

Paul's Conclusion to his Letter

(Romans 16)

Introduction

The controversy of this passage

It is interesting to note that there is somewhat a controversy over Romans 15:14–16:27. The question is "Where did Romans originally end? Was 15:13 originally the last verse of Romans?" Many old manuscripts do not contain this passage (15:14–16:27), and at the same time most do in one way or another. Some have it placed at the end of chapter fourteen and others both at the end of chapter fourteen and at the end of the book. This bears no influence of compromising the text's integrity, but can be logically explained. Someone copying the letter and desiring to disperse it among many different churches could have left off the parts personal to the church at Rome.

The Personality of This Passage: Personal

Romans chapter sixteen shows us the personal side of Paul as he sends greetings to Believers who live in Rome. He speaks as one does to friends and not only as a leader or pastor. This sixteenth chapter is often neglected by many. It is by far the most extensive, intimate, and particular of all the words of greeting in Paul's letters (Second to it is Colossians 4). No one can afford to miss this wonderful outpouring of the heart of our apostle toward the saints whom he so loved, which means all the church of God.

The spirit of this chapter is exceptional particularly when you consider that Paul did not found the church at Rome and had not even visited it yet (Similar to his letter to Colossae)! Despite that, Paul mentions by name 26 people in that church. Each name listed in Paul's closing remarks undoubtedly has a story of courage, love and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Other Than by their names, Paul identifies these people as:

- kinsmen, sisters, brethren, mother
- servants of the church
- laborers, helpers in Christ
- fellow prisoners
- saints, churches of Christ
- well-beloved, beloved in the Lord
- first-fruits unto Christ
- in Christ, in the Lord
- approved in Christ
- chosen in the Lord

Phebe's commendation (v. 1–2)

[NOTE: Several of the quotes in the section are taken from "Alexander MacLaren's Expositions of Holy Scripture". Alexander MacClaren (February 11, 1826 - May 5, 1910) was a Scotsman and minister of the Gospel for almost 65 years who labored tirelessly in preaching and writing concerning the Scripture. MacClaren's Expositions of Holy Scripture is a collection of over 1,500 expository sermons.]

Paul recommends a sister (a sister not in the flesh but in the Lord)

Cenchrea was a small harbor in Corinth

But if we take into account the hideous immoralities of Corinth, we shall deem it probable that the port, with its shifting maritime population, was, like most seaports, a soil in which goodness was hard put to it to grow, and a church had much against which to struggle. To be a Christian at Cenchrea can have been no light task.
—MacClaren

Phebe was one of the many good women who helped Paul in the work of the Gospel.

Her name is a purely idolatrous one, and stamps her as a Greek, and by birth probably a worshiper of Apollo.
—MacClaren

To Phebe is intrusted this letter who would personally deliver it to the church at Rome

Here are Paul the Jew, Phoebe the Greek, and the Roman readers of the epistle, all fused together by the power of the divine love that melted their hearts, and the common faith that unified their lives. The list of names in this chapter, comprising as it does men and women of many nationalities, and some slaves as well as freemen.
—MacClaren

Galatians 3:28—There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

To the world in which Paul lived it was a strange, new thought that women could share with man in his loftiest emotions. Historically the emancipation of one half of the human race is the direct result of the Christian principle that all are one in Christ Jesus.
—MacClaren

Greetings and salutations (v. 3–15)

Paul Salutes 16 groups of people at Rome:

1. **Priscilla and Aquila**, my helpers in Christ (and the House Church of Priscilla and Aquila). Priscilla and Aquila were tent makers as was Paul. Traditionally this missionary couple is included in the list of 70 disciples appointed by Jesus in Luke 10. They are mentioned six times in four different books of the New Testament. They are always named as a couple and never individually. Of those six references, Aquila's name is mentioned first three times and Priscilla's name is mentioned first on three occasions. Priscilla is not Aquila's property but rather his partner both in ministry and marriage. Priscilla and Aquila were last mentioned in Scripture as being in Ephesus (Acts 18:18–19). Priscilla and Aquila had been among the Jews expelled from Rome by the Roman

Emperor Claudius in the year 49. They ended up in Corinth. Paul lived with Priscilla and Aquila for approximately 18 months. Then the couple started out to accompany Paul when he proceeded to Syria, but stopped at Ephesus. As they are mentioned in Romans 16, Sometime before 56 or 57, they had returned to Rome. The gentile church felt thankful for Priscilla and Aquila because they risked their own necks for them ("laid down their own necks").

2. **Epaenetus**, my well-beloved, the first fruits unto Christ of Achaia.
3. **Mary**, who bestowed much labor on us.
4. **Adronicus and Junia** my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, of the apostles. They were in Christ before Paul. Of the twenty-six to whom Paul sends special greetings, at least six are women, indicating the position and importance of women among the Christian group at Rome. The controversy over this short verse is the questions "Is the person named Junia (feminine name) or Junias (masculine name)?" and "Is the phrase following the names best translated 'outstanding among the apostles' or 'well-known to the apostles'?"
5. **Amplias**, my beloved in the Lord.
6. **Urbane**, our helper in Christ.
7. **Stachys**, my beloved.
8. **Apelles** approved in Christ.
9. **Those in Aristobulus's household**.
10. **Herodian**, my kinsman.
11. **Those of the household of Narcissus**, which are in the Lord.
12. **Tryphena and Tryphosa**, labor in the Lord.
13. **Persis**, beloved, which labored much in the Lord.
14. **Rufus** chosen in the Lord, and **his mother** and mine.
15. **Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them**.
16. **Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them**.

A holy kiss (v. 16)

- The 'Holy Kiss' is an ancient traditional Jewish and Christian greeting. Also called "kiss of peace", "Brother kiss" among men, or "Sister kiss" among women.
- Mentioned 5 times in the New Testament: Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20 ; 2 Corinthians 13:12 ; I Thessalonians 5:26 ; 1 Peter 5:14. ("peace be with you", "Shalom")
- For the first several centuries at least, this kiss was not mouth to cheek, but mouth to mouth. From an early date, to guard against any abuse of this form of salutation, women and men were required to sit separately, and the kiss of peace was given only by women to women and by men to men.
- Most Protestant churches have readopted the holy kiss metaphorically (in that members extend a pure, warm welcome that is referred to as a holy kiss).

One final warning (v. 17–20)

Paul follows with some pastoral guidance and instruction. He says "mark" them. This word *mark* means to "take aim, take heed." The same word is used in Philippians 3:17.

Closing (v. 21–27)

Paul ends with a HALLELUJAH!