

Romans – Gospel of God Exalted

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

Zoom Meeting ID:

 **828 7580 6094** ►

Thursday February 5, 2026

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Romans 16:20 (NLT)

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Introduction

Love for the Saints

Despite the great popularity of the book of Romans, chapter 16 is often neglected by preachers, teachers, and Bible students. It has almost no explicit teaching and includes several lists of people, many of whom we know nothing about except what little, if anything, is said of them here. But they doubtless were a representative cross section of believers in Rome and of Paul's companions at the time he wrote the letter.

This passage is by far the most extensive and intimate expression of love and appreciation to come from the tender heart and inspired mind of the apostle Paul. It is a rich and rewarding section that yields many insights into the life of Paul, into the lives of other early Christians, and into the nature and character of the first-century church. The apostle's comments about these mostly unknown individuals are all the more compassionate because this great apostle takes time to speak so warmly and appreciatively of these "ordinary" Christians, who were as much his

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brothers and sisters in Christ as Peter, James, John, and other New Testament notables. He here reveals his deep affection for those whom he had served, for those who had served him, and for those who served with him.

Paul continues the personal epilogue that began in 15:14 and reveals still more of his inner thoughts and feelings, not so much as an apostle as a fellow servant of Jesus Christ. In 15:14–33 he focuses on his relationship to the Lord in his ministry. In chapter 16 he focuses on his relationship to other Christians with whom he has been associated in one way or another in his ministry. He specifically identifies, and sometimes briefly comments about, those to whom he felt the closest. He reveals his love for the community of the redeemed, his mutual accountability with them before God, and his dependence on them for his own ministry and for his own well-being.

In this beautiful account Paul reveals that love in four ways: through his commendation (vv. 1–2), through his passion (vv. 3–16), through his caution (vv. 17–20), and through remarks about and greetings from his companions (vv. 21–23), after which he adds a brief benediction (v. 24).

POINT 1 -PAUL’S COMMENDATION

Romans 16:1–2 (NASB95)

1. I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; 2 that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.

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Paul devotes these two verses to the commendation of a single individual, **Phoebe**, ... **a servant** and a member **of the church which is at**. Cenchrea was the neighboring port city of Corinth, from which Paul wrote this letter, and **the church ... at Cenchrea** doubtless was a daughter church of the one at Corinth. It was from Cenchrea, at the end of his first ministry in Corinth, that Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila “put out to sea for Syria” (Acts 18:18).

Paul could **commend** this woman not only for what she had done as a faithful **sister** and **servant** of Christ but also for what she was soon to do in further service to their Lord. It is almost certain that **Phoebe** delivered this letter in person to the church at Rome, a responsibility of considerable magnitude.

The name **Phoebe** means “bright and radiant,” and from Paul’s brief comments about her, it seems that those words did indeed characterize her personality and her Christian life. Paul commends her to the church at Rome in three different ways: as a sister in Christ, as **a servant** and as **a helper of many**, including himself.

In Christ, we belong to God not only as “fellow citizens with the saints” in His divine kingdom but also are brothers and sisters in His divine “household” (Eph. 2:19). To refer to Phoebe as **our sister** meant that she was a devoted member of the family of God, and the context makes clear that she was especially dear to Paul.

Paul next commends **Phoebe** as **a servant** beloved by those she served in her home church **at Cenchrea**, and probably in the mother church at Corinth as well. **Servant** translates *diakonos*, the term from which we get *deacon*. The Greek word here is neuter and was used in the church as a general term for servant before the offices of deacon and deaconess were developed. It is used of the household

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servants who drew the water that Jesus turned into wine (John 2:5, 9), and Paul has used the term earlier in this letter (Rom. 13:4, twice) to refer to secular government as “a minister of God to you for good” and even of Christ as “a servant to the circumcision,” that is, to Jews (15:8)

During the first few centuries of the church, the role of a woman **servant** (*diakonos*) was to care for fellow believers who were sick, for the poor, for strangers passing through, and for the imprisoned. They also were responsible for helping baptize and disciple new women converts and to instruct children and other women.

Whether or not Phoebe held some official title or not, Paul commended her as a highly-proven **servant** of Christ and implored the church at Rome to **receive her in the Lord**.

As mentioned above, Phoebe was entrusted with carrying this letter to the church at Rome. There were, of course, no copiers or carbon paper in those days, and even the simplest writing materials were very expensive. It is therefore highly unlikely that Paul, through the hand of Tertius (v. 22), made more than one copy of this letter. Since Paul realized that letter would become part of God’s written Word, he knew that the truths he imparted in this letter had the mark of divine authenticity. He would therefore have made certain that this epistle to the Romans was entrusted only to the most reliable of persons.

Phoebe was to be received into fellowship **in a manner worthy of the saints**, that is, as a true and faithful believer. Jesus promised that when believers minister to “one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them,” they do it for Him (Matt. 25:35–40). Christians are to **receive**, to love, to minister to each other in a way that is distinct from the world around us and that it cannot comprehend. We are to

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embrace, serve, and care for all those who genuinely name the name of Christ (cf. Matt. 18:5–10).

Paul requested that the Roman church **help** Phoebe **in whatever matter she may have need of** them for. **Matter** is from *pragma*, from which we get *pragmatic*, and refers to anything that was done or carried out. It was often used of business transactions, and probably carries that idea here, as indicated by the King James's rendering of "business." Paul not only was giving a commendation of Phoebe as a faithful Christian but also was giving a letter of reference, as it were, in regard to whatever business **matter** she may have had in Rome.

That idea is reinforced by Paul's speaking of her as a **helper**, which was commonly used to signify a patron, a wealthy person who encouraged and financially supported an organization or cause, as in a patron of the arts. In other words, Phoebe was no ordinary **helper**, but one of high esteem and integrity and likely was a businesswoman of considerable wealth. She used her influence and her financial means, as well as her personal time and effort, as **a helper of many fellow believers and of myself [Paul] as well**.

That statement says as much about Paul as it does about Phoebe. The esteemed apostle readily and graciously acknowledged his personal indebtedness to and love for a Christian sister, whom he memorialized in these two verses in the Word of God. And, although God inspired no woman to write a part of Scripture, he used Phoebe to transport the first copy of this marvelous letter, which is one of the bedrocks of New Testament theology. This woman was representative of those countless women of God whom He has used and honored with great distinction within the framework of His divine plan.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What stood out to you in the introduction?**
- 2. What kind of person was Phoebe ?**
- 3. How was the church to help her?**
- 4. What stood out to you in this portion of the lesson?**

POINT 2 - PAUL'S GREETINGS

Romans 16:3–16 (NASB95)

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; 5 also *greet* the church that is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.

Paul continues his outpouring of love and affection for a host of beloved friends and fellow believers. In these verses the apostle gives a roster of choice Christians

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he knew and with whom he had worked. He had served them and been served by them.

The first to be greeted are **Prisca and Aquila**, a husband and wife who were **fellow workers in Christ Jesus** with Paul. They were not apostles or prophets but, nonetheless, were invaluable **workers** in the early church.

Paul first met this Jewish Christian couple on his first visit to Corinth, to which **Prisca**, whose name was Priscilla, **and Aquila** had fled from Rome when all Jews were expelled by the Emperor Claudias. It is possible that she was a Gentile, and perhaps a Roman citizen like Paul, and Aquila a Jew, but the expulsion would have applied to both of them, even if only one was Jewish.

During that period, it was customary in synagogues not only that men and woman sat on separate sides but that the men sat in groups according to profession or trade. It is therefore likely that Paul first met **Aquila** when he sat down as a visitor in the synagogue at Corinth. As it happened, he and **Prisca** were tentmakers like Paul, who stayed in their house while he began his ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:1–3). This remarkable couple is mentioned six times in the New Testament, three times by Luke in the book of Acts and three times by Paul, here and in 1 Corinthians 16:19 and 2 Timothy 4:19.

It is interesting that in four of those six references, Priscilla's name is given first. No reason for that unexpected order is given in the texts themselves. She may have been the more dominant and active of the two, or, as some have suggested, she may have had a higher social standing. No single explanation seems satisfactory, however, because both Luke and Paul use the names in both orders.

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They were much more than fellow workers with Paul, for whom they **risked their own necks**. Probably more than once, they put their own lives in jeopardy to protect Paul's. From a human perspective, they prevented Paul's life and ministry from being cut short before he had fulfilled his role in God's plan. They obviously rendered selfless service to many other Christians as well, because Paul goes on to make the remarkable statement that to them **not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles**. Wherever they traveled and lived, that Jewish couple ministered unstintingly and without prejudice.

Aquila and Priscilla later moved from Corinth to Ephesus. While there, they met a young Jewish preacher "named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, and eloquent man, ... mighty in the Scriptures." He did not have a full understanding of the gospel, "being acquainted only with the baptism of John.... But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (**Acts 18:24–26**).

After Claudius died, Aquila and Priscilla returned to Rome, where they lived and ministered when Paul wrote this letter to the church there. By this time there were many believers in Rome, probably spread throughout the city. One of the congregations was meeting **in their house**, and Paul extended his greetings to them.

Paul's next greeting is to **Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia**. It is likely that **Epaenetus** was especially **beloved** of Paul for the very reason that he was **the first convert from Asia**, now sometimes referred to as Asia Minor, the general area of modern Turkey. Because Paul speaks of this man so affectionately, it could well be that he came to Christ through the preaching of Paul and was lovingly disciplined by him.

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First convert translates *aparchē*, which literally means firstfruit. This believer was the **first convert from Asia** who became part of Paul's "offering of the Gentiles" to the Lord (Rom. 15:16). Through the intervening years, Paul had kept track of Epaenetus and was pleased that he now was part of the church at Rome.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What lessons can we learn from Aquila & Priscilla?**
- 2. What is an interesting fact about Priscilla?**
- 3. What did we learn about Epaenetus?**
- 4. What can we apply to our lives in this lesson?**

Closing Prayer