

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 43

I. Exposition of Chapter 16 (Continued).

A. **Verses 3-5a - Greetings to Priscilla and Aquilla.** (Note: Even though Paul had never been to Rome, there are many people listed in this chapter who he must have met in other places. Priscilla and Aquilla are examples of this. We should also note that Paul addresses about 24 people personally and of the 24, 10 of them were women! In spite of what many claim, Paul was not a misogynist).

1. Paul met Priscilla and her husband Aquila in Corinth (**Acts 18:1-2**). When he left for Ephesus, he took them with him (**Acts 18:18**). He left them in Ephesus when he moved on to Jerusalem (**Acts 18:18-19**). In Ephesus they helped Apollos (**Acts 18:24-28**). Apparently, they returned to Rome where they had lived previously (**Acts 18:2**). Later still they returned to Ephesus (**II Timothy 4:19**). Churches normally met in houses at this time, and one met in theirs (cf. v. 23; **I Corinthians 16:19**).
2. **Verse 4** – “...who risked their own necks for my life...” – We don’t know when or how this happened but at some time, they apparently risked death to help Paul.
3. **Verse 5** – “Likewise greet the church that is in their house...” – Obviously, there were no “church buildings” at that time so there were probably many homes where believers would meet.

B. Verses 5b-16 - Various greetings.

1. **Verse 5** – “Epaenetus” - He was apparently among the very first converts of Achaia (the region where Corinth was, where Paul wrote this letter from).
2. **Verse 6** – “Greet Mary, who labored much for us.”
3. **Verse 7** – “Greet Andronicus and Junia...” – These were possibly husband and wife and were both Jews (“my countrymen) and had been imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel (“my fellow prisoners”). Both of them were apparently considered apostles. It’s important to know that there are different kinds of apostles in the New Testament.

“Junia is a feminine name and was universally recognized as a female apostle for the first several centuries of the Church’s existence. The famous church father of the fifth century, John Chrysostom, exclaimed, ‘Oh how great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle.’”¹

4. **Verses 8-10** – “Greet Amplias...Urbanus...and Stachys...Apelles...those of the household of Aristobulus” – All of these are masculine names and we don’t know anything more about them. The only exception might be “Aristobulus”, who according to Picirilli, “Some think this Aristobulus is the famous grandson of Herod the Great who lived in Rome, and it would perhaps be more likely that some of his servants would be Christians than some of his immediate family.”
5. **Verse 11** – “Greet Herodian...” – Paul states that he also is “my countryman”, indicating that he was a Jew but with a Roman name. Dr. Robert Utley suggests that he may have been a slave of Herod’s family.²
6. **Verse 11 (cont.)** – “...those of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.” – History suggests that Narcissus was an early martyr of the Church. “Narcissus was a famous freedman of that name who was put to death by Agrippa shortly after Nero came to power.”³
7. **Verse 12** – “Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa...” – May have been sisters due to ancient customs and the similarity of their names. (Two more women esteemed highly by Paul.)
8. **Verse 12 (cont.)** “Greet Persis...” – Another feminine name.
9. **Verse 13** – “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.” – This may be the same man mentioned as a son of Simon the Cyrene in **Mark 15:21**. This is possible, but Rufus was a common name - so it may have been someone else.
10. **Verses 14-15** – It seems there are two groups mentioned. Each of them states, “...and the brethren who are with them.” (verse 14) and “...and all the saints who are with them.” (verse 15). This is probably referring to two different assemblies of believers meeting in different homes. All are masculine names with the exception of Julia (verse 15).
11. “Greet one another with a holy kiss...” - This might sound strange to us, but **Luke 7:45** shows how common a greeting a kiss was. Jesus rebukes a Pharisee because he had not given Jesus a kiss when He came into his house.

¹Eddie L. Hyatt, *Paul, Women and Church*, (Hyatt Press, Grapevine, TX, 2016), 25.

²Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 16:11.

³*Nelson Study Bible*, Earl D. Radmacher, gen.ed. (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1997), 1909.

C. Verses 17-27 - Final words and warnings.

1. Verses 17-20 - Warning regarding Dividers and Deceivers.

- a. Verse 17 – “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”
 - 1) Most seem to agree that this is referring specifically to false teachers due to the phrase, “...contrary to the doctrine...”.
 - 2) Three things false teachers were doing from this verse:
 - a) They stirred up divisions.
 - b) They put hindrances in the believer’s way. (“offenses”).
 - c) They taught in opposition to the doctrine the church had already been taught.
 - 3) Two things Paul states that they are to do concerning false teachers:
 - a) “**Note them**” – The word “note” means; “to continue to regard closely—to watch, to notice carefully.”⁴
 - b) “**Avoid them**” – The word “avoid” means; “to deviate, to turn away (from someone or something)”⁵
- b. Verse 18 – “For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech, deceive the hearts of the simple.”
 - 1) Two-fold Characteristics of these False Teachers:
 - a) They are not serving the Lord Jesus Christ but their own bellies. In other words, they’re out to take care of themselves, their own appetites/desires (cf. **Philippians 3:17-19; I Timothy 6:5**) “**They were selfish gluttons.**”⁶
 - b) They deceive the simple with “smooth words”, and “flattering speech”. “Smooth words” is defined as; “eloquent and attractive speech involving pleasing rhetorical devices”.⁷ The words “flattering speech” means; “in a bad sense, language artfully adapted to captivate the hearer: fair speaking, fine speeches.” (Thayer’s Lexicon). Cf. **Proverbs 26:28; Jude 1:16.**
- c. Verse 19 – “For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.” – The obedience and faith of the Roman church was spoken of throughout the world (1:8). Paul here is commending them for their submissiveness but, as Picirilli suggest, Paul is also saying, “...I do not want you to be foolish and naïve, accepting just anything without testing it. I want you to be wise and careful, observing, testing, and rejecting the evil that exists and threatens.”⁸
- d. Verse 20 – “And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” - This is an allusion to **Genesis 3:15**. The believer’s relationship with the Lord gives them victory also (cf. **I John 5:4-5**). In this context Satan represents the confusion and division caused by false teachers. Behind false teachers is the demonic!

2. Verses 21-24 - Greetings from those in Corinth with Paul.

- a. Verse 21 - Timothy receives first mention, being one of Paul’s closest and most trusted associates.
- b. Verse 22 - “I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle...” - 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.
- c. Verse 23 - Gaius had such a reputation for hospitality that Paul can say he was regarded as the host of the whole church. This could possibly mean that he had church in his house. He’s probably the same Gaius as in **I Corinthians 1:14**.

3. Verses 25-27 - Conclusion to the Letter.

- a. Verse 25 – “...Him who is able to establish you...” – He brings stability, steadfastness (cf. **Ephesians 4:9-16**).
- b. Verse 25-26 – “revelation of the mystery ...now made manifest...” – The “mystery” given to Paul was the mystery of the church, the Body of Christ composed of Jew and Gentile. (cf. **Ephesians 1:9; Colossians 1:25-27**.)
- c. Verse 27 – “To God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.”

⁴Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 279.

⁵Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries : Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998).

⁶John A. Witmer, “Romans,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 501.

⁷Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* , 392.

⁸Picirilli, *Romans*. (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 1975), 319.