

## **Romans 16**

### **A Family Portrait**

<sup>1</sup> I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. <sup>2</sup> I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

<sup>3</sup> Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

<sup>5</sup> Greet also the church that meets at their house.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

<sup>6</sup> Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

<sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

<sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

<sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

<sup>11</sup> Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew.

Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.

<sup>14</sup> Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them.

<sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them.

<sup>16</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the churches of Christ send greetings.

<sup>17</sup> I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. <sup>18</sup> For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. <sup>19</sup> Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

<sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.

<sup>22</sup> I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

<sup>23</sup> Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.

Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. <sup>[24]</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, <sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—  
<sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

### **Why This Chapter in Romans Matters**

Why does this chapter matter?

We might as well skip it with all the difficult names.

Who cares?

Well, of course God does, but every matters to him.

But we should also care because they are our ancestors - they are our family.

They are our church about 2000 years ago.

You might be a believer today because of their faithfulness.

And one day you will meet them.

In fact, this chapter is like looking at an old family portrait.

These people are all dead, long gone.

But in God's Kingdom, they are not only our spiritual ancestors, they our our brothers and sisters.

And they wait for us to continue their mission on earth in our time.

And one day, you will add your name to this list.

None of the ever expected to be immortalized, that 2000 years later we would remember their names.  
But we do.  
Because every one matters.  
Those who do not know their history are cut adrift, not knowing their place in time or space.  
This chapter reminds us that we belong to God's people throughout time.

## **The Structure of Chapter 12**

This is very simple.

1. An Introduction of the Messenger
2. Greetings To
3. A Warning Regarding Division
4. Greetings From
5. Benediction

## **Your Mail Carrier**

<sup>1</sup> I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. <sup>2</sup> I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

Does anyone know the name of their mail carrier?

Do you care?

Well, you won't have the chance soon because they are being replace with metal boxes.  
They are people too and hard corporate decisions will affect their lives.

Phoebe is a deacon (which means servant) from Cenchreae.

Cenchreae is a city along the coast near Corinth, which is where Paul is located.

This is not an easy journey.

We don't know if she travelled alone, but it could be very dangerous.

What for us would be a short flight could have taken weeks of travel by foot and by boat.

They would have to face bandits or stormy seas.

Messengers were not to be taken for granted.

And here is Phoebe, a woman who is willing to carry this letter.

If she did not accomplish this mission, well, we wouldn't be reading these words!

## **Greetings To**

26 people are named in the greeting and many more

who are not named but referred to as relatives or house churches.

Let's just introduce a few.

**Priscilla** - Now, this is a cultural oddity in placing a woman's name before her husband's.

There is a significant question and conversation that abides here regarding Paul's view of women in ministry in his writing.

**Aquila** - Has house church with Priscilla

**Epenetus** - First Convert in the Province of Asia!

**Mary**

Andronicus

Junia

Ampliatius

Urbanus

Stachys

Apelles

Aristobulus - Leads another house church

Herodion - Jewish, even his name reflects this.

Narcissus

Tryphena

Tryphosa

Persis

Rufus - There is only one other Rufus in the Bible could it be the same one?

**Mark 15:21** *A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and **Rufus**, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.*

[Cyrene is in North Africa just south of Greece]

It does say that he was "chosen in the Lord." HmMMM.

Asyncritus

Phlegon

Hermes

Patrobas

Hermas

Philologus

Julia

Nereus

Olympas

What we know from these names is that they come from different cultures.

All the names are Hellenised.

These were relatively common names that reflected their culture.

Some were related to paganism but these people were not pagans.

You could tell many were first generation believers

who had to have become followers of Jesus from out of another religion and way of life.

Some of these names are still used today.

This was the multi ethnic church that lived under a dominant Hellenized culture.

## Warnings Regarding Divisive People

<sup>17</sup> I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. <sup>18</sup> For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. <sup>19</sup> Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

<sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

And here, between the greeted and the greeters we find a curious warning regarding divisive false teachers.

One thing to notice is that it isn't just their theology that is off - it is their purpose, motivation and method.

They are self serving, smooth talking and deceptive.

These people existed in the first century and they certainly exist in the twenty-first! Verse 19 has special significance to me and to us.

*Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*

As you know, our church is 7 years old.

We are a small congregation, one-third of which are children.

We have no property, no denominational support organizationally or financially.

But we have Jesus and we have one another.

I think of us as being insignificant but faithful.

In the past 3 years and particularly this year, people have been talking about us.

They have heard of our way of following Jesus.

They have heard about how we kept unity even when faced with the potentially divisive transgender issue.

They have met you - you who represent Jesus in your daily lives in your school, work, homes and play.

Everyone has heard about your obedience.

And for this, I am thankful.

You are, we are, despite all appearances a significant church in this city.

But not for our own name's sake, but for Christ.

Two of the most telling comments I have heard recently through the grape vine:

The senior pastor of a Chinese church said personally of me,  
"Ted is not a good pastor - look at the size of his church."

In the same week a hard core atheist trans woman said of F3C:

"Your church is doing something important and significant. You are making a difference."

But in the end, we don't aim at being significant in the eyes of other people.

We are to be significant in the eyes of God.

## Greetings From

And so we then move to those who are sending greetings.

**Timothy** - Who came to follow Jesus through Paul and was mentored by him.

Who will become pastor of the vital church in Ephesus

where the apostle John and Mary, mother of Jesus would have been.

He co-authored 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon with Paul.

He was jailed for the gospel and eventually released.

Legend tell that he was martyred at the age of 80 in the streets.

**Lucius**

**Jason**

Sosipater

Tertius - Is the actual scribe of this letter, indicating that Paul dictated it. Here he shows his personality, his service and presence.

Gaius - Is this the Gaius

Erastus

Quartus

### **Conclusion**

Every Person matters.

You matter.

Your decisions, your work, your family, your attitudes, your mind, your body, your life, your death.

And everything in between.

We build bridges in time from the past to the future.

We are simply asked to be one thing - faithful in the present.

And in doing we add our names to the family.

And Here are some of our family photos.

### **Exercise**

Share about one faithful person who has made a deep impression on your life.

Pray thanking God for them.

Who is someone that you are influencing for the Kingdom in this life?

Pray for wisdom for yourself and for this person.

### **Benediction**

<sup>25</sup> Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, <sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—

<sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.