

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #57

Romans 16:1-16

When the Apostle Paul wound down his letter to the Romans, he wanted these believers to realize there was a way to become famous forever. He wanted them to know they could earn eternal recognition and notoriety with the Living God.

PEOPLE WHO DILIGENTLY INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN GOD'S WORK AND GOD'S CHURCH WILL BE ETERNALLY FAMOUS.

These people, for the most part, were nobodies on the streets of Rome, but in the streets of heaven they were all special and all eternally remembered.

All people in this list had at least three things in common:

- 1) They had responded to God's Grace.
- 2) They had been connected to Paul.
- 3) They had worked hard for God.

GREETING #1 – The commendation of Phoebe. 16:1-2

- 1) She is a believer - “our sister.”
- 2) She is a servant - some official position, perhaps a deaconess.
- 3) She is a helper - she had helped many people including the Apostle Paul.

There is not a lot known about the office of “deaconess.” But there are two known facts about this office: 1) It was an office that did not in any way usurp the male leadership of the church; 2) It was not a replacement for male leadership but an expansion into female ministry.

Thomas Robinson of the University of Edinburgh in the 1800s said that these women were mostly widows or older unmarried women who had six main responsibilities:

- 1) Instruct female candidates concerning membership.
- 2) Attend their baptism.
- 3) Visit the females of the church and report to the bishop concerning each one.
- 4) Be present if needed for a meeting with a female.
- 5) Attend to the sick, strangers, and martyrs.
- 6) See that the women maintain a good order.

GREETING #2 – The greeting to Aquila and Priscilla. 16:3-5a

Aquila and Priscilla or Prisca had a long association with Paul. They were business people who first met him in Corinth and gave him a job when he needed it (Acts 18:1-3). They had traveled to Ephesus with Paul and even risked their own lives for his ministry. In fact, Paul says “all” of the Gentile churches are indebted to this couple because Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and they had done so much for him.

One of the main features which continually shows up with this couple is that they always had a church in their home. The early Church often met in homes because they did not have any buildings (Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2). They had one in Ephesus (I Corinthians 16:19) and they had one in Rome (16:5a). This couple loved God and they loved God's Church.

GREETING #3 – The greeting to Epaenetus. **16:5b**

Paul wanted to go to Asia on his second missionary journey; however, the Spirit of God would not permit it. Instead, he was called to Macedonia (Acts 16:6). However, on Paul's third missionary journey he did go to Asia (Acts 19:10) and apparently one of the first converts was Epaenetus.

GREETING #4 – The greeting to Mary. **16:6**

The words "worked hard" in Greek mean that she worked to the point of exhaustion, to the point of growing weary.

GREETING #5 – The greeting to Andronicus and Junias. **16:7**

We learn **five facts** about these two in this one verse: **1)** They were Jewish believers ("kinsmen"); **2)** They had served time in jail with Paul; **3)** They were highly esteemed by all the apostles; **4)** They had been believers longer than Paul, which means they had been believers for over 22 years. It is possible they had personally followed Jesus Christ, Himself; **5)** They were now living in Rome.

GREETING #6 – The greeting to Ampliatus. **16:8**

Paul had a deep love for this man and that love was solely based on the work of God.

GREETING #7 – The greeting to Urbanus and Stachys. **16:9**

These were people whom Paul loved who had helped him in the work of God.

GREETING #8 – The greeting to Apelles. **16:10a**

The text says that Apelles had been "approved in Christ." The Greek word "approve" is one that means to approve by a test. Apparently, Apelles had gone through some form of testing for his faith and he had survived. His faith remained firm and he did not waver even in hours that were dark and now he is eternally remembered.

GREETING #9 – The greeting to the household of Aristobulus. **16:10**

In the annals of history, an Aristobulus shows up as the grandson of Herod the Great. In I Corinthians 1:26 Paul said "not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble" are called, but there obviously were a few. Not many does not mean not any.

GREETING #10 – The greeting to Herodian. **16:11a**

This is clearly a name from the line of Herod who was a Jewish believer (“kinsman”). Again the gospel had reached some very high places.

GREETING #11 – The greeting to the household of Narcissus. **16:1 lb**

According to history, Narcissus had been a secretary to Claudius. He made his fortune by taking bribe money to pass on personal requests to Claudius when he was Caesar. When Claudius was murdered and Nero came to power, Narcissus stayed in Rome for a time and then committed suicide. Apparently some of his family had come to faith in Christ and were faithful in the church of Rome.

GREETING #12 – The greeting to Tryphaena and Tryphosa. **16:12a**

Nothing is known about these ladies. It is speculated that they may have been twin sisters because it was customary to name twins with similar names. What is known is that they were diligent workers for God. The words “worked hard” indicate that they worked to the point of exhaustion.

GREETING #13 – The greeting to Persis. **16:12b**

Persis, probably from Persia, was a diligent worker who labored to the point of exhaustion in the work of God in the church. He did many things for God.

GREETING #14 – The greeting to Rufus. **16:13**

According to Mark 15:21, the person who carried the cross of Jesus Christ was Simon of Cyrene (North Africa). Simon had two sons, Alexander and Rufus.

It is probable that this is the Rufus whose father actually carried the cross of Jesus Christ. It is also possible that Alexander, his brother, is the one who calmed the crowd at Ephesus (Acts 19:33) and later, the one of whom Paul speaks very harshly against (I Timothy 1:20; II Timothy 4:14).

Paul brings out the fact that Rufus was the one chosen by God. The implication is that Rufus had been called out, his mother had been called out, but Alexander was not called out by God.

GREETING #15 – The greeting to Group #1. **16:14**

GREETING #16 – The greeting to Group #2. **16:15**

GREETING #17 – The greeting to all. **16:16a**

Paul wanted the believers to greet with a holy kiss.

This is referred to in I Corinthians 16:20; I Thessalonians 5:25, and I Peter 5:14.

It was a kiss on the forehead or cheek that expressed a common unity. It was not a romantic-type kiss, rather an expression of love and unity.

GREETING #18 – The greeting from the other churches. **16:16b**

Notice it is not the church of a particular city or denomination; **it is the church of Christ, the church of God.**

Paul never forgot this point. It was God's church, not his, not theirs and not ours! And God keeps record of those who faithfully serve and minister in His church. Both men and women and children are vital to the work of God and we need you active and faithful in this, His church.

Those who do are earning eternal fame and eternal honor. That is something very clearly seen in this 16th chapter of the book of Romans.