



World Christian Fellowship

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Romans 131

Love for coworkers.

Romans 16:1-16

Romans 16:1-16, *I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, ² that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also. ³ Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. ⁵ Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. ⁶ Greet Mary, who laboured much for us. ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. ⁸ Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹ Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. ¹⁰ Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. ¹¹ Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.*

¹² Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have laboured in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord. ¹³ Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. ¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. ¹⁵ Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. ¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.

Now in this closing chapter Paul continues what he really began in in **15:14** was to reveal his heart. To give them a personal insight into himself, and ministry. Paul's gifts and callings within the will of God.

Paul finished his theological statements by **Romans 15:13** and now he wants the Romans and us to know him as much as possible, as well as his theology.

In chapter 16 Paul focuses on his relationship with people.

- **Chapter 15**, his relationship to the Lord in ministry,
- **Chapter 16** his relationship to people in ministry.

This chapter has a myriad of names are given, specifically identifying people who were a part of his life and ministry.

The emphasis of the chapter is to show his love, his mutual accountability, and his dependence on people within the loving community of the redeemed.

Paul before signs off this great epistle with a final benediction that comes from verse 25 to 27.

Paul's love for his fellow brother and sister believers.
As we focus on that we will see his love revealed in three ways

**Commendation,
Affection,
Caution.**

1. Commendation.

V 1-2, I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, ² that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

Phoebe, we have a little of information about, some of them we have absolutely no information about.

The names are then somewhat incidental.

Paul's love and the networking of loving relationships that make ministry possible.

This chapter provides for us one of the clearest insights into the community of believing people in the early church and how that community functioned together.

Romans was taken to Rome by a very special Christian lady by the name of **Phoebe**. That is why Paul commends her to them.

Phebe is the one carrying the Roman epistle to the church at Rome.

Remember, Paul is writing this letter from Corinth.

Corinth is in Greece.

Rome is in Italy.

A significant journey from Greece to Italy.

This great epistle would be carried as a very delicate and a very valuable message to that church in Rome. There was no Xerox machine in that day. There was no way to copy what was penned.

To maintain from some disaster or loss, so Phoebe is given a very sacred trust to handle the Word of God and reach the

destination of Rome and give it to the redeemed saints there in the church.

Phoebe arriving in Rome, will give that letter and they will as they look at it note that in the beginning of the sixteenth chapter, she is commended to them.

As she is worthy of their hospitality, worthy of their care, worthy of their fellowship.

At the very beginning we sense in the commendation of Paul the expression of love toward this faithful Christian lady to whom he entrusted this great epistle of Rome.

Paul wanted them to read about his desire to come to them and to find there the resources to go to Spain. But the articulation of the great truth of justification by grace through faith.

So, Paul trusted sister Phebe greatly. A lady that he loved in Christ greatly, he gives this wonderful ministry.

V 1, “commend.”

It basically means to introduce in a casual way, but to introduce with an affirming statement of commendation.

Now this is a very common thing in the early church.

Letters of commendation were written, when a believer would be traveling to another city and would want to go and fellowship with that church, that believer could carry a commending letter from the church in their own hometown which would ensure to that new congregation that this was indeed one of the children of God, a brother or sister to be loved and received with hospitality.

The reason for that was the need for a place to stay. In those days inns were nothing short of brothels. They were places where there would be perhaps looting and stealing. They were not safe places.

As Christians travelled around in the Roman world, the letters of commendation allowed them to be received with love into varying Christian communities and shown hospitality and care for whatever matters of business they needed to carry on.

We find such letters of commendation referred to throughout the New Testament.

Acts 18:27, *And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace;*

A very common thing.

Here is Apollos moving along in his journeys, a mighty preacher of the Old Testament and a servant of God and he is commended in a letter so that the saints will know to receive him and to demonstrate to him hospitality, not be fearful but be responsible for his care.

2 Corinthians 8:18-24, *And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches,* ¹⁹ *and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind,* ²⁰ *avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—* ²¹ *providing honourable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

²² *And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you.* ²³ *If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.* ²⁴ *Therefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.*

In commending Titus and those who came with him to the Corinthians as a commendation of them so they will be granted a certain amount of hospitality and grace by those who are to receive them.

3 John 1:9, *I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.*

There is a commendation.

There is an affirmation of my coming but a refusal to receive me, and he goes on to speak about the evil deed of one Diotrephes.

So, it was common to give advance notice of a certain saint coming, either in a biblical letter or in a private letter of commendation.

Many such letters have been found, particularly in the Egyptian desert sands that provide for us some insight into the character of those ancient letters of commendation.

Paul, in commending Phebe to the church at Rome, expresses his love for her and his desire that she be properly treated.

The idea here is that they are to receive her.

"Because she is our sister, because she is a servant,"

"Because she is a helper".

He has a loving commendation for this gracious woman.

Phoebe name means "bright and radiant," and perhaps that was true of her testimony.

She is commended because she is “our sister.”

That is not to say our sister in a physical sense but our sister in a spiritual sense. She belongs to the family of God. She is your sister and my sister.

She is a member of the body of Christ.

She is united to all Christians in the common resurrection life of Christ.

Ephesians 2:16-22 and many other passages, all who love Christ are a part of His family and they belong together. There is one body, no separate bodies of Christ, and she must be received as one who belongs to that body.

We are one family.

We are all the children of God.

We must fellowship with one another according to the common eternal life.

Based upon her identity as a believer, belonging to the family of God, she is to be received.

Anyone who comes naming the name of Christ and belonging to His family is family to us as well.

Paul says that she is not only our sister, but she is a servant of the church which is at Cenchreae.

Paul is writing from Corinth and about nine miles away, on a port city, known as Cenchreae. Any shipping that needed to be done from Corinth would be done at Cenchreae.

It's very likely that the church in Cenchreae was founded because of the ministry of the church at Corinth, that church spawning.

Phoebe, no doubt had some role of service that she rendered in this congregation.

The word "servant" is the word *diakonon*, from which we get our familiar word deacon.

That word knows no gender.

It is neither a masculine word nor is it a feminine one.

Diakonon defies that kind of gender distinction. Thus, it refers in very general terms to one who serves be he male or female.

In the New Testament is very broad and very general.

Phoebe was one of those special servants who had been identified to say there were women deacons which we come to know as deaconesses.

In the history of the early church, we find that the role of those women in the first few centuries was to care for the sick, to care for the poor, to minister to strangers, to show hospitality, to

serve martyrs in prison, taking them supplies and needs and providing for whatever might be desperately needed because of the exigencies of imprisonment.

Those deaconesses were used to instruct new women converts in the discipling process, to assist in the immersion of women and to exercise a general supervision over ministries to the needs of women in the churches.

Now that was the role of a deaconess and this was such a woman, a sister in Christ and a servant of the church who was no doubt recognized as one worthy of commendation.

V 2, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

A patron was someone who financially supported someone else. Many artists had a patron. They would paint and they would do their sculpture and they would do whatever they needed to do.

Apparently, this woman had enough means to provide a patronage for not only the apostle Paul but for others in the church.

The term is basically in the Jewish community came to refer to a wealthy supporter. So, this dear woman was a wealthy supporter, no doubt, of the church at Cenchreae.

It may well have met in her home.

She may have been to that church what Lydia was to the church at Philippi.

She also offered some support in some way to the apostle himself.

Because of her godly ministry she is entrusted with the epistle to the Romans in her care on her journey to Rome.

She is commended by Paul.

The church is told to receive her in the Lord as saint. To accept her as one who belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ is like accepting Him.

Anyone of us who is in Christ when treated by any other one of us is in a sense receiving the treatment that Christ Himself is receiving.

She was no alien to spiritual intimacy.

She was to be received in the love bond of fellowship and union with Jesus Christ.

Receive her in the Lord.

The word “saint” means one set apart to God.

We are to receive one another with a measure of love and hospitality the world doesn't know anything about.

The obligation of love is an obligation to hold no strangers, it is an obligation to love all those who name the name of Jesus Christ.

When a stranger in Christ comes among us, we are to receive that stranger with an open heart.

You assist her in whatever business she has need of you.

She was on her way to Rome for some business, if indeed she was a wealthy patron. She was probably going with some special business in mind.

She had come to Rome for a legal matter related to her business and he tells the church, assist her.

When someone comes to us, a stranger, we are in the church to provide not only love and spiritual affection but assistance in the matters of finance or business or whatever other matters that person might have in view that are not necessarily related directly to the kingdom of God.

We are to provide all the resources necessary for that person to accomplish whatever objectives are in mind.

Paul said, whatever her business might be, whatever transaction she enters in, you know the people in Rome, you know how things are, you know who to see, you know who to talk to, you expedite that situation on her behalf.

Whatever she had done for Paul, or for the church at Cenchreae and we really don't know specifics, it was sufficient for him to commend her in love to this congregation.

We are looking into the heart of Paul and seeing his love for people.

There are some people who reach a place where they really lose touch all together with those who have assisted them in the process and have little thought for them, but not the apostle Paul. It should thrill us to find him so gracious and so generous and so commending of this dear woman.

She bears the gospel of God.

In the book of Hebrews, it tells us that the law of God was brought to men by angels.

Here is something more important than Old Testament law, that the gospel of the living God not entrusted to angels but to one faithful lady.

What a commendation of the kind of woman she was, to bear the message of the gospel of grace to the centre of the Gentile world, the city of Rome.

May I encourage all the ladies that are here tonight that God has always used women and still does and uses them mightily in the advance of His kingdom.

Though God did not use a woman to write a book of the Bible, He used a woman to transport that book, and demonstrated that within the bounds of biblical definition and function designed by God for women.

Phoebe is an emblematic of all those women, who within the framework of God's design, have borne a place of honour.

We see in the love of Paul the commendation of one woman that no doubt would extend to many other people who served him so well.

So, the first insight into His love and into his relationships with people, his accountability, his dependency is related to this commendation.

2. Affection.

From verse 3-23, and 17-20.

Starting in verse 3 we begin a list of names that runs down to verse 16 and then stops where there's a greeting.

Then we pick up more names in verse 21 to 23.

All these names extend to us insight into Paul's love, because it's a whole lot of affection and loving greeting to everybody.

It is a real display of open love.

He greets the saints.

Paul knows who they are. They are not a lot of nameless people. This is not a man who is so isolated from reality, who is so into his own thing.

Paul knew who his helper was.

Paul knew who stood by him.

Paul loved them and they were an essential part of his life.

The breadth of his ministry, the sweep of it can be seen in the fact that though he has never been to Rome he names here **24 individuals, 17 men and 7 women.**

Paul names two households along with some unnamed brothers and unnamed sisters in the Saviour who are at Rome.

Though he had never been there he had been instrumental in winning so many to Christ who had gone to Rome and were now there as a part of that church in that great city.

Undoubtedly what we have in these 24 individuals and two households and unnamed sisters and brothers is a catalogue of very choice Christians.

We don't know much about them.

But there are a few fascinating highlights to examine.

We could just read names and say, we don't know who they are, and go on. But there are some in history who couldn't do that, and we are grateful to them.

A great exegetical commentator by the name of **J.B. Lightfoot** seemed to be preoccupied with finding out who all these people were. He has some fascinating data.

William Barclay, also personally preoccupied with trying to find out who all these people were, adds some very important and interesting data.

Some of them, even the New Testament gives us a little information about.

V 3, *Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,*

Paul names Prisca and Aquila.

- They were not apostles.
- They were not prophets.
- They were his fellow workers.
- They were tent makers.

Acts 18:1-3, *After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. ²And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. ³So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.*

Paul went to the synagogue and when he went to the synagogue he met them.

It was customary for people in the synagogue to sit in this fashion, men on one side and women on the other side.

The men sat not just on one side, but they sat in the area of their profession.

So, it would not be uncommon for Paul to take his seat with the tent makers and therefore strike up an acquaintance with this man named Aquila and therefore meet his wife whose name is Prisca.

Like the apostle Paul, who just used his tent making to support his ministry. Apparently, Aquila and Priscilla used their tent making to support their own ministry of the proclamation of the gospel as well. So, they had that in common.

It is also interesting that this couple is mentioned six times in the New Testament, three by Paul and three by Luke.

Paul always uses Prisca and Luke always uses Priscilla, favouring that diminutive form.

In the six uses four of the times, she is mentioned first.

Now that's a little unusual that a woman would be mentioned before her husband in that ancient world. Some say it has to do with the dominant personality.

We all know that there are couples where the woman dominates. In fact, in all couples there are times when the woman dominates. In some couples there are just more of those times.

She just had the effusive personality. She, because of the nature of her personality, was a dominant factor. Others say that it was to do with her social ranking.

Some feel she was a noble Roman and he was a humble Jewish tent maker. This noble Roman lady marries the humble Jewish tent maker and so by virtue of her nobility she is named first. We don't know the answer. It's just a matter of speculation.

Paul met them in the Corinth synagogue, and they struck up a marvellous friendship because of their common love of the gospel, their common desire to see it proclaimed.

They had originally lived in Rome. They were thrown out of Rome because **Claudius** banished all the Jews from Rome.

She was a Roman and he was a Jew that would be enough to be banished. In their banishing they had gone to Corinth and that's where Paul met them.

Two years after their original meeting they moved to Ephesus. When they moved to Ephesus, they established the proclamation of the gospel there.

Now Paul finds them in Rome.

They had returned to Rome because of the death of Claudius, so the banishing of the Jews was a past matter.

Later, they will appear again in Ephesus.

2 Timothy 4:19, *Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.*

They are back in Ephesus.

They are best known for instructing the great Old Testament preacher Apollos.

Acts 18:24-26, *Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. ²⁵This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*

They are also known for having a church in their house in Ephesus.

1 Corinthians 16:19, *The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*

So, they were a very actively involved Christian couple. They used their tent making business as a way to support the proclamation of the gospel.

We are talking about someone who goes to the mission field but supports himself in his own employment. That comes from the tent making of Paul and people like Aquila and Priscilla. They must have been skilled in the knowledge of the Word of God to instruct someone who was mighty and eloquent in the Scripture like Apollos.

Paul says they are my fellow workers that we have laboured together, through the years of ministry we have shared much.

V 4, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Loyalty.

They were willing to die to preserve me.

They would have given their lives that I might carry on my ministry.

What a loyalty?

What wonderful friends?

Everyone could use friends like that.

They put their lives in danger for Paul's sake. There must have been some specific incident, we don't know what it is, in which the life of Paul was on the line. They stepped into the gap. They were willing to die for his sake and he was delivered and were so they by God's mercy and grace.

Paul is so thankful.

They were all a product of Paul's ministry.

Paul dead means the end of everything.

Not only Paul thankful for them, but everybody also else is thankful for them.

During his missionary career, Paul had colleagues and fellow workers. But he deemed it necessary to oppose Peter to his face, with Barnabas he had such a sharp disagreement that the two parted company. There was a time when Paul refused to allow Mark to remain one of his companions. He was going to reprimand Euodia and Syntyche and Demas were going to desert him.

But even though Priscilla and Aquila in a sense stood closer to him than any of those others. For they were his companions in trade and in faith.

Between Paul and Priscilla and Aquila there was always perfect harmony.

There was a wonderful relationship.

V 5, *Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.*

Now they are in Rome and their house is open to house the church.

- On the one hand they have laid down their life for the great apostle Paul.
- On the other hand, they have opened their home to the church.

We find that the church in Rome met in several places. The church in Rome was not always meeting in one place, they had no building. So, they were meeting in varying homes.

Since the church could only come together in a public place for maybe the Lord's Table or a love feast or a communion.

The weekly meetings would have to be held in the homes of those who were gracious enough to open them for the use of the church.

I am always blessed and thankful to God for those in our congregation who open their homes for the people of the Lord to meet in fellowship.

V 5, Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the first fruits of Achaia to Christ.

Who is Epaphroditus?

He is the first fruits of Asia unto Christ.
The first convert in Asia Minor.

Asia Minor had the city Ephesus and all the other cities mentioned in **Revelation 2 and 3**, the cities of Laodicea, Philadelphia, Smyrna, Sardis, and Thyatira, Pergamos and Ephesus.

The first convert in Asia was Epaenetus and now he is in Rome, moved there for whatever reason.

There was something significant about the first convert in Asia. The first one that came to Christ, Epaenetus, had a special place of affection in the heart of Paul.

If he was the first fruits means that many others followed!
He doesn't say he's the only fruit.

We know nothing more about this man at all. But Paul loved him greatly and Paul knew where he was,

Paul knew he was in Rome. He followed these people. He understood where they were because they were so deeply ingrained in his life.

V 6, *Greet Mary, who laboured much for us.*

There are six women in the New Testament who have the name Mary, a very common name. This one is known to Paul, we don't know who she is, because she has bestowed much labour.

Paul says greet her who bestowed much labour on you.

How did Paul know about her?

How did he know she had given much labour to the church at Rome?

The best idea is that Aquila and Priscilla who had come from Rome would have informed Paul about her and this dear lady that had given so much labour to the church.

The idea of much labour expresses the fact that she probably had been an early part of the church at Rome.

The past tense indicates that by now she may have been very old, and her labour was much behind her. Paul commends with a loving greeting this woman who in the past rendered much labour to the establishing and the developing of the church of the believers in Rome.

V 7, *Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*

Andronicus is a male name.

Junias could be male or female.

We have no way to know.

So, either this is two men, or it is a couple, and there's no way to know which.

But Paul does specify four reasons why he wants to greet them.

One, they are *my countrymen*.

Does this mean that they are Jews?

Certainly, they were Jews because Paul was a Jew.

But I believe it means more than that because there are other Jews mentioned in the list. No doubt many of them who are not identified necessarily as my countrymen.

They were actual relatives of Paul.

V 11 *Herodian is my countrymen.*

V 21 *Jason and Sosipater, my countrymen.*

Paul seems to identify those who have some actual relationship to him in an earthly way. They are Jews and perhaps it is fair to say they were related to Paul.

So, he wants to greet these who were related to him who were in Christ.

Coming out of a Jewish family, being of the tribe of Benjamin, being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, to know that some in his family had embraced the same Christ that he had embraced as well.

We get a little feel that his family may well have been involved in the extension of his ministry.

Secondly, he commends and greets them in love because they are "*my fellow prisoner.*"

Somewhere along the line, and we don't know where, Paul spent a lot of his time in prison.

2 Corinthians 11:23, "*in prisons often.*"

We don't know where it was but in one of his imprisonments or another they were there also. They had paid the price of imprisonment too for their faith in Christ, for their love of the Lord Jesus.

Paul greets them who had shared prison with him. It wouldn't take much imagination to come to the realization of the fact that if you in that day and age had spent time in prison with someone, you would get to know them very well.

There was a deep bond with Andronicus and Junias and the apostle Paul. They were relatives and they were fellow prisoners.

Thirdly *"They are of note among the apostles."*

The word ***apostoloi***, translated "sent ones," it could be that they were missionaries or messengers or sent with the gospel from the church. Lesser stature than Paul and the twelve.

But the better idea here is that what he is saying about them is they were of note among the apostles of the Lord.

In other words, they were highly esteemed for their spiritual life and service among the apostles.

Fourthly, *"who were also in Christ before me."*

Now Paul was converted in the process of persecuting the church. On his way to Damascus from Jerusalem, if he was persecuting Christians early in his life and they had already become Christians, they must have become Christians through the ministry of the church in Jerusalem.

Therefore, they would have been known by the early apostles and probably of note among those apostles as those marked out for unusual spiritual character.

It may well have been that had he been given the opportunity he would have killed them.

If Paul had been given the opportunity, he would have imprisoned them and punished them severely for their faith.

But he was never given that opportunity and perhaps even they prayed for him because they were his kinsmen, his relatives.

We begin to see this circle of expanding relationships emanating from Paul's words here that give us a feeling for the intimacy that this wonderful apostle had with many people who touched his life,

- Phoebe,
- Priscilla,
- Aquila,
- Epaenetus and
- Andronicus and
- Junias, who were of his family.

V 8, Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord.

We see this word beloved for the second time. This is a loving man, and he demonstrates his love and there is no fear of saying that.

Some people find it hard to say, "I love you," or to call someone a "beloved friend," not Paul.

He had no problem with that, and he greets Amplias in this way.

We don't know who he is. We do know that Amplias is a slave name because in history we can find it among the slaves. Slaves did not bear the name of free men or noble men.

So, it is a slave name.

A very common name in the imperial household of Rome.
The household of the Caesar.

There is a cemetery at **Dalmatia**, the earliest of the Christian catacombs. They were the burial place of Christians in the first century. In that early catacomb there is a very decorated tomb is this large name Amplias, which is quite interesting, because single names were unique.

A Roman nobleman or a Roman free man would have three names, but a slave would only have one name.

Amplias was a slave. The fact that at his burial, if it be the same Amplias, he is given a large and rather decorated tomb and his name is placed there for all to see, indicates in comparison with the other burial places in the catacomb that he was set apart as high ranking in the church.

It shows us that while the world may have ranked people according to their economic status, the church didn't do that.

A slave could rise in the church of Jesus Christ to a place of recognized prominence to be given unique honour in his burial.

It may well have been that in the church in many cases and in many places, slaves were the elders teaching their own owners the Word of God.

We see in the early church that even a slave could reach the place of prominence and social status was not a barrier or even an issue in the church.

Galatian 3:28, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

V 9, *Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved.*

Urbanus is a very common Roman name.

It suggests that he was a native Roman, probably a Gentile.

Paul calls him "our helper," that is to say he helped me, and he helped the Roman church.

We don't know how or where but Paul knew, and he had been in assistance to Paul as well as the Roman church and he says greet him.

Paul mentions Stachys.

That is a very unusual Greek name, it means ear of corn.

It's a very strange name, even in that culture.

Paul doesn't have any compunction about expressing his deep love to this believer in the Roman church.

We don't know where he met him or how he knew him, but he did.

V 10, *Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.*

Tried and proven true, trustworthy, worthy of confidence.

We don't know anything about him. That's all we know but that's enough.

Greet them who are of the household of Aristobulus.

Paul doesn't greet Aristobulus.

We assume that Aristobulus is not a Christian, not a believer, not in the church.

But some of his household who are of Aristobulus.

Those who belong to his household.

If he was a Christian, he would have greeted him, too, but he's not a Christian.

We have the fact that the gospel has divided a family, it's divided a household. It may have been his wife or his children or part of his servants or all the above.

Jesus said, "I come to bring a sword to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother and to divide a family, I came to do that."

Lightfoot. **Aristobulus** may have been the brother of **Herod Agrippa I** and the **grandson of Herod the Great**. Aristobulus was in the family of the Herod's.

He would therefore have been an intimate ally with Emperor Claudius, who at the time was the Roman Emperor.

When Aristobulus died his wife, family, slaves, and possessions, would become the property of the emperor.

They would all be absorbed within the emperor's imperial household. So, in the imperial household you would have those of Aristobulus. It would be known as the household of Aristobulus.

V 11, *Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.*

A Jewish relative of Paul who has some relationship to the family of Herod.

Herodion obviously would have had some connection to the family of Herod, so it's very possible that the household of Aristobulus was a group of people who came from Herod the Great.

Though Aristobulus was not a believer, at his death that family had been absorbed into the imperial household and many of them had become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can perhaps speculate that there was within the very imperial household a growing congregation of those who loved the Saviour.

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

Not all of them are in the Lord.

Greet the ones in the household who are in the Lord.

Narcissus again is not identified as a believer, but there were believers in his household.

Who is Narcissus?

William Barclay suggests Narcissus is a common name, but the most famous Narcissus was a free man who was secretary to the **Emperor Claudius**.

He exercised a tremendous influence over the emperor. In fact, he is said to have amassed a private fortune of inestimable wealth. His power had lain in the fact that all correspondence addressed to the emperor had to pass through his hands and never reached the emperor until he allowed it to do so.

So, he made his fortune from the fact that people paid him large bribes to make sure their petitions and requests reached the emperor.

When Claudius was murdered and Nero came to the throne, Narcissus survived for a little while.

In the end he was compelled to commit suicide and all his fortune, and all his household of slaves passed into the possession of Nero.

It may well be his one-time slaves which are here referred to. It may have been those who once belonged to Narcissus who now have been redeemed.

If Aristobulus really is the Aristobulus who is the grandson of Herod, and if Narcissus really is the Narcissus who is Claudius' secretary, then this means that many of the slaves at the imperial court were already Christians and the leaven of Christianity had reached the highest circles of the empire.

Paul's letter to the Philippians at the end he says the believers in Caesar's household greet you.

V 12, *Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have laboured in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord.*

Tryphena and Tryphosa, mean delicate and dainty.

Using there is a strong word for labour.

We don't know anything about them except that they laboured in the Lord.

Then Paul mentions Persis, another female name.

Persis means a Persian woman.

In the church at Rome there was a Persian woman who loved Christ. We don't know how he met her, but she laboured much in the Lord.

Tryphena and Tryphosa, present tense, who are labouring in the Lord, and the beloved Persis who laboured in the Lord.

An indication that Tryphena and Tryphosa may have been young and Persis much older, so that it is the volume of labour based on years rather than the quality of it. She laboured much, perhaps because she was older.

V 13, *Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.*

Christians are chosen in the Lord. It may well be that he's just focusing on that.

Paul knows Rufus, he loves him.

"Greet also his mother and mine."

This is not literally Paul's mother, but what Paul is saying is the mother of Rufus was to me on some occasions a mother indeed.

We don't know anything about Paul's mother, but here was a woman who became in a personal, loving way like a mother.

Do we know anything about Rufus?

Mark 15:21, *Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross.*

Simon of Cyrene, North Africa, who happened to be passing by the city of Jerusalem for the Passover.

He was immortalized as the one who carried the cross of Christ. He is the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Rufus was the son of the man who carried the cross. It may well have been that his brother wasn't a Christian and that's why Rufus is called "chosen in the Lord," to set him apart from Alexander who was not.

We don't know that.

The gospel of Mark was written after the epistle to the Romans, and so Mark, no doubt, identifies this Rufus who is the same Rufus here greeted by Paul who is famous.

V 14, Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them.

Five men that we don't know anything about.

Five men who had a church in a home.

Paul says say hi to those guys out there, those five who are leaders of an assembly within the whole Roman church.

V 15, Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

They were little branch fellowships.

Paul says greet all the rest of these men and women, greet them all.

Who is Nereus?

In A.D. 95 there happened an event which shocked Rome. Two of the most distinguished people in Rome were condemned for being Christians. They were husband and wife.

The husband was Flavius Clemens, he was the consul of Rome, the wife was Dalmatia, and she was of royal blood.

She was the granddaughter of Vespasian, a former emperor and the niece of Domitian, the reigning emperor in 95 A.D.

In fact, the two sons of Flavius Clemens and Dalmatia had been designated Domitian's successors in the imperial power.

Flavius was executed and Domitia was banished to the island of Pontiac where years after Paula saw the cave where she drew out a long martyrdom for the Christian name. **William Barclay.**

V 16, *Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.*

We could as well describe ourselves here.
Some of us who are labouring in the Lord,
others laboured much in the Lord,
those who have endured hardship,
those who are willing to give their lives,
those who are beloved and well beloved,
those who have been used by God to reach others for Christ,

these are just people and Paul knows them and he loves them and if he would kiss them.

This is Paul family. This is intimacy.