

- Week 24 -

Romans 16

That long list of names (vv 1-16)

This chapter is Paul's final, personal salutation. It is not as doctrinal as the rest of the book, and interestingly, it moves around in the ancient manuscripts because it just doesn't seem to "fit." Here are the people he greets by name:

- Phoebe (v1) – called both a sister (*adelfe*) and servant (*diakene*), feminine forms of words we almost always see in the masculine. She was from Corinth (Cenchreae was the port of Corinth) and may have been the messenger who carried Paul's letter.
- Prisca and Aquila (v3) - co-workers (*synergous*). They were residents of Rome who Paul met in Corinth (Acts 18:1-2) who later traveled to Ephesus with Paul and were instrumental in the conversion of Apollos, who in turn became a prominent leader (Acts 18:24-28, 1 Cor 1:12).
- Epaphroditus (v5) – apparently the first convert (*aparche*) in what is today Turkey, perhaps a merchant who Paul met in his ministry who then went to Rome.
- Mary (v6) – a woman, not one of the Mary's from the gospels, who perhaps was a caretaker or pastor since she is described as being "weary" ("worked hard," *ekopiasen*) for the church.
- Andronicus and Junia (v7) – probably another married couple who Paul says are probably Hellenic Jews (kinsfolk) and prisoners with him. They were apparently already believers when Paul met them. Their names are Greek.
- Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles (vv8-10) – there's really nothing about these four. The indication, however, is that many of the people he knows in Rome came from other works Paul was involved in.
- The family of Aristobulus, the family of Narcissus (vv10-11) – this greeting likely indicates that these men were martyred or that they were soldiers and away from Rome.
- Herodion (v11) – nothing is known about this person, but the fact that he has this name indicates that he may have once been a servant in the household of one of the Herodian kings. Probably another Jewish convert, but possibly from the Sadducee ruling class.
- Tryphaena and Tryphosa (v12) – female works like Mary who serve the church, but their names indicate they are aristocratic. The names occurs in Egyptian records.
- Persis (v12) – distinguished from the other two women, this name is usually reserved for female slaves, and so placing her in the list next to the previous two was in keeping with Paul's theme of unity, regardless of status.
- Rufus and his mother (v13) – a Roman and his mother who apparently cared for Paul at some point, possibly a childhood friend of Paul's.
- Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers (v14) – a seemingly random collection, but the names indicate slaves and former practitioners of pagan cults. Perhaps a collective household, a group of young converts.
- Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympus (v15) – probably slaves in the imperial household.

What is Paul doing with this seemingly random list of people? There are Greeks, Jews, Romans, Eastern aristocrats, slaves, freedmen and women, possibly former temple prostitutes. They are the

living epistles – the realities of the message that Paul was sharing. The church is composed of all kinds at all stages from all backgrounds.

His command to “greet one another with a holy kiss” is not a normative command. He is telling the Roman church to enjoy the most intimate connection with these people who – if it weren’t for Christ – they would never associate with.

Paul’s Final Words (vv 17-20)

- What is the difference between *divisions* and *obstacles*? (v17)
- Paul is concerned that the Romans’ “obedience” (*hypakoe*) could allow a false teacher to manipulate them (v19) Why would this be a concern?
- How can we be “wise as to what is good” and “innocent as to what is evil”? (v20)

Paul’s Helpers (vv 21-23)

Paul lists his team which includes:

- Timothy (basically his assistant)
- Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (fellow Christian Jews),
- Tertius (his scribe or *amanuensis*)
- Gaius (the guy who Paul was probably staying with)
- Erastus (probably the manager of Gaius’s household or a city official)
- Quartus (just “our brother”)

The Doxology (vv 24-27)

This is fairly typical of Paul’s closing doxologies. It includes elevated language, meant to demonstrate the grandness of the calling.

- What is the “mystery” that is revealed?

Remember that is has been “made known to all nations” by the prophetic writings. What prophetic writings is he talking about?