

# **ROMANS - #16**

## **ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS**

### **LESSON TOPIC**

## **“DEARLY BELOVED” AT ROME**

### **SCRIPTURE LESSON: ROMANS 16:1-27**

**MEMORY VERSE; ROM. 16:16. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Paul now comes to the end of a long, powerful and spiritually enlightening epistle to the Church at Rome. He has covered a broad range of relevant spiritual concerns applicable to the Roman church, but just as applicable to us today. I fear that there is so much more contained in this epistle which we have not been able to cover. Maybe, at least, our study opens our thoughts to the greater horizons contained in this marvelous letter. I have to wonder, what kind of letter would you or I be able to write to a church which we had never seen but were moved of God to love and desire to see. By being drawn nearer to Paul's doctrine through this epistle, may we also be drawn nearer to God and to our fellow Christians in the process.

This last chapter seems at first to be a long list of insignificant names of Roman Christians, picked up somewhere in the course of his many travels. Looking closer, we see that they were laborers with Paul at some time as well as kinsmen, beloved, servants and saints of God, known to Paul and very dear to him for various reasons. These individuals certainly gave him strong reasons to desire to visit the church at Rome. These people who were so dear to him had, in one form or another and at one time or another, been in Paul's labors helping him on his journey. He even spoke of those who were his "fellow prisoners". When you have labored in the gospel together; worked at the same trade together; lived in houses together; slept in prison in chains together and more, you become so much more than mere acquaintances you, by chance, met at church one night. You have formed unforgettable experiences together in the kingdom of God, sharing moments of divine ecstasy as well as moments of the deepest of trials and suffering. That is the substance and basis of Paul's acquaintance and love for those to whom he writes. He shares with them an unbreakable bond of love and peace through Christ and his gospel. That is how Christian relationships should be.

### **DAILY SCRIPTURES AND COMMENTS**

**MONDAY. ROM. 16:1-2. PHEBE, THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH AT CENCHREA.**

V1. I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea. V2. That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also.

Phebe was a servant or deaconess of the church at Cenchrea. Cenchrea was actually a part of the area in and around Corinth where Paul preached for 18 months. Paul gives her the highest commendation to the church at Rome, where she apparently was moving to. She hath been a succorer of many, including myself also. She cared for, helped and in general was a servant to many within the church there.

**TUESDAY. ROM. 16:3-5. PRISCILLA AND AQUILA AND THE CHURCH IN THEIR HOUSE.**

V3. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: V4. Who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. V5. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well beloved Epaenetus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts we learned how the relationship of Paul and Priscilla and Aquila was formed. They built tents together, they preached the gospel together and Paul stayed at their house. At that time they had been driven out of Italy and had come to Corinth where they met Paul. Now it is some 5-6 years later (about 57-58 AD) and they are back in Rome, with a “church in their house”. They seem to have given their lives completely to the work of spreading the gospel, helping Christians and making tents to supply their needs. They were a blessing to Paul.

Epaenetus was the first convert when Paul preached in Achaia (Corinth), and a beloved brother, now also apparently in Rome.

**WEDNESDAY. ROM. 16:6-16. GREETINGS TO LABORERS, KINSMEN, BELOVED, SAINTS, ETC.**

V6. Greet Mary who bestowed much labor on us.

Paul honors one Mary who had labored with or on his behalf in a church where he had preached. This labor could have been domestic, teaching, service of many sorts or otherwise.

V7, Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Four notable attributes are given regarding Andronicus and Junia. A) They were Paul’s kinsmen, either as Jews or of his own family; B) Somewhere they had been his “fellow-prisoners”. This was something like Silas was but apparently not at the same time; C) They were well known among the apostles which elevates their standing as original Christians; and D) They were Christians before Paul and therefore deserved his respect.

V8. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

That would not be much of an introduction in today's world, but it was very dear and meaningful to Paul.

**V9. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.**

These, along with others even in this chapter, are names that do not impress us with great things which they did. Only eternity will reveal all that they did to help Paul in his labors somewhere. Like the "Unknown Soldiers" buried in Arlington, they are known only to God.

**V10. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.**

Apelles was "approved" in Christ. The highest attainment and exaltation you can achieve.

All we know about Aristobulus is that his household was committed to the Lord. What more could he do?

**V11. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.**

Again Paul refers to one (Herodion) as his "kinsman". There surely were many other "Jews" in Rome he could have claimed "national" kinship with. This seems to refer to a family or gospel kinship.

Another acquaintance of Paul, Narcissus, whom he has had the occasion to learn about and / or work with in some area, is recognized for those in her household who were in the Lord. It is probably a household similar to that of Lydia in Philippi.

**V12. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord.**

Their names surely catch our attention; perhaps they were sisters, maybe even twins. But their names are not the outstanding characteristic of them; their labor in the Lord was and that is very noteworthy. Then there was Persis who labored "much" in the Lord. These are people we will never meet this side of eternity but there is no telling how rich that meeting will be when we learn of all they did for the gospel of Christ.

**V13. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.**

Somewhere Paul had met Rufus and his mother. He refers to the mother of Rufus as his mother also. You can interpret this statement as their natural mother or as Paul's mother in the faith which seems somewhat out of context. In either case, there is a strong Christian bond between them which would have been formed somewhere in Paul's missionary journeys. A further point of interest about this Rufus is raised in Mk. 15:21. Here it tells us of the event of Simon the Cyrenian being compelled to carry the cross for Christ. Then it tells us that he was the father of Alexander and "Rufus". There is some commentary, with good rationale, that this Rufus is the same as that whom Paul now greets.

**V14. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes and the brethren which are with them.**

This seems to be several individuals grouped together, along with other brethren, who may have met in some house in their own area of Rome.

V15. Salute Philologus, and Julia, nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

Here again it seems that these individuals are grouped together in some area separate from the others. If this is not the case, then you have to conclude that there are “cliques” in the church if it is only one assembly.

V16. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

We do not know all of their customary methods of greeting friends. Paul freely exhorts them to salute one another with a “holy kiss”. It would be carnal to make anything of this “holy kiss” other than a friendly embrace as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Nothing else should be read into it.

V17. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

Nothing destabilizes a Christian assembly more than someone stirring up offensive stories or someone causing divisions over the established doctrine. Paul says avoid them.

V18. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

People who come up with some other doctrine other than apostolic truth only serve their own selfish pride and lusts. They will often capture the hearts of those who don't know better.

V19. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men, I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

The Roman Christians had a reputation which had reached Paul which declared that they were obedient unto the gospel in all things.

V20. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Victory will soon be yours over those who do evil and cause problems in the church.

**FRIDAY. ROM. 16:21-27. GREETINGS FROM “US” TO “YOU”.**

V21. Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

Since we know Timotheus, that he is not a natural kinsman of Paul, we can safely conclude that the others are “kinsmen in Christ” also.

V22. I Tertus, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.

This only means that Tertus was the one who actually did the writing of this letter, for Paul.

V23. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

I'm living with Gaius just now, and he along with the rest of the church sends you greetings. Erastus was the treasurer (chamberlain) of the city of Corinth. All through the Bible it is not uncommon to find God's people in strategic places in life.

V24. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

This is a usual ending of a Christian letter, much the same way that we would say, "yours truly" or "love".

V25. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, V26. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandments of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

The secrets of the gospel plan of salvation, hidden in types, shadows and prophecies of Old Testament scriptures, are now made known through the atoning work of redemption by Christ and is preached unto the world for them to obey in faith.

V27. To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

### SUMMARY

In closing this letter to Roman Christians Paul sends specific greetings to 29 different individuals, plus the church in several houses and also other groups. His acquaintances there are many and very close to him. This could only have come about by his personal interaction with them at some point in his ministry. This interaction would have had to be more than a one-time meeting in a church service in some city.

These were not people of high position in life. They were recognized for something far more valuable to Paul than that. Some of them were recognized as "servants" of the Lord. Many of them were recognized as "laborers together with Paul", or helpers in the Lord. Many were addressed as "beloved" and "chosen in Christ" and some as "kinsmen".

The letter was apparently written about 57-58 A.D. That would mean that it was about 5 years before Paul finally reached Rome, being brought there under Roman guard as a prisoner who had appealed his case brought against him by the Jews. On that journey, when he was about 50 miles from Rome, at Appii forum, some of the brethren from Rome came to meet him which greatly encouraged Paul. You have to wonder if there were not some of the same ones whom he greeted in this chapter there on that occasion to welcome Paul to Rome and to support his work.

It is a letter that sets forth in a scholarly manner, with very persuasive arguments, the great truths of God's redeeming grace for both Jew and Gentile. It is for us also today, as is his farewell blessing of the grace of God upon all Christians. Some highlights of the letter are: 1) The mutual sinfulness of both Jew and Gentiles; 2) The redemption of every member of our bodies through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ; 3) The predestined plan of God; 4) All things work together for good to them who love God; 5) Practical Christian living; 6) Obedience to civil authority, and, 7) Greetings to saints at the church at Rome. Farewell.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Why would so many of those whom Paul greeted be mentioned along with "the church in their house?"
2. What are the true motives of those "who cause offenses and divisions"?
3. Where was Paul when he wrote this epistle?
4. What one outstanding lesson have you learned from the book of Romans?