in ministry (1 Cor. 16:16; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17). Here it probably denotes missionary work (cf. Cranfield 1979: 785; Käsemann 1980: 412; Wilckens 1982: 135; Dunn 1988b: 892; P. Lampe 1991: 223). What these women did specifically is not delineated, but we cannot doubt that they were vitally involved in ministry.¹⁹

The **term "coworker"** (*συνεργός*, *synergos*) is also used for those involved in Christian ministry: Urbanus (Rom. 16:9), Timothy (Rom. 16:21; 1 Thess. 3:2), Paul (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 1:24), Titus (2 Cor. 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:3), Philemon (Philem. 1), and various others (Col. 4:11; Philem. 24; 3 John 8; cf. verbal form in 1 Cor. 16:16). Paul heads up the greeting section by designating Prisca and Aquila as "coworkers" (*συνεργούς*, v. 3).²⁰

The greetings also reveal that the Christian community in Rome was composed of house churches (see Filson 1939). It seems that at least five house churches are greeted: at the home of Prisca and Aquila (v. 5), those who belong to Aristobulus (v. 10), those who belong to Narcissus (v. 11), and in both verses 14 and 15 the names probably represent members of two house churches (so Dunn 1988b: 891; P. Lampe 1991: 229–30).¹⁷ Evidence for a house church in verse 14 is contained in the words "and the brothers and sisters with them" (*καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀδελφούς*, *kai tous syn autois adelphous*), suggesting that Paul names the five members of the church he knows of and then greets the rest of the church generally.¹⁸ Similarly, in verse 15 he greets the five persons he knows, and then greets the rest of the church with the words "and all the saints with them" (*καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς πάντας ἁγίους*, *kai tous syn autois pantas hagiους*).¹⁹ The largest house churches could probably hold fifty people (Murphy-O'Connor 1983: 153–58). We do not know how many house churches existed in Rome at this time, nor do we have details on how they functioned. The presence of various churches, however, may also explain the tensions between the "strong" and the "weak" in Rome if differing customs were observed in the various churches.²¹

Main Point:

High value on the service of all members of the family of God—the church

Principle:

The Value of People

- Service and support to others
- Sacrifice for the sake of the church

⁷ See Fiorenza's (1986) study, though many of her conclusions are questionable. Cf. also Richardson (1986), who argues that the original freedom of women to minister in the early church, which was never without controversy, was squelched rather quickly. Richardson is correct in concluding that women were vitally involved in ministry, but he is incorrect in deducing that they functioned in authoritative positions contrary to the admonition in 1 Tim. 2:12.

⁸ Some scholars believe that Mary was a Jewish Christian. P. Lampe (1991: 225) argues that Mary was a Gentile since the Latin "Maria" was common in Rome while the Semitic "Maria" was rare.

¹⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 793.

²⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 794.

¹⁷ P. Lampe (1991: 230) suggests from the other names that there were possibly three more house churches. Minear (1971: 7) thinks there were five or six.

¹⁸ Contra Murray (1965: 232), the reference to *ἀδελφούς* does not show that only males are intended. The term refers to all believers and should not be distinguished from "saints" in verse 15.

¹⁹ Many commentators believe that Philologus and Julia are husband and wife. Some also speculate that Nereus and his sister are their children. This last suggestion seems unlikely to me.

²¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 797.

Hard work for the gospel
Longevity and loyalty to the Lord

Families that together follow the Lord
Close relationships within the church—like family

Interaction:



Talk about it

How are we at loving others within the family?
How are we at developing depth of relationship with others?

Do we see and believe in the need to work hard in the church, or is that what we pay others to do?

What does this section teach us about the need to participate in ministry?



What do we learn
About God?

God can save anyone!
God can use anyone!



Act on it

What would Paul affirm you for?

Relationships are important
Affirmation is important

Service is important
All should serve

How am I developing deep relationships within the church?
Do I feel like I am part of a biblical spiritual family of fully devoted followers of Christ?

Are there individuals within the church with who I am not in full fellowship?
Do I need to seek forgiveness or reconciliation?

Am I using all my gifts and abilities to the glory of God and the furthering of the Gospel?

Appendix 1:

Calvary Church Covenant

Because we are God's children who have been born again by the grace of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and who have been justified on the basis of His shed blood, and who have confessed our faith before one another, we covenant with one another as one body in Christ, sincerely and joyfully, in the presence of God and this assembly.

We pledge, therefore, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to minister in the exercise of our spiritual gifts; to strive for the improvement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and blessing; to promote its well-being and spirituality; to support its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the financial support of the ministry, to the relief of the poor, and to the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also pledge to observe family and personal devotions, to educate our children in the Holy Scriptures, and to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

We pledge, too, by the grace and power of God, that as "strangers and pilgrims"¹ we will "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul"¹; that we will "put away from us all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking,"³ and "be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us."⁴

We further pledge to watch over one another in brotherly love, to remember each other in prayer, and to aid each other in sickness and distress.

We moreover pledge that should we move away from here, we will unite as soon as possible with another church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

¹1Pet. 2:11

¹1Pet. 2:11

³Eph. 4:31

⁴Eph. 4:32

Romans 16:1-16

- 1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe,
a servant of the church at Cenchreae,
2 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.
- 3 Greet Prisca and Aquila,
my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
4 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.
- 5 Greet also the church in their house.
Greet my beloved Epaenetus,
who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.
- 6 Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.
- 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia,
my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners.
They are well known to the apostles,
and they were in Christ before me.
- 8 Greet Ampliatus,
my beloved in the Lord.
- 9 Greet Urbanus,
our fellow worker in Christ,
and my beloved Stachys.
- 10 Greet Apelles,
who is approved in Christ.
Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.
- 11 Greet my kinsman Herodion.
Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.
- 12 Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa.
Greet the beloved Persis,
who has worked hard in the Lord.
- 13 Greet Rufus,
chosen in the Lord;
also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.
- 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas,
and the brothers who are with them.
- 15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas,
and all the saints who are with them.
- 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
All the churches of Christ greet you. (ESV)

Conclusion
Romans 15:14–16:27

**Motivation for
Writing**

15:14

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**Intention of
Visiting**

15:22

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**Greetings and
Admonitions**

16:1

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