

## Romans Chapter Sixteen

### Romans 16:1-2

**v1.** "I COMMEND UNTO YOU PHOEBE OUR SISTER, WHO IS A SERVANT OF THE CHURCH THAT IS AT CENCHREAE." (ASV)

The accepted tradition is that this sister in Christ, Phoebe carried Paul's letter to Rome.

**Acts 18:18** "AND PAUL, HAVING TARRIED AFTER THIS YET MANY DAYS, TOOK HIS LEAVE OF THE BRETHREN, AND SAILED THENCE FOR SYRIA, AND WITH HIM PRISCILLA AND AQUILA: HAVING SHORN HIS HEAD IN CENCHREAE; FOR HE HAD A VOW. (ASV)

Where is Cenchrea and what relationship does it have to the Paul's location when he wrote this letter? Cenchrea is a little piece of southern Greece, the city that surrounds the eastern harbor of Corinth; today we would call it a suburb of Corinth. Corinth was the location from which the Paul wrote the Roman letter.

Did Paul's commendation of Phoebe as a servant indicated any special status that she held in the church at Cenchrea? Some would try to make Phebe someone who held a special office such as those appointed by the Catholic Church to special offices to serve the sick and poor in later centuries; those that are called nuns today. In view of the fact that several of the so-called Christian schools today are turning out women youth ministers, and otherwise adhering to the world concept of the role of women in the Lord's church I thought we should go aside and consider the role that many assign to Phoebe.

### Deaconesses

One argument by which people are attempting to expand the role of women in the church beyond what God has authorized is with regard to the alleged existence of deaconesses in the New Testament church. There are only two passages that even hint of such an office:

**Romans 16:1** "I COMMEND UNTO YOU PHOEBE OUR SISTER, WHO IS A SERVANT OF THE CHURCH THAT IS AT CENCHREAE." (ASV)

The term translated "servant" here is the Greek word **diakonos**, a term meaning "one who serves or ministers." It is gender neutral; that is it can be used to refer to either men or women. It occurs in, at least, twenty-eight places in the New Testament including **Matthew 20:26; 22:13; 23:11; Mark 9:35**, etc. Of those twenty-eight places, one is translated minister and three of them are translated servants, not deacons. The accuracy of the translation of these references are borne up by their context.

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This word is used in the New Testament in two senses. It is used as a technical term for a formal office in the church to which one may be appointed by meeting certain qualifications. This is the usage that we find in:

**I Timothy 3:8** “DEACONS IN LIKE MANNER MUST BE GRAVE, NOT DOUBLE-TONGUED, NOT GIVEN TO MUCH WINE, NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE;” (ASV);”

**I Timothy 3:12** “LET DEACONS BE HUSBANDS OF ONE WIFE, RULING THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR OWN HOUSES WELL.” (ASV)

The second usage that we find in the New Testament is as a non-technical term for the informal act of serving, ministering or attending to. This usage is found in:

**I Timothy 4:6** “IF THOU PUT THE BRETHERN IN MIND OF THESE THINGS, THOU SHALT BE A GOOD MINISTER OF CHRIST JESUS, NOURISHED IN THE WORDS OF THE FAITH, AND OF THE GOOD DOCTRINE WHICH THOU HAST FOLLOWED UNTIL NOW:” (ASV)

Here Timothy is instructed to “BE A GOOD **diakonos** OF JESUS CHRIST” and it is translated minister. In **Romans 15:8** Paul records that Jesus Christ was a **diakonos** of the circumcision (the Jews) and it is translated minister. In **Romans 13:3-4** we are told that civil “RULERS” are the **diakonos** of God and it is translated minister. And there are more but time and space does not permit.

The second passage that some of our brethren have appealed to in order to find support for their women deacons is **I Timothy 3:11**. Here, in the midst of a listing of the qualifications of deacons, Paul refers to women. But what women?

**I Timothy 3:11** “EVEN *so must their* WIVES *be* GRAVE, NOT SLANDERERS, SOBER, FAITHFUL IN ALL THINGS.” (KJV)

**I Timothy 3:11** “WOMEN IN LIKE MANNER MUST BE GRAVE, NOT SLANDERERS, TEMPERATE, FAITHFUL IN ALL THINGS.” (ASV)

If you're reading from the KJV, you say how do they get deaconesses out of this passage; Paul is talking about deacon's wives. The problem is in the translation of the original Greek; the word translated wives in the KJV is **gunaikas** and can mean a “wife”, or simply a “female” or “woman.” And that is the way it is translated in the American Standard. Again, we must look at the context and determine who Paul is talking about. God through the Holy Spirit is laying out the qualifications of those who would serve in the office of deacon.

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And so we can, from the context, understand who God wants to serve the church as its deacons:

1. A woman cannot be “THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE’ I Timothy 3:12
2. To switch from men deacons to women deacons in mid-sentence without any explanation doesn’t make sense; as teachers we understand the proper structure of language.
3. Referring to the wives of these officers of the church is appropriate for the conduct of their family is part of their qualifications.
4. The word “LIKEWISE” or “EVEN SO” (KJV) simply means that the deacon’s wife must have the same virtues as the husband who serves as the deacon.

So where in church history do we get women deacons? In the third century we find in Syrian records, references to women deacons. Their work consisted of assisting at the baptism of women, going into homes of heathens where believing women lived, and visiting the sick, that is ministering to them and bathing them; all work appropriate only (by the way) to a woman. A full blown order of deaconesses does not appear in history until the fourth/fifth century (probably eastern Catholic, which became Greek Orthodox) and they had the same responsibilities as those in the third century.

The evidence for women deacons is simply lacking. The existence of a female diaconate within the New Testament cannot be demonstrated. Those who insist upon establishing such an office do so without the authority of the Scriptures.

A final word needs to be said concerning the fact that both men and women must remember that Bible teachings on differences in roles between men and women does not in any way imply differences in worth, value or ability. Women are not inferior to men anymore than Christ is inferior to God, citizens are inferior to the President, or church members are inferior to their elders. The differentiation is purely a matter of function, assigned tasks and responsibility. The real question becomes “How willing are we to fit ourselves in to God’s pattern?”

So there is no scriptural basis for the contention that Phoebe had any official capacity in the Lord’s church at Corinth. She was simply a hardworking lady who did whatever she could to assist those of the Lord’s church. Needless to say we have several ladies present who willingly and unselfishly do the same things that Phoebe did and should be as appreciated just as she was.

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**v.2** “THAT YE RECEIVE HER IN THE LORD, WORTHILY OF THE SAINTS, AND THAT YE ASSIST HER IN WHATSOEVER MATTER SHE MAY HAVE NEED OF YOU: FOR SHE HERSELF ALSO HATH BEEN A HELPER OF MANY, AND OF MINE OWN SELF.” (ASV)

Phoebe was going to a land that was foreign to her, a place where she possibly knew only a few people and where she probably did not have any family ties. Consequently, Paul is concerned for her well-being and asks the members of the congregation or congregations at Rome to assist her any way that she needed their assistance. He closes his commendation of her by telling them that she was a helper to or had assisted many including Paul himself.

### **Romans 16:3-16 – Greetings to Christians at Rome**

**v.3** “SALUTE PRISCA AND AQUILA MY FELLOW-WORKERS IN CHRIST JESUS,” (ASV)

Priscilla and Aquila had been driven out of Rome and were in Corinth when Paul was on his second missionary journey.

**Acts 18:2** “AND HE FOUND A CERTAIN JEW NAMED AQUILA, A MAN OF PONTUS BY RACE, LATELY COME FROM ITALY, WITH HIS WIFE PRISCILLA, BECAUSE CLAUDIUS HAD COMMANDED ALL THE JEWS TO DEPART FROM ROME: AND HE CAME UNTO THEM;” (ASV)

When he ended that journey and returned to Jerusalem he had left Priscilla and Aquila at Ephesus (**Acts 18:26**). Now the political climate has improved to the extent that they have returned to Rome. They had to flee Rome again as we see in **II Timothy 4:19** because that is where Paul was when he wrote the second letter to Timothy and they are with Timothy. It seems that if many of the first century Christians could not worship God as he requires in a certain location that they simply picked up and moved to a location where they could. Yet they were in constant danger of persecution.

**v.4** “WHO FOR MY LIFE LAID DOWN THEIR OWN NECKS; UNTO WHOM NOT ONLY I GIVE THANKS, BUT ALSO ALL THE CHURCHES OF THE GENTILES:” (ASV)

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We're not told where nor when but at some time Priscilla and Aquilla had risked their lives for Paul. He remembers and thanks them again, reminding the Roman brethren that in doing so and allowing Paul to continue his ministry they had benefited all of the churches of the Gentiles.

**v.5** "AND SALUTE THE CHURCH THAT IS IN THEIR HOUSE. SALUTE EPAENETUS MY BELOVED, WHO IS THE FIRST-FRUITS OF ASIA UNTO CHRIST." (ASV)

Most of the time I don't think we think of these cities having a number of congregations of the church like we have today but that seems to be the case in Rome. Understanding the churches met in houses, or space that was already available somewhere rather than building buildings it is logical that there would be several small congregations. Also many of the cities, such as Rome, contained large populations that were spread out over large areas. Priscilla and Aquilla had a congregation meeting in their home.

This is the only mention we have of Epaenetus, he was likely the first man converted at the city of Ephesus, in the province known as Achaia or Asia in other translations.

**v.6** "SALUTE MARY, WHO BESTOWED MUCH LABOR ON YOU." (ASV)

Mary is another that is not mentioned anywhere else but we know from this verse that Paul knew her somewhere else and that she had rendered service to him and his work. The KJV reads "US" instead of "YOU" at the end of the verse.

**v.7** "SALUTE ANDRONICUS AND JUNIAS, MY KINSMEN, AND MY FELLOW-PRISONERS, WHO ARE OF NOTE AMONG THE APOSTLES, WHO ALSO HAVE BEEN IN CHRIST BEFORE ME." (ASV)

Paul was apparently imprisoned frequently. We read of several cases in Acts but there were others as he mentions it twice in **II Corinthians (6:5, 11:23)**, written during his third missionary journey. These two people had been in prison with him. They were his kinsmen, family, related, well known among the apostles and had been converted before Paul was converted.

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**v.8-12** “SALUTE AMPLIATUS MY BELOVED IN THE LORD. SALUTE URBANUS OUR FELLOW-WORKER IN CHRIST, AND STACHYS MY BELOVED. SALUTE APELLES THE APPROVED IN CHRIST. SALUTE THEM THAT ARE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF ARISTOBULUS. SALUTE HERODION MY KINSMAN. SALUTE THEM OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF NARCISSUS, THAT ARE IN THE LORD. SALUTE TRYPHAENA AND TRYPHOSA, WHO LABOR IN THE LORD. SALUTE PERSIS THE BELOVED, WHO LABORED MUCH IN THE LORD.” (ASV)

Again we know nothing about the people that Paul is sending greetings to here except what Paul writes to them here. They all were Christians in Rome, they were probably parts of different bands or congregations. One, Herodion, is another relative or kinsman of Paul. All are workers in the church, having labored before in other places and laboring in Rome as well.

**v.13** “SALUTE RUFUS THE CHOSEN IN THE LORD, AND HIS MOTHER AND MINE.” (ASV)

A special mention is made of this man named Rufus and he is designated as “chosen in the Lord.” Does that mean that he was called or chosen any differently than anyone else? No, Paul simply uses the designation to honor this man’s work as we are all chosen in the Lord as we are added to the church (**Acts 2:47**). Paul also makes special mention of the mother of Rufus who had rendered such service to Paul that he honored her as he did his own mother.

**v.14-15** “SALUTE ASYNCRITUS, PHLEGON, HERMES, PATROBAS, HERMAS, AND THE BRETHREN THAT ARE WITH THEM. SALUTE PHILOGOGUS AND JULIA, NEREUS AND HIS SISTER, AND OLYMPAS, AND ALL THE SAINTS THAT ARE WITH THEM.” (ASV)

Again we have people not mentioned anywhere else in scripture and further indication of several congregations in this great city. For people persecuted as the Jews, whether Christian or not and the Gentile Christians were; they traveled and moved frequently to escape this persecution. In recent times we have seen those that claim to be “Christian” being driven out of Muslim countries because of the fear of death. There were also times when from a business perspective it was beneficial to be in Rome so we have people moving there.

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We could draw a parallel with the multitudes of people during and after World War II who left the share crop farms and small towns for the cities or the people that are crossing our southern border daily or leaving the fields of produce, seeking places where the means of making a living are much better than what was available to our parents and families.

**v.16** “SALUTE ONE ANOTHER WITH A HOLY KISS. ALL THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU.” (ASV)

This verse is probably one that most of us can quote without too much thinking because it is where the churches of Christ derive the name that we use. In past years some have tried to make greeting with a “holy kiss” a requirement, misunderstanding and misapplying what Paul says here.

As we know, especially from watching our televisions, this is a standard greeting in eastern cultures even yet today. Paul is simply telling them that our greetings to other Christians should be pure and holy, honest and sincere.

### **Romans 16:17-20 – Matters of Fellowship**

**v. 17** “NOW I BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, MARK THEM THAT ARE CAUSING THE DIVISIONS AND OCCASIONS OF STUMBLING, CONTRARY TO THE DOCTRINE WHICH YE LEARNED: AND TURN AWAY FROM THEM.” (ASV)

God, through the pen of the Apostle Paul gives, not only the Roman brethren but us as well, direction regarding what to do with false teachers and false doctrines. During my time on this earth there has never been a time of true peace among those who call themselves churches of Christ. In the 1940's and 1950's men made laws regarding congregational cooperation and orphan's homes. There were debates and fellowship issues with cups vs communion trays, Sunday school classes, Bible school material other than the Bible itself and a number of other things; divisions very much in existence even yet today. Then in the 1960's men returning from overseas mission fields started looking at the churches of Christ in the U.S. and raising warnings that we were becoming like Israel of old; turning our backs on the Law of Jehovah:

**Isaiah 30:9-10** “FOR IT IS A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE, LYING CHILDREN, CHILDREN THAT WILL NOT HEAR THE LAW OF JEHOVAH; THAT SAY TO THE SEERS, SEE NOT; AND TO THE PROPHETS, PROPHECY NOT UNTO US RIGHT THINGS, SPEAK UNTO US SMOOTH THINGS, PROPHECY DECEITS,” (ASV)

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At about this time, the mid-late 1960's, churches of Christ entered a period of rebellion and apostasy equal to, if not greater than that which created the various Christian Church denominations in the late 1880's. False teachers and false brethren are more prominent and numerous today than they were in Paul's day. In fact, in my personal experience, the majority of those that I know who call themselves members of the church of Christ, our brethren today, fit into the category of those who should be marked and avoided. Here in the Rio Grande Valley it is no different than anywhere else. They teach and/or practice things contrary to the doctrine or teaching which we learn from the words of Jesus and his apostles. Or they honor those by their fellowship who are false teachers and false brethren. And many other brethren, even those who would never otherwise compromise their stand for the truth say Schwegler you're a troublemaker. They do this simply because I will speak out about these things and work to hold fast to the Apostles' doctrine (**Acts 2:42**). So let's take a few moments of our class time this morning and see if we can't determine by the word of God who is and who is not a troublemaker.

- 1) Is the troublemaker one who embraces and **conforms** to false doctrine, or the one who **ceases** false doctrine?

**Romans 12:1-2** "I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, TO PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE. AND BE NOT FASHIONED ACCORDING TO THIS WORLD: BUT BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, AND YE MAY PROVE WHAT IS THE GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD." (ASV)

- 2) Is it the one who **commends** false doctrine, or is it the one who **condemns** it?

**Ephesians 6:10-11** "FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD, AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT. PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE WILES OF THE DEVIL." (ASV)

The source of false doctrines is none other than our adversary, the devil, the one who walks about as a roaring lion seeing who he can devour.



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- 3) Is it the one who **covers up** false doctrine, or the one who **corrects** it?

**II Timothy 4:2-4** “PREACH THE WORD; BE URGENT IN SEASON, OUT OF SEASON; REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT, WITH ALL LONGSUFFERING AND TEACHING. FOR THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT ENDURE THE SOUND DOCTRINE; BUT, HAVING ITCHING EARS, WILL HEAR TO THEMSELVES TEACHERS AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS; AND WILL TURN AWAY THEIR EARS FROM THE TRUTH, AND TURN ASIDE UNTO FABLES.” (ASV)

- 4) Is it the one who **condones** false doctrine, or the one who **cries out** against it?

**Acts 20:29-30** “I KNOW THAT AFTER MY DEPARTING GRIEVOUS WOLVES SHALL ENTER IN AMONG YOU, NOT SPARING THE FLOCK; AND FROM AMONG YOUR OWN SELVES SHALL MEN ARISE, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEM.” (ASV)

Paul here is speaking to elders, and the ability for false brethren and false doctrines to exist even within the eldership of a congregation of the Lord's church.

- 5) Is it the one who **compliments** false doctrine, or the one who **censures** it?

**Titus 1:9-11** “HOLDING TO THE FAITHFUL WORD WHICH IS ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING, THAT HE MAY BE ABLE TO EXHORT IN THE SOUND DOCTRINE, AND TO CONVICT THE GAINSAYERS. FOR THERE ARE MANY UNRULY MEN, VAIN TALKERS AND DECEIVERS, SPECIALLY THEY OF THE CIRCUMCISION, WHOSE MOUTHS MUST BE STOPPED; MEN WHO OVERTHROW WHOLE HOUSES, TEACHING THINGS WHICH THEY OUGHT NOT, FOR FILTHY LUCRE'S SAKE.” (ASV)

- 6) Is it the one who **chooses to sit at the feet** of false teachers, or the one who **calls the names** of false teachers?

**II Timothy 2:16-18** “BUT SHUN PROFANE BABBLINGS: FOR THEY WILL PROCEED FURTHER IN UNGODLINESS, AND THEIR WORD WILL EAT AS DOTHS A GANGRENE: OF WHOM IS HYMENAEUS AN PHILETUS; MEN WHO CONCERNING THE TRUTH HAVE ERRED, SAYING THAT THE RESURRECTION IS PAST ALREADY, AND OVERTHROW THE FAITH OF SOME.” (ASV)

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This false doctrine is still being taught today under the name of Realized Eschatology.

- 7) Is it the one who **comforts** the false teacher, or is it the one who **cautions** others about the false teacher?

**Matthew 7:15** "BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS, WHO COME TO YOU IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING, BUT INWARDLY ARE RAVENING WOLVES." (ASV)  
see also **II John 9-11**

- 8) Is it the one who **calls** the false teacher (sound), or the one who **calls upon** the false teacher to give an account of where he stands?

**I Peter 3:15** "BUT SANCTIFY IN YOUR HEARTS CHRIST AS LORD: BEING READY ALWAYS TO GIVE ANSWER TO EVERY MAN THAT ASKETH YOU A REASON CONCERNING THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU, YET WITH MEEKNESS AND FEAR."

**I Kings 18:17-18** "AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN AHAB SAW ELIJAH, THAT AHAB SAID UNTO HIM, IS IT THOU, THOU TROUBLER OF ISRAEL? AND HE ANSWERED, I HAVE NOT TROUBLED ISRAEL; BUT THOU, AND THY FATHER'S HOUSE, IN THAT YE HAVE FORSAKEN THE COMMANDMENTS OF JEHOVAH, AND THOU HAST FOLLOWED THE BAALIM."

If there was ever a man that wayward brethren would call a troublemaker it would be the Apostle Paul. Paul's major problems seemed to start with this:

**Acts 15:1** "AND CERTAIN MEN CAME DOWN FROM JUDAEA AND TAUGHT THE BRETHREN, SAYING, EXCEPT YE BE CIRCUMCISED AFTER THE CUSTOM OF MOSES, YE CANNOT BE SAVED. **v.5** "BUT THERE ROSE UP CERTAIN OF THE SECT OF THE PHARISEES WHO BELIEVED, SAYING, IT IS NEEDFUL TO CIRCUMCISE THEM, AND TO CHARGE THEM TO KEEP THE LAW OF MOSES." (ASV)

These men were contrary to God in two things. First of all they were binding a requirement on Christians that God had not made. Second they were trying to carry over part of the Mosaic Covenant with Israel into the law of Christ as a condition of salvation. In fact the covenant of circumcision was a carryover into Judaism from the Law of the Patriarchs wasn't it? That covenant was made with Abraham (**Genesis 17:10**). Other places had other problems:

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**I Corinthians 5:11** "BUT AS IT IS, I WROTE UNTO YOU NOT TO KEEP COMPANY, IF ANY MAN THAT IS NAMED A BROTHER BE A FORNICATOR, OR COVETOUS, OR AN IDOLATER, OR A REVILER, OR A DRUNKARD, OR AN EXTORTIONER; WITH SUCH A ONE NO, NOT TO EAT." (ASV)

**II Timothy 3:4-5** "TRAITORS, HEADSTRONG, PUFFED UP, LOVERS OF PLEASURE RATHER THAN LOVERS OF GOD; HOLDING A FORM OF GODLINESS, BUT HAVING DENIED THE POWER THEREFORE. FROM THESE ALSO TURN AWAY." (ASV)

And the problem of false teachers is addressed by other inspired writers as well:

**II John 10** "IF ANY ONE COMETH UNTO YOU, AND BRINGETH NOT THIS TEACHING, RECEIVE HIM NOT INTO YOUR HOUSE, AND GIVE HIM NO GREETING:"(ASV)

And the Apostle Peter devotes almost an entire chapter to this problem; **II Peter 2**.

**v.18** "FOR THEY THAT ARE SUCH SERVE NOT OUR LORD CHRIST, BUT THEIR OWN BELLY; AND BY THEIR SMOOTH AND FAIR SPEECH THEY BEGUILE THE HEARTS OF THE INNOCENT." (ASV)

It seems that a good work, whether it be a school, school of preaching, evangelistic or mission work, that is started by honest, sincere and devoted Christians dedicated to the doctrine of Christ is doomed from the beginning. Either in the generation in which it is started or more likely in the next generation; that work will go off into apostasy. Why? My observation is that most likely as they grow and their material needs increase they follow the money. In recent times when I have discussed this possibility I was told that "it doesn't matter where we get our funding". But as we studied just a few weeks ago accepting or giving of a contribution to a work is to be therefore in full fellowship and approval of whatever those who oversee that work and what they teach and/or practice. So it does matter where we get our funding.

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Should it be any wonder then that it seems that the most prominent, the most talented and supposedly the most intelligent of our brethren are the ones who abandon The Faith? Should it be any wonder that so many are deceived and lead astray by the "GOOD WORDS AND FAIR SPEECHES" of these men? Is it any wonder that most of them will not attempt to meet a sound brother, solidly anchored in the Word of God in debate of their teaching and practices? Look at Paul's admonitions to the church at Philippi and at other places:

**Philippians 3:17-19** "BRETHREN, BE YE IMITATORS TOGETHER OF ME, AND MARK THEM THAT SO WALK EVEN AS YE HAVE US FOR AN ENSAMPLE. FOR MANY WALK, OF WHOM I TOLD YOU OFTEN, AND NOW TELL YOU EVEN WEEPING, THAT THEY ARE THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST: WHOSE END IS PERDITION, WHOSE GOD IS THE BELLY, AND WHOSE GLORY IS IN THEIR SHAME, WHO MIND EARTHLY THINGS." (ASV)

**I Timothy 6:3-5** "IF ANY MAN TEACHETH A DIFFERENT DOCTRINE, AND CONSENTETH NOT TO SOUND WORDS, EVEN THE WORDS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND TO THE DOCTRINE WHICH IS ACCORDING TO GODLINESS; HE IS PUFFED UP, KNOWING NOTHING, BUT DOTING ABOUT QUESTIONINGS AND DISPUTES OF WORDS, WHEREOF COMETH ENVY, STRIFE, RAILINGS, EVIL SURMISINGS, WRANGLINGS OF MEN CORRUPTED IN MIND AND BEREFT OF THE TRUTH, SUPPOSING THAT GODLINESS IS A WAY OF GAIN." (ASV) "FROM SUCH WITHDRAW THYSELF". (KJV)

**II Peter 2:1-3** "BUT THERE AROSE FALSE PROPHETS ALSO AMONG THE PEOPLE, AS AMONG YOU ALSO THERE SHALL BE FALSE TEACHERS, WHO SHALL PRIVILY BRING IN DESTRUCTIVE HERESIES, DENYING EVEN THE MASTER THAT BOUGHT THEM, BRINGING UPON THEMSELVES SWIFT DESTRUCTION. AND MANY SHALL FOLLOW THEIR LASCIVIOUS DOINGS; BY REASON OF WHOM THE WAY OF THE TRUTH SHALL BE EVIL SPOKEN OF. AND IN COVETOUSNESS SHALL THEY WITH FEIGNED WORDS MAKE MERCHANDISE OF YOU: WHOSE SENTENCE NOW FROM OF OLD LINGERETH NOT, AND THEIR DESTRUCTION SLUMBERETH NOT." (ASV)

But though he is warning the brethren at Rome of all of these problems and troubles that the church was facing, he could commend them as well.

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**v.19** “FOR YOUR OBEDIENCE IS COME ABROAD UNTO ALL MEN. I REJOICE THEREFORE OVER YOU: BUT I WOULD HAVE YOU WISE UNTO THAT WHICH IS GOOD, AND SIMPLE UNTO THAT WHICH IS EVIL.” (ASV)

The reputation of the church at Rome was one of being sound in The Faith, solidly anchored in Christ. So Paul tells the Romans brethren that he would have them to be “SIMPLE CONCERNING EVIL”, not have first hand knowledge of the practices and pleasures of evil. Jesus told his disciples:

**Matthew 10:16** “BEHOLD, I SEND YOU FORTH AS SHEEP IN THE MIDST OF WOLVES: BE YE THEREFORE WISE AS SERPENTS, AND HARMLESS AS DOVES.” (ASV)

This doesn't mean that we are to be simple minded, unable to recognize evil, unable to discern the difference between what is good and what is not good but rather simple in the experience of these things.

**I Corinthians 14:20** “BRETHREN, BE NOT CHILDREN IN MIND: YET IN MALICE BE YE BABES, BUT IN MIND BE MEN.” (ASV)

**v.20** “AND THE GOD OF PEACE SHALL BRUISE SATAN UNDER YOUR FEET SHORTLY. THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU.” (ASV)

This is a general truth that is valid through all time. If we mark and avoid those who are false teachers and false brethren, if we mark and avoid those who are false brethren due to their unfaithfulness to God in matters of their daily living, if we are obedient to the Word of God, and if we avoid that which is evil and cling to that which is good; Satan will be unable to influence us. He will fail and figuratively speaking be bruised, defeated and trampled underfoot by our walk of life.

### Romans 16:21-23 – Greetings From Those With Paul

**v.21** “TIMOTHY MY FELLOW-WORKER SALUTETH YOU; AND LUCIUS AND JASON AND SOSIPATER, MY KINSMEN.” (ASV)

This section of Paul's letter carries the greetings of others that are with him to the church at Rome.

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Timothy we know well, Lucius is probably Lucius of Cyrene that we find at Antioch in **Acts 13:1**, Jason is likely to be the Jason that had the church in his house in Thessalonica in **Acts 17:5**; Sosipater, another kinsman of Paul, known to the brethren in Rome is probably the same Sopater of Berea traveling with Paul in **Acts 20:4**.

**v.22** "I TERTIUS, WHO WRITE THE EPISTLE, SALUTE YOU IN THE LORD." (ASV)

Paul did not write his own letters, but usually wrote the salutation (**I Corinthians 16:21, II Thessalonians 3:17**), some speculate due to problems with eyesight:

**Galatians 6:11** "SEE WITH HOW LARGE LETTERS I WRITE UNTO YOU WITH MINE OWN HAND." (ASV)

So a man called Tertius wrote this letter for Paul and Paul added his own autograph as he did the letter to the churches of Galatia.

**v.23-24** "GAIUS MY HOST, AND OF THE WHOLE CHURCH, SALUTETH YOU. ERASTUS THE TREASURER OF THE CITY SALUTETH YOU, AND QUARTUS THE BROTHER. THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALL. AMEN." (ASV)

In **I Corinthians 1:14** we read of Gaius as being one of only two in Corinth that Paul baptized himself. Because Paul wrote the book of Romans while he was in Corinth, apparently this is the same Gaius. He not only hosted Paul but apparently the church met in his house as well.

Erastus traveled with Paul (**Acts 19:22**) and was not from Corinth (**II Timothy 4:20**).

Quartus is mentioned simply as a brother in Christ and was apparently known to the Roman brethren.

Paul ends his salutation wishing them well, much as we would today.

### Romans 16:25-27 – Final Commendation

**v.25** "NOW TO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO ESTABLISH YOU ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL AND THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY WHICH HATH BEEN KEPT IN SILENCE THROUGH TIMES ETERNAL," (ASV)

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Paul commends them to God according to the gospel, which Paul calls "MY GOSPEL". Does this mean that Paul taught something unique or different from the other apostles? No, it simply means that as the apostle to the Gentiles (**Acts 9:15**) that he taught the "FORM" (**Romans 6:17**) or "MOLD" or "PATTERN" of doctrine that brought salvation from sin. When that gospel is taught, just like the seed that is used as an analogy in Matthew 13, it will generate the same result every time; Christians serving God and the church of Jesus Christ. It was the preaching of Jesus Christ and his apostles which he promised to bring to their remembrance through the Holy Spirit (**John 14:26**).

And what is this mystery? It was the mystery that God had kept hidden from the beginning of time (**Genesis 3:15**) when he promised Eve that all men would be blessed and Satan defeated through her seed. It was a spiritual truth which could not be explained except by divine revelation after which time it was no longer a mystery.

**v.26** "BUT NOW IS MANIFESTED, AND BY THE SCRIPTURES OF THE PROPHETS, ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT OF THE ETERNAL GOD, IS MADE KNOWN UNTO ALL THE NATIONS UNTO OBEDIENCE OF FAITH:" (ASV)

A mystery that has now been made "MANIFEST" or known:

"...BY THE APPEARING OF OUR SAVIOUR CHRIST JESUS, WHO ABOLISHED DEATH, AND BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL," **II Timothy 1:10** (ASV)

To the Jews first at Jerusalem:

**Acts 6:7** "AND THE WORD OF GOD INCREASED; AND THE NUMBER OF THE DISCIPLES MULTIPLIED IN JERUSALEM EXCEEDINGLY; AND A GREAT COMPANY OF THE PRIESTS WERE OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH." (ASV)

Then through Peter to the Gentiles:

**Acts 10:22** "AND THEY SAID, CORNELIUS A CENTURION, A RIGHTEOUS MAN AND ONE THAT FEARETH GOD, AND WELL REPORTED OF BY ALL THE NATION OF THE JEWS, WAS WARNED OF GOD BY A HOLY ANGEL TO SEND FOR THEE INTO HIS HOUSE, AND TO HEAR WORDS FROM THEE." (ASV)

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**v.27** “TO THE ONLY WISE GOD, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, TO WHOM BE THE GLORY FOR EVER. AMEN.” (ASV)

Thus Paul ends his letter with these last few verses being almost a summary of the entire letter.

The power of the gospel that Paul was commissioned to preach...

The revelation of it as the eternal purpose of God...

It's contents of faith and obedience...

It's scope, “ALL NATIONS” of the earth...

It's author, “THE ONLY WISE GOD”