



## Getting Personal

In this text, we get a glimpse into the tender heart behind the pen of the apostle Paul. We see his love for the saints and the gentleness of his conduct. In Romans 16, the love Paul wrote of in I Corinthians 13 is in action. He takes the time to demonstrate his care for individuals, greeting these saints by name, and speaking with a fond affection for each of them. He calls them “my beloved,” “our helper,” etc. He showed honor to the everyday Christians with personal love, not just to the big-name apostles. We, too, can make sure to take the time to tell the people in our own lives how much we sincerely appreciate them. It’s also beautiful that the 28 people listed in this chapter whom Paul asks the Romans to greet on his behalf are quite diverse. Among them are both Jews and Gentiles, nobility and slaves, and men and women; all of them are referenced side by side, because in Christ all kinds of people are made one.

## Chapter Highlights

### VS 1-16: NOTABLE REFERENCES

#### PHEBE

It seems that Phebe was likely the one carrying this epistle to the Romans, and she must have been quite faithful and reliable to be trusted with this task. Paul calls her “our sister.” She is part of the family, and so he calls on the saints to receive her and help her with whatever she needed. She is also called a servant (or deaconess) ready to serve the Church. Verse 2 calls her a “succorer of many,” meaning she was very giving and strengthening to the saints, and likely was a patron supporting the work of the gospel and a benefactor to Paul as well. She was someone who took care of people’s needs.

#### PRISCILLA & AQUILA, ANDRONICUS & JUNIA

Priscilla and Aquila worked with Paul and traveled with him on several occasions. They served together in many places, and are never mentioned apart. Both of them had risked their lives for Paul. They used their marriage for God’s purposes, and had a church in their home. They were a team working together as one flesh. Both of them were instrumental in doing these things, as opposed to Aquila doing all the service and Priscilla standing aside because he’s the man. Another couple that was also probably married listed here is Andronicus and Junia. They came to Christ before Paul and were of note among the apostles, meaning they were probably early Christians.

## VS 1-16: NOTABLE REFERENCES CONT.

### APELLES, ARISTOBULUS, NARCISSUS, STACHYS

Paul calls Apelles “approved in Christ.” Consider what that must have done for his heart, to know that whatever came before, Scripture speaks of him this way. Another note worth mentioning is regarding Aristobulus, who according to historical scholars could have been the grandson of Herod the Great. Likewise, Narcissus was a famous wealthy house in Rome and Stachys was perhaps someone who served in the royal Roman palace. These people of nobility had received the gospel and as mentioned before it’s beautiful to see them listed beside people of very different backgrounds.

### RUFUS

There is Scriptural evidence that the gospel writer Mark wrote his epistle to a Gentile audience, and likely to a Roman one. During his account of Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus’ cross to Golgotha, Mark mentions that Simon is the father of Rufus and Alexander, suggesting that these were well-known Christians at the time. It is likely that the Rufus mentioned here in Romans 16 is the very same Rufus from Mark. It is also sweet that his mother (probably the wife of Simon) acted as a mother to Paul too.

### A HOLY KISS

In Christian culture, it’s good to have our verbal greetings confirmed by a physical gesture of warmth and affection. This will vary greatly by culture, but the heart of this is to have a follow-through of affection, not just words. An example of this is the Pharisee who invited Jesus to his home but insulted him by not giving the normal cultural greeting of a kiss. The sinner woman, on the other hand, brought an alabaster box of ointment and anointed/kissed his feet. We are to value one another in view of Christ’s value and show affection accordingly, rather than seeing each other in competition with each other.

## VS 17-20

Seeing how Paul considered these saints as family, he also had a duty to heartily defend them. In the face of people who sought to divide the Roman church, this defense called for **vigilance, separation, and discernment**: **vigilance**, in that they were to be on guard and watch out for those who caused division through slander and arguments; **separation**, in that they were told to keep away from them; and **discernment**, in that they were to have the wisdom to tell the difference between sincerity and hypocrisy. One could think this sounds harsh for Paul to ask this of them. Why such drastic measures? It’s very serious when people try to get Christians to stand apart from the body. Like predators, these divisive ones often separate their targets from the group, picking off the weak ones of the flock to draw away disciples after themselves. These people may often seem like mature, devoted ones, but they influence others to join them in their disunity and evil speaking.

## VS 17-20 CONT.

This is contrary to the doctrine of the dying and rising of Jesus, which has made us one. The Romans, therefore, needed to be deliberate in avoiding them. It's not that we hate these kinds of people, but the most loving thing to do is to separate them so they have an opportunity to repent. Taking these measures is all in the hope that they will be ashamed and be reconciled. Other verses that speak to this include: **Titus 3:10**, **II Thessalonians 3:14-15**, **II John 1:10-11**, and **Acts 20:28-30**.

They seek to serve their own bellies, so if we don't have the discernment to avoid them, they will deceive the hearts of the simple in an attempt to advance their own agenda. With fair speeches and flattery, they go after innocent, harmless ones. They may not always present as selfish ones, but as noble crusaders for a godly cause. Paul advises the Romans to stand strong. Their obedience was well known, so he calls on them to remain innocent from these evils and wise to good things. We also should have compassion on these divisive individuals, knowing they are deceived by Satan. We know who's really behind all these evils, so don't see brothers caught in wickedness as enemies. Ultimately, the God of peace will crush the enemy in the end. Peace will triumph over disunity.

## VS 21-27

### MORE SALUTATIONS AND GLORY TO GOD

Another greeting of note is by a man named Tertius, who was Paul's scribe and wrote down this epistle. His name means the number 3, and, like Quartus (a brother whose name with the meaning of 4 is cited in verse 23,) this could indicate that they were slaves from infancy. They had never been given a name, but even though they were nobodies in the world, they were beloved of the lord now. \*Note that Verse 24 is omitted according to most critical Greek texts. Verse 25 begins to praise God once more. Glory be to God, who has the power to establish us, to make us firm, strong, and stable. He does this by the gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ. He also does it by the revelation of the mystery, the previously hidden wisdom of God regarding our fullness and unity in Christ, now made known to the world by the commandment of God and in the Scriptures of the prophets. As chapter 1 taught us, this gospel is to be preached to all nations, both Jew and Gentile, for the obedience of faith.

## Conclusion

When everyone sees themselves as part of the gospel work, everyone gets restored into the knit-together oneness that God always planned for us. So, let us seek to mature in receiving and taking care of each other. We can learn much from the example of Paul in these matters, including his deep love for those with whom he served, as we will see in chapter 16.

*Romans*

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