

16:1-2: *I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchreae: 2 that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you: for she herself also hath been a helper of many, and of mine own self.*

Rome's capital city was like a magnet; it drew people from all over the empire. Some of the people Paul met and converted in places like Antioch of Syria, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, etc. may have eventually moved to Rome. This would explain why Paul knew so many of the people who were living at Rome. He had met and perhaps worked with them in the past. The list of names in this chapter also tells us that Paul tried to stay in touch with the people he knew.

One of the people Paul remembered was "*Phoebe*" (this name meant "bright, radiant"). Since the church was to "*receive her*" (verse 2), many believe she carried this letter to the Christians in Rome. This is a reasonable conclusion. Phoebe was a wonderful servant because "*commend*" (*sunistemi*) is a present tense verb.

Phoebe was part of the church that met in "*Cenchreae*," a seaport a few miles east of Corinth (for additional information on Christians and where they met, see the commentary below on verses 3-5 as well as the commentary on Acts 5:11). Paul knew that Phoebe was a "*servant*." The word *servant* (*diakonos*) has caused some to conclude Phoebe was a "deaconess," perhaps the first deaconess, in the early church. The Bible Knowledge commentary says, "Use of the word with the phrase 'of the church' strongly suggests some recognized position, a fact appropriate for a person serving as Paul's emissary" (p. 499). What this source does not say is that this same term is applied to human governments in Rom. 13:4 and even Jesus in Gal. 2:17.

If Paul believed in deaconesses and the brethren at Rome were familiar with this term, it seems odd that Scripture omits any guidance about this function. There are qualifications for preachers, elders, and deacons. There is information about the organization of the New Testament church. Men, women, and children are told how to behave. Christians are told how to live their lives, but the New Testament has no information about deaconesses. The only passages that could be remotely related to this subject are Rom. 16:1 and 1 Tim. 3:11. If God has not asked for *deaconesses*, we have no right to have them in the church (2 Jn. 9). A careful study of deaconesses reveals that this "office" was not part of the first century church. One of the passages that makes this clear is 1 Tim. 3:11 (see the commentary on that verse).

In his commentary on the *Pastoral Epistles* (pp. 60-61) Gordon Clark affirms that the word *deaconess* is a *misnomer*. He states, "there is no

feminine form for the Greek word *deacon*. It is always masculine; and if there had been ‘deaconesses’ they would have been called *deacons*. In the women’s liberation movement of today, when women are ordained as ministers no one calls them ministeresses or pastoreesses. If the Roman Church should ever elect a woman as Pope, would they call her *il papa*?” (pp. 60-61). Strauch reiterates the point (*Minister of Mercy The New Testament Deacon*, p. 117) and he is even more forceful: “In English, for example, we speak of the ‘minister’ or ‘pastor’ of a church, but today that person may be either male or female. We don’t call a woman minister or pastor a ‘ministeress’ or ‘pastoreess.’ We say minister or pastor. The same thing is true of the word *nurse*. A nurse may be either male or female. We have no special term to distinguish male or female nurses. The same situation exists with the Greek word *diakonos*.”

In commenting on 1 Tim. 3, Strauch (same page) further said, “Why, after listing five qualifications for ‘deacons’ that could include males or females, does Paul in verse 1 repeat nearly the same qualifications for women deacons? That would be like saying that all nurses must attend four years of college and then singling out all male nurses and repeating that male nurses must attend four years of college with a slightly different terminology. The required four years of college applies to all nurses, male or female.

“If Paul is indeed singling out female deacons in verse 11 (of First Timothy 3, BP), we then should expect him to add some uniquely important qualifications for women deacons. That is not the case. Instead, as all commentators agree, Paul lists nearly the same qualifications as those listed in verses 8-9. So, to understand *gynaikas* as referring to women deacons leaves us with formidable unanswered questions.” Other sources such as the Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia affirm that deaconesses did not appear until the third century—a time long after the establishment of the church and the completion of the Bible. Since God has not provided us with information about *deaconesses*, creating this office is going beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6, ASV).

If it be asked who the women in 1 Tim. 3:11 were, a brief quote from West (Studies In Timothy and Titus, 12th Annual East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions Lectures, pp. 95-96) is helpful. He said, “Paul is adding here a parenthetical thought which is equally applicable to the wives of both elders and deacons. Since God created woman to be a helper fit for man, it would be only natural that the wives of elders and deacons should assist them in some areas of their work. And there is a delicate area in which the wives of elders and deacons discreetly help their husbands, and at the same time do not become ‘she-elders’ and ‘she-deacons.’ As a matter of fact, the qualifications laid down in this passage may well have been designed by God to see that such a thing does not happen.”

In Gordon Clark's commentary there is also a comment on Rom. 16:1. He said using the information about Phoebe to justify deaconesses "is a worthless argument. The word *diakonos* (the word translated *deacon* in 1 Tim. 3:8, 12 and 'servant' in other passages, BP) usually does not mean *deacon*. It is just the ordinary Greek word for servant. If the Pope claims to be the servant of the servants of God, it does not follow that every servant is a Pope. Nor is every French *garçon* a waiter." Phoebe was a servant of the church just as every other member of the church is a servant.

When Phoebe came to Rome Paul told the brethren to "receive her" (*prosdechomai*) in a worthy way (give her a reception that was appropriate for a dedicated Christian). Phoebe was to receive all the help she needed. Those at Rome were to treat her in a way that was hospitable; she was to be treated like an out of town guest. Every courtesy needed to be extended to her.

"*Worthily*" (*axios*) is translated "as *becometh*" in the KJV. This term expresses the proper way of receiving and sending (showing hospitality to) Christians (CBL, GED, 1:313), and especially those who are involved with full time church work or special projects. This woman had helped many people, including Paul, and now it was time for others to help her. For another passage that uses *prosdechomai* (*receive*) in this same way, see Phil. 2:29. Another key term is "*need*" (*chrezo*), a present tense verb. Jesus used this term in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:32). Phoebe is a case where heaven knew of a need, and this need was to be met by God's people.

When Paul listed the people he wanted to commend, he spent about half of his time listing women. In addition to Phoebe he listed *Prisca, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis*, the *mother of Rufus*, and the sister of *Nereus*. There are two other names *Junias* (verse 7) and *Julia* (verse 15) that may have been women. This list of greetings is the longest list in the New Testament. Paul listed twenty-six different people and referred to many others (verses 5, 10-11, 13-15). All the names in this chapter should cause us to wonder what Paul would write about us if he were still alive. What kind of record do we have?

16:3-5: *Salute Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles: 5 and (salute) the church that is in their house. Salute Epaphroditus my beloved, who is the first-fruits of Asia unto Christ.*

"*Priscilla*" and "*Aquila*" are familiar names. Paul first met this couple when he arrived in Corinth on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:2). He worked with them in the tent making business. This couple had come

to Rome because Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome. According to 2 Tim. 4:19 this couple eventually returned to Ephesus.

Paul paid a very high compliment to these two Christians. He called them his “*fellow workers in Christ Jesus.*” *Fellow workers* (“*helpers,*” KJV) is from a single term (*sunergos*) that has special significance. Paul used it “to make an association between those he was recommending to the various churches and himself. Paul used *sunergos* to give credibility to those mentioned” (CBL, GED, 6:194). It is found two other times in this chapter (verses 9 and 21). Concerning Priscilla and Aquila, Paul also revealed that this couple had risked their lives on his behalf, but we do not know the details of the story. We do know that all of the Gentile congregations were grateful to this couple. As Christians this couple did a lot of good and part of their service to God involved *worship*. There was a congregation that met at their house (according to Col. 4:15 and Phil. 2 this was a common practice). The way Paul worded his thought shows there is a difference between the church (the people) and where the church meets (the church building). Local congregations in New Testament times (Rom. 16:16; Acts 8:1, 3; 15:41; Rom. 16:1; Col. 4:15; 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 14:33) were often based in homes; this is where Christians “came together” (1 Cor. 11:18) and offered service to God and received instruction (1 Cor. 14:19, 34). The first known “church buildings” were not built until some time after 125 A.D. These were built at Edessa and Arbella, towns east of Damascus. Because of archeology, we know that these buildings had baptisteries that were used to immerse people (CBL, Acts, p. 205).

“*Epaenetus*” is mentioned only here in the New Testament. He is described as Paul’s “*dear friend.*” The same is said of “*Stachys*” (verse 9). *Epaenetus* was one of the “*first fruits*” (first converts) in the province of Asia (the western portion of what is now Turkey). A textual variant caused the KJV translators to render the text “*Achaia*” instead of “*Asia.*” Paul was in this area on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:10). The expression *first fruits* indicates these people were first (or among the first) *and* that others were also converted.

16:6-7: *Salute Mary, who bestowed much labor on you. 7 Salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also have been in Christ before me.*

“*Mary*” is described as a hard worker because “*labor*” (*kopiao*) denoted “hard work, the pains of labor and strain—both physical and mental” (CBL, GED, 3:381-382). A little later (verse 12) this same term is applied to others. Paul used a simple but honorable description for her. In 1 Tim. 5:17, this term is applied to elders. The next two names might refer to a

husband and wife. The text refers to them as Paul's relatives ("kinsmen"). This may mean they were from the tribe of Benjamin (the tribe Paul was from, Phil. 3:5; Rom. 9:3), or it may mean they were Paul's blood relatives. Four other *relatives* are mentioned in verses 11 and 21.

The two people listed at the beginning of verse 7 had been imprisoned with Paul. When and where this occurred is unknown. We are told that these two men became Christians before Paul did, but we do not know how much sooner they were converted. We do know they had worked long enough and hard enough to be known and appreciated by the apostles.

The word "*apostle*" had a general and specific meaning. The general meaning of the word was "*one sent.*" The specific meaning of the term described the apostles who were personally selected as the Lord's representatives. In this passage either meaning of the word is possible.

16:8-11: *Salute Ampliatus my beloved in the Lord. 9 Salute Urbanus our fellow-worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. 10 Salute Apelles the approved in Christ. Salute them that are of the (household) of Aristobulus. 11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Salute them of the (household) of Narcissus, that are in the Lord.*

These verses consist of some additional greetings that are very personal. *Apelles* was someone who had been tested and "*approved.*" This suggests he had gone through a very trying time but had remained faithful to God. The rest of the names show that Paul was able to greet entire households. In some of these households there were family members who were still unsaved. This may be deduced from verse 11 ("*that are in the Lord*"). This problem has not gone away. There are still households where not everyone in the home is a Christian.

16:12-13: *Salute Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute Persis the beloved, who labored much in the Lord. 13 Salute Rufus the chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.*

If these two verses are coupled with verse 6, we may conclude that at least four women "*worked hard*" in the kingdom of God. Ladies are important, they can do much good in the kingdom of God, and their contributions should receive wide recognition. As Paul described these two ladies in 12a, he used a present tense verb ("*who labor*"). "*Persis*" was another woman who was praised; in this culture and time this was a common name among slaves.

The name "*Rufus*" may refer to the same person mentioned in Mk. 15:21. If so, he was a son of Simon of Cyrene. He was "*chosen*" (*eklektos*) in Christ just like every other Christian (see the commentary on Eph. 1:4).

Turner (p. 129) said Rufus was elect “not because he is an outstanding or choice Christian – which would be the secular sense of the word – but because every believer is *eklektos* in the new sense: called, justified, sanctified, and destined to be glorified.” It seems better to understand the thought as, “some distinction of Rufus. He was a noble specimen of a Christian” (Expositor’s Greek Testament, 2:20). It is also possible that a special task had been given to this man. His mother had been “*like*” a mother to Paul (this is a metaphor).

16:14-16: *Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren that are with them. 15 Salute Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints that are with them. 16 Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you.*

In verse 14 five names are mentioned together; this suggests these people had something in common. They may have been elders because of what is said in 14b. The wording in verse 15 may describe another congregation that met in someone’s home.

The 16th verse describes an ancient custom. Members of the same sex kissed each other with a “*holy kiss*.” This act was not a sensual or sexual kiss. It was a greeting just like our shaking hands or smiling. This practice existed long before the New Testament as several verses in the Old Testament refer to *kissing*. According to Gen. 29:11-13, kisses were given among relatives. There was a kiss of greeting (Ex. 4:27) and a kiss for farewells (Ruth 1:9, 14), just as we often shake hands when we greet and leave someone. Kisses were an expression of love and affection (1 Pet. 5:14). There is an example of feet being kissed (Lk. 7:45). The New Testament also speaks of *each* person being greeted in this way (1 Thess. 5:26). Whatever greeting is customary in our culture and time is the one we should use, and it should be extended to every member of the church. Paul’s word for *kiss* is the same term employed when describing Jesus’ betrayal by Judas (Lk. 22:48).

The Christians at Rome received greetings from the “*Churches of Christ*.” This is a Biblical designation for the one church built by Christ (Mt. 16:18). This designation, instead of being a denominational title, shows that the church belongs to Christ. Those who are now known as the Churches of Christ seek to be the church that Jesus built (Mt. 16:18) and practice Christianity as it is described in the Bible.

Elbridge B. Linn, a preacher within the churches of Christ, wrote a book entitled “That They May All Be One.” On pages 117-118 of this book he said, “In the effort to emphasize the truth that the churches of Christ can be non-denominational, I have frequently used this illustration

to stress that the church is not a denomination or sect:

I am a Baptist because I immerse by the authority of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but I don't belong to that denomination. The church began on the day of Pentecost but that doesn't name it. An elder is a presbyter but there is no New Testament authority to denominate the church which belongs to Christ by some type of church government. I am a firm believer in being methodical in my church work and life but the New Testament nowhere authorizes me or anyone else to name the church after this practice. God's word commands all Christians to live in holiness but never is the church so denominated. The church revealed in the New Testament is universal, or catholic, but in no sense belongs to that sect in Christendom calling itself the 'Catholic Church.'

The church revealed in the Bible is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27), the 'church of God' (1 Cor. 1:2), 'church of the Lord' (Acts 20:28), Paul wrote of the 'churches of Christ' (Rom. 16:16) and Jesus said 'my church' (Matt. 16:18). Since Christ built the church, purchased it with his own blood, and it is his, there certainly is no more fitting expression than 'church of Christ' but this is not the only *one* designation found in the New Testament; instead there are many names denoting relationship. Since the kingdom of Christ is the body of Christ, the family of God, the church of Christ, the church of the living God, the church of the Lord, the church of the firstborn (plural), let us not use *one* name to the exclusion of all the other New Testament designations! I feel the importance of this truth very keenly. I'll use any designation of the church I find in the New Testament. There are descriptive terms or they may be used to denote relationship. But right here is where sectarianism rears its divisive power. Religious bodies are named after some man, or movement, or some type of church government, or even ordinance, like baptism; but Christ, the builder of the church, composed of the 'called out,' the saved, is scarcely referred to by sectarian names of religious groups."

Today is not uncommon for people to ask who the churches of Christ are. The following six points offer a brief response to this question. (1) The *Churches of Christ* are a religious group with the right founder (Christ, Mt. 16:18) who paid for the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). (2) The *Churches of Christ* have Jesus as the head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23). (3) The *Churches of Christ* were established at the right time (see this point developed in the commentary on Acts 8:11-12). (4) The *Churches of Christ* use proper names to describe the things of God (compare 1 Cor. 2:13). (5) In the *Churches of Christ* there is proper organization (see this point developed in the commentary on Phil. 1:1). (6) Because of proper organization and strict adherence to the New Testament, the *Churches of Christ* are not a denomination. It might be said they are *anti-denominational* (opposed to denominationalism because this concept

cannot be found in the Scriptures). An illustration of how united the saved are is found in the Greek text of verse 16 (“another”). In the Greek testament there are two words for “other,” and the term used here (*allos*) usually denotes “another of the same kind.” Using this term instead of the other prominent word (*heteros*) strongly indicates these Christians all had the “same faith” (Jude 3). Christians all believed the same thing when it came to doctrine; there was no such thing as the “my faith and your faith” philosophy so prevalent in today’s world.

16:17-20: *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent. 19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I rejoice therefore over you: but I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil. 20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

Even though Paul was through with the farewells he had a little more to say. Paul issued some final warnings about brethren who put *stumbling blocks* (obstacles, traps, snares) in front of other Christians. This may refer to the material in chapters 14 and 15. Christians at Rome were to do two things to those who created stumbling blocks. First, they were to “*mark*” those who created problems. *Mark* (*skopeo*) is a present tense verb, and it is found only a few times in the New Testament. While it has a good sense in Phil. 3:17, here it means “to fix one’s eyes upon, direct one’s attention to” (Thayer, p. 579). Gingrich and Danker (p. 756) say, “*look out for those who cause divisions*, i.e. avoid them.” MacKnight said it “signifies to observe attentively and diligently, as they do who are placed in a watch-tower to observe the motions of their enemies. The purpose for which the brethren were to mark the persons described, is mentioned in the next clause of the verse.” Faithful Christians were also to “*turn away*” from (avoid) those who were causing “*divisions*” and creating “*occasions of stumbling*” (*skandalon*). Those who created the problems were acting “*contrary to the doctrine*” they had learned. Anything contrary to the doctrine of God must be opposed and avoided (2 Jn. 9-11) because godliness is inherently linked with correct doctrine (1 Tim. 6:3; Tit. 1:1).

Divisions (*dichostasia*) is a relatively rare word in the New Testament (it is found only here, 1 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:20), and here it is plural. MacKnight offers an intriguing explanation on who this may have referred to: “The apostle had in his eye the Jewish teachers, who in many churches set up separate assemblies for the worship of God, (see Jude, ver. 19), on

pretence of greater orthodoxy and sanctity than others, and who would admit none into their communion but such as joined them in their peculiarities, and who represented all others as erroneous and impious. This they did, from no regard to the Lord Jesus, but to enrich themselves and to live in sensual pleasure, verse 18; for by making themselves the heads of these schismatical assemblies, they drew a plentiful maintenance from their followers, whereby they enriched themselves, and gratified their lusts. See Philip. 3:19.”

In describing the false teachers, Paul spoke of information being “*learned*” (*manthano*), 17b. In a day and time when doctrine is often pushed aside for entertainment, “feel good preaching,” and “just Jesus,” this is a very helpful text. God has *doctrine* (teaching) that is to be taught, learned by those who do not know it, and obeyed by all. For other key places where *learned (manthano)* is found, see Mt. 11:29; Jn. 6:45; Eph. 4:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Tim. 2:11.

The people involved in the wrongdoing may or may not have pretended to “*serve*” (*douleuo*) the Lord (verse 18). In either case Paul made it clear that they were not servants of Christ. Those who were creating the problems served themselves. They were only interested in their lives and their desires. *Serve* is the same term used in the Sermon on the Mount (Jesus said a man cannot *serve* two masters, Mt. 6:24), and here it is a present tense verb. “*Belly*” (*koilia*) has the same sense as in the Philippian letter (Phil. 3:19); it described inner evil desires. Such a person is not in a right relationship with Christ. These people lured others away from the truth through “*smooth and fair speech*” that swayed and deceived “*the innocent.*” *Smooth (chrestologia)* is found only here in the New Testament. Classical writers used this term in ways that were both positive and negative, but here the term is completely negative. Such people were “smooth talkers,” but they led their listeners into error. *Fair speech (eulogia)* should be understood as flattery. Well delivered speeches and fawning over those who heard the material was convincing to at least some because the words or presentations were “pretty” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:2). “*Beguile*” (“*deceive*,” KJV) is applied to Eve in 2 Cor. 11:3. This term (*exapatao*) is used in the LXX to describe the enticement of Samson (Judg. 14:15; 16:5). “*Innocent*” (*akakos*) is found only here and Heb. 7:26 (the Hebrew writer applied it to Jesus and it is translated “*harmless*”). In Romans 16, the term denotes “the minds of ‘naive’ people” (CBL, GED, 1:133).

In verse 19 Paul assured these Christians that he had confidence in their spiritual maturity. He knew they had enough wisdom to hold to what was right, and that their obedience was well known. He was sure they would do what was right, but he did want to give them a gentle reminder. Part of his reminder involved being “*simple unto that which was evil.*” Those at Rome

were to avoid the ways of the world. They also needed to free themselves from the troublemakers and false teachers in their midst. For information about the word “obedience” (*hupakoe*), see the commentary on 1:5. Information about the word “wise” (*sophos*) is available in the commentary on 1:14. Here the word means “the understanding of what is ethically right in daily life” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:261). Thayer (p. 582) defined it as “skilled, expert” (compare Heb. 5:12-14). *Simple* (*akeraios*) is found only here, Mt. 10:16 and Phil. 2:15 (it is rendered *harmless* in both of the other places). A concise but useful definition for it is “uninformed” (there are some things about which it is good to be ignorant).

The 20th verse may be another reference to the false teachers. If this is the correct explanation, it means those involved with leading others astray would be crushed. Religious error destroys both those who teach it and those who adhere to it (Mt. 15:14). “Bruise” (*suntribo*) has the sense of *crush*. Thayer’s definition (p. 607) is also quite good: “to put Satan under foot and (as a conqueror) trample on him.” Religious victory would come to these Christians and it would come “shortly” (*tachos*).

16:21-24: *Timothy my fellow-worker saluteth you; and Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. 22 I Tertius, who write the epistle, salute you in the Lord. 23 Gaius my host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the treasurer of the city saluteth you, and Quartus the brother. 24 (The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.)*

When Paul wrote this letter he had some fellow Christians with him. These brethren also wanted to send greetings to those at Rome. One of the people who wanted to wish others well was “Timothy.” He was a young man who was strongly influenced by Paul (for additional information about Timothy see the commentary on 1 Tim. 1:2). “Fellow-worker” (*sunergos*) is discussed in the commentary on Rom. 16:3-5. Some of the other names mentioned in these verses are found in other parts of the New Testament (see Acts 13:1; 17:5-9; 20:4). Whether or not the names describe the same people is unknown. “Kinsman” (*sungenes*) is used earlier in this chapter (verses 7 and 11). In other parts of the New Testament this word is used to describe both relatives and “broader bonds” such as family or friends (CBL, GED, 6:133). Here it seems to describe extended family members (ibid).

The man who actually wrote this epistle is made known in verse 22. The person who was serving as Paul’s host (Gaius) is described in verse 23. In the New Testament the name “Gaius” describes at least two different men. One of these men was from Macedonia and traveled with Paul (Acts 19:29). The other was from Derbe (Acts 20:4). Compare too 3

Jn. 1 and 1 Cor. 1:14. In 23b readers encounter “*Erastus*.” We may think of him as the director of public works or possibly the treasurer. He was a Christian who had a very important job in the secular world. Another man with this name was sent to Macedonia and did some work in Corinth (Acts 19:22; 2 Tim. 4:20).

16:25-27: *Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, 26 but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith: 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever. Amen.*

These verses close the book. As Paul closed this epistle, he said the gospel belonged to him (“*my gospel*,” verse 25). Paul didn’t create the good news, but he preached it and loved it to the point where he felt like it was truly his message.

The gospel preached by Paul is able to “*establish*” us (for information on this word see the commentary on 1:11-12). Though the gospel was formerly a “*mystery*” (25b), and very little was revealed about it prior to the New Testament era (“*silence*”), it has now been revealed and the knowledge of it is now available to all nations (verse 26). Each person is invited to be obedient to the faith. This is according to the “*commandment of the eternal God*.” *Commandment (epitage)* is only found a few times in the New Testament (for the other places where this term occurs see the commentary on 1 Cor. 7:25). Here it means: “The *concrete* command of God which corresponds to his will and plan for salvation in a definite point in time” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:41). It seems Paul could not close this book without again mentioning “*obedience*” (*hupakoe*); this book opens (1:5) and closes with this term because faith must “*work*” (Gal. 5:6) and “*faith without works is dead*” (Jas. 2:26). Man is saved by faith, but not faith alone (Jas. 2:24). Telling all the nations about the faith which must be obeyed is consistent with the great commission (Mk. 16:15-16; Mt. 28:19). Here *hupakoe* is a noun; in other parts of the New Testament this term is a verb (*hupakouo*). For an interesting and special study of how the verb form of the word is used, see the gospels commentary on Mt. 8:23-27 (section 18).

Concerning the first part of verse 26, “*by the scriptures of the prophets*,” this point is illustrated in Acts 8:28-35 and Acts 17:2. Old Testament scriptures were the primary text for studying and revealing New Testament truths. Preachers like the apostles “*ever preached that Christ*

was foretold by the prophets. Paul's epistle constantly quotes the prophets. He must do that, for a Christ who is apart or different from the Messiah of the prophets would be a false Christ" (Lenski, Romans, p. 930).

Verse 27 says God's *wisdom* is displayed through Christ. The thought may be related to Jn. 14:9 and Col. 2:3. The word "*wise*" (*sophos*) means God "alone is *wise*" (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:261). To the *only great and wise God* Paul wished "*glory forever.*" God is worthy of continuous praise and we do this through the Lord because it was through Christ heaven's plan to redeem man was completed. "*Only*" (*monos*) means just one and no other (unique); for other places this term is applied to God see 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16; Jude 25; Rev. 15:4.

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