

## Romans – Justified through faith

### Week 24 – Romans 16 (Commendations, greetings, warnings, messages and doxology)

#### 1. **A commendation (v1-2)**

Phoebe was very likely entrusted with taking the letter to Rome. Letters of commendation were often in use in N.T. times to protect people from charlatans. She must have been a woman of means as the help she's given was almost certainly financial (the greek means benefactress). She probably held a position of responsibility in the Church, the greek translates as deacon.

"I think that many even of those who have the appearance of being extremely good men, hasten over this part of the epistle as superfluous...Yet the gold founders' people are careful even about the little fragments...it is possible even from bare names to find a great treasure.

- John Chrysostom (c347-407 AD)

#### 2. **Many greetings (v3-16)**

Many of those 24 names individuals are mentioned elsewhere in scripture. Priscilla and Aquila are almost certainly those from Acts 18. They would have been able to return to Rome after Claudius' death. The names are a mixture of men and women, high-born Roman, Jewish and common slave's names. This shows the diversity and unity of the Church in Rome. Rufus was probably the son of Simon who carried Jesus' cross! (Mark 15:21) Mark's Gospel was written primarily for the Roman church; so Rufus gets a mention because the believers there would have heard of him and his family. Nine of the names are women and four get special mentions for working hard in the Lord – we don't know what they did but it must have been special for Paul to single them out. Paul is able to honestly send greetings from all the churches because he's almost certainly in Corinth with other leaders from across the region and they will probably have asked him to do so. (Acts 20:4)

#### 3. **Paul's warnings (v17-20)**

Paul appeals for the church to be vigilant, separate and to have discernment.

- i. Be vigilant (watch out for) people who teach things that cause divisions or cause people to stumble.
- ii. Be separate (keep away from them) from people whose teachings deliberately depart from the true gospel. Paul doesn't want us to engage in debate let alone welcome them in. He has a zero tolerance approach to those deliberately trying to disrupt the gospel.
- iii. Have discernment (be wise about good, innocent about evil). To have discernment apply a three fold test to systems of doctrines and ethics... Biblical, Christological and Moral. Does it agree with scripture? Does it glorify the Lord Christ? Does it promote goodness? Paul adds the wonderful assurance that "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet"! Peace here seems strange given such a violent image, but God's peace allows no appeasement of the devil; only through the destruction of evil can peace be attained.

#### 4. **Paul's messages (v21-24)**

Paul now passes on messages from 8 named people. The word relatives here and elsewhere in the chapter is more accurately translated 'kin' so it probably meant they were fellow Jews not necessarily his blood relations.

**5. Doxology (v25-27)**

This is a very grammatically complex sentence!

- i. Paul writes of the power of God (who is able to establish you). It's no coincidence that Paul wants his letter to begin and end with a reference to the power of God to save (see Rom 1:16) and also establish/nurture/strengthen those saved into maturity.
- ii. Paul writes of the establishment of the believers being according to his gospel, according to the proclamation of Jesus Christ and according to the revelation of the mystery. The mystery is not fully explained here but he reveals it in Colossian 1:27 – and it is in fact Christ in us.
- iii. Paul writes of the evangelisation of the nations. The Old Testament writings are now seen in the light of Christ and the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham to bless all the nations of the world through his descendants.
- iv. Finally Paul writes in praise of God's wisdom. This wisdom is seen in the person of Jesus Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:1-3) and in the cross which seems foolish to the world (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Q1. What has challenged you most in our study of Romans?

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Q2. What has been brought to light that's lead you to change your beliefs and/or behaviour or to, at least, want to change it?

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**Memory Verse:**

**"To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen."**  
– Romans 16:27