***Paul's Personal Greetings, No. 2  
Romans 16:1-16  
RO197-02***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1977)**

We are in Romans 16, looking at verses one through 16. Our subject is Paul's Personal Greetings - Segment Number Two. Paul closes his letter to the Christian community in Rome with chapter 16. In this chapter, he sends greetings to specific individuals. Some of these people he definitely knows personally. Others, he probably only knows by reputation as spiritual leaders in Rome from information that has been brought to him.

**Paul Introduces Phoebe**

The epistle of Romans was probably carried from Paul in Corinth to Rome by a Christian lady named Phoebe. Paul introduces Phoebe therefore at the beginning of this chapter to the Christian leaders in Rome to whom she delivers the letter from Paul. Paul identifies Phoebe as a genuine courier from himself. That is, she is not an imposter who is carrying a false document to which Paul's name has been added.

Christians, of course, upon reading Romans will readily recognize that it is inspired Scripture. One has only to read some of the books which are accepted by the Roman Catholic Church in the Old Testament called the Apocrypha to very quickly, sense the difference between a genuinely inspired book and a book which is a false claim to Scripture. The difference is dramatic. And you can sense it in the very reading, let alone in the content, because in those books you will find contradictions. You will find errors of fact. So that Christians would know that this book was genuine. And they had this confirmed that Phoebe was indeed the true courier.

She was a servant of God associated with Paul, but she was not a deaconess in the sense of a church officer. Women in God's order are not placed in positions of church leadership in terms of pastor-teacher, elders, or deacons. Phoebe was from a local church in the city of Cenchrea, which was one of the seaports of the metropolitan city of Corinth. For some reason, she was traveling to Rome, so Paul entrusted her with this letter, which was of course a very great responsibility for her to carry this pivotal book of New Testament Scriptures to the spiritual leaders in Rome.

Paul asks the Christians in Rome to receive Phoebe as one of themselves in Christ. He asks, furthermore, that they give her any assistance that she needs while in Rome. He indicated that Phoebe was well deserving of that kind of help, since she herself had been in the habit of assisting many Christians in their needs. And as a matter of fact, Paul says that he himself was a beneficiary of Phoebe's Christian service.

**Greetings to Priscilla and Aquila**

Paul sends special greetings, first of all as we have seen, to some very close friends in Rome, a husband and wife team named Priscilla and Aquila. These people had on several occasions assisted Paul in his missionary work. They had, in fact, hazarded their very lives, Paul says, to protect his life. Priscilla and Aquila were well trained in Church Age doctrine and so they were a great help in guiding the gentile churches when Paul was not around. Thus, not only did Paul thank God for these outstanding Christian servants, but all the gentile churches that Priscilla and Aquila ministered to were also enormously grateful to them. This was a well-known husband and wife team among the New Testament community.

**The "Church"**

**"Ekklesia" - Called Out**

Paul sent his fraternal greetings to the local church, which met in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. Because, again, I must reiterate, that that's the way it was in the New Testament. People for the first 250 to 300 years of Christianity up to about the year 300 did not meet in buildings formally constructed for church use, but simply in homes. The word church in the Greek Bible looks like this: "e k k l e s i a," the word "ekklesia." This word is actually made up of 2 Greek words. The first part, "ek," is a preposition and it means "from." And "klesia" comes from the Greek verb "kaleo," which means "to call." The fact is the word "ek" means "from out." So, when you combine these words, you get the concept of "called out." Basically that is what a church is. A church is a group of people called out from a larger mass of humanity.

This word was in common use in the Greek language in New Testament times. And so it is often translated simply as an assembly. It was used, for example, of the gathering of a group of citizens out of a Greek city state. Part of the citizens would gather for a governmental function. They were called an "ekklesia." You have this very use in Acts 19:32, Acts 19:39, Acts 19:41. In each of those places they refer to a group of citizens who have gathered for a certain purpose as a church, as an "ekklesia."

This word was also used of Israel in Acts 7:38 where Luke refers to Israel as a congregation or a community in the wilderness. He's calling it the "Ekklesia," the assembly in the wilderness. So, immediately, you see there's a difference between the word "church" in its technical meaning as part of the body of Christ and of its general use as a governmental group or as a group of people who are gathered in some place for some reason. It is this use in Acts 7:38 of referring to Israel as the church in the wilderness or the assembly in the wilderness, that is what the amillennialists pounce upon in order to say, 'you see, there is no difference between Israel and the Church; Israel is called the Church.' But I want you to understand that Israel is never called the Church in terms of the body of Christ in its New Testament technical use.

This is just a word that was in common use in the Koine or common Greek, as it was called, and which God the Holy Spirit took then and gave it a special meaning and a special use. So, the word "ekklesia" has come into Christian use in a very technical sense for the body of Christ. It is used of a special new body of believers, which was formed on the day of Pentecost by God after the ascension of Jesus Christ, when the Holy Spirit descended on a group of believers gathered on that day and formed them into the first elements of the body of Christ. This invisible body of Christ is being added to daily, and when the last person destined by God to be born again and placed into that body has been won to Christ, the Church will be removed from this earth and taken into Heaven to be with the Lord. Then, God will turn back once more to His dealing with Israel.

**No Longer Jew or Greek**

So, this word has a technical meaning for the body of Christ, and it is totally separated from Israel and in fact from Gentiles. This is clearly demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 10:32 where Paul says to Christians, "Give no offense either to Jews [There you have one group of people, Israel.] or to the Greeks [There you have another group of people in God's dealing, Gentiles.] or to the church of God [There you have a third group of people that God deals with.]." In that verse, Paul very distinctly says that Jews and Gentiles and Christians are 3 separate groups. God has a program for each one of them. You can trace these programs through the Bible from the start to the finish, but the groups are not intermingled. That's why it is not exactly right to refer to a Jewish person who has accepted Christ as his Savior by calling him a Christian Jew. Because you are in God's eyes, one of the 3 things: you're a Gentile, you're a Jew, you're a Christian. Christians are made up of former Gentiles and former Jews, but we don't object to you using the term Christian Jew, we understand what you mean by that. But I want you to understand that they're really not Jews anymore. They have become Christians and their Jewish association is terminated with God. Your Gentile association was terminated for all of you when you became Christians.

The word "ekklesia" is used of the Church in its universal meaning in Ephesians 1:22-23 and Ephesians 5:25-27. Let me just read Ephesians 1:22 and 23. Here we're talking about the Church as made up of all Christians of all denominations everywhere in the world. Ephesians 1:22-23, "And He put all things in subjection under His [that is Christ's] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." So, Jesus Christ is the head of a body called the Church, which is New Testament Age believers. These are joined together in a universal body of Christ. Ephesians 5:25-27 refers to the same thing.

**The Living Organism: The Church**

This Church, of course, is a living organism with Christ as its head. Colossians 1:17-18 stresses that He is the head. And I say it is a living organism in order to contrast it with an organization. There are some denominations that will laugh in your face if you say that there is an invisible body of Christ called the Church. They will come down very adamantly and very hard: the only church that exists is what like right here, people gathered together, it's an organizational structure. And man always wants to have that kind of arrogant domination and control because you see, the invisible church is out of his control. The body of Christ is very clearly, totally under the control of the living God, and it's headed up by the living Christ.

So, the Church is a living organism. This began on the day of Pentecost, as we read in Acts 2:1-4. And what began it was the baptism of the Holy Spirit where every Christian was placed into Christ. Now, it is true that the Acts 2:1-4, you will not find the word "baptism of the Holy Spirit." The reason we know that's what happened is that when you read Acts 11:15-17, where Peter is describing what he saw happening in the Gentile Cornelius's household, when for the first time a Gentile, 7 years after Pentecost, came into the body of Christ, Peter observed that I knew that they were real Christians in the body of Christ, because I had the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit taking place just as it took place, he said to us on the day of Pentecost. So, that's what happened on Pentecost, the fusing together of these believers into the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us that at the point that any person trusts in Christ as personal Savior, he is automatically and immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. Which is why Paul early in Romans says if you do not have the spirit of Christ, you are not part of Christ. Baptizing by the Holy Spirit places you in Christ.

So you see the enormous misconception of the charismatic movement today, which is constantly telling people come to church and we'll give you the baptism of the Holy Spirit, by which they mean will give you a great power with God. That is certainly not confirmed by Scripture.

There is also, however, the thing we are more directly interested in at this moment: a visible expression of that invisible body. All over this world, there are little groups of human beings who are Christians, who are visible portions of the invisible body of Christ. They, too, are called Church. And as a matter of fact, I must tell you that most of the time that this word "ekklesia" is used in the New Testament, it is used in reference to a local visible organizational structure, a church organization. This use is illustrated, for example, in Acts 20:28-29, 1 John 2:18-19. One characteristic, I should say, that is different about the local church, is that it can have believers and unbelievers in it. The body of Christ, the universal Church, can only have believers in it. But in Acts 11:15-17 and Acts 20:28-29, in 1 John 2:18-19, you see that you can have false professors who say they are Christians who are part of a local organization, but they are not really believers.

That's why you have to be very careful, as careful as you can be, how you bring people into a local church. You have to sit down and talk to people and see if they really understand what saving faith is and that that is what they have, that they are genuine believers. You don't want them in your congregation putting their hands up and voting on church matters if they are goats, out of the family of God. You want only sheep who have a right to that kind of privilege.

**Biblical Uses of the Word "Church"**

The word church then is used in the local sense. It is used, for example, in the singular several times in the Bible. You read about an individual church in some localities. For example, we read about the church in Corinth, 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 4:17. We read about the church in Jerusalem, Acts 8:1 and Acts 8:3, the church in Antioch, Acts 13:1, the church in Thessalonica, 1 Thessalonians 1:1. This is referring to an individual church, as you might say, Berean Church in Irving. This is an individual specific church in the Bible, sometimes refers to individual local churches. For 250 years up to about the year 300, churches always met in homes, so they were called house churches. After Constantine took over Christianity and made it the Department of Religion of the Roman Empire, then they began building church structures as such for people to meet in larger numbers.

The word church is used of the worldwide body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 you have the word church being used in a visible sense but speaking about Christians everywhere: like we would say the church believes this, speaking about the church all over the world in its visible expression. 1 Corinthians 12:28, we read, "And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles," then so on, mentioning these specific spiritual gifts which have been placed into the church. And these are church officers. When he says God has appointed in the church these officers and these spiritual gifts, he's not talking about a single Berean Memorial Church, he's talking about the visible Church obviously, because the invisible Church doesn't have human officers. He's talking about the church all over the world, all visible believers gathered in various groups.

This word is also used in the plural. Sometimes the Bible says, "churches," meaning all of the churches, are treated as a single unit. Several churches in a single geographic location are viewed collectively as a unit. So, in Galatians 1:2, we speak about the churches plural of Galatia. Now, what does he mean? He means that the Romans province of Galatia had a lot of individual local church organizations. In the churches of Asia in 1 Corinthians 16:19, he's speaking about these churches in a single geographic location. And there it’s used in the plural, very understandable, you would say, the churches of Texas, all over Texas, individual churches.

But it is also used in the singular when referring to churches in many different geographic locations but they're viewed as a whole. Now that's a little tricky. Sometimes the word church is used and I'll tell you in a minute why it's important that you understand these differences. Sometimes the church is used in the singular, but it's singular because it's talking about a geographic location like the United States. The church in the United States would be a true statement, but not a single church organization. If we were to say, "the church in the United States," we would understand we mean all these local church organizations on every corner all over every little town have this viewpoint. You might say the churches of the United States believe the Bible is the Word of God or something like that. You wouldn't mean one universal church organization, even though you use the word church singular, meaning a lot of individual churches. You have this exemplified in Acts 9:31 and in Acts 16:4-5.

Let me just read those. I want to be sure you understand this. In Acts 9:31, "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace." Now was there one church that all the people from Judea, Galilee, and Samaria came together for? Obviously not! Yet, the word church is used singular. In Acts 16:4-5 that's illustrated again. "Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees, which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and we're increasing in number daily." Here, many local churches are receiving a message. This singular use of the word church to cover many geographic locations indicates that the word church can be used as if there was only one church there, but obviously you can tell that could not be from the very fact that these are widely different locations.

**One Church/One Elder**

The point of all this is that when we have references to elders in the New Testament, a serious mistake has been made by the Christian community. This is propagated by good seminaries because it came down from the Reformation. They had the assumption that whenever the Bible spoke of church like the church in Ephesus, it was one church and then one organization, one local group meeting and then Paul met the elders of Ephesus at the seashore on his way to Jerusalem. What was the impression you get? It was that there were several spiritual leaders who were the head of this church organization that existed in Ephesus.

There was not one church in Ephesus. There were many house churches in Ephesus. Therefore, when he met with the elders, it was not saying that all these elders were in one church. In fact, what it was saying was that there was one elder who was a pastor-teacher bishop for one church: one elder, one church, many deacons assisting that one elder pastor-teacher. This is clearly reinforced, of course, when you read the 1 Timothy guidelines for the qualifications for a person who is a pastor-teacher elder bishop. Those are interchangeable terms and you discover that it says the pastor-teacher elder bishop, singular, shall be. You get down to verse 13 there and you say the deacons, plural, shall be. You go to Titus you find the same thing. It is not without significance that when Paul talked about the executive head of a church, he talked about a single man, when he talked about a single man in the position of spiritual leadership. When he talked about those who handle the material business of the church, he talks about them as a plurality. This is the background. Without that understanding, some of the things that Paul says in these greetings won't make much sense to you because you won't understand the historical context, the background of the time. That's what we mean by the word isagogics, how they did things.

**Paul's Personal Greetings**

**Epaenetus the "First Fruit"**

So, coming back then, with that little bit of background reminder and review to Chapter 16, Paul having presented Phoebe, his courier, having sent greetings to Priscilla and Aquila at the end of verse 5, proceeds now to name a series of people that he is sending personal greetings to in Rome. First of all, at the end of verse 5 he says, "Greet Epaenetus." "Epaenetus" is his name in Greek. We don't know anything about this man. His name pops up here. Paul says something about him. He calls him "Epaenetus, my beloved." This is the Greek word "agapetos," a g a p e t o s. "Agapetos" is a word that connotes something that is very dear to you. So Paul has an affection for Epaenetus for some reason, and probably, I'm suspect, because this man was positive to the doctrine he was taught. As a matter of fact, he had a special place in Paul's heart because he is described as "the first convert." Actually, this is the word "aparche," a p a r c h e, and the word "aparche" means "first fruits." This man was the first fruits to Christ from Asia. Epaenetus has the fame of being the first born again person in the ministry in the Roman province of Asia. This doesn't imply necessarily that Paul led him to salvation, perhaps Priscilla and Aquila led him to salvation. But Paul knew this man who was residing in Rome and he had the highest esteem for him. He was dear to Paul.

**Epaenetus the "First Fruit"**

The word "first fruit" which of course indicates something very important. First fruits, we were told that Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection and that tells us that more will follow. First fruits is just part of what you brought in from the grain in the field. More will follow from the harvest of souls in Christ. And furthermore, Epaenetus is a sample of the kind of thing that will come from the field, born again believers, trophies of the grace of God, who are destined someday to be transformed into the very image of Christ.

The result of this man's salvation is illustrated in Acts 19:10. Acts 1910 is where we read about Paul teaching for 3 years in Ephesus. And Luke says, "And this took place [Paul's teaching] for 2 years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." [It was] An extensive outreach of evangelism in Asia! Verse 20 says "So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." It's a great fruit bearing, but it all began with this man Epaenetus. We don't know anything more about him than that.

**Mary Who Worked Hard**

The next person that Paul sends greetings to is in verse 6. He sends greetings to Mary. We don't know anything else about this woman. But we do notice something that Paul says. "Mary is who," Paul uses the word "who." And this is a special word in the Greek, this is the Greek word "hostis," h o s t i s, which means the "kind of person." Mary was the kind of person Paul says, "who worked." And this is the Greek word "kopaio," k o p a i o, and it is a particular Greek word which means "working to the point of weariness." This was a woman of unstinted devotion in Christian service. The word hard is actually the Greek word "polus," which means "much." Mary was a woman who wore herself out in extensive Christian service. She toiled laboriously for God's people in Rome and perhaps on some occasion had even served Paul. Therefore, Paul was deeply indebted and appreciated such a Christian who would serve the Lord in this magnificent way.

**Paul's Outstanding Kinsmen**

In verse 7 he refers to Andronicus and Junias, 2 men: he calls them his kinsmen. This probably means that they were fellow Jews rather than blood relatives of the apostle Paul. He refers to Jews like this in Romans 9:3 for example. But the word marks in any case that these men have a very close relationship to Paul. Furthermore, he says, that they have been his fellow prisoners: which means that they may actually have been in jail at some time with Paul, or it may simply mean that they themselves have shared the hardship of imprisonment in the process of their Christian service ministries. The 3, in any case, Paul, Andronicas, and Junias had suffered together in the angelic warfare, which at times restricted the freedoms of all of them. They were his fellow Jews and his fellow warriors in the angelic conflict.

He says these men "are outstanding." The word "outstanding" looks like this in the Greek Bible, "episemos," e p i s e m o s, and the word means "notable." These 2 men were notable "among the apostles," referring here to the apostolic band. That is, these men were known by the apostles at Jerusalem for some reason, and they were highly esteemed by the apostolic community. They were held in the highest appreciation and love.

And again, it says those "who also," and we have that same word "who," "the kind" who were in Christ. That is, they were born again in the body of Christ. And this is a technical word. "In Christ" is a technical expression for a church age believer who is in the body of Christ. You have that in 1 Corinthians 12:3, Ephesians 1:22-23, referring to people who are actually born again. And so they're described as "in Christ" because in Christ is the position where God sees you with the perfections of His Son. He says that these 2 men were actually in salvation before Paul himself. Andronicus and Junias had become Christians before Paul was saved. Paul respects these fellow Jews who had the discernment to accept Jesus Christ as Messiah while the educated, the intellectual, and the religious Jews were persecuting Paul and Christians. Paul could look upon these people and have a great respect for them.

It is, as you and I perhaps are aware of the fact, that here's a youngster who grows up in a home where he has great Christian influence and opportunities and he gets to a certain point and he just drifts off from it. He just becomes a person who turns his back on it. Another person comes along and he accepts and he goes on with it. Maybe the character that drifted off came back later and finally got back on track for which we are happy. But we never had the same respect for the guy who wandered off as for the one who had the gutsy discernment that he understood from the first where reality lay and his devotion to Christ never wavered.

So, the apostle Paul, surrounded by Jews who are forever trying to kill him, could certainly have appreciated a couple like this who are appreciated by the apostolic band as well, and who actually had been Christians before Paul. Paul is saying that they had better sense than he did all along. How they came to be in Rome, we don't know.

**Greet My Beloved**

In verse 8, Paul says "Greet Ampliatus." This is a Latin name. And again, this word "greet," (I don't think we've mentioned it this morning. It keeps coming back here repeatedly.) is the Greek word "aspazomai" a s p a z o m a i, and the thing that's significant about this is it's in that aorist tense, which means at a point of action now to take steps to do something, it is active, you do it, but it is imperative, it's a command. Paul repeatedly uses the word greet "greet." And every time, he is saying I'm telling you to do this, so don't forget it. Don't do like when I come up to you and ask you to pray for me, you say 'you bet brother, right on, I will,' and then you forget me. Paul is saying, I want you really to go to these people and deliver my special greetings to them.

So, here he says again toward Ampliatus "greet him." And he calls this man "beloved." The word indicates another person of special affection for whom Paul has special affection and he limits the area of that affection to being in the Lord. He was a person that had become a very dear friend to Paul in the Lord. They had a mutual relationship to Jesus Christ in salvation, which established the basis of their Christian love. This deep esteem between believers, of course, is in great contrast to the lack of unity and the lack of esteem that exists between believers and unbelievers. At least it should. We are all aware that 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 does not exactly fit some of the Christians we know. Paul says I have a deep, close association for a man like Ampliatus because he is beloved to me in the Lord as a fellow servant.

Yet many Christians find a great camaraderie and a closeness even greater with the people of Satan's world. 2 Corinthians 6 beginning at verse 14, Paul says "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; [Boy, is that a good principle to remember. Can you imagine how many Christians in miserable marriages could have saved themselves a lot of trouble had they read that Scripture and believed it: never gotten involved with an unbeliever?] for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, [That is a name for Satan.] or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,' says the Lord. 'AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' Says the Lord Almighty."

This is the opposite of what the apostle Paul was talking about saying with people like Ampliatus, I have the closest kind of fellowship and I like to be around them. That other gang, Satan's world, I make a point to avoid being with them except to minister the gospel to them. Paul had a special appreciation for believers who consistently live for the Lord, union with Christ in love creates union of love for other believers.

**Greet My Fellow Worker**

In verse 9 he says, "Greet Urbanus." He calls him a "fellow worker," one who is known for his service for Jesus Christ, a believer who truly serves our Lord. And he is our worker. No matter where a Christian serves, he becomes our worker as well. Paul has great respect, you see, for the Christians who have learned the spiritual principles that Christian service means not doing something else. A lot of Christians never learn that at all. You'll find out in Heaven that that's what it meant. So, they're too busy to do Christian Service. Christian Service means you quit doing something you're doing and you do the things of the Lord. Greet Urbanus, this great fellow worker in Christ. "And Stachys my beloved." This man, a Christian man, is just mentioned, is very dear to Paul from some past association.

**An Approved Man**

In verse 10, he refers to Apelles, and Apelles he says is an "approved" man. Interesting Greek word, he's a "dokimos" man, d o k i m o s. The word "dokimos" is a word that refers to something that is tested and thereby found to be genuine. Somebody gives you a gold coin and you wonder whether it is a lead coin painted gold. You give it the "dokimos" treatment. If it's gold all the way through, you say this is a "dokimos" gold coin: it's genuine all the way through. What a great thing to say about a fellow believer. This man, this man Apelles is approved. In what respect? In Christ, a man who has been found that when it comes to his devotion to Jesus Christ, he's no hypocrite, he's no talker without comparable action. This man knew how to fall back and to act upon the doctrines of Scripture, what Paul is saying, that every one of us should be ready to be commended by the Lord. 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Corinthians 10:18, both stress the fact that you better be careful what you do with your body, by which Paul means the days of your life; and make them, use them, use that body in such a way that God will commend you for what you did with it while you were here on this earth. A Christian whose conduct in the angelic warfare is inspirational, it's a morale builder to the rest of us, greet Apelles, a really genuine prince of God.

**All Equal Before Christ**

Then he says greet those who are in "the household of a man named Aristobulus." We had the word household to indicate that he's speaking about a group of people, probably slaves, in the household of this man Aristobulus, a man who is apparently known in the Christian community as a man of some notoriety in the city of Rome. He may himself have been dead. Really, he may not himself have been a Christian.

In those days, when a wealthy man died, his slaves were taken over by the emperor and they became part of the emperor's staff. But here is an indication of what we know historically is true, that there were a lot of the wealthy, the intellectuals, the power movers, the shapers of public opinion thumbing their nose at the gospel. And the philosophers made fun of Paul and his ideas about going to Heaven on the basis of the death of Christ. The simple ordinary folks saw that this rang true and responded enthusiastically. So, the result was that many slaves were born again. So, when Christians gathered, as they did in the evening on Sunday in the New Testament church, it was an oddity to walk in there because you saw the Masters dressed well and you saw their slaves walking in behind them with them. They all sat down. And here was this conglomerate audience of every kind of social strata and economic level. But once they walked in that door, they now find equality at the foot of Christ. A master was not superior to his slave. They could all participate equally in the service. They could all stand up and lead in the hymn. They could all stand up and give a word of admonition. They could all stand up and give a testimony. Once they walked back out that door, the inequality was locked back in between master and slave.

So what we're reading here is probably Paul's sending greetings to a lot of people he has never met, but that he has been told that a large number of this man's household have become Christians and he sends them greetings.

In verse 11, he greets Herodion. And again, he says "my kinsmen," probably referring again to a fellow Jew. And he says to greet those who are "of the household of Narcissus." Again, this man Narcissus, we had the word household to make the sense "who are in the Lord." So, again, here's a group of people in this man's household and perhaps again, slaves, perhaps family members, who are in Christ, in the Lord, the place of safety. Here's another large number of people that he's heard about in the household of this man, Narcissus. When you spoke about the household of a man in New Testament Rome, you referred to his family, you referred to his retinue of slaves as well.

**Greeting Devoted Christian Workers**

Then in verse 12, you have 2 sisters. Those of you that are looking for names for your little girls, here's 2 beauties, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Tryphaena and Tryphosa, ... I wondered why these names have not been used more often by people who love to use Bible names in naming their kids. But these 2 sisters were held in very high esteem. They were called workers in the Lord. Again, we have that same word "kopiao," which means "people who exhaust themselves in an effort" and they were known for their devoted service in the Lord.

Paul says also, along with these 2 sisters, greet another gal named Persis. Persis was a Christian woman in Rome. He identifies her as someone that is very dear to him, dear to Paul. Beloved he calls her, and again he uses that Greek word "who" which means "the kind of." She's the kind of person who has (And there he spelled it out!) worked hard. Here the word means "work much in the Lord." Paul says I really do have a great respect for Persis. She was a lady who knocked herself out for the Lord. She worked, and the word "hard" there means "much." She did a lot of things for the Lord. Her life was invested in Christian service. Certainly these women in this verse exemplify the Christians who take rewards in heaven seriously.

These women exemplify the Christian who has the wisdom to understand he's going to leave everything behind; he's going to leave everything behind except what he has invested in the Lord's work and thus is sent ahead to Heaven. Paul says I love these gals and I want you to give my special greeting to them.

**Greet Rufus**

In verse 13, he says, "Great Rufus." This may have been a very important person. Notice in Mark 15, Mark 15:21 as Jesus was walking to Golgotha's hill, like all men who were to be crucified, He was required to carry on His shoulder, the crossbeam to which His hands would be attached. That crossbeam weighed about 100 pounds. After the beating and the physical debilitation, Jesus was so exhausted He fell to the ground and the soldiers saw that He would never make it carrying that load up to the hill of Golgotha. So, they reached out in the crowd and they saw a man named Simon of a place called Cyrene. They reached over, grabbed him just arbitrarily, but no doubt by the providence of God, by the shoulder, jerked him over and said, pick up that crossbar and carry it up the hill for Him. Mark here in Mark 15:21 goes out of the way to give us the name of the 2 sons of this man: "And they pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross." It may well be, and indeed Christian tradition says this is so, that the Rufus to whom Paul sends this greeting in Rome was the son of Simon of Cyrene. This has probably considerable validity when you remember that Mark wrote his gospel from Rome. So, he knows this man Rufus among the Christian community, and he describes him as a choice man.

This is the word that sometimes is translated elect. It's the word "eklektos" man, e k l e k t o s. It doesn't mean "elected" man unto salvation here, all these people have been elected to salvation. This means he was an eminent man. He was a special man of some fame and importance in the Christian community. He was, however, particularly a choice, a special man, in the Lord.

And then Paul says "also his mother and mine." Now that doesn't mean she was Paul’s birth mother. What it means is that she is an older woman, Rufus's mother, who treated Paul when they were together as if he were her son. It's another example of how God does His greatest work of Christian service through ordinary unknown believers. When you get to Heaven, you are going to discover that all the famous names that are only household words, religious names of leaders that are household words in Christian communities, are not going to be the people that you think are going to be standing up front in line. You're going to find that they're going to be people like this that you are reading about that you don't know a thing about, but who are going to be at the head of the line when it comes for Christian rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The world and carnal Christians have a tendency to praise their own kind who are losers with God. God praises the true winners who are generally unknown in the world in which they move beyond a small circle around them. Take encouragement from that.

**Paul's Groups of Five**

Then we have the group of five: "Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them," ... all men who lived in Rome. They always had trouble when they got Hermes and Hermas together, those guys should have changed their names or gone to different churches. I hope they did. 'Would you send Hermes up here?' and up comes Hermas. 'Not Hermas, Hermes! Why don't you listen?' It's terrible to try to distinguish between these two and it's the same way in the Greek. One guy's name is Hermes, the other is Hermas. It's pretty close. But Paul respectfully mentions these 5 men with no specific comment. He probably maybe hasn't even met them. But he furthermore notes that he sends greetings to the brethren with them, which suggests that they are spiritual leaders and they have a circle of association where they are influencing people. Perhaps they were pastor-teachers in the city of Rome.

Then in verse 15, we have another circle of 5. Here is Philologus, a man in Rome; and Julia, a Christian woman in Rome; Nereus, a Christian man in Rome; and his sister, 'what's her name' Paul says; (obviously he couldn't remember her name but he knew that he did have a sister of some significance so he says, "Nereus"... He didn't want to say, "what's her name," but he said "and his sister," which was a nice way of doing that. Then Olympus, who is a Christian man. And, again, he says, "all." And this time, we have the Greek word "pas" included, which is the word for all, which is to stress that he's talking about a large group. He says, "all the saints who are with them," which suggests to us that these people are associated with a substantial group of believers someplace in Rome, probably a group that had gravitated toward each other so that they had a larger church structure. He sends special greetings to them and to all who are with them.

**Well Done, Thou Good and Faithful Servant**

So, here we are, people that I know you will all be eager when it is your time to come in to Heaven to look up some of these folks. And you'll say, yes, I remember the Sunday after the 39th banquet at Berean Church. We talked about Tryphaena and Tryphosa and we wondered about poor old Hermas and Hermes, how you did out with your names. It's all very human, you see?

These are human beings. This is not a bunch of Holy Joes out there. Paul and these Christians lived in a very real world. It wasn't very long before Rome became the religious center of Christianity. And it wasn't very long before it also became the source of all the corruption that we know of as the Roman Catholic Church today as the political government took over Christianity and combined it with Babylonian mysticism to create that hybrid religion.

But the people here that Paul has mentioned, of whom we read this morning, are some of the all-time great Christians that ever lived. And I guarantee you that the way Paul speaks about these people,... Paul is not a kind of a person that goes around complimenting those who don't deserve it. When Paul says "You are my beloved," when Paul says "You're a choice person," when Paul says "You have done a magnificent job," when Paul says "I hold you in the highest esteem," you can count on he really meant it. And if Paul, with his frame of reference, his spiritual discernment, could say that to a person, you can suspect that he will also hear when he stands before Christ "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Wouldn't it be nice to make sure that that's the commendation each of us would receive as well?

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)