

FINAL GREETINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Romans 16:1-27
Phil de Martimprey

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GREET THE FAMILY (16:1-16)

Paul moves from telling the Roman brothers and sisters his hopes and plans to come see them, (15:22-33) to greeting an incredible list of people, including 26 individuals, 2 “families” and 3 “house churches”. Paul hasn’t been to Rome, but we see that he knows a number of people he has either heard about, or that he has met during his ministry, that he believes have now traveled to Rome. There are a couple things that stand out in this section.

First is his recommendation of Phoebe to the Roman believers. It would appear that she was the one who has carried this precious letter to the church, and Paul wants to ensure that she receives “whatever she may need” from the Romans churches. She isn’t mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament, but it is clear she was a prominent member and minister at the church at Cenchreae.

Second, we clearly see again that the christian life is a life lived in relationship with the family of God. This family is full of brothers and sisters with different gifts and ministries, but all are so vital. In this list Paul identifies: fellow workers, risk takers, the beloved, kinsmen, the approved, hard workers, the chosen, mothers, house churches, fellow prisoners, and even the first convert in Asia. The thing that binds this family together is their Christ centered love and ministry toward one another, and their devotion to the “work” the Lord has called them to. This is a beautiful picture of just a few of the family of God found in Rome. God has been calling people to Himself in Christ through the Holy Spirit all over the world, with all kinds of different backgrounds, vocations, and ministry roles, and He continues to do so today for His Glory and the redemption of those who would believe in Him! What a wonderful truth to marinate our hearts and minds in.

GUARD THE FAMILY (16:17-20)

In these verses we have a seemingly out of place appeal from Paul. He pleads with them to watch out for false teachers. What makes these verses seem a little out of place, is that this is the first time false teachers have been addressed in the whole letter, and he only uses a few sentences to deal with them. But, as we think about Paul’s purpose for including it, it will fit right into what Paul has been talking about.

It would seem that he isn’t addressing a current problem that he has heard about in the Roman churches, but rather, getting out in front of a problem he knows *will* come to the Roman churches. Paul knows all too well that false teachers, and those who would distort the gospel message, will attempt to deceive the believers in Rome. His confidence comes from his own experience, as he saw or heard of it happening in almost every city that he preached the gospel in (Read Acts Chapters 14-23). He has spent the last few chapters developing the importance of being unified and “welcoming” one another in Christ, and there are few things that will tear at the church family worse than the division that comes from the teaching of false doctrine. His appeal is that they stay far away from these people, for they are not servants of Christ. They are evil in purpose and desire. To close out the thought, Paul commends them for their obedience, but encourages them to be wise. They need to be aware of false doctrine, not naive and unsuspecting. They need to be on their guard, not just accepting any teacher that comes into their midst. The final outcome of this struggle will be that “Satan will be crushed under their feet”. This seems not only to relate to their overcoming the satan-driven, lying, false teachers that will seek to divide them, but also is a reference to the promise of the full and final defeat of Satan, as promised in Genesis 3:15 and described in Revelation 20.

GREETINGS FROM PAUL'S COMPANIONS (16:21-23)

Here is another list of people who are with Paul and want to add their greeting and blessing to this letter to the Roman believers. Once again, adding weight to the importance of relationships among the family of God. Timothy was Paul's closest ministry partner and traveled all over with Paul, preaching and teaching and to some degree even co-authoring at least six of Paul's letters. (2 Corinthians; 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Philippians; Colossians; Philemon). Tertius was the one who copied down Paul's words to the Romans, called an "*amanuensis*". Gaius was the host to Paul and to the other believers in Corinth where Paul was most probably dictating this letter from. Erastus the treasurer and another brother Quartus, whom we don't know anything else about. Now that all the greetings and last appeals have been made, Paul closes out this unparalleled letter with a magnificent doxology. These Spirit filled word of praise have echoed through God's family for over 2000 years!

GLORY TO GOD (16:25-27)

The gospel message of Jesus Christ is the pinnacle story of world history. It was a divine mystery, kept secret for ages, but has now been revealed and made known throughout the world because God commanded it to be!

Paul closes out this letter echoing many of the ideas he started with in chapter 1. The only wise God is fulfilling, through Christ, what was hidden and prophesied about thousands of years before Christ was born, lived, died, and was resurrected. May these truths, so often heard, never lose their power in our lives! This good news is calling all mankind to the obedience of faith, both Jews and Gentiles, both the Weak and the Strong, to the eternal glory of God through Christ Jesus, AMEN!