



## Romans - Chapter Sixteen

### VII Romans 15:14-16:23 - The extension of God's righteousness through the Pauline mission (continues/concludes)

#### Summary of Chapter Sixteen

Particularly during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century there were a number of scholars who contested that Chapter 16 was part of the original letter to the Romans, and that it was perhaps the conclusion to a letter that was written to the Ephesian church. However, this has generally been dismissed due to further analysis that can be undertaken with additional evidence that has since become available to scholars in the last 100 years or so.

Paul starts by introducing Phoebe who was from Cenchreæ, a sea port close to the city of Corinth from where Paul was writing his letter. It would be Phoebe that would then take the letter with her to Rome.

The next section is Paul's greetings to those he knew, or at least knew of, in Rome. This is standard syntax for letters written around this time and it also provided Phoebe with a list of contacts if she were indeed a stranger in the city, at least within the Christian communities there.

In the middle section of the chapter Paul, possibly writing in his own hand, warns the Roman congregations in general terms of the types of danger they will inevitably meet from both inside and outside the church. The letter then concludes with personal greetings from the people who were with Paul in Corinth, and who wanted to send their personal greetings to the Roman congregations.

Many believe the final doxology was added at some point after Paul had written the letter but it does not contain anything to detract from the letter's content or value. In fact, it provides a well rounded summary statement that would come across as an appropriate conclusion to the letter as a whole.

#### VII.b Romans 16:1-27 - Personal greetings

Verses 1-23 form the accepted basis of this chapter and are dealt with as a single section. Verse 24 does not appear in the NIV translation but is included here without comment. Verses 25-27 are a doxology, formed as a single sentence in the Greek, that many scholars accept was added by someone other than Paul at some point within the next 150 years, but which does not detract from the contents of the letter. In fact, as already stated in the summary, it does add a well rounded conclusion, especially when the letter was being read out as a whole to gathered church congregations, for whom the original ending may have seemed to be tame and lacking in

the power and energy of the rest of the letter.

#### VII.b.i Romans 16:1-23 - Appreciation and greetings to co-workers in the Gospel

Paul warmly greets those he knows, either personally or by reputation, in Rome who are involved in ministry, showing the love that existed among Christians. These greetings also function to support the authenticity of the Pauline Gospel, for they show that respected co-workers in Rome are co-labourers in the same Gospel that Paul proclaims. It is not surprising he would know so many who are now in Rome, for travel was more common than modern people might think. Further, although Paul may not have known every person he greeted in the letter, it is likely he knew of some by virtue of their reputation. Note that Paul says something specific about virtually every person greeted.

The list of those personally greeted, twenty five including the unnamed mother of Rufus, is the most extensive in Paul's letters with only Colossians coming anywhere close. It is interesting that Colossæ was the other church that Paul wrote to before he had visited them.

There are also five church groups mentioned and many scholars have concluded that would indicate around 100 Christians in Rome out of a population of over one million, although we can never be certain of either figure.

<sup>1</sup> I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.

#### Romans 16:1

Through Paul's letters it is clear to see he was an intelligent man, who was both wise and discerning, but who was also a loving man, caring so much for the church and the individuals that comprise it. He had expressed his love for the Romans, many of whom he had not yet met.

He starts this chapter by commending Phoebe from Cenchreæ to the Roman congregations. She appears to be a lady of estate, perhaps having her own business, as did Lydia in Philippi: <<One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message>> (Acts 16:14). Phoebe appears to have had business that would take her to Rome, a place perhaps foreign to her, and so Paul requests the Romans, but in a way that will hardly be refused, that they greet, accommodate and care for her while she is with them. It appears that she was the bearer of the letter he was writing to them. Paul calls her 'our sister', not biologically of course, but through the Spirit of Christ that was in them both: <<There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus>> (Galatians 3:28). For as Jesus had said: <<Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother>> (Mark 3:35).

Scholars debate whether Phoebe is a servant in a general sense, or whether she served as a deacon, since the Greek word diakonon can mean either servant: <<For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer>> (Romans 13:4), <<For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs>> (Romans 15:8), <<What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task>> (1 Corinthians 3:5), and: <<If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed>> (1 Timothy 4:6), or deacon, referring to a church office: <<Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons>> (Philippians 1:1), and: <<Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against

them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well>> (1 Timothy 3:8-12).

Despite her apparent affluent status she was probably being described as a servant of the church. The masculine ending of the Greek favours the translation as servant and not deaconess. She would no doubt have served in acts of care, charity and hospitality, for the church was held in her home, but not in a general teaching role, for women were not permitted to teach at public gatherings that included men in those days: <<As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church>> (1 Corinthians 14:33-35).

Cenchreae was a port town just 6.5 miles or 10.5 km east of Corinth and was Corinth's main port to the Aegean Sea. The Roman harbour of Cenchreae is still visible, although largely submerged, and excavators have identified warehouses, fish tanks, and what they believe may be temples to Isis and Aphrodite.

<sup>2</sup> I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

Romans 16:2

Paul calls upon the church to assist Phoebe since she has helped so many. Phoebe served as a great help, benefactor or patron in some translations, probably with financial assistance and hospitality. The greetings which follow this commendation seem to serve a number of functions. In particular, they give Phoebe herself a list of people to call on when she first arrives, to whom she could look for hospitality and subsequent support; and they ensure that the letter she presumably took with her would be well received, since Paul already knew so many, some personally and some by reputation at least, of the Roman congregations, including a number of leading figures.

The list itself has several interesting features:

1. Paul had personal links with a number of those listed including Priscilla and Aquila, Urbanus, Epænetus, Ampliatus, Stachys, Andronicus, Junias, Rufus and his mother.
2. The social composition shows that, although some were Jews, i.e. Andronicus, Junia, Herodion, Priscilla, Aquila, Mary, Rufus and his mother, the majority were Gentiles, although none were specifically Roman names. Indeed, many of the names would indicate they were slaves, freedmen or freedwomen in the main, indicating that the social status of the early church was predominantly from the lower social classes of Roman society; although there were undoubtedly some of means, who would have assisted their brothers and sisters.
3. Not least in significance was the number of women who evidently assumed roles of some prominence in the Roman churches, showing how the understanding of the Gospel was impacting on the social norm of those times, especially among those from a Jewish background.

<sup>3</sup> Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

## Romans 16:3

Priscilla, referred to as Prisca in many translations, and Aquila are well known from elsewhere in the NT: <<There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them>> (Acts 18:2-3), <<Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreæ because of a vow he had taken>> (Acts 18:18), Luke writes of their initial association with Apollos: <<He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately>> (Acts 18:26), <<The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house>> (1 Corinthians 16:19), and: <<Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus>> (2 Timothy 4:19). Scholars have often wondered at the many reasons why Priscilla is named first so frequently in an age dominated by men, especially with regard to husbands:

- Was it her prominence?
- Or social standing?
- Or that she was converted first?
- Or was it out of courtesy?
- Or a mere stylistic variation?

However, there is insufficient evidence to know the answer. Paul also names her first in 2 Timothy 4:19, and second in 1 Corinthians 16:19.

Spurgeon on Priscilla and Aquila: "When two loving hearts pull together they accomplish wonders. What different associations cluster around the names of 'Priscilla and Aquila' from those which are awakened by the words 'Ananias and Sapphira'! There we have a husband and a wife conspiring in hypocrisy, and here a wife and a husband united in sincere devotion".

<sup>4</sup> They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

## Romans 16:4

Perhaps Priscilla and Aquila risked their lives when Paul was in danger during the riots in Ephesus, see Acts 19:23-41 for a detailed account, which may or may not be the events referred to by Paul in his letters to the church in Corinth: <<If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die">> (1 Corinthians 15:32), and: <<We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many>> (2 Corinthians 1:8-11).

<sup>5</sup> Greet also the church that meets at their house.

Greet my dear friend Epænetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

## Romans 16:5

The church that meets in their house. Apparently a house church met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila just as it did in Ephesus during their time there: <<The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house>> (1 Corinthians 16:19).

Early Christian churches, since they were small and since Christianity was not recognised as a legitimate or legal religion, met in homes: <<When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying>> (Acts 12:12), <<Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God>> (Acts 18:7), <<Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house>> (Colossians 4:15), and: <<to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home>> (Philemon 2). There is extensive archæological evidence from many different cities showing that some homes were structurally modified to hold such churches.

Asia here refers to a province in what is modern-day Turkey. Its principal city was Ephesus.

<sup>6</sup> Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

## Romans 16:6

A number of women, like Mary, are commended in Chapter 16 for their hard work, but such work does not mean that these women served as pastors, elders, or overseers: <<I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent>> (1 Timothy 2:12).

<sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

## Romans 16:7

Andronicus and Junias, Junia in most translations, were probably a husband and wife ministry team. Most scholars now think that Junias was a woman, although some have argued that a man named Junias is in view as the spelling would be the same in Greek, and both male and female forms are rare in Greek; however, the female equivalent of Junia is much more common in Latin, and Paul could have been referring to a woman with a Latin name.

Although generally thought to be husband and wife by many scholars, and the syntax of the language in early manuscripts bears this out, some later manuscripts tend to indicate they were both male, leading other scholars to state they were probably brothers. These, like Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (v.21) are also called Paul's relatives. In some translations they are called kinsmen. It is possible they were biological relatives of Paul, originally from his native Cilicia, or simply that he considered himself related to them through their common bond in Christ, as those mentioned in v.21 were, who were also thought to be Jews.

Outstanding among the apostles. Some have said that this verse proves that Junias was an apostle, and thus women can fulfil any church office. The verse seems to be saying, however, that Andronicus and Junias were well known to the apostles, not that Junias herself was an apostle. Other examples of this construction, Greek episēmos plus en plus dative, have been found with the meaning 'well known to (someone)'. Some references given for this explanation are Psalms of Solomon 2.6; Euripides, Hippolytus 103; Lucianus, Harmonides 1.17. Some translations render the passage as stating that Andronicus and Junia were 'well known among the apostles', but apostle, the Greek word apostolos, would probably then mean messengers or representatives of churches, just as it does in: <<As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an

honour to Christ>> (2 Corinthians 8:23), <<But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs>> (Philippians 2:25), and: <<I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him>> (John 13:16), rather than apostles in the technical sense of Peter, John and Paul. In this case, the term would refer to Andronicus and Junias as itinerant missionaries, and, given both biblical patterns of leadership and ancient cultural expectations, Junias probably laboured especially among the women. This passage also reveals that the couple were Jewish, family members of Paul, had been imprisoned, and had become Christians before Paul.

<sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

<sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

Romans 16:8-10

The people greeted in these verses are not mentioned elsewhere in the NT. The household of Aristobulus probably refers to the servants in Aristobulus' household rather than his family members. Some think Aristobulus is the grandson of Herod the Great (circa 73-4BC), and the brother of Herod Agrippa I (10BC-AD44), although this remains uncertain.

<sup>11</sup> Greet Herodion, my relative.

Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

Romans 16:11

The household of Narcissus again probably refers to the servants in Narcissus' household. Some scholars think Narcissus was the wealthy freedman, who served the emperor Claudius (AD41-54), and who was compelled by Nero's mother, Agrippina, to kill himself when Nero became emperor (AD54).

It is interesting that Paul comments on the households of Aristobulus (v.10) and Narcissus (v.11), but not the men themselves. It is possible that they were now deceased or that neither of them was a convert themselves, but that members of their household, most likely their servants were. In addition to the information already given, there is a report of a wealthy and influential man in Rome called Narcissus at the time of Claudius Cæsar, who had the reputation as being particularly evil. If his household is in view here then their commitment to Christ shows extraordinary courage. Whatever the case, it is known that the servants and slaves who became Christians when their non-Christian masters do not, will be the ones with eternal blessing; in the mean time in this life: <<All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered>> (1 Timothy 6:1).

<sup>12</sup> Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

Romans 16:12

Three women are greeted who work hard in the Lord, see the comment made on v.6.

<sup>13</sup> Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.

Romans 16:13

It is not certain that this is the same Rufus as mentioned in Mark 15:21 <<A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross>>, but it is possible that he is the son of Simon of Cyrene. Apparently Rufus' mother ministered significantly to Paul.

Rufus' mother is referred to as being a mother to me too, i.e. to Paul as well, and the comments made on Phoebe being 'our sister' apply here too. Paul instructs Timothy: <<Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity>> (1 Timothy 5:1-2), which covers both cases in view.

<sup>14</sup> Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them.

<sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them.

Romans 16:14-15

There is no further information on the saints greeted here, but they are known in heaven and were important in the work of the church.

<sup>16</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the churches of Christ send greetings.

Romans 16:16

Christians greet one another with a holy kiss to signify their warm affection for one another. Like some other practices with symbolic meanings that change from culture to culture, such as foot washing, or head covering for wives, a holy kiss would not convey the same meaning today that it did in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, and in most cultures it could be seriously misunderstood. Such commands are best obeyed by substituting an action, such as a handshake or hug or bow, varying by culture that would convey the same meaning of acceptance in a modern culture. The kiss was usually reserved for special reunions among family members or formal greetings; extending such a kiss to an entire group was a practice unique to the early church that signified their mutual acceptance as a family.

Apparently, in Roman Catholic Church tradition, it is believed that Peter was the Bishop of the Roman church at the time of Paul's letter; in fact, some hold that he founded the church in Rome! However, it seems highly unlikely that Paul would construct such an eloquent and detailed letter to a church led by any apostle, let alone one with Peter's outstanding reputation, without some form of personal greeting or acknowledgement, even if their personal relationship was not strong at that time. Most commentators hold that the Roman church was probably founded by Jews who had attended Pentecost when the Spirit was first poured out: <<When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them>> (Acts 2:1-4). It is most probable that Peter did not visit Rome until shortly before his and Paul's martyrdom sometime between AD64/67.

<sup>17</sup> I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. <sup>18</sup> For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

### Romans 16:17-18

Some commentators believe that from this point until the end of v.20, Paul took the pen from his scribe Tertius (v.22), and wrote a personal section. Although he does not draw attention to his doing so, it is something that Paul has done in other letters.

Paul uses very endearing but not commanding language to call for unity, and for them to disassociate themselves from any that would harm the church, for such would come and still do come into the church, but Christ's woe is upon them: <<Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!>> (Matthew 18:7). Satan is in the world, and he does all he can to come into the church but he has to be invited to come in. A danger discovered is half prevented, at least.

Paul does not take the opportunity to return to former arguments but warns this still fledgling faith group that it is living in opposition to an evil world and that trials would come. Some would come from inside and cause divisions. As the faith was still new there would be new people coming and going all the time, a slave bringing a fellow slave in to see what it was all about, or a travelling businessman claiming perhaps to be part of a fellowship elsewhere. While the church should always be accepting and welcoming to newcomers, it is important for the established members to be discerning. Some may come and offer alternative teachings that would sound plausible, putting obstacles in the way of the members as it was contrary to the teaching they had received from those who were truly apostles and disciples of Christ. False teachers were a problem that Paul had encountered and warned of in the other churches too. They were not serving our Lord Christ but their own appetites, i.e. looking to establish the church for their own good or for their own power base. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people; such people remain a danger in modern churches too.

At times the church has to look to itself: <<Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully>> (2 John 8). Paul calls them to wisdom in this matter, as wise as serpents, without the subtlety of the Old Serpent, not to be deceived but discerning of that which is of Christ and that which is counterfeit. Like those Paul refers to as 'the circumcision group' in Titus 1:10, or Jesus states are from 'the synagogue of Satan' in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9. Scriptures such as these come to mind: <<The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception>> (Proverbs 14:8), and: <<Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults>> (1 Corinthians 14:20).

On the theme of false teaching we read elsewhere: <<Then the Lord said to me, "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds>> (Jeremiah 14:14), and a warning from Jesus: <<Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves>> (Matthew 7:15), or as Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Miletus: <<I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them>> (Acts 20:29-30), <<As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer>> (1 Timothy 1:3), and: <<But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves>>

(2 Peter 2:1). Christians must be alert and discerning, for these false teachers and divisive people are attractive in speech but are motivated by selfish desires.

<sup>19</sup> Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

#### Romans 16:19

Your obedience is directly contrary to those not serving Christ in v.18. The Roman congregations had gained a reputation for faithfulness and Paul wanted to ensure they remained in such a healthy spiritual state, hence the warnings given in vv.17-18.

They are living in an alien world and thus Paul encourages them in much the same way Jesus did to his disciples: <<I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves>> (Matthew 10:16).

The issue of false teaching is not just one of doctrinal differences but one of real spiritual significance. There are those who can sound really plausible, who use a lot of biblical truths in their teaching but include an underlying theme that is actually opposing the Gospel truth. Such people usually teach with subtlety, charm and eloquence. Christians, wanting to accept what they hear in good faith and humility are easy prey for such people, which was probably one reason why Jesus gave the warning in Matthew 10:16. The church is in a real battle; spiritual warfare is not just a slogan. There is a battle raging for the redemption and renewal of the world and of individual people, and the church is up against the powers of darkness. Paul doesn't dwell on it here as he does elsewhere but it gives due warning just the same.

Part of the wisdom and innocence which Paul longs to see consists precisely in learning which things are of little consequence and can be disregarded, and which are vital and non-negotiable.

False teachers are categorised by Paul as those looking after their own interests. This could include some of the big TV evangelists that like to say what people want to hear and avoid saying what they should hear, and tend to make a lot of money by doing so, with no real fruit, other than their own, to show for it.

<sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

#### Romans 16:20

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet provides Christians everywhere with hope and confidence of a final triumph of good over evil, the triumph of God over the most powerful force of evil that afflicts this world. Not only does the slogan reflect this continuity of hope, but it reflects the eschatological expectation which seems to have been characteristic of the Christian movement from the beginning; the final power of God already pushing back the frontiers of evil: <<So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house>> (Mark 3:23-27), and: <<The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven>> (Luke 10:17-18).

With an allusion to [Genesis 3:15](#) <<And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel>>, the readers are assured that [Satan](#) will soon be destroyed.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.

#### [Romans 16:21](#)

In vv.21-23, those who are with Paul in Corinth as he dictates this letter, now send their personal greetings to the Romans.

[Timothy](#) is Paul's most famous co-worker and son in the work of Christ: <<Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope, To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord>> ([1 Timothy 1:1-2](#)), <<Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons>> ([Philippians 1:1](#)), and: <<We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith>> ([1 Thessalonians 3:2](#)), and was probably his most beloved colleague in ministry.

[Lucius](#) is likely not Lucius of Cyrene mentioned in [Acts 13:1](#) <<In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manæan (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul>>, nor is he Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

[Jason](#) is likely from Thessalonica and the same person named in: <<But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Cæsar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go>> ([Acts 17:5-9](#)).

[Sosipater](#) is probably the same person as Sopater from Berea, who was one of several men who would accompany Paul with the offering to Jerusalem: <<He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia>> ([Acts 20:4](#)).

<sup>22</sup> I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

#### [Romans 16:22](#)

[Tertius](#) functioned as Paul's scribe or secretary for the letter. It was common for those writing letters in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century to dictate to a secretary, but the content of the letter is clearly Paul's.

<sup>23</sup> Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.

Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.

## Romans 16:23

Gaius here is not the Gaius of Derbe, see Acts 20:4, who some believe to be the same as mentioned as being from Macedonia, but this too is not certain: <<Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's travelling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theatre>> (Acts 19:29), and (Acts 20:4), see v.21, but the Gaius of 1 Corinthians 1:14 <<I am thankful that I did not baptise any of you except Crispus and Gaius>>, confirming that the letter was written from Corinth. Gaius was a man of some wealth, for he provided a place for the entire church to meet.

It is difficult to know if Erastus is the same person mentioned in Acts 19:22 <<He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer>>, and: <<Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus>> (2 Timothy 4:20).

The city's director of public works or treasurer. A large Latin inscription in the limestone pavement near the Corinthian theatre reads, 'Erastus in return for his aedileship laid (the pavement) at his own expense'. An aedile was a man elected to oversee aspects of city finances. Often prominent elected officials would fulfil campaign pledges by providing some public structure to the city. Although there is some debate over whether the Greek word for city treasurer is oikonomos, and was the equivalent in the Corinthian Roman colony to the Latin ædile, the mid 1<sup>st</sup> Century dating of the pavement and the rarity of the name Erastus in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Corinth hold out the distinct possibility that this pavement was laid by Paul's fellow churchman.

{{Verse 24 is not included in the NIV translation as it is missing from early manuscripts. The following is taken from the KJV:

<sup>24</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.}}

Paul's task is now complete. After such a lengthy business, involving considerable concentration and staying power, and presumably also after proof reading what Tertius had written, (indeed, it is not unlikely that some of the earliest textual variations go back to Paul himself!), Paul must have been very relieved. All that remained was to add greetings from his immediate companions, two of the leading Christians in Corinth, his host Gaius and the city treasurer Erastus, and a couple of Christians who presumably had some personal connections with one or other of the churches in Rome, Quartus and Tertius himself. With no one else asking to add his or her greetings, the scroll could be sealed, addressed, and ready for Phoebe to take with her to Rome, to start its journey into the Christian canon and to begin exercising its incalculable influence on 2,000 years of Christian faith and theology.

### VII.b.ii Romans 16:25-27 - Final summary of the Gospel of the righteousness of God

As stated in the comments on Romans 1:1-7, many of the themes in the introduction reappear in the conclusion. However, it will shortly be discussed that the final sentence of this letter was not written by Paul and may have been added to give a more rounded ending to the letter.

<sup>25</sup> Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,

## Romans 16:25

The Gospel is a mystery that has been kept secret but is now revealed. The Gospel centres on Jesus Christ. The word mystery does not necessarily refer to something puzzling or difficult to grasp, but to something that was previously hidden and is now revealed. The mystery here has three elements:

1. at this time in salvation history, the majority of Israel has been hardened;
2. during this same time, the full number of Gentiles is being saved; and
3. God will do a new work in the future, in which he will save all Israel.

<sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him –

## Romans 16:26

The prophetic writings are the OT Scriptures: <<the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures>> (Romans 1:2). The Gospel is not only a mystery that has been revealed, but also a prophecy that has been fulfilled.

Believe and obey him. It is God's will that this Gospel go to all nations, so that all who are obedient because of their faith will be saved.

<sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

## Romans 16:27

The writer now comes to the main point of the doxology. The God who has planned salvation history in this way is all wise, and he deserves glory forever. Romans could not end in a more fitting way, as God's glory is to be the theme of Christians' lives and the joy of their hearts.

Many commentators agree that the last three verses, a single sentence in the Greek, were added after Paul wrote the letter, at some point in the first 150 years of church history. It would seem that his ending at v.23 was unsatisfactory when the letter was being read out to congregations, and so what better way to end it than with a doxology that sums up many of the major themes in the letter.

The fact that the authors are unknown to modern scholars and that they have no way of truly discerning the intent of this addition does leave modern readers with a quandary. However, the inclusion of 'my Gospel' in v.25 makes the clear link to Paul and this seems to have been readily accepted by the early churches.

All that can be said is that the doxology has summarised well some of the basic concerns of the letter. Everything begins and ends with God. His power alone is sufficient to sustain those who rely on him in faith. The Gospel, which made this clear and with which Paul was entrusted, focused on Jesus Christ and contained the revelation of the mystery of the divine purpose for the salvation of mankind. That purpose was in full continuity with God's earlier revelation through the prophets and scripture. But what had now been made clear, as God had always intended it should, was that God's saving purpose reached out to all nations and that it was entered into through faith; a faith which was not different from nor opposed to the obedience God had always looked for in his people, but which in fact came to expression in the dependent submissiveness of the creature of its Creator. It is to this God, the one true God, the God who is the source and measure of all real wisdom, now most fully understood and approached through Jesus Christ that all the glory of the ages belongs.