

August 27 2023
Romans 16:1-5
Church Family

Romans 16:1-5

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae (**keng-khreh-a'-hee**), **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.

[For those who have their Bible continue reading to verse 16: **27 people** and all brothers and sisters in Christ]

Romans 16 is filled with family languages.

- In verse 1 it says, "I commend to you our **sister** Phoebe"
- In verse 17 it says, "I appeal to you, **brothers** ..."
- in verse 23 it says, "... our **brother** Quartus, greet you."
- Now these are spiritual **brothers and sisters in the Lord**.

Why? Because Paul wants to make sure we understand that these spiritual family is from God. And not blood related.

Words like:

- V2 "**in the Lord**"
- V7 "**in Christ**"
- 11 times it uses these kinds of spiritual family language

So basically Paul is ending this theological book or letter or **epistle** (**formal letter**) with his spiritual family in mind. Talk about “humility.” Paul could have simply ended with chapter 15:13

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in **hope**.

Paul could have simply ended it with **God’s hope**. All through Romans chapter 1-15 he shares this very rich theological understanding from **needing salvation** to **how to practice your salvation after you’ve been saved**. But he didn’t.

He wanted to write an entire chapter recognizing his spiritual family. **Why?** Because Paul recognizes if it wasn’t for **them** his ministry **could not have been successful**. The spiritual family around him is what made the church expand. And many of them were martyred, for sharing their faith. So Paul gives them credit where credit is due.

Romans 13:7

Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, **honor to whom honor is owed**.

Let’s give some people at our church some encouragement.

[Turn to the people next to you and say, “**Thank you for serving!**”]

Paul is reminding us that we are all in need of church family. Listen **doing ministry is hard** and we all need to spiritual family.

In Romans 16 there are 36 people mentioned. Now, I cannot talk about all of them, so I’ll just **highlight a few of them** to give you a picture of the people we call saints (followers of Jesus).

On the **Back of your chairs**, we have put the **names** of the people in **Romans 16:1-16**.

And when you read about these people, you will recognize that you fit just like many of these people. And when God calls you home, **you will meet them**, like you would meet Abraham, Moses and King David and Apostles (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). All of you will meet these people and your going to have a lot of fun talking to them.

So let's begin.

Romans 16:1-5

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a **servant** of the church at Cenchreae (pronounced **keng-khreh-a'-hee**), **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.

This is very interesting is that Paul begins with giving thanks to a woman by the name "Phoebe."

Phoebe

- Servant = diakonos (pronounced: **dee-ak'-on-os**) = "Whatever the church needs, she takes care of it."
- She serves the church in a practical way (visit the sick, helping the poor and so forth). She is a "deacon" of the church.
- "patron of many" or a benefactor of many or helpful to many.

In order to travel from Corinth to Rome, it takes money. So It might be that **she is wealthy**. She might be a **business owner**. Maybe she was a **merchant**. Perhaps her husband died and **left the wealth to her** but what we do know is that she is a "**benefactor to many**." This

is how Phoebe was able to travel to Rome to deliver the letter to the Christians there.

This is very interesting is that in the traditional **Greco-Roman culture** (Partly Greek and partly Roman), the **women were treated as second class citizen**. This was a **culture in which men dominated** every aspect of the empire. In the Greco-Roman culture, **everyone hoped for a boy**. And in many cases, if it was a girl, then the parents would **throw away the baby girl**.

- Still to this day in China for example you have over **35 million** more single men than women. (China had for a long time a one-child policy. So many people chose boys over girls).
- Many parts of the Middle East and even in India, girls were not important in society still to this day. But especially in Greco-Roman society.

The world looks at a women as a lower form of life, but in **God's view** and from what Paul is indicating is that this woman called "Phoebe" is the first to be given the gratitude of her work for the Lord. This **woman was given a high honor by Paul**.

So in Romans 16:1 where it says, "**I commend to you our sister Phoebe,**" it basically means, "**I have good things to say about Phoebe, who is a leader in the church at Cenchreae.** (pronounced **keng-khreh-a'-hee**)" During that time and from the world's view, you don't commend a woman, but in God's kingdom, a woman that loves Jesus **becomes the first to be commended**.

This is important because when the culture says, you are not important, your life is not important, but God says, you are a **child of God**. You are worthy of my affection.

Now many of you might be familiar with these two people. They are an amazing couple. [We have some [amazing couples at our church](#)]

Romans 16:3-5

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. [Because Aquila and Priscilla made a [huge impact](#) to the Gentiles]

Aquila and Prisca (Priscilla)

- Aquila is a Jewish Christian along with his wife Priscilla
- Aquila is a tentmaker by trade
- Aquila and Priscilla planted many “House Churches”

Remember that you had Christians in Rome.

- In Rome, you had Gentile Christians and you also Jews who were Christians.
- But there was a clash between the Christian Jews and traditional Jews. And there clash between the two groups was not a good look for the Romans. **Tensions started to arise in Rome**, so **Emperor Claudius decided to expel** all the Jews in Rome.
- Aquila and Pricilla were Jews so they had to leave Italy.
- They decided to go to Corinth to do work there.
- All throughout the Roman empire wherever the Jews lived, they had Synagogues (**Temple**). Remember when Paul left Jerusalem to persecute the Jews in Damascus? They had synagogues there.
- So it was normal for all Jews to go to Synagogues. That’s what you do as a Jew (culture). So they went to a synagogue in Corinth.

- And what is interesting is that in the Synagogues, you had **men on one side and women on the other**.
- And on the men's side, you had similar professions or people who had similar trades would all go sit down by their groups.
- So you had Aquila on one side and Priscilla on the other side and then here comes the Apostle Paul who is also a tentmaker.
- So guess which group he was sitting with? Tentmakers. And Aquila (a tentmaker) was there. That's how they met.
- So Paul took Aquila and Priscilla and taught them a deeper understanding of Jesus and all the doctrines of scripture.
- And later on Paul took Aquila and Pricilla to Ephesus to do ministry together.
- From there Aquila and Pricilla went back to Rome after Emperor Claudius died and the persecution of the Jews had stopped.
- And wherever Aquila and Priscilla went they used their house meeting place for "**House Churches**." So when they came back to Rome, they did what they knew best. House Churches.

Romans 16:3-5

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 (**Aquila and Priscilla planted house churches**) give thanks as well.

These are the type of people you want to know and get associated with. **My prayer is that the married couples in our church will be like Aquila and Priscilla**. They just love Jesus and they love the

people of God. These are the type of friends you want as life long friends.

Proverbs 18:24 New King James Version

A man *who has* friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend *who sticks closer* than a brother. **[Brothers and Sisters in Christ]**

Listen if you say, ***I don't have friends***, then go find true spiritual friends. You will never regret making this right decision.

- Worldly friends will only want self-satisfaction
- Godly friends will give and minister to you and do ministry together.

Romans 16:9 New Living Translation

Greet **Urbanus**, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend **Stachys**.

Urbanus was a common name for slaves.

Urbanus = "Urban" = Belonging to the City (city dweller)
So most likely Urbanus was raised in the city as a slave who later accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Stachys on the other hand was an uncommon name.

Stachys (pronounced ***stakh'-oos***) means a head of grain.

- His a name was found to be in the Royal Household in Rome.
- In other words, he came from a wealthy family.

Here you have in one sentence two different people from two different worlds coming to the faith of Jesus Christ. And these two are not only good friends with the Apostle Paul but they are **good friends with each other**. Only Christ can bring them together.

In what part of the world can they be friends? None. Still in Asian and the middle East, you still have class separation. Only in Jesus can

they be united. This would make an **awesome drama show or a movie**. I would love to see a movie like this.

When you come to the feet of Jesus, whether you are a slave or a wealthy person, we are all on the same floor. This is the reason, why I love God so much.

Romans 16:11

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

Narcissus

- Happens to be a very well known person in Rome.
- He was rich and very influential
- He was a real creep or a very unlikable person and he was ungodly or wicked. In general nobody liked him.
- He was well known because he was the secretary for Emperor Claudius. He helped kick the Jews out of Rome.

Remember how Aquila and Priscilla got kicked out of Rome? He was one of those helpers. Yet even a creepy, unlikable, ungodly and a wicked person like Narcissus, repents before Jesus, God still receives a person like Narcissus.

Turn to your neighbor and say, "**Are you a Narcissus? God still loves you.**"

Romans 5:8

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [**Narcissus did not stay a sinner!**]

Let me end with these two last people

Romans 16:12 New International Version

Greet **Tryphena** and **Tryphosa**, those women who **work hard** in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

Tryphena (pronounced: *troo'-fahee-nah*)

Tryphosa (pronounced: *troo-fo'-sah*)

- They are female and are considered either sisters or twins.
- The word “**Try...**” in both names show family connection or twins.
- [My brothers: **Yong** Woon, **Yong** Duk, **Yong** Sung, **Yong** Jin (**PJ**)]

This is very interesting because:

- **Tryphena** meaning is “**Dainty**” (small, weak or fragile)
- **Tryphosa** means “**Delicate**” (Easily broken or damaged)
- (**Romans 16:12**): “**work hard in the Lord**”: They work until you are absolutely exhausted and can't go any further.

How does someone that is “**dainty**” and “**delicate**” labor in the Lord or work till you are absolutely exhausted and can't go any further?

Without God, you simply can not, because the world tells you that you are small, weak, fragile, and you are easily broken. By the world standards, you are a damaged person and they cater to you.

You stay as a victim, weak, fragile, and damaged, but **God says ...**

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (**memorize**)

In the last chapter of Romans, Paul is making it clear, that **he could not have done all this ministry by himself**. He needed friends and not just any friends, but friends who are connected to Jesus Christ.

Paul had spiritual friends.

So I urge you, and I plead with you that as you journey in this life called faith, lets make **good spiritual friends**. Trust me, you will never ever regret it.

- Remember, you have to be a **good friend with Jesus first**.
- Then, when you pursue after God, **good friends will come to you**.

John 15:15

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but **I have called you friends**, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.