

EXPLANATION OF 45TH BIBLEBOOK

ROMANS 16 (April A.D. 67)

INTRODUCTION

Romans 16 describes the fellow workers and acquaintances of the apostle Paul.

OUTLINE

Theme 2. Paul as a co-worker of God's righteousness - continued.

(II) 16:1-27. Other co-workers of God's righteousness.

- a. Recommending the servant (16:1-2).
- b. Personal greetings from Paul (16:3-16).
- c. Warning against false teachers and propagandists (16:17-20).
- d. Greetings from friends (16:21-24).
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EXPLANATION

(II) 16:1-27. Other co-workers of God's righteousness.

a. Recommending the servant (16:1-2).

16:1. I commend¹ (vipa) to you our sister Phoebe², who is (vppa) (also) a servant³ (cf. 15:8) of the church (congregation) in Cenchrea⁴.

16:2. (I ask you) to welcome (receive)⁵ (vsad) her in the Lord (in a way) worthy of the saints and to give her help (to stand beside her in order to assist)⁶ (vsaa) in whatever matter she *again and again* may need⁷ (vspa) from you, for she has been (viao) a helper (patroness, protectress)⁸ to many people, including myself.

The question of female offices in the Church. The question whether the New Testament revelation knew female offices as elders, pastors or deacons is a controversial issue among Christians today. Some Christians regard Paul's teachings and instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:33-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 as limited to the relationship of 'married women' to their own husbands. Other Christians regard his teachings and instructions as authoritative for the behaviour of 'women in general' in all the official meetings of the Church. The following facts should help Christians to accept a biblical point of view.

- First. According to the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, by Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, the word for 'woman'⁹ means 'any adult female' in the two above passages: 1 Corinthians 14:34f and 1 Timothy 2:11f! Also in 1 Corinthians 11:3,5ff. Only in the context of marriage can it also mean 'wife'¹⁰.
- Second. Read 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6. The Bible teaches that the appointed elders of the congregation were always male. They were 'the husbands of but one wife' and not 'the wives of but one husband'. The Bible gives no justification or warrant for the appointment of women to any Church office.

Phoebe was a servant rather than a deaconess. The name 'Phoebe' means 'bright or radiant'. Letters of commendation were a necessity when a Christian travelled from one Christian congregation to another in which he was unknown to the Christians there. Because the apostle commends Phoebe as a servant of the congregation in Cenchrea, she was probably the bearer of Paul's letter to the Romans to Rome. Cenchrea was one of the ports of Corinth. There was a congregation there and Phoebe was a 'servant' of this congregation.

Although the Greek word for 'servant' is exactly the same as the Greek word for 'deacon'¹¹, there is no need or warrant to suppose that Phoebe occupied or exercised *an office or position* in the congregation! Romans 16:1 is the only example where a woman is called a 'diakonos'. The verb 'diakoneó' (to serve) is never translated with 'to serve as a deacon' (that is, to serve in the office called 'deacon'), but always with 'to serve' or 'to care for the needs of'. Therefore the only correct way to translate the noun 'diakonos' here is not with 'a deacon', but with 'a servant' (helper). In Romans 16:1 there is absolutely no indication of the appointment to an office as in Acts 6:1-6!

¹ G: sunistémi

² G: Phoibé

³ G: diakonos

⁴ G: Kegchreia

⁵ G: prosdechomai

⁶ G: paristémi

⁷ G: chrézó

⁸ G: prostatis

⁹ G: guné

¹⁰ Matthew 5:31; Ephesians 5:22ff; Colossians 3:18f

¹¹ Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13

1 Peter 4:10 teaches that all Christians, men and women, are required to have *a service* in the congregation. The *service* which Phoebe performed was similar to those of the deacons. The service of the deacons was (and still is) one of mercy to the poor, the sick and the desolate. The service of Phoebe was one of mercy to travellers, which is called *hospitality*. Paul qualifies her service as being a *protectress, patroness, helper* or *assistant* of himself and of many, indicating that she probably gave the kind of help travellers from East to West needed at ports, namely, *hospitality*. She could also have been a well-to-do lady, with an alert mind and heart overflowing with kindness and helpfulness. She must be compared to the women, mentioned in Luke 8:1-3, 1 Timothy 5:9-10 and Acts 16:15, who performed similar services. But the fact that Phoebe performed a specific service does not mean that she occupied *an office or position* as deacon in the congregation. *In the Bible there is no warrant that women occupied the office of an elder (pastor) or deacon.* Some women and men have the gift of service, but all women and men must serve!

The difference between servants and deacons. The word in the original language literally means ‘servant’. Every member of the Body of Christ has a different service or ministry (12:3-8)¹². The different spiritual gifts, which God gives to each Christian, are for serving, building and equipping others in the congregation¹³. One particular spiritual gift is called ‘service’¹⁴ (12:7) and is related to the spiritual gift of ‘helpful deeds’¹⁵. Both these spiritual gifts do *not refer to a church office, but to the ability and desire*, which the Holy Spirit gives to a Christian to serve in some area. We need to distinguish between three words: servant, service and deacon. Every Christian should desire to be ‘a servant’. Some Christians have received the spiritual gift called ‘service’. But only some Christians are appointed by the elders to the office of ‘deacon’. The office of deacon is definitely not compulsory and often not necessary.

Between A.D. 30-32 a specific need arose in the local congregation of Jerusalem. In the Christian service of helping the poor widows, the Greek-speaking widows were for some unknown reason neglected. Therefore the congregation in Jerusalem officially chose and appointed seven *men* to give their attention to this specific problem and to meet this specific need. According to Acts 6:1-7, these men served until this need was apparently met. A little later, one of them called Philip was no longer serving as a deacon in Jerusalem, but was serving as an evangelist in Samaria and Caesarea¹⁶.

In A.D. 60-61, there is mention of the church office of deacons in only two other local congregations in the whole Bible, namely, at the congregation in Ephesus¹⁷ and the congregation in Philippi¹⁸. The deacons are clearly distinguished from the church office of elders. In order to be chosen as a deacon, they had to meet certain specific qualifications. Although their tasks were not delineated, they were certainly not the leaders of the local congregation and they also did not perform the tasks of the elders.

Female servants in the Christian Church? Romans 16:1 uses the male form ‘diakonos’. Some Christians want to translate this word with the office of ‘deaconess’. But *nowhere does the Bible speak of women in any Church office!* Women did not occupy the office of elder and they did not occupy the office of deacon. The Bible also teaches that deacons were male¹⁹.

In 1 Timothy 3:11, the term “women like these”²⁰ cannot refer to the office of deacons, which would have required the term “the deaconesses”²¹. The term is also not the same as “wives of deacons”, which would also have required another term in Greek: “their wives” or “having wives”²². The wives of the deacons were already mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:12 and the translation “wives of deacons” in 1 Timothy 3:11 would exclude the wives of the elders. Therefore, we must conclude that the term “women like these” most probably refer to a separate group of women who exercised *not an office, but rather a particular service* in the congregation at Ephesus, as 1 Timothy 5:3-16 clearly suggests.

Conclusion concerning women in the Christian Church. Women are as indispensable and as valuable in the Christian congregation as men! The Bible has recorded the names of worthy women who have performed valuable services in the Christian community²³.

Although Galatians 3:28 teaches that both male and female are equally children of God through Jesus Christ, the Bible teaches that the responsibilities given to male and female within God’s plan, arrangement and regulation after the creation as well as after the recreation in Christ are different! Although they are equally precious in God’s eyes, God

¹² 1 Corinthians 12:5

¹³ 1 Peter 4:10-11

¹⁴ G: diakonia

¹⁵ G: antilémpsis)(1 Corinthians 12:28

¹⁶ Acts 8:26-40; 21:8

¹⁷ 1 Timothy 3:8-13

¹⁸ Philippians 1:1

¹⁹ Acts 6:3

²⁰ G: gunaikas hósautós

²¹ G: tas de diakonous

²² G: gunaikas autón or gunaikas echontes

²³ Luke 7:44-47; 8:2-3; John 4:39; 20:17-18; Acts 9:36; 16:15; Romans 16:1-2; 16:3; 16:6; 16:12-13

has assigned to men and women different functions in the marriage relationship²⁴ as well as in the Church relationships²⁵.

Christians must avoid two extremes:

- They must avoid the extreme of ordaining women to a church office when there is no warrant for doing so in the Bible!
- And they must avoid the extreme of ignoring the very important and valuable services that able, devout and alert women are able to render to the Church!

b. Personal greetings from Paul (16:3-16).

16:3. You must greet²⁶ (vmad) Priscilla²⁷ and Aquila²⁸, my fellow workers²⁹ in Christ Jesus.

16:4. They placed their own necks under (the axe of the executioner)(they risked their lives)³⁰ (viaa) for me; to whom not only I am *always* grateful (vipa), but also all the churches (congregations) of the Gentiles.

16:5a. (Greet) also the church (that meets) at their house³¹.

16:5b. You must greet (vmad) Epenetus, my beloved, who is (vipa) the first fruit in the province of Asia for Christ.

16:6. You must greet (vmad) Mary, who worked much with effort³² (viaa) for you.

16:7. You must greet (vmad) Andronicus and Junias, my fellow-countrymen³³ and (former) fellow-prisoners³⁴, who are (vipa) outstanding³⁵ among the apostles and were (vira) in Christ before me.

16:8. You must greet (vmad) Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.

16:9. You must greet (vmad) Urbanus, our fellow-worker in Christ and (greet) Stachus, my beloved.

16:10a. You must greet (vmad) Apelles, who is tested and approved³⁶ in Christ.

16:10b. You must greet (vmad) those who belong to (the household of) Aristobulus.

16:11. You must greet (vmad) Herodion, my fellow-countryman³⁷. You must greet (vmad) those who belong to (the household of) Narcissus who are (vppa) in the Lord.

16:12. You must greet (vmad) Tryphena and Tryphosa, who *always* work hard (vppa) in the Lord. You must greet (vmad) Persis, the beloved, who worked much with effort (viaa) in the Lord.

16:13. You must greet (vmad) Rufus, the elect in the Lord and his mother and mine.

16:14. You must greet (vmad) Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them.

16:15. You must greet (vmad) Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them.

16:16. You must greet (vmad) one another with a holy kiss³⁸. All the churches (congregations) of Christ greet you (vipn).

Paul's fellow-workers Priscilla and Aquila (16:3-5a). Priscilla means 'little old woman' and Aquila means 'eagle'. Priscilla is mentioned first, probably because she was the more active co-worker of the apostle Paul. They came from Rome to Corinth due to the decree of the Roman Emperor Claudius in A.D. 49 that forced all Jews and Christians to leave Rome. Paul met them at Corinth where they made tents together and ministered together³⁹. Later they accompanied Paul to Ephesus and remained there, probably to strengthen the congregation which Paul founded at Ephesus⁴⁰ (A.D. 50-52). They had a house church or house fellowship at Ephesus from where Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians⁴¹ (A.D. 56). There they instructed Apollos in a more accurate understanding of the gospel⁴². Later they moved back to Rome (16:3-5) (A.D. 57). It is not clear where they lived later⁴³ (winter A.D. 64-65). They were well-

²⁴ Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:18 -19; 1 Peter 3:1-7

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:3-16; 14:33b-36; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 3:1-15; 5:10; Titus 2:3-5

²⁶ G: aspazomai

²⁷ G: Priska

²⁸ G: Akula

²⁹ G: sunergos

³⁰ G: trachélon hupotithémi

³¹ G: tén kat oikon autón ekklésian

³² G: kopiaó

³³ G: suggenés

³⁴ G: sunaichmalótos

³⁵ G: episémos

³⁶ G: dokimos

³⁷ G: suggenés

³⁸ G: en philématí agió

³⁹ Acts 18:2-3

⁴⁰ Acts 18:18-19

⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 16:19

⁴² Acts 18:26

⁴³ 2 Timothy 4:19

versed in the Christian faith and Paul calls them *his co-workers (in his trade as tentmaker and in his ministry)*. This is another example of the contribution made by a woman in the work of the gospel and of the congregation within the limits prescribed by Paul himself elsewhere⁴⁴.

Priscilla and Aquilla had risked their lives for Paul, but the details are unknown. It may describe the extreme peril at the hands of persecutors to which they subjected themselves to save Paul's life. It could have been related to the riot at Ephesus⁴⁵.

The Christian congregation in Rome met together in several house churches, or better, house fellowships, because a church or congregation has a body or council of elders⁴⁶. A congregation may consist of several house fellowships functioning under one body or council of elders. Priscilla and Aquilla had a congregation (church) or better house fellowship in their house⁴⁷. This house fellowship may not be restricted to the people of their own household⁴⁸, but must have consisted of several different families or households that met together for the various activities of the fellowship in the house of for example Priscilla and Aquilla. The fact that the congregation in their house is particularly mentioned shows that the Christian Church in Rome must have been much bigger. Moreover, Romans 16:14 says, "Greet ... the brothers with them" and Romans 16:15 says, "Greet ... the saints with them". This probably refers to the members of two more house fellowship groups in Rome. These house fellowships were connected to the people mentioned in these verses. Hence we conclude that there were several house fellowships in Rome. The fact that Paul was acquainted with so many people at Rome is probably due to all that Priscilla and Aquilla had told him and due to meeting many people from Rome on his missionary journeys.

Epenetus and Mary (16:5b-6). Epenetus (means: praiseworthy). He was the first convert in the province of Asia in modern Turkey (probably Ephesus).

Paul probably knew about Mary's work in Rome through what Priscilla and Aquila told him⁴⁹.

Paul's fellow-countrymen Andronicus and Junias, outstanding among the apostles (16:7). Andronicus and Junias were not 'relatives' of Paul⁵⁰, but rather *fellow-countrymen (Jews)* (9:3; 16:7,11,21). They were Christians before Paul. There is no reason to think that the ending of the name Junias must denote a woman⁵¹, because in Matthew 16:14, the names of both Elijah and Jeremiah have the same ending! Paul suffered imprisonment several times⁵² and at one occasion these two Jews were his *fellow-prisoners*⁵³.

The phrase "outstanding among the apostles" could mean that that the group of apostles held them in high esteem or that they belonged to a group called apostles. The word *apostle* means *a person sent out with a mission*. The phrase in Romans 16:7 may be understood in two ways: as outstanding among the apostles of Christ or as outstanding among the apostles (that is, the men sent out with a mission) of the congregations.

The apostles of Christ. The word 'apostles' in stricter sense means 'sent out' by *Jesus Christ* and refers only to the eleven disciples of Jesus Christ and Paul. The apostles of Christ were sent out by Jesus Christ Himself to be the eye-witnesses of his death and resurrection⁵⁴, to establish the first congregations⁵⁵ among the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles⁵⁶ and to complete the recording of the New Testament revelation⁵⁷. Then the phrase in Romans 16:7 means that, because they had become Christians before the apostle Paul himself, Andronicus and Junias were held in high esteem by the apostles Peter, John, etc.

The apostles of the congregations. The word 'apostles' in broader sense means delegates, messengers or missionaries *sent out by congregations*. They were sent out by congregations with the usual task to establish other local congregations through their preaching and teaching. It refers to a broader group of people like Barnabas, Epaphroditus, Apollos, Silvanus and Timothy⁵⁸, who all preached the gospel and could be described as *people sent out* by the congregations. Today we would call them *missionaries*. Andronicus and Junias themselves could have been *people sent*

⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:3-16; 14:33b-36; 1 Timothy 2:8-15

⁴⁵ Acts 19:23-41; 1 Corinthians 16:9,19; 2 Corinthians 1:8-10

⁴⁶ Acts 20:17,28; 1 Timothy 4:14

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 16:19; cf. Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2

⁴⁸ Acts 10:24-27; 11:14; 16:15,31; 18:7-8

⁴⁹ Acts 18:1-2

⁵⁰ Luke 1:36; John 18:26

⁵¹ as Julia in 16:15

⁵² 2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:23

⁵³ cf. Colossians 4:10; Philemon 10,24

⁵⁴ Luke 24:45-48; Acts 1:21-22

⁵⁵ Matthew 15:18; Ephesians 2:20

⁵⁶ Acts 1:8

⁵⁷ John 14:26; 16:13-15

⁵⁸ Act 14:14; Philippians 2:25

out by a congregation and then the phrase in Romans 16:7 means that *among the missionaries or emissaries of the congregations*, Andronicus and Junias were held in high esteem.

Ampliatius, Urbanus and Stachus (16:8-9). Ampliatius means ‘enlarged’. He was a beloved in the Lord. This means that although there existed a strong attachment between Paul and his fellow-Jews (cf. 9:1-4), an even stronger bond of love existed between Paul and fellow-believers.

Urbanus (means: urban, elegant and polite) was probably born a Roman. ‘Our’ fellow-worker instead of ‘my’ fellow-worker (as with Priscilla, Aquilla and Timothy) suggests that their relationship was probably not equally close.

Stachus means ‘an ear of grain’.

Apelles, tested and approved in Christ (16:10a).

- A Christian needs to be tested and approved by God in the area of the difficulties in life. When is a Christian tested and approved? God especially uses difficulties, trials, temptations and sufferings to test Christians and develop their Christian character⁵⁹. When amidst such difficulties, trials, temptations and sufferings, a Christian remains true to Christ and the Christian faith he has as it were been thoroughly examined by God, passed the test and is approved by God. Such a Christian may have the satisfaction of knowing that God is pleased with him and commends him. Amidst all the difficulties circumstances Apelles remained faithful and loyal to Christ. That is why he will receive God’s approval!
- A Christian needs to be tested and approved by God in the area of behaviour. In 1 Corinthians 11:19-22, Paul says, “No doubt there has to be differences among you to show which of you have God’s *approval*. When you come together, is it not the Lord’s Supper you eat?” The Lord’s Supper was celebrated in conjunction with the *love meal*, that is, a meal in which Christians of the congregation ate together. Some people participating were selfish, brought their own food and ate it without waiting for the others or without sharing with those who brought no food. Others misbehaved and even got drunk. God tests people through their behaviour in the Christian meetings and their behaviour in ordinary life. A real Christian should behave as a Christian under all circumstances. Only then does he receive God’s approval!
- A Christian needs to be tested and approved by God in the area of spiritual training and discipline. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul uses pictures from sports to exhort Christians to put themselves under strict training and to run and fight with a clear aim in life. He says, “I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” To be tested and approved by God is the opposite of being disqualified by God. In order not to be disqualified by God, every Christian must put himself under strict spiritual training and live his life with a clear purpose. Only then does he receive God’s approval!
- A Christian needs to be tested and approved by God in the area of correctly interpreting the Bible. In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul exhorts Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one *approved*, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” For “correctly handling the word of truth”, the original Greek text literally says, “to cut the word of truth straight”. Every church leader must, like Timothy, do his very best to handle the truth of the Bible correctly. He may not cut the word of truth crookedly, that is, he may not misinterpret the Bible. This is a great responsibility for all church leaders and teachers. That is why many congregations do their best to train their leaders and teachers in correctly interpreting the Bible. Christians must always interpret the Bible correctly. Only then do they receive God’s approval!
- A Christian needs to be tested and approved by God in the area of his ministry. In 2 Corinthians 10:12-18, Paul says, “We do not dare to ... compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. ... We will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us. ... We do not go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. ... It is not the one who commends himself who is *approved*, but the one whom the Lord commends.” Paul had first preached the gospel in Corinth and had founded the Christian congregation in Corinth. Afterwards, some false teachers and even false apostles came and tried to influence the Christians away from Paul to themselves. These false teachers and false apostles boasted about the congregation of Corinth as if it were their ministry and commended themselves to the Christians in Corinth as being more important than the apostle Paul. Paul simply answered that God would test the ministry of those false apostles and consequently not approve of them. Even if these false apostles commended themselves, it does not mean that God commends them! It is “not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends!” Christian leaders must realise that God will certainly test their ministry and either disqualify them or approve of them. Christian leaders must do their ministries not in accordance with their own ideas, but in accordance with the whole Bible, not independently but in complete dependence of God. Only then do they receive God’s approval!

Note Christ’s commendation of those who put their talents to use: “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness⁶⁰!” The opposite of a commendation is a disqualification or even rejection⁶¹.

⁵⁹ Romans 5:3-4; James 1:2-4

⁶⁰ Matthew 25:21; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Corinthians 11:19; 2 Corinthians 10:18

⁶¹ Matthew 25:26-30; 1 Corinthians 9:27

Those of Aristobulus, Herodion, those of Narcissus, Tryphena and Tryphosa, Persis (16:10b-12). Aristobulus was probably not a Christian or had already died. 'Those of his (household)' is probably a reference to some of his slaves. Herodion was a fellow-countryman of Paul (a Jew).

Narcissus means 'a bulb plant with smooth leaves and clusters of orange, white or yellow flowers'. The name also represents a mythological figure that pined away for love of its own beautiful reflection in a spring and represents a person characterised by excessive self-love. Not all the people of his household were believers.

Tryphena (means: delicate) and Tryphosa (means: dainty) were still hard workers in the Lord (present tense).

Persis (means: a Persian lady) and in the past she had also been a hard worker in the Lord (past tense). The past tense for Persis could mean that Paul did not know her present situation or that she did less, due to age or infirmity.

Rufus and his mother (16:13). Rufus could be the son of Simon of Cyrene⁶² because Mark wrote his gospel in Rome for the Romans. He was 'the elect in the Lord', not in the sense of election to salvation, but in the sense of election to some eminence in the congregation.

His mother was not literally Paul's mother, but had performed the responsibilities of a mother also to Paul at times.

Asyncritus, etc. and the brothers with them (16:14). This probably refers to the members of another house fellowship or house church group in Rome.

Philologos, etc. and all the saints with them (16:15). This probably refers to the members of yet another house fellowship or house church group in Rome.

The Christian greeting with a kiss (16:16). All the churches (congregations) visited by Paul on his third missionary journey (A.D. 52-57) would have asked him to transmit greetings to brothers and sisters elsewhere.

The New Testament shows that the Christians had the custom to greet one another with a kiss.

The kiss was an expression of affection. When Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to have dinner, he did not give Jesus a kiss (probably on the cheek or the forehead), as was the custom in those days⁶³. But a sinful woman came to where they were eating and did not stop kissing the feet of Jesus!

This passage shows that *affection should be expressed*, for example, by some token of affection. During the time of Jesus, the kiss was a token of affection. In our day, Christians in different countries of the world should decide *what would be appropriate tokens of affection in their culture*. Christians in every country of the world should express their affection towards one another in an appropriate way. For example in some cultures, Christian men give one another a bear hug.

The kiss should be a sincere expression of affection. Judas betrayed Jesus to his enemies with a kiss⁶⁴. The kiss of Judas was insincere and the Christian kiss may not be like Judas' kiss of betrayal. This passage shows that the kiss or any other way of expressing Christian affection should be real and sincere.

The kiss should be a holy expression of affection. The apostle Paul urged Christians to greet one another with a *holy kiss*⁶⁵. The word *holy* means *separated from evil and set apart for God*. Therefore, a holy kiss always implies that three parties are involved: Two people, each having a share in Christ's love, share this love also with one another! The holy kiss symbolises Christ's love which they share.

On the one hand, the kissing may not be cold, indifferent and meaningless. On the other hand, the kissing may not be out of the wrong desire or wrong motive. This passage shows that the kiss should be meaningful. It should symbolise their love and care for one another. It is an expression of Christian love as well as an expression of commitment to help one another to be separated from evil and set apart for God.

The kiss should be a common expression of affection. The apostle Paul commands Christians, "Greet *all the brothers* with a holy kiss"⁶⁶. Christians may not omit showing affection to those members they do not like for some reason! The holy kiss should be given to every Christian without partiality. This passage shows that the kiss maintains the harmony and peace among the Christian brothers and sisters.

The kiss should be a loving expression of affection. The apostle Peter commands Christians to greet one another with a *kiss of love*⁶⁷. This passage shows that the kiss is an expression of the responsibility to love one another with Christian

⁶² Mark 15:21

⁶³ Luke 7:36-50

⁶⁴ Luke 22:47-48

⁶⁵ Romans 16:16; 2 Corinthians 13:12

⁶⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:26

⁶⁷ 1 Peter 5:14

love. The kiss is as it were a commitment to love one another as Jesus loved them⁶⁸ and to love in the way taught in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

The history of the Christian kiss. There is evidence that the holy kiss passed into common Christian usage until the 13th century in the Western Church. Today it is still continued in the Coptic Christian Church! In some cultures the contact between the different sexes is more strictly regulated than in other cultures. The correct application of the Christian kiss would be that Christians in every country of the world should decide what would be an appropriate way to express their Christian affection to one another.

⁶⁸ John 13:34-35

c. Warning against false teachers and propagandists (16:17-20).

16:17. I exhort (vipa) you, brothers, to continually watch out (to mark and avoid)⁶⁹ (vnpa) for those who do (i.e. cause) (vppa) divisions⁷⁰ and do (i.e. put)(vppa) obstacles (in your way) that are contrary to the teaching (i.e. what is taught)⁷¹ you have *once for all* learned⁷² (viaa). You must *always* avoid (vmpa) them!

16:18. For such people *never* serve⁷³ (vipa) our Lord Christ, but (serve as a slave) their own bellies (appetites); and by smooth talk⁷⁴ and flattery⁷⁵ they *again and again* deceive⁷⁶ (vipa) the hearts of naive (simple, innocent)⁷⁷ people.

16:19. For the (report of) your obedience has reached⁷⁸ (viad) everyone, so that I *continually* rejoice (vipa) over you; but I want (vipa) you to *continually* be (vnpa) wise about what is⁷⁹ good, and innocent (unmixed)⁸⁰ about what is⁸¹ evil.

16:20. The God of peace will soon⁸² crush (trample)⁸³ (vifa) Satan under your feet. The grace of the Lord Jesus (be) *with you*.

The false teachers and their methods. It is nowhere implied that these people were members of the congregation at Rome, because Paul commends the obedience of the Christians in Rome to Christ (16:19). Instead, *they were probably outsiders, travelling false teachers and propagandists, who knock on your door or confront you on the street*. Some may have been Gnostic ascetics, like the false teachers in Colosse, who taught a stringent asceticism⁸⁴. Some may have been Jewish legalists who tried to convert the Christians back to Judaism and the ceremonial law⁸⁵. Some may have been antinomian libertines, free thinkers who reject God's law completely so that people may sin as much as they like (6:1). And some may have been of the Epicurean type, serving their own appetites (16:18).

'Their god is their stomach' is probably an expression that they served themselves instead of Christ. 'Their glory is in their shame'⁸⁶ could mean that they have given themselves over to shameful way of living, but probably means that they shamelessly put themselves in the centre of everything. Their mind is on earthly things⁸⁷.

All such people serve themselves or their organisations (cults) instead of Christ. They are slaves of their own ego. They are filled with an exalted opinion about themselves. They love to hear themselves talk! They deceive people with their smooth talk and flattery (16:18). This still a common feature of all false teachers today, who corrupt the purity and simplicity of the gospel to deceive people. They are characterised by their opposition to the Bible and its clear teachings.

How Christians should treat false teachers and propagandists. Paul does not say that Christians must *oppose* these false teachers, because they might have been too strong for the ordinary members of the Christian congregation. Instead he says *watch out for them all the time*, that is, *notice who they are, mark them, so that you can avoid them!* The apostle Paul commands Christians to avoid (shun, keep away from) them. Also the apostle John commands Christians not to take false teachers into their house and not to welcome them, because anyone who welcomes a false teacher into his house shares in the wicked work of the false teacher⁸⁸.

Paul wants Christians to stay far from being corrupted and from being led astray from their sincere and pure devotion to Christ⁸⁹. "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil"⁹⁰. Christians must be wise about what is good. They must know what to say and do at the right time and in the right way. Christians must be innocent about what is evil. They must be 'unmixed', that is, 'pure' and innocent' of every form of evil, especially the evil of the false teachers.

⁶⁹ G: skopeó

⁷⁰ G: dichostasia

⁷¹ G: didaché

⁷² G: manthanó

⁷³ G: douleuó

⁷⁴ G: chréstologia

⁷⁵ G: eulogia

⁷⁶ G: exapataó

⁷⁷ G: akakos

⁷⁸ G: aphikneomai

⁷⁹ G: eis to

⁸⁰ G: akeraios

⁸¹ G: eis to

⁸² G: en tachei. cf. Revelation 1:1

⁸³ G: suntribó

⁸⁴ Colossians 2:20-23

⁸⁵ Galatians 4:9-10; 1:8-9

⁸⁶ Philippians 3:19

⁸⁷ James 3:15; Jude 16,19

⁸⁸ 2 John 10-11

⁸⁹ 2 Corinthians 11:1-3

⁹⁰ 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

Romans 16:20 is an allusion to Genesis 3:15! The divisions in the world and in the Church are caused by Satan's instruments⁹¹. It is God in Christ who bruises Satan and establishes peace in contrast with conflict, discord, and division. Therefore he is called 'the God of peace'.

In the present time Christians have battles and victories in anticipation of the final victory⁹²! The final victory and subjection of all enemies is certainly going to happen⁹³!

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you" is a benediction inserted at the close of a subdivision of the letter as Paul does more often⁹⁴.

d. Greetings from friends (16:21-24).

16:21. Timothy, my fellow worker greets (vipn) you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow-countrymen.

16:22. I, Tertius, who wrote down (vpaa) this letter, greet (vipn) you in the Lord.

16:23. Gaius, who is my host⁹⁵ and that of the entire church (congregation), greets (vipn) you.

16:24. Erastus, who is the economist (or treasurer)⁹⁶ of the city, and the brother Quartus greet (vipn) you.

Paul's fellow-worker Timothy (16:21). Timothy is Paul's beloved son⁹⁷ and serves Paul in the gospel work⁹⁸. The other three men were probably fellow-countrymen (cf. 16:7).

Paul's secretary Tertius (16:22). It is not unusual for an author of a letter to employ a secretary. Paul would sometimes add a few words with his own hand⁹⁹. Tertius was a Christian, because he greets them in the Lord.

Paul's host Gaius (16:23). Because Priscilla and Aquila were no longer in Corinth, but back in Rome (16:5), Paul probably stayed with Gaius. He may be the same person mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14, because Paul is writing from Corinth. There is good ground for thinking that he is the Titius Justus of Acts 18:7 into whose house Paul entered after leaving the synagogue.

Gaius was the host of the whole church, which means that his home was the meeting place for the congregation of believers at Corinth. It could also mean that his home was open to all Christians visiting Corinth, an outstanding example of hospitality (12:13). He is not the Gaius of Acts 19:29; 20:4; 3 John 1.

The treasurer Erastus (16:24). The translation as if Erastus was 'the director or commissioner of public works' in charge of buildings, roads, public games, etc. is not warranted. He was an economist or treasurer of the city. It is difficult to identify him with the Erastus of Acts 19:22. He may be the Erastus of 2 Timothy 4:20.

e. The final doxology (16:25-27)

16:25. Now to him¹⁰⁰, - who is *always* able (present tense) to establish (aorist tense) you in accordance with my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, in conformity with the revelation of the mystery (secret) that was concealed (perfect tense) for long ages past,

16:26. but (this mystery) having now (in the New Testament period) been manifested¹⁰¹ (vpap) through the prophetic Scriptures, is in accordance with the command of the eternal God being made known¹⁰² (vpap) among all the nations in order to bring about the obedience of faith. .

16:27. - to the only wise God through Jesus Christ, (to him) (be) glory forever! Amen.

The final doxology belongs to the original letter of Paul. There are five groups of Greek manuscripts with differences with respect to this final doxology.

- The doxology comes after Romans 16:23 (24) in Codex Synaiticus (4th C), Codex Vaticanus (4th C), Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (5th C), Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (5th-6th C)
- The doxology comes after Romans 14:23 in Codex Regius (8th C)
- The doxology comes after both Romans 16:23 and Romans 14:23 in Codex Alexandrinus (5th C)
- The doxology comes after Romans 15:33 in the Chester Beatty Papyrus p46 (ca. A.D. 200)
- No doxology – Codex Seidelianus I (10th C), Codex Borelianus (9th C) and the false teacher Marcion (and his followers were known to be anti-Rome and anti-Old Testament).

⁹¹ 2 Corinthians 11:12-15; Revelation 13:2

⁹² 1 John 2:14; 4:4

⁹³ 1 Corinthians 15:25-28

⁹⁴ 1 Corinthians 16:24; Galatians 6:18; Philippians 4:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:18; 2 Timothy 4:22; Philemon 25

⁹⁵ G: xenos

⁹⁶ G: oikonomos

⁹⁷ 2 Timothy 1:2

⁹⁸ Philippians 2:19-22

⁹⁹ Galatians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:1

¹⁰⁰ cf. verse 27

¹⁰¹ G: phaneroó

¹⁰² G: gnórizó

There is an argument that the shorter version ending with Romans 14:23 came into existence when the Letter to the Romans became a kind of circular letter and the particular information with respect to Rome was deleted. Against this argument is the insuperable objection that the apostle would not slice his teaching in Romans 14:1 to 15:13 into two.

There is an argument that Paul's habit was to conclude his letters with a grace benediction. Against this argument is the fact that Paul's first letter to the Corinthians does not conclude with the grace benediction. Also other New Testament books do not end with a benediction.

There is an argument that Paul does not conclude his letters with a doxology. Against this argument is the fact that the letters 2 Peter and Jude both conclude with a doxology. And the letter to the Romans concludes both its doctrinal part (1:1 to 11:36) and its practical part (12:1 to 16:27) with doxologies of nearly the same length!

The overwhelming testimony of the Greek manuscripts is that the doxology (16:25-27) is authentic and comes at the end of Romans 16:24!

A mystery is a revealed truth. 'A mystery' is a truth that would have remained unknown if God had not revealed it¹⁰³. If the mystery were a person, the person would have remained unknown if God had not revealed him¹⁰⁴. Thus, a mystery is only known by revelation from God.

The mystery was completely hidden before the creation. The mystery was God's decision or design or plan that was kept concealed from times eternal (16:25b)¹⁰⁵. This fact implies that the mystery had been designed by God from eternity! It had always been a part of his eternal plan! Just like the glory of the mystery of election is enhanced by the fact that it took place "in Christ before the foundation of the world"¹⁰⁶, so the glory of this mystery is shown by the fact that it was eternally embraced in God's design. The mystery was concealed from man, but not from God himself.

The mystery was partly revealed during the Old Testament period. The mystery had been promised beforehand in the prophetic books of the Old Testament (1:2; 16:26a). The essence of the mystery revealed during the Old Testament period was 'the gospel', the good news that one day believing Gentiles would enter the Kingdom of God in large numbers. This promise was given to Abraham (about 2100 B.C.)¹⁰⁷ and had been unfolded progressively. In the Psalms (about 1000 B.C.)¹⁰⁸ and Isaiah (about 700 B.C.)¹⁰⁹ it is a recurring refrain!

The mystery was fully revealed during the New Testament period.

The mystery is now completely revealed and made known through the proclamation of the gospel and Jesus Christ (16:25a) and consequently through the (Old Testament and New Testament) Scriptures that accompany the proclamation of the gospel to the nations (16:26a).

The essence of the mystery revealed during the New Testament period is that God's Old Testament people, (believing) Israel, is *continued and enlarged* to include the believers from all the Gentile nations and that these believing Gentiles share on completely equal terms in all God's promises! From the first coming of Jesus Christ onwards, the gospel of the Kingdom of God is proclaimed as a testimony to all the nations (including Israel)¹¹⁰ and vigorous believers from all the nations are taking hold of the Kingdom of God¹¹¹. The believing Gentiles have become fellow heirs together with the believing Jews, fellow-members together with believing Jews of the one Body of Christ and fellow sharers together with believing Jews *of all God's promises in the Bible*¹¹² and all this on absolutely equal terms with believing Jews¹¹³! The believing Jews are no longer the only special people of God¹¹⁴. Believers in Jesus Christ from every nation now constitute God's special people¹¹⁵!

Only with the coming of Christ and the breaking down of the wall of partition (the Old Testament ceremonial law)¹¹⁶ God's Old Testament promises and prophecies began to go into fulfilment. It was only at the first coming of Christ that these Old Testament promises and prophecies (the mystery) together with their implication became clearly visible to the believers from the nation of Israel¹¹⁷! They will continue to go into fulfilment until the second coming of Christ, when the full number of elect Gentiles and the full number of elect Jews will have been saved (11:25-26).

¹⁰³ Ephesians 3:2-6

¹⁰⁴ Colossians 1:25-27

¹⁰⁵ 1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 1:4; 3:9-11; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; Titus 1:2-3

¹⁰⁶ Ephesians 1:4

¹⁰⁷ Genesis 12:3; cf. 22:18; Galatians 3:6-8

¹⁰⁸ Psalm 2:8; 67:7; 102:15

¹⁰⁹ Isaiah 2:2-4; 42:6; 49:6; 56:3-8

¹¹⁰ Matthew 24:14

¹¹¹ Matthew 11:12

¹¹² Ephesians 3:6; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:20

¹¹³ Acts 10:15,28,34-35; Romans 10:12-13

¹¹⁴ Deuteronomy 7:6-10

¹¹⁵ John 10:16; Galatians 3:28; 1 Peter 2:9-10

¹¹⁶ Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14

¹¹⁷ Acts 10:34-37; 11:14-18; 15:7-11; 13:38-48

Originally only the Jews possessed the prophetic writings (the Old Testament Scriptures). But from the first coming of Christ the gospel about Jesus Christ is proclaimed to all the nations in accordance with the command of Jesus Christ (16:25)¹¹⁸ and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8). With this world-wide proclamation, not only the Old Testament Scriptures, but also the New Testament Scriptures have become the property of all nations without distinction. And through these Scriptures (the whole Bible) the mystery is made known to all the nations in the world.

The purpose of the mystery that has been revealed. The purpose of the revealed mystery and its proclamation is that all nations might believe in Jesus Christ and obey him (16:26b; cf. 1:5).

The mystery that has been revealed functions to the glory of God. Was not the letter to the Romans addressed to a congregation that consisted of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles, who were serving God in unity? All this was happening at Rome and is still happening now all over the world to the glory of the only wise God who revealed himself through Jesus Christ (16:27)!

¹¹⁸ cf. Matthew 28:18-20