

# Romans 16

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Why is this in the Bible?

## Romans 16:1-16

<sup>1</sup>I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, <sup>2</sup>that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

<sup>3</sup>Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup>who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. <sup>5</sup>Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. <sup>6</sup>Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. <sup>7</sup>Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. <sup>8</sup>Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. <sup>9</sup>Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. <sup>10</sup>Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. <sup>11</sup>Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. <sup>12</sup>Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also, his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. <sup>14</sup>Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. <sup>15</sup>Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. <sup>16</sup>Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

1. Cenchreae: a city near Corinth, where Paul wrote Romans
2. Phoebe delivered Paul's letter to the Roman Christians
3. "Servant": In Greek, "diakonos," translated as "deacon" in Phil. 1:1. Phoebe is a deaconess.
4. Patron: a protector, provider. She aided others in their resources
  - a. Phoebe was wealthy
  - b. Phoebe was generous



Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. Greet also the church in their house.

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1. A husband and wife who are mentioned in several of Paul's letters.
2. Paul also sends his greetings to them in 1 Cor. 16:19 and 2 Tim. 4:19.
3. They put their lives on the line for Paul.
4. They are recognized in many churches where many are thankful for them.
5. They host a church in their own house.
6. "Prisca" is the formal name. "Priscilla" is the nickname for Prisca. Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned in Acts 18.

Acts 18:1-3: After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And [Paul] went to see them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.

- a. Pontus is a region in northern Turkey located on the Black Sea.
- b. Before meeting Paul in Corinth, they were in Rome.
- c. The Caesar Claudius expelled Jews from Rome around 49 AD because of “disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus.”
- d. Jews were allowed to return to Rome after Claudius died in 54 AD. (Paul’s letter was written around 58 AD.)

Acts 18:18: After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila.

- a. They travelled with Paul.

Acts 18:24, 26: Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. . . . He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

- a. They travelled on their own to Ephesus.
- b. They disciplined Apollos.
- c. They returned to Rome sometime between 54 AD and 58 AD where they had their own house church.

Rom. 16:5b-16: Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also, his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

1. It's good to greet people.
2. People are working for the Lord.
3. Paul knows and cares about these people.
4. Some "fun facts:"
  - a. Epaenetus: Asia is the region of Ephesus and the seven churches mentioned in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.
  - b. Andronicus and Junia: Jewish Christians, who were imprisoned for their faith. "Known to the apostles" may mean that they were also apostles. An apostle is someone who witnessed the resurrection and was commissioned by the Lord to proclaim the gospel.
  - c. Aristobulus/Narcissus: families are Christian, but they are likely not.
  - d. Rufus' mother: Like a mother to Paul, not Paul's biological brother.
  - e. Nereus: A servant mentioned in Roman records?

# Diversity based on sex

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1. Nine women are singled out (Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Junias, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus' mother, Nereus' sister). Paul is making a point to recognize the women.
2. Phoebe:
  - a. Welcome her “in a way worthy of the saints.” She is to be treated as a person with honor.
  - b. “Help her in whatever she may need from you.” As she has helped so many others, the Romans are encouraged to also help her.
3. Prisca:
  - a. In Roman culture, wives were the property of their husbands.
  - b. Prisca is an equal partner with her husband, Aquila.

# Diversity based on ethnicity

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1. Paul singles out his “kinsmen,” fellow Jews: Andronicus, Junias, and Herodion.
2. From Acts 18 we know that Aquila was Jewish, but Prisca was not (and may have been from an upper-class gentile family).
3. Mary is a Jewish name.



# Diversity based on politics

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1. Aquila and Prisca
  - a. Jews who were expelled from Rome for political reasons
  - b. They have recently returned to Rome
2. Ampliatus: a member of the imperial household
3. Julia: a current or former slave of the imperial household
4. There may be others: 13 of the 27 names appear in documents/inscriptions relating to the Emperor's palace

# Diversity based on economics

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1. Phoebe was wealthy.
2. Prisca and Aquila:
  - a. Prisca was possibly upper class.
  - b. They had a tent making business.
  - c. They seemed to travel a lot.
3. Julia was a slave.
4. Was Nereus also a slave?

# Diversity based on unbelief in the same family

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1. Rom. 16:10b: “Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.”
2. Rom 16:11b: “Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.”
3. It looks like unbelief in the same families:
  - a. The “families” are believers and are to be greeted.
  - b. Neither Aristobulus nor Narcissus are greeted. They are likely not believers and members of the Roman church.

# Diversity brings the danger of division

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Acts 16:17-20: “<sup>17</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, to **watch out for those who cause divisions** and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. <sup>18</sup> For **such persons do not serve our Lord Christ**, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery **they deceive the hearts of the naive**. <sup>19</sup> For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. <sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”

# Paul repeatedly warns against division

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- 1. Rom. 14:1-4a:** “<sup>1</sup> As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but **not to quarrel over opinions.** <sup>2</sup> One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> **Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains** and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. <sup>4</sup> **Who are you to pass judgment** on the servant of another?”
- 2. Rom. 14:13-15:** “<sup>13</sup> Therefore **let us not pass judgment on one another any longer**, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. <sup>14</sup> I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. <sup>15</sup> For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.”

# Paul uses “all” to emphasize the unity in Christ

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1. Rom. 1:7: “**All** god’s beloved in Rome”
2. Rom. 3:23: “**all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
3. Rom. 4:17: “[Abraham] is the father of us **all** [those who share the faith of Abraham]”
4. Rom 10:12: “the same Lord is Lord of **all** and bestows his riches upon **all** who call upon him”
5. Rom. 16:4:
  - a. Aquila is a Jew
  - b. “**all** the churches of the Gentiles give [him] thanks”

## Paul uses “we/us” and “you” to warn against rejecting Christ’s unity

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1. Rom. 6:5, 12: “<sup>5</sup> For if **we have been united** with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. . . . <sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in **your** mortal body, to make **you** obey its passions.
2. Rom. 14:10a, 13: “Why do **you** pass judgment on your brother? Or **you**, why do **you** despise your brother? . . . <sup>13</sup> Therefore let **us** not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.”

Rom. 16:19:

Paul ties “all” together with “you”

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“For your **obedience is known to all**, so that I **rejoice over you**, but I want **you** to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.”



# The danger of Romans 16 looks like America today

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1. Division based on sex/gender
2. Division based on ethnicity/race
3. Division based on politics
4. Division based on economics/rich vs. poor
5. Division based on unbelief in the same families

# Paul's solution

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Rom. 12:1-2: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Rom. 12:3a: "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think"

Rom. 12:16b: "Never be wise in your own sight."

Rom. 12:19a: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God"