

ROMANS CHAPTER 16

Romans 16:1

Phoebe may have been the person who personally delivered Paul's epistle to the Romans. She received Paul's hearty commendation. It's interesting that of the first five believers mentioned by Paul (verses 1-6), three of them were women. When it comes to service for Christ and His assembly, women in no way take a second place to men. They are "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7) and at Christ's judgment seat their faithfulness will be rewarded. When it comes to laboring faithfully for the Master, there is neither male or female in Christ. We all serve the same Saviour as His love-slaves, though in different capacities. Biblical Christianity, in spite of what its critics say, has always dignified womanhood and allowed believing women to find the full satisfaction and joy of being the persons God would have them to be. It is in societies where Biblical principles are not honored that women are horribly mistreated and held in low esteem.

Phoebe was both a SISTER and a SERVANT (v.1). Paul recognized her as a sister in Christ (an endearing family term) and as a servant (diakonon) of the assembly. She was the servant of the local assembly that was at Cenchrea, a seaport city located right next to Corinth (compare Acts 18:18).

Phoebe was a "servant" or a "deaconess" of the church. Is this word used in a general sense to indicate that she was a humble servant of the assembly or is it used in the more technical sense that she held an office in the church? Did the early church have such an office as "deaconess" (female deacon)? There is no mention of "deaconesses" in the New Testament. There is, however, one passage that is of interest, found in 1 Timothy chapter 3, the chapter which gives the qualifications of elders (bishops) and deacons. In the middle of Paul's list of qualifications for deacons, Paul adds this statement: "Even so *must their wives be* grave, no slanderers, sober, faithful in all things" (1 Tim. 3:11). The word "wives" may be also translated as "women." It refers either to the wives of the deacons or to other women in the assembly (deaconesses?). If it refers to the wives of deacons, then why was nothing said by Paul in this chapter about qualifications for wives of the elders? Why are the wives of deacons told to measure up to a certain standard when there is silence concerning the wives of elders? Some would say that Paul was setting forth qualifications, not for deacons' wives, but for deaconesses.

Whether or not the "office" of a deaconess can be Biblically supported, we still must recognize the "work" of a deaconess. Whether she holds such an official title or not, the godly female saint is to function as a humble servant. If we understand the purpose of male deacons, then we can understand the need for female servants. The origin of deacons is found in Acts 6:4. There was a need to minister to needy widows and this problem was becoming a burden to the apostles, even to the point of taking away from their ministry of prayer and the preaching of the Word of God. The church's spiritual leaders must never be turned aside from their chief work of **prayer** and **preaching**. Qualified "deacons" were appointed to handle these matters so that the apostles could give themselves "continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." The ministry of the widows was given to the deacons so that the apostles could devote themselves to the ministry of the Word of God.

This is the primary function of a deacon today. He is to be spiritual man, a humble, capable servant who handles such things as finances, building and property care and upkeep, and anything else that will help to ease the burden from the spiritual leaders of the assembly so that they can give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Needless to say, if a Pastor spends 25 hours one week in painting, doing repair work, shoveling snow, cleaning the church building, etc., then the pulpit ministry is going to suffer greatly. Faithful and capable deacons should be able to handle many of these necessary chores. Imagine a large snowstorm that has covered the ground with 15 inches of freshly fallen snow. The Pastor puts his snow gear on and goes out to tackle the job. Suddenly Deacon Dave comes along on his snowmobile, grabs the shovel, and says, "Pastor, I'll handle this! I want you to go back to your office and use the time to PRAY and PREPARE to PREACH. The deacons can handle the snow, but God has gifted certain men to feed the flock (Eph. 4:11-12) and we don't want you to be distracted from your main task!"

Likewise, godly women in the assembly can fulfill similar functions. There are countless chores and needful jobs that women can take care of which will help to ease the load and lighten the burden from the spiritual leaders of the assembly. The humble female servant should ask, "What can I do for the Pastor and elders that could ease their load and make it easier for them to devote themselves to the crucial ministry of the Word?" Whether we call them "deaconesses" or not, this "work of a deaconess" is greatly needed in our day, and the entire assembly will benefit from it. Women can function as deaconesses even if they do not hold an official title.

Romans 16:2

Paul exhorts the Roman believers to "receive" Phoebe. It means they were to "receive her unto themselves, to admit her, to receive her into intercourse and companionship" (Thayer). They were to eagerly welcome her into their midst (this word "receive" is used of believers eagerly waiting the coming of the Lord—Titus 2:13—"looking for"; Jude 21—"looking for"; and compare Luke 2:25—"waiting" and Luke 2:38—"looked for"). It is used in Philippians 2:29 of the Philippian believers receiving Epaphroditus, Paul's faithful fellow soldier. It is used of the Lord Jesus who received sinners and ate with them (Luke 15:2). They were to receive her "in the Lord," as a sister in Christ, one who enjoyed blessed UNION with the Son of God. They were to do so "as becometh saints," in a manner worthy of saints. They were to receive her in a manner appropriate for saints. As believers, we are to walk *worthy* (same word) of our high, holy, heavenly calling (Eph. 4:1), and this would include our conduct towards our fellow believers. Being saved is an awesome privilege, but it carries with it awesome responsibilities to walk and live in a worthy manner.

As saints, we are to walk worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1).

We are to walk worthy of God's good news, the gospel (Phil. 1:27).

We are to walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing (Col. 1:10).

We are to walk worthy of God who has called us into His kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12).

In 3 John Gaius was exhorted to minister to the saints "after a godly sort" or in a manner worthy of God. That is, he was to extend hospitality to them as if God Himself had come for a visit. How we would treat the Saviour ought to be the way we should treat the saints. They are worthy of such treatment for Christ's sake.

The Lord never wants us to forget WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST. We must never forget that we are SAINTS (Rom. 1:7). God has sanctified us in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 6:11). We are His HOLY ONES who have been set apart to serve the living God. May we live saintly. May we not bring shame on the Name of the One who has set us apart unto Himself.

Paul tells the Roman believers to "assist" Phoebe. The verb means "to stand by to help" (Thayer), to "provide" (see Acts 23:24) whatever she might have needed. Why were they to assist her? Because she was a succourer or helper of many, including Paul. Those who are helpers deserve to be helped. Those who assist others deserve to be assisted. It is fitting and appropriate to assist the helper. We are not told exactly what Phoebe did to help Paul and the many others. Yet think of the countless thousands through the centuries who have been spiritually helped and blessed by Paul's epistle to the Romans. By delivering this epistle, Phoebe has indeed "been a helper of many."

Romans 16:3-4

It is interesting that Priscilla, the wife, is mentioned by Paul before Aquila, her husband. Consider the following information that the New Testament provides about this remarkable husband/wife team:

1. Aquila and Priscilla were *industrious*. They were diligent and occupied in a good way. They were

- tentmakers (Acts 18:2-3) and they worked hard at their trade. We should note that Aquila was a Jew (Acts 18:2). Although Paul first met these two believers in Corinth, they were originally from Rome (Acts 18:2).
2. They were **hospitable** (Acts 18:3). They opened their home to the Apostle Paul who was also a tentmaker. They opened not only their home to Paul but also their hearts.
 3. They were **teachable**. Aquila and Priscilla were probably converted under Paul's ministry. We have no record that they were saved prior to their encounter with Paul in Acts 18. They not only received Paul into their home but they received Paul's Christ into their hearts. With all eagerness and readiness of mind they received with joy the message that Paul preached. They were disciples of Paul. They absorbed the doctrine and the truth which the Apostle gave them.
 4. They were **Bible orientated** (Acts 18:24-26). Not only were they teachable, but they were able to teach others also. Apollos was a great preacher who was mighty in the O.T. Scriptures, but he was ignorant of the essential facts of the gospel (and weak on dispensational truth). With a godly concern for this man, Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos aside and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. It is possible that Priscilla may have taken the lead in this session with Apollos because in some manuscripts her name is mentioned first (see Acts 18:26 in the New American Standard Bible). Some wives are better able to explain Bible doctrine than their husbands, and in the right setting it is permissible for the woman to take the lead (though certainly not in a local church teaching situation). She knew God's Word and she was able to deal with these kinds of doctrinal matters. This husband and wife team was well grounded in God's truth and able to minister that truth to others.
 5. They were **local church orientated** (1 Cor. 16:19 and Rom. 16:5). Both of these passages speak of the church that was in their house (both in Rome and in Ephesus). Their home was a place for believers to assemble—a place for worship, singing, preaching, fellowship, prayer and the breaking of bread.
 6. They were a **husband and wife team**. Priscilla's name is mentioned six times in the N.T. and in each place her husband's name is found as well. She is always mentioned with him. This implies harmony in their relationship and unity of purpose. She worked with her husband, not against him. They functioned as a team in the service of the King.
 7. They were **rightly orientated to God's gifted man** (Rom. 16:3). In this verse they are described as Paul's "helpers" (literally "fellow workers"). As Priscilla and Aquila came to Paul's mind, he was able to say, "These dear believers are my helpers, my fellow workers." Can your Pastor say the same thing about you? What kind of relationship do you have with God's gifted man (compare Eph. 4:11)? Are you a help or a hindrance to your Pastor? Are you working with him or against him? Does he see you as a plus or a minus? Paul certainly considered this husband and wife team to be a great PLUS to his ministry and service for Christ.
 8. They were **courageous** (Rom. 16:4). Apparently Paul owed his life to this brave husband-wife team. We are not told any of the details, but they somehow risked and hazarded their lives for Paul's sake. They laid down their own necks in order to save Paul's life, and as a result Paul and all the churches of the Gentiles owed them a debt of thanks. Paul was God's special apostle to the Gentiles, and if Priscilla and Aquila had not intervened, Paul might have died and his ministry to the Gentiles might have come to an abrupt end. Priscilla and Aquila manifested a genuine love for Paul in the spirit of 1 John 3:16. Whatever incident Paul was referring to, it is possible that Priscilla played the more significant role in light of the fact that her name is mentioned first in Romans 16:3. This brings us to our next point.
 9. Priscilla was **submissive** but she was not **suppressed**. In the six New Testament references where this husband/wife team is mentioned, Priscilla's name comes first in three of these places (some would say this is true in four out of these six places because of a textual variant in Acts 18:26; see the *New American Standard Bible translation* of this verse). Since it was customary to list the husband's name first, why did Priscilla's name come first in these passages? We are not given the reason why and we can only surmise. Was it because she was the more energetic of the two? Did she have the stronger character? Did she have superior zeal? Did she have superior ability in certain areas? Did she play a more significant role in risking her own neck for Paul's sake? Without trying to speak where the Scriptures are silent, the following might be said:

She was **not suppressed**. She seemed to have special gifts or abilities or a unique devotion to Christ which enabled her in some areas to surpass her husband in such a way as to merit special recognition from Paul.

She was **submissive**. In the six places where she is mentioned in the New Testament (by Luke and Paul), it is never implied that she was out of line in any way. She is never rebuked but only commended. She is

always mentioned in connection with her husband. She was a submissive wife.

10. They were *faithful and consistent* to the very end (2 Timothy 4:19). This is Paul's last letter, written about 14 years after he had first met Aquila and Prisca (Priscilla). They were faithful believers. Nothing negative is said about these two believers in any of the writings of Paul or Luke. As far as the record shows, between Paul and Aquila/Priscilla there was always harmony. Paul never had to say of them what he said of Demas (2 Tim. 4:10). What about you? In what spiritual condition will you be in 14 years from now? May we not leave our first love and may we not lose the joy of our salvation.

Romans 16:5

Paul sent greetings to the church that was in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. This brings us to the interesting question of "house churches." In the first century there were no church buildings as we know them today. Believers would assemble together wherever they could—in homes, in fields (compare Acts 16:13 where we find Jews gathered by a river), in the catacombs, etc. They had Christ's promise, "For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Also transportation was not as easy then as it is today. Today we can travel from one end of a large city to the other without much of a problem, but in the first century when most transportation was done on foot, this would not have been so simple.

The following passages are significant when it comes to "house churches":

When Aquila and Priscilla lived in Ephesus mention was made of "the church that is in their house" (1 Cor. 16:19).

In Romans 16:14 Paul greets several believers and then makes mention of "the brethren who are with them." In Romans 16:15 Paul greets several believers and then makes mention of "the saints who are with them." Could this indicate two additional locations where believers were accustomed to meet?

In Acts 12:12 we learn that "many were gathered together and were praying" in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark.

The house of Lydia was used as a gathering place for believers (Acts 16:15,40).

In Laodicea there was a house church hosted by Nymphas ("[greet] the church that is in his house"—Colossians 4:15).

In Philemon 2 we read, "And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house."

Even if believers did meet together in different locations, it is important to keep in mind that, in God's reckoning, each major city had but one church. Thus in the city of Rome there were not several churches; there was but one church. Every city had only one church. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:2 we read about "the CHURCH (singular) of God which is at (in) Corinth." Corinth was a large city but it only had one church. In Revelation 2:1 we learn of "the CHURCH (singular) of Ephesus." Ephesus was also a very large city but there was but one church, even though we know that there was at least one "house church" in this city (see 1 Cor. 16:19). And even if we grant that Corinthian believers may have met together in different homes, there were occasions when the "WHOLE CHURCH" would come together "IN ONE PLACE" (see 1 Cor. 14:23 and 11:20).

Today, in spite of having superior transportation, we justify having more than one church in a city because of the size and population of the city. "One church could not possibly reach all these people. There is room in this city for several churches." In light of this, it is interesting to consider population estimates of some of the cities that were prominent in New Testament times:

JERUSALEM

Josephus states that at Passover time (when there were thousands and thousands of pilgrims and visitors) there were 2,700,000 people in this city. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says that the population of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. may have been as much as 250,000 (but probably less). It would be safe to say that there were at least 100,000 people.

How many believers were in the Jerusalem church (see Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; etc.)? How many churches were there in Jerusalem (Acts 15:4)?

ROME

"The population of the city during the first century A.D. was formerly estimated as being between 1,200,000 and 2,000,000 inhabitants. In 1941, however, an inscription was discovered at Ostia with statistics indicating that in 14 A.D., the year of the death of Augustus, the city of Rome had a population of 4,100,000 inhabitants" (*An Introduction to the New Testament*, D. Edmond Hiebert, Vol. 2, page 164 and see *Introduction to the New Testament* by Everett F. Harrison, p. 299).

ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria was the second largest city in the Roman empire and it contained three major groups: Egyptians, Jews and Greeks. According to the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, "at the beginning of the Christian era there were 300,000 free men in the city of Alexandria." The *World Book Encyclopedia* says that at its height this city may have had a population of one million.

EPHESUS

There was only one church in this major city (Rev. 2:1). Its population was so great that in the second century it rivaled the city of Alexandria with respect to population.

ANTIOCH

How many churches were there in this city (Acts 14:26-27)? This too was one of the largest cities in the empire. Its population also was a mixed multitude. According to the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* its population in New Testament times was 500,000 (half a million).

THESSALONICA

How many local churches were to be found in this city (1 Thess. 1:1)? In Paul's day this city may have had as many as 200,000 people (see *Introduction to the New Testament* by Everett F. Harrison, page 260).

CORINTH

This large commercial city had only one local church (1 Cor. 1:2). The city was heterogeneous (a mixture of everything). People thronged there to make money and spend it. Common enterprise and business and common debaucheries were the only bond that held the people together. It was the city of sin and immorality and its population may have been as high as 700,000 (most estimates would say one half million people). The *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia* says there were 200,000 free men and 500,000 slaves.

Observations: These were very large cities even in terms of modern day population statistics, yet there was only one church in each city. Today we are far from the New Testament pattern. The Lord predicted that this would happen in the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32). Out of true Christianity there grew up an abnormal, unusual, hideous, monstrous religious system which has come to be called "Christendom." We might call it "churchianity." The devil has succeeded in corrupting, complicating, confusing and cluttering what once was a very clear testimony. He has created a mess!

Romans 16:5—Epaenetus

Paul enjoyed a harvest of souls while he ministered in Asia. The first-fruit of that harvest (the first convert) was Epaenetus, a believer who was dear to the Apostle's heart. The KJV has "Achaia" but the Greek manuscripts seem to better support the reading of "Asia" (see Darby's translation and the *Scofield Reference Bible*, 1967 edition). Asia refers to Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), the area where Ephesus was located (as well as the other cities mentioned in Revelation 2-3).

Paul mentions Epaenetus after having mentioned Aquila and Priscilla who also labored in Asia, specifically in Ephesus, one of the chief cities of Asia (1 Cor. 16:9). As William Hendricksen has pointed out, "It is easy to imagine that whenever Paul or any of his fellow-workers, such as Prisca and Aquila, looked back upon the tremendous expansion of Christianity in and around the Roman province of Asia, they must have said, 'And it all began with Epaenetus; he was *the firstfruits*'" (*Romans Chapters 9-16*, p. 503). Paul certainly remembered with joy the firstfruits in Macedonia (actually the firstfruits in Europe) who happened to be a woman by the name of Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened (Acts 16:14). It is always a joy to look back and remember the first person who was saved in a certain area, knowing that the God who has begun such a good work will indeed continue it. In a harvest, the "firstfruits" mark just the beginning and indicate that there are many more fruits to come. Such was certainly the case in Asia (see Acts 19:10-20). Do you have fond memories of the first person you led to the Lord? Have there been more to follow?

Romans 16:6—Mary

We are told little about Mary except for the fact that she "labored much" for Paul and his companions (or for the church in Rome if the textual variant "you" is accepted). The meaning of the Greek term is that she worked hard and toiled laboriously even to the point of weariness and exhaustion. Many believers work extremely hard for the cause of Christ and often it goes unnoticed and unappreciated and unrewarded by men. But God certainly takes note (see Hebrews 6:10). May we give our all for the Saviour and for His work: "Rise up, O men of God, be done with lesser things; Give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the King of Kings."

Mary (Miriam) was a very common name in New Testament times and several different women had this name:

1. Mary the mother of Christ (Matt. 1:16).
2. Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2).
3. Mary the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12).
4. Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha (Luke 10:42).
5. Mary the *wife* of Clopas (John 19:25; note that in this verse three of the four women mentioned had the name "Mary").
6. Mary who is mentioned in Romans 16:6.

Romans 16:7

There is some uncertainty as to whether the second name represented a man (Junias) or a woman (Junia). It depends on how the word is accented. If this person was a woman it is possible that Andronicus and Junia were husband and wife. Paul tells us four interesting facts about these two believers:

1. They were Paul's "kinsmen." This word is sometimes used of close blood relatives as in Mark 6:4, Luke 1:36 (Mary's "cousin Elizabeth"), Luke 1:58, Luke 2:44; Luke 14:12, Luke 21:16, John 18:26 and Acts 10:24. In Romans 9:3 Paul uses the term in a wider sense to refer to all Israelites who were his "kinsmen according to the flesh." In Romans 16 Paul uses this term three times (see verses 7,11,21) and he names six people as his kinsmen. Does this mean that these people were fellow Israelites, related to each other as all Jews are, or is Paul indicating an even closer kinship? It seems

unusual that Paul (originally from Tarsus) would have six close relatives in Rome who were all believers, so it may be better to understand the term in its wider sense. Paul did not greet every Jew as his "kinsman" because in verse 3 Priscilla and Aquila are both Jews but Paul does not call them "kinsmen." If the term does refer here to the fact that these six people were Israelites, then it is interesting that when Paul greeted the church he made special mention of some Israelites who were in the church. This might have bearing on Galatians 6:16 where Paul makes special mention of a group he calls "the Israel of God" (the Israel that belongs to God). The "Israel of God" does not refer to Gentile believers (Gentiles in Scripture are never called Israelites) but to Jewish believers who are Jews "inwardly" (Rom. 1:28-29).

2. They were Paul's "fellowprisoners." The book of Romans was written prior to Paul's first and second imprisonments in Rome, but according to 2 Corinthians 6:5 and 11:23 Paul was often in prison, and during one of these imprisonments Andronicus and Junia must have shared with Paul in his affliction.
3. They were "of note among the apostles." This can be understood in one of two ways: 1) they were apostles of special note, that is, they stood out among the apostles. If this is Paul's meaning, then he is using the term "apostle" in its non-technical sense of anyone who is sent on a mission; 2) The apostles took note of them. This is the more probable meaning. Since these two believers came to Christ even before Paul (see point #4) they probably were in close proximity to Jerusalem and were known by the apostles and had an excellent testimony before them.
4. They were "in Christ" before Paul. They came to Christ before Paul did, prior to Acts chapter 9. In spiritual years, they were older than Paul! This interesting point is significant in understanding when the church began. If being "in Christ" has the technical meaning that is found in Galatians 3:27-28 (being "in Christ"=being in the church), then according to Romans 16:7 the church must have begun prior to Acts 9. We also know this from the verses which speak of Paul persecuting "the church" (1 Cor. 15:9; Phil. 3:6; Gal. 1:13). This adds support to the fact that the church began in Acts chapter 2 (Pentecost) and refutes the ultradispensational notion that the church began in Acts 13 (as some say) or Acts 28 (as others say). See also Galatians 1:22 where Paul refers to "the churches of Judea that are in Christ" (and these "In Christ Churches" existed at least a decade before Acts 13). We might also note that if being "in Christ" carries the technical meaning of being part of His church, then 1 Thessalonians 4:16 ("the dead in Christ shall rise first") indicates that the resurrection that takes place at the rapture involves only church-age saints and does not include Old Testament saints (as some older dispensationalists taught).

Romans 16:8—Ampliatius

According to Hendriksen the name Ampliatius was a common name among slaves. Possibly Ampliatius was a slave in the church of Rome, but he was beloved to Paul. Believers have a wonderful bond in Christ regardless of their station in life or their position in society. The gospel puts every believer on the same level. We are all bond slaves serving our Master, the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:23-24). Ampliatius may have been a slave, but he was Paul's dearly beloved brother in Christ. In the New Testament churches the emphasis was upon a man's spirituality and walk with the Lord and not on his station in life. For example, in 1 Timothy chapter 3 a man is not disqualified for the officer of elder or deacon because he is a slave (nothing of the sort is mentioned). This opens the way to the fascinating possibility that a slave could have been an officer in a local assembly of believers and his believing slave owner (master) would have been in submission to him in the assembly, whereas outside of the assembly the believing slave would be subject to his believing master. One is reminded of the days of William Carey in India when the people were in bondage to a strict caste system, but when these people trusted Christ as their Saviour and entered the church of the living God, they enjoyed an equal status in Christ, being co-heirs of the grace of life. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Romans 16:9—Urbanus and Stachys

The word "helper" means "fellow-worker" (same word as found in verse 3). Believers work together on the same team, having the same ambition (to please Christ—2 Cor. 5:9) and having the same goal (the glory of God—1 Cor. 10:31). Just as the members of our human body help one another, so it is with the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12, 20-27). Stachys was beloved to Paul. Notice in these verses how encouraging Paul's greetings are. These Roman

believers certainly had their weaknesses and faults, but Paul greeted them in love and "love is kind and thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. 13:4,5). Paul saw these believers not as they were in themselves but as they were "in Christ" (see verses 3,7,8,9,10,11,12,13 and notice the expressions "in Christ," "in the Lord").

Romans 16:10—Apelles and Aristobulus

The word "approved" is found elsewhere in Rom. 14:18; 1 Cor. 11:19; 2 Cor. 10:18; 13:7 and 2 Timothy 2:15 (Timothy was to make every effort to show himself "approved" unto God as an unashamed workman). It is also found in James 1:12—"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (bears up well under trial) for when (after) he is **tried** (tested and found approved), he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." This same word with the negative particle ("unapproved") is found in 1 Cor. 9:27 ("castaway") and means "unapproved, disqualified, rejected" (see also Rom. 1:28; 2 Cor. 13:5,6,7; Tit. 1:16; Heb. 6:8; 2 Tim. 3:8). Apelles was a believer who was tested by trials and afflictions and adverse circumstances, but he trusted the Lord and remained true to Christ. How the believer responds to the fiery trials which God sends his way is of utmost importance.

Some (Lightfoot, Hendricksen) have suggested that Aristobulus may have been the grandson of Herod the Great (the brother of Herod Agrippa I), although it is difficult to determine if this were really the case. If so, then Paul was probably referring to slaves in his household who were believers. We should never be reticent to look for believers even in the most unexpected places. The Herod family was one of the most ungodly families in the history of mankind (see the notes on the Herod family in our set of notes entitled *Infamous Unbelievers*), but God is able to do His wonderful work of grace even within the gates and walls of the most infamous unbelievers. Even in our day it is ironic that the most celebrated and publicized atheist of the last half of the twentieth century had a son who became a Christian, to her utter dismay and disgust!

Romans 16:11 Herodion, Narcissus

Herodion was Paul's kinsman, probably indicating that he was a Jew (see discussion under verse 7). We should also be reminded of the close kinship that all believers have as "brethren." There cannot be a closer relative than a brother! The name "Herodion" may indicate some relationship to the family of Herod. Hendricksen suggests "associated with" or "having admiration for" the family of Herod. Murray suggests that he was of the family or household of Herod. Perhaps he too was associated with the household of Aristobulus (v.10).

The name "Narcissus" reminds us of a mythological youth who was so beautiful that all the girls longed to be his, but he only shunned them. He would have none of them. Finally one of the girls whose heart he had wounded prayed this prayer to the gods, "May he who loves not others love himself." The goddess Nemesis granted her request. As Narcissus bent over a clear pool for a drink and saw there his own reflection, he immediately fell in love with it. He burned with love for himself and could not stop gazing at that reflection. He stayed there, pining away, until he died. Thus Narcissus (narcissism) has become a term which refers to SELF LOVE, an excessive interest in one's own appearance, comfort, importance, abilities, etc. Sadly this is one of the chief characteristics of the last days—"For men shall be **lovers of their own selves**" (2 Tim. 3:2).

Lightfoot suggests that Narcissus could have been a rich and powerful freedman who was closely connected to the Emperor Claudius, serving as his secretary, and who was later put to death shortly after Nero assumed the throne. If Aristobulus was related to the Herods (see v.10), then he would have been a close ally of Claudius. These two possibilities may give us some help in understanding Philippians 4:22 ("[the saints] that are of Caesar's household"), because there would have been at least two households within the palace that had believers in them.

Romans 16:12 Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis—three female laborers!

These three believers were known for their LABOR. The word means strenuous labor, even to the point of weariness and exhaustion. Even in the midst of labor, the believer is to learn to REST (Matthew 11:28). These three women labored "in the Lord" and we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58). Our labor is to be "in the Lord" and it is also to be for His great Name's sake (Rev. 2:3), because of WHO HE IS. The One we labor for is worthy of our utmost energy and effort. He deserves nothing less than our best. If anyone labored,

it was the Apostle Paul himself: "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I LABORED more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10 and compare Col. 1:29; 2 Cor. 11:23). This was a LABOR motivated and empowered by the grace of God. Our motivation for labor should also be LOVE—love for the Saviour and for believers and for all mankind. God is not unrighteous to forget such a labor of love (Heb. 6:10).

Tryphaena and Tryphosa had names which were very similar and perhaps they were sisters (sometimes parents give their daughters names that sound alike or are similar in some way (Ruth and Rachel, Joan and Jean, etc.)). The labor of Persis is described in the past tense which is unusual (the labor of the first two women is described in the present tense). Hendricksen offers a possible explanation: "Does the distinction in tense indicate that the frailties connected with old age have caught up with Persis, so that she is no longer able to labor as diligently as was once the case? If so, Paul takes care that her past labors are not forgotten. A lesson for us all to remember." Paul was careful how he referred to a female saint. In verse 9 he addresses Stachys (a man) as "my beloved" but he addresses Persis as "the beloved." It's important to be careful about such things, lest a man give the impression that he is being too familiar with a woman.

Romans 16:13 Rufus and his mother

It is possible that Paul is here sending greetings to the same "Rufus" who is mentioned in Mark 15:21, the son of Simon, the man who carried our Lord's cross. The "Rufus" mentioned in Mark 15:21 had a brother named Alexander. Paul described the mother of Rufus as "his mother and mine." There was a sense in which Paul claimed the mother of Rufus as his mother, reminding us of Mark 10:29-30. She no doubt had had occasion to care for Paul as if he were her own son. When we are saved and become members of the family of God (John 1:12) we soon discover that we have many brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers! God's blood-bought children have a unique relationship one with another. "Let Christian mothers find here a great field for that wonderful heart of instinctive loving care given by God to mothers,—that they extend their maternal care beyond their own family circle, to all Christians, and especially to all laborers for Christ. The Lord will remember it at His coming!" (W.Newell)

All believers are "chosen in the Lord." We all are God's elect (see Col. 3:12; Rom. 8:33; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2:9 where this same word is used). Compare also Ephesians 1:4. Some believe that this term is here used in a special sense, meaning that Rufus was a "choice" believer (an exceptional believer having some eminence—see the NASB—"a choice man in the Lord"). Thayer says it can have the meaning of "*choice, select*, i.e. the best of its kind or class, *excellent, preeminent*." But if Rufus was such an outstanding, preeminent believer, why is he only mentioned here and nowhere else in the Scriptures? [Aquila and Priscilla, for example, are mentioned a number of times in the N.T.] So it is possible that Paul used the expression "chosen in the Lord" in its common, normal sense. Perhaps he was seeking to encourage the heart of Rufus by reminding him of the glorious fact of his election, a fact which should bring forth much thanksgiving from the heart of every believer (2 Thess. 2:13). Perhaps Rufus was saved in a remarkable way, having been a person who seemed very unlikely to ever come to Christ. We all know people who, from a human point of view, seem to be impossible candidates for salvation: "That man will never get saved!" But the God who converted Saul of Tarsus can wonderfully surprise us. "Rufus, never forget God's wonderful work of calling you and choosing you and bringing you to Himself! You are a trophy of God's sovereign, saving grace!"

Romans 16:14-15 Ten believers.

Five believers are greeted by name in verse 14 and mention is made of the "brethren that are with them." Five believers are mentioned in verse 15 as well as "all the saints who are with them." See our lengthy discussion under Romans 16:5 concerning "house churches." Nereus may have been instrumental in the salvation of two famous Romans. In 95 A.D. Rome was shocked when two distinguished Roman citizens were condemned for being Christian believers: Flavius Clemens and his wife Domatilla (she was the granddaughter of Vespasian, a former Emperor and the niece of Domitian, the reigning Emperor). Flavius was executed and his wife was banished to an island. Flavius and his wife had a household servant named Nereus (see verse 15). Nereus was a common name, but if the household servant of Flavius was the same man Paul referred to, then it seems likely that Nereus was influential in the salvation of these two prominent people (see William Barclay's discussion of

this in his *Letters to the Romans*, also cited by MacArthur in *Romans 9-16*).

Romans 16:16 The Holy Kiss

In the early church there was a unique kinship among believers: "Greet one another with an holy kiss." Also there was a unique kinship among assemblies of believers: "The churches of Christ greet you." Believers had a special relationship one with another and assemblies had a special relationship one with another, all because of Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament the term "KISS" is mentioned five times in connection with greetings. Four times Paul speaks of "an holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26) and once Peter speaks of "a kiss of love" (1 Pet. 5:14). The Lord Jesus spoke of this custom when He gently reprimanded Simon the Pharisee: "Thou gavest me no kiss" (Luke 7:45). When Paul said farewell to the Ephesians they "fell on Paul's neck and kissed him" (Acts 20:37 and compare the welcome of the prodigal son in Luke 15:20). The custom was to kiss on the forehead or cheek, not on the lips (it was in no way a sensual, erotic or romantic kiss). Since Paul exhorted them to "greet one another" with this kiss, could it be that the greeting was to extend to all believers, not just to members of the same sex (compare Gen. 29:11 where Jacob kissed Rachel, which was not a romantic kiss but an affectionate greeting among relatives)? However there are some who feel that this custom only applied to members of the same sex—men kissing men and women kissing women (see *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, p. 1814). It was a "**holy** kiss" indicating that God was involved and God was pleased in this warm and affectionate display of genuine love between believers: "it should never imply less than three parties: God and the two who kiss each other. The holy kiss symbolizes Christ's love mutually shared" (Hendricksen).

In our society and in most societies today, a warm and affectionate greeting is expressed in ways other than by a kiss. A warm and affectionate "holy handshake" would certainly be a God-honoring substitute for what the first century Christians did, and if we are to "greet one another" then the hand should not be refused even if it be offered by a member of the opposite sex. We are brothers and sisters in Christ and we are to see that we love one another with a PURE HEART fervently (1 Pet. 1:22).

There are times when believers try to obey the "letter of the law," and in doing so actually disobey the "spirit of the law." This could happen with "the holy kiss." There are some churches in America that seek to practice this custom, believing it to be Biblical. However those who have witnessed this report that such a greeting is anything but warm and affectionate. Kissing fellow believers is so foreign to our custom that we go through the motions of it but it loses all warmth and affection. Thus in keeping to the letter of the law we have lost the spirit of the law. Far better to lose the letter of the law by substituting the kiss for a more comfortable handshake, and thus be able to fulfill the spirit of the law (a warm and affectionate greeting). Those believers who live in countries where this kind of kissing is still practiced are better able to fulfill both the letter and the spirit of this command.

"The churches of Christ" sent their greetings to the church of Christ that was in Rome. The churches of the first century had a kinship and unity that we no longer find among churches today. This is because first century churches all shared in common the following:

SAME TEACHING "as I teach every where **in every church**" (1 Cor. 4:17)

SAME PRACTICE "as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I **in all churches**" (1 Cor. 7:17)

SAME CUSTOM "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither **the churches of God**" (1 Cor. 11:16).

SAME ORDER "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as **in all churches of the saints**" (1 Cor. 14:33).

Today there is a group of churches called "THE CHURCH OF CHRIST" which claims to base its practices and its doctrine solely on the authority of the New Testament Scriptures. Sadly this group of churches promotes serious

error in at least two points: 1) They teach baptismal regeneration, that a person cannot be saved and cannot have his sins forgiven until he is baptized in water (*see our study on DOES WATER BAPTISM SAVE?*); 2) They teach that a believer in Christ can lose his salvation (*see our study on ETERNAL SECURITY*).

Romans 16:17-18 *A Call for Separation*

At this point in the text we have an abrupt break in the flow of thought. Paul had been giving a series of greetings to the believers living in Rome. Then he suddenly stopped as if he were somehow reminded of something very urgent that he must share with these believers for their own safety and protection. It reminds us of Jude when he gave all diligence to write of the common salvation but then he changed what he intended to do because he was suddenly impelled to exhort the people to earnestly contend for the faith and to beware of false teachers (Jude 3 and following).

In these verses Paul sounds out a final warning and exhortation concerning false teachers in which he spells out ***two ways in which believers may protect themselves against false teachers***. The first way is by **SEPARATION** (verse 17) and the second way is by **PENETRATION** (Verse 18).

SEPARATION (Verse 17)

The first way we may protect ourselves against false teachers is by SEPARATION. This verse is structured around two commands. Biblical separation can be realized only as these two commands are obeyed. The first command is a command for **identification**: MARK THEM! It is impossible to separate from a false teacher if you do not know who he is. He must be identified for what he really is. This command is given to the "brethren" in Rome, not just to the elders in Rome and not just to the leadership of this local assembly. Every believer is to show this kind of discernment. Paul was saying, "Make sure you can spot them and identify them. Constantly be on guard, watching for those who might promote false doctrine (compare the warning Paul gave to the Ephesians elders in Acts 20:29-31).

Paul then gives some help in identifying these false teachers, describing them as those who "cause divisions and offenses (stumbling blocks)." Those who are faithful to the Word of God and "narrow minded" in a good way (the Bible is a very narrow book, compare Matthew 7:13-14), are likely going to be accused of being DIVISIVE. "You separatists are always dividing the body of Christ. Why don't you be more loving and less dogmatic about what you believe?" Etc. Paul reminds us who the divisive ones really are: those who go contrary to the doctrine which has been handed down. In other words, those who cause divisions are those who refuse to stand obediently and faithfully upon the written Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation. Those who move away from that sure foundation are the ones, from God's perspective, who are causing division. They should not have budged from the rock solid foundation of truth!

These false teachers cause divisions and offenses **contrary** to the doctrine (teaching) which the Roman believers had received. This preposition **para** (contrary) is normally translated "along side of." The error creeps up to the truth and comes along side of it. Error always rides closely to the truth and yet it does not quite match up to the truth. It comes close to it though, and is very subtle. Paul expected the Roman believers to know enough doctrine so that they could discern truth from error and thus be able to mark and identify false teachers. They need to be very skilled at telling the difference between that which is counterfeit and that which is true, even though the false and the true may look very similar in many ways. One of the problems in so many churches today is that the people do not know enough doctrine to be able to recognize a person who is teaching contrary to sound doctrine.

Once the false teacher has been marked and identified, what is next? This brings us to our second command which is a command for **severance**: AVOID THEM! Literally it means, "turn away from them." Notice that we are to separate not merely from their teachings but from them. Alva McClain said it this way, "Get as far away from them as possible."

Concerning those who teach false doctrine, notice what the New Testament tells us in other places:

Let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9).

From such turn away (2 Tim. 3:5).

An heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject (Tit. 3:10).

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not . . . (2 John 10).

(Each of these passages must be studied in its context so that each command might be correctly understood and properly obeyed.)

PENETRATION (Verse 18)

The penetration demanded here in verse 18 is twofold. First, there is penetration into their motives ("For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly") and second, there is penetration into their methods ("and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple").

Penetration into their motives: We must penetrate beyond the mere profession. They professed to serve Christ, but Paul penetrated into their true motive. He denied that they served Christ, but rather he discerned that they served their own belly. This was a very strong way of saying that they were SERVING SELF. The word "belly" (κοιλία) comes from a word meaning "hollow" and can denote the entire physical cavity (often used in the NT of the womb). In John 7:38 it stands metaphorically for the innermost part of man (Vine). In Philippians 3:18-19 Paul used this term to describe the enemies of Christ: "whose God is their belly." Many today claim to be serving Christ but are really striving for personal gain and fame. They care not about the Name and reputation of Christ. They are serving and pleasing SELF and not God.

Penetration into their methods: They deceive the hearts of the simple (literally "without evil", innocent, those who are unsuspecting). These victims are trustful souls who expect nothing bad. How do these false teachers deceive these unsuspecting ones? They do it with good words (words that sound so good, so plausible) and fair speeches (polished language). False teachers really know how to communicate! It is POISON but it is served on such a beautiful platter! They are very smooth talkers. They have a gift at making error sound so good. We remember the words of the serpent in Genesis 3 which sounded so good to Eve. We need to penetrate and look beyond their flattering and polished speeches and discern the hiss of the serpent. Such people are to be marked and avoided!

Romans 16:19

After giving a strong word against unregenerate false teachers, Paul admonishes the Romans concerning their responsibility toward good and evil. He first notes their fidelity (they had not succumbed to false teaching): "your obedience has reached unto all men." We have already seen that the Romans were famous for their faith (Rom. 1:8). Where there is faith there will also be obedience: "by faith Abraham...obeyed" (Heb. 11:8). The greatest antidote against false teaching is to simply obey the Word of God (compare Rom. 6:17). Their obedience caused Paul to be glad and rejoice over them (compare the Apostle John's rejoicing over obedient believers in 3 John 3-4). The Roman believers occupied a crucial and strategic place in heart of the empire and it would be tragic if their faith would be corrupted. Historically we know that eventually this did happen. The most corrupt and influential religious system that ever developed from Christianity bears the name "Roman"—***the Roman Catholic church!***

Paul's earnest desire for these believers was that they would be "wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil." Being "wise unto that which is good," will include "the constant study of God's Word of truth, and careful observation and valuing what is good in the lives about us, and of those whose lives and works we read. Paul sums it up in Philippians 4:8" (Newell). God wants us to be careful students when it comes to what is good, who is good, and how to be good. We need to be constantly testing what is that good will of God (Rom. 12:2), ever following that which is good (1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:13), ever avoiding what is not good (1 Pet. 3:11—"eschew"), and abounding to every good work (2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 2:10; 2 Thess. 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:17; Tit. 3:1) being

fruitful therein (Col. 1:10).

Being "simple concerning evil" in some sense must be opposite in meaning to "wise unto that which is good." We are not to be wise unto that which is evil. We are to be naive (innocent, uninitiated) toward evil, in a good way. We are not to study evil in the sense of going out and doing experiential research and personal investigations of how rotten the world system has become. When it comes to knowledge and understanding, we are to be mature and be un-childlike, but when it comes to malice and wickedness we are to be very immature and unknowing (1 Cor. 14:20). If there is a corrupt television program, the believer does not need to view it in order to discover for himself how evil it is so that he might warn others. "Many Christians rationalize watching degrading movies and TV programs by claiming they need to be familiar with the ways of the world in order to better analyze secular culture and be better prepared to witness to those who are worldly. But it is not necessary to sift through garbage to recognize it for what it is, and the more we are around it the more we pick up its stench. The more willingly we associate with evil, the more it will drag us down to its level" (MacArthur). We are to "abhor that which is evil" (Rom. 12:9) and shrink back from it in terror, not try to get close enough to it to investigate it. As sinners saved by grace we have already been as close to sin as we ever need to be. Our object now is to get as far away from it as possible, "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).

The word "simple" literally means "unmixed." It is from a verb meaning "to mix, mingle, to mix wine and water" with the negative prefix, thus: not mixed, unmixed. It means "without admixture of evil, free from guile, innocent, simple" (Thayer). It was used of wine not diluted with water (pure wine) and metal not weakened in any way (pure metal). It is used in two other places in the NT—1) Philippians 2:15, "That ye might be blameless and harmless, the sons of God . . . in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." 2) Matthew 10:16, "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (notice that here as in Romans 16:19 the word is contrasted with the word "wise"). The "dove" in Scripture seems to be a symbol of purity. It is used in Song of Solomon 6:9 in parallel with the term "undefiled" and it is a symbol of the Holy Spirit in Matthew 3:16.

Romans 16:20

In this verse believers have been given the wonderful promise that our war with Satan will shortly come to a complete and final end, with Satan totally vanquished and with God's saints sharing in the glorious victory. He's the "God of peace" in the sense that He alone is able to bring an end to the war with Satan which will result in peace for the saints ("peace" in the sense of the end of war, freedom from conflict). Obviously God's people enjoy God's peace now (John 14:27), but in light of the promise in this verse, Paul was probably thinking of the ultimate peace that believers will gain through the defeat of Satan.

This promise is a direct reference to Genesis 3:15 where we are told that the seed of the woman (Christ) would bruise or crush the Serpent's head (a fatal blow), and that Satan would bruise or crush Christ's heel (Calvary's cross). God will inflict a crushing blow upon the archenemy of our souls, and we will share in God's victory over Satan. The ones who are "co-heirs" (Rom. 8:17) are also co-conquerors. He will be crushed "under your feet." When the Israelites conquered enemy kings they would symbolize their great victory by putting their feet upon their necks (Joshua 10:24). God invites His saints to celebrate His victory over Satan.

When will this great defeat of Satan take place? It will happen "shortly, quickly, suddenly, soon." Believers are encouraged by the fact that the battle, though difficult, will not be long. We can expect it to be soon. Satan's time is short and his defeat is certain.

Prophetically we know that at the mid-point of the tribulation Satan will be cast out of the third heaven and execute his fury upon the earth, knowing that his time is short (Rev. 12:12). He knows his doom is impending. Three and a half years later he will be cast into the abyss at which time he will literally be "under the feet" of millennial saints. His final and ultimate doom is described in Revelation 20:10 (and compare Matthew 25:41).

When Paul wrote to the Romans, Satan, though defeated at Calvary, was still an active and formidable foe, as he still is today (1 Pet. 5:8-9; 1 John 4:4). Believers of the first century, as well as believers today, are joyfully expecting the imminent return of Christ (Tit. 2:13; Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 1:7; etc.). We know that once this event takes place (which may be at any time), Satan's defeat will soon follow. It is from the perspective of imminency

that we may speak of Satan's defeat as "soon." Believers of any period of church history should be encouraged by the fact of Christ's soon coming and Satan's soon defeat!

This Greek phrase "soon" or "shortly" is also found in Revelation 1:1 and 22:6—"the things which must *shortly* come to pass." There are those today who believe that the tribulation period is not **future** but has already been **fulfilled** in history at or around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. They believe that most prophecy, including most of what was predicted in the book of Revelation, was fulfilled at this time. Since it says "these things must shortly come to pass" they reason that all these things must have taken place in the first century. But Romans 16:20 serves as an argument against such thinking. Obviously Satan is an active and dangerous foe today and he has not yet received his crushing and defeating blow, even though it has been nearly 2000 years since Paul promised that this would soon take place! And yet, from the perspective of believers both then and now, this event may be anticipated to take place "shortly."

I wrote to, Gary DeMar, a very prominent author, anti-dispensationalist and defender of the view that says that most prophecies have been fulfilled in the past, in or around 70 A.D. I simply asked him when he believed Satan would be crushed in light of Romans 16:20. I also asked him if he thought this has already taken place in 70 A.D. Here is his response:

The primary reference is the Roman Christians to whom Paul is writing ("*your* feet" not "their feet," that is, not the feet of people who were not alive when Paul wrote his letter). The crushing is to take place "soon." "Soon" means "soon." Since nearly 2000 years have passed, whatever Paul was describing, it is history. Satan could refer to the apostate Jews who Revelation describes as a "synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9), the same ones that Jesus describes as being related to the Devil in John 8:44 ("ye are of your father the devil"). The Jews were the ones "who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out," Paul writes. "They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved, with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. *But wrath has come upon them to the utmost*" (1 Thess. 2:14-16). This "wrath" might be Paul's crushing metaphor. (5/21/01)

Notice that DeMar, in seeking to understand "soon" literally, is forced to understand the verse in a very non-literal way. He says that "soon" means "soon" but then goes on to explain that Satan does not really mean Satan but it is merely a metaphor for the unbelieving Jews who will be crushed in 70 A.D. This is typical of the preterist position. By insisting that most prophecies find their fulfillment in the first century they are forced to understand most prophecies in a very non-literal way. [See our booklet, *The Great Tribulation—Future or Fulfilled?*]

Romans 16:21-24

In the first part of this chapter Paul sent his personal greetings to various saints in Rome. In this section, beginning with verse 21, Paul conveys greetings to the Romans from his companions who were with him in Corinth. The book of Romans was written in Corinth at the close of Paul's third missionary journey. On these verses, see a very helpful quote by Bishop Moule (cited also by Newell, p. 562).

Paul mentions his faithful fellow-worker Timothy, his own son in the faith (see Phil. 2:19-20; 1 Tim. 1:2). Paul had a warm place in his heart for Timothy even to the end of his life. Among his last recorded words, Paul twice asked to see Timothy again (2 Tim. 4:9,21). Lucius is probably the same man mentioned in Acts 13:1, among the prophets and teachers of the great church at Antioch. Some identify Lucius with Luke (see MacArthur). Jason could be the same man mentioned in Acts 17:5-9 who entertained Paul and Silas and whose house was assaulted by a mob. Sosipater may be the same man called Sopater in Acts 20:4-6, and if so he was one of the noble Bereans of Acts 17:10-12. The last three names mentioned in verse 21 are said to be Paul's kinsmen, indicating they were Jews (see our discussion of "kinsmen" under Romans 16:7), another reason for not identifying Lucius as Luke (Luke was a Gentile).

Verse 22 is the one verse in the book of Romans that Paul did not write! Tertius was Paul's secretary or amanuensis (an assistant, one who takes dictation). Paul spoke as he was moved and carried along by the Holy

Spirit (compare 2 Peter 1:21) and Tertius recorded or transcribed with precision what he said. But here Paul allowed Tertius to speak for himself and to send greetings to the Romans. Apparently Paul generally dictated his letters, perhaps due to an eye problem which forced him to write in large letters when he did write, John Hancock style (Gal. 6:11). At the end of his epistles Paul would normally pen a greeting with his own hand, which was a token of the letter's authenticity (see 2 Thess. 3:17 and Gal. 6:11). He greeted the saints "in the Lord," in the Person of our blessed Head who alone can unite believers together.

Gaius (verse 23) was known for his hospitality, and not only hosted Paul but also the whole assembly. "Here is a brother whose hospitality welcomes all saints. Brother, if you have a longing to be helpful to God's saints, be a Gaius! Count not the things you have as your own, but as belonging to Christ; and, therefore, to be used freely by Christ's own" (Newell). He is probably the same man mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14, whom Paul baptized (Paul wrote Romans from Corinth). Some identify him with Titius Justus of Acts 18:7. It is thought that Gaius was a rich and prominent man and as such may have had a spacious house suitable for the gathering of the saints for worship.

Erastus (verse 23) was the chamberlain or city treasurer of Corinth. It is the word "*oikonomos*" (compare the English word "economy") which means "house manager, steward" or in this case "superintendent of the city's finances." We get the term "dispensation" from this word. Erastus was a dispensationalist in more ways than one. He was entrusted with the city's finances and more importantly, as a believer, he was entrusted with the responsibility to manifest and exhibit God's grace (Eph. 3:2). Erastus was a man of high station and political influence, and as such had the opportunity to be an excellent testimony before the leaders of the city. May we shine for Christ wherever God has put us, whether high or low (Phil. 2:15).

Quartus (verse 23) may not have been a prominent person, but he was a dear brother in Christ and Paul sent heartfelt greetings from Quartus to the Romans. How thankful we should be that Christ is not ashamed to call us "brothers" (Heb. 2:11). Quartus was the last of Paul's companions to send greetings.

In verse 24 Paul gives a closing benediction very similar to what was written in verse 20. Some manuscripts omit this verse (N, A,B,C). To have two benedictions very close to each other was not foreign to Paul's style (see 2 Thess. 3:16,18). The believer in Christ cannot be reminded too often of his need for the God of grace and the grace of God (compare 2 Cor. 9:8; 2 Tim. 2:1).

Romans 16:25-27 (closing benediction).

There are a number of similarities between these verses and Paul's opening verses in Romans chapter 1. Consider the following:

Romans 16	Romans 1
"my gospel"—v. 25	"the gospel of God"—v.1 "not ashamed of the gospel"—v. 16
"the preaching of Jesus Christ"—v.25	"concerning His Son, Jesus Christ"—v.3 "the gospel of Christ"—v.16
"to stablish (establish) you"—v. 25	"to the end ye may be established"—v.11
"made known to all nations"—v.26	"among all nations"—v.5
"for the obedience of faith"—v.26	"for obedience to the faith"—v.5
"the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets"—v.25-26	"which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy scriptures"—v.2

The last of these (in bold print) is actually a contrast. In chapter 1 Paul speaks about the gospel of God which had been promised before by the Old Testament prophets, but in chapter 16 Paul, in speaking of the gospel, mentions a mystery which had been kept secret but which is now revealed by the New Testament prophets. There is a sense in which the gospel is both old and new. There is an aspect of the gospel which is old and which was revealed on the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures. There is another aspect of the gospel which is new and which was kept secret throughout the Old Testament period, but which has been made known during this present age by Paul and other New Testament prophets and apostles.

The Old Gospel

The gospel message centers around the Person and work of Christ, and especially His substitutionary death and His bodily resurrection from the dead. Paul defines the gospel most clearly in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 where he says, "Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures* . . . and rose again the third day *according to the Scriptures*." The cross and the empty tomb must not be preached according to our own ideas and opinions, but in strict accordance and agreement with what has been revealed about these stupendous events in the Scriptures, even the Old Testament Scriptures. For example, a most detailed account and descriptive explanation of Christ's substitutionary death is set forth in Isaiah 53, about 700 years before Christ was crucified. Even in the New Testament it is hard to find the doctrine of the substitutionary death of Christ so thoroughly covered as it is in Isaiah 53 (the New Testament writers assume that you have already mastered what God said through the prophet Isaiah!). Proof that the great truths of Christ's death and resurrection were revealed in the Old Testament can be found in the words of our risen Lord in Luke 24:44-46.

When Philip preached the gospel to the African, he used Isaiah 53 as a starting point (Acts 8:28-35). In Acts 2:24-32 Peter preached the resurrection of Christ and used Psalm 16 as the basis for his message. In Acts 3:18 Peter preached the gospel and announced that the sufferings of Christ had been foretold by the mouth of all God's prophets. In Acts 4:10-11 Peter preached the death and resurrection of Christ and based it on Psalm 118. In Acts 10:43 Peter proclaimed that all the prophets had pointed to Jesus Christ and the forgiveness found in Him. In Acts 13:33-37 Paul preached the gospel in a synagogue and told the Jews that Christ's resurrection was a fulfillment of Psalm 2 and Psalm 16.

In Romans Paul's main theme is justification by faith and Paul sets forth Abraham as an example of this, based on Genesis 15:6 (Rom. 4:1-8). The revelation of God's righteousness had been "witnessed by the Law and the prophets" (Rom. 3:24). In Romans 10 Paul discusses the gospel of the grace of God and he quotes from several Old Testament passages to establish his points (see verses 6,7,8,11,13,15,16,18). In Romans 15 Paul cites several Old Testament passages which were in harmony with the fact of the gospel going to the Gentiles (verses 9-12,21).

In Galatians Paul again uses Abraham as an example of justification by faith (3:6) and Paul even goes so far as to say that the promise of Genesis 12:3 was given by God because God foresaw that the Gentiles would be justified by faith and blessed (Gal. 3:8). In this same context Paul says that God "preached before the gospel to Abraham" (Gal. 3:8). Paul cites Habakkuk 2:4 as support for his doctrine of justification by faith (3:11).

The gospel Paul preached was "according to the (Old Testament) Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4)! His basic themes of the cross and the empty tomb and justification by faith were themes that could be found in the Old Testament. There was no mystery in this.

The New Gospel

Today there is a "mystery" aspect of the gospel which was unknown in other ages but which now forms the very core of the gospel preaching of this age:

Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same

body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel . . . that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:5-8).

In this age, therefore, there is a distinctive element to the content of the gospel which is called "the mystery of the gospel" (see Eph. 6:19 and compare Col. 1:26-27; 4:3). This new revelation is that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise (Eph. 3:6). Such equality—Jew and Gentile united together in one body—was previously unknown. The distinctive message of the church is that Jew and Gentile alike may believe the gospel and be united together into ONE BODY (1 Cor. 12:13) for the purpose of manifesting and bearing witness to Christ who is the sovereign Head of this unique and living organism!

Dispensational writers have long recognized the distinctive element of gospel preaching in this church age:

The idea that Gentiles should be on exactly the same plane as Israelites and, furthermore, in the intimate relationship as being members of the same body, is absolutely foreign to the Old Testament. According to Isaiah 61:5,6, the Gentiles are pictured as being the servants and Israel as the priests of God. While it is true that the Gentiles were promised blessings in the future millennial kingdom, they are never given equality with the Jews in the Old Testament (Walvoord, *The Church in Prophecy*, pp. 46-47).

The Old Testament does predict Gentile blessing for the millennial period (Isa. 61:5-6; 2:1-4), but the blessings do not include equality with the Jews as is true today in the Body of Christ. Great blessing is promised Gentiles in the predictions of the Old Testament, but not on the basis of equality of position with the Jews. This equality is the point of the mystery revealed to the apostles and prophets in New Testament times (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 134).

Mystery truth is not developed in Romans as much as it is developed in Ephesians and Colossians, but the epistle to the Romans does touch on some of these things. The uniqueness of being in the body of Christ is treated in Romans 12 and the unique ONENESS and IDENTIFICATION with Christ that both Jews and Gentiles enjoy by virtue of being "IN CHRIST" is wonderfully treated in Romans 6. The glorious and precious mystery of "Christ in you" (Col. 1:26-27) is touched upon in Romans 8:9-10. The union of the believer with Christ, likened to a marriage relationship (Eph. 5:29-32) is presented in Romans 7:1-4. The many riches that Jews and Gentiles alike share in Christ are wonderfully set forth in Romans 8. The mystery of Israel's partial and temporary blindness is set forth in Romans 11:25. Indeed, Romans, more than any other epistle, helps us to understand God's purpose and program for Israel, in light of what God is doing today among the Gentiles and in light of what God will do in the future (Romans 9-11). Thus the book of Romans contributes in a significant way to our understanding of mystery truth. May God help us to be good and faithful stewards of these things (1 Cor. 4:1-2)!¹

Let us now consider some of the key words and phrases in these final three verses:

Romans 16:25

"**To stablish you**" means to render you firm and constant, to keep you from falling. God has all power and ability to establish believers in the truth, that our FAITH might be fixed down on God's FACTS. Those believers who are not well grounded in the truths set forth in the book of Romans are on dangerous ground and are susceptible to many grievous errors. But those believers who have mastered Paul's doctrinal masterpiece have fortified themselves on these great foundational truths and it is difficult to get them to move or budge from the rock-solid foundation upon which they have established themselves. As a case in point, the fellowship of Bible believing churches of which I was a part was deeply hurt by false teaching which denied the eternal Sonship of Christ (teaching instead that Christ became the Son of God at the time of the incarnation). This error is so simply and clearly answered and refuted in Romans 1:3-4 (at the incarnation the One who was already the Son became a man "of the seed of David according to the flesh," whereas the erroneous view teaches that at the incarnation the eternal God became the Son). This is but one example of how a correct understanding of the teaching set forth in Romans can establish believers in the truth and keep them from falling into error.

Believers cannot be fully established in the truth apart from a proper understanding of "mystery truth" which is

the subject of this closing paragraph. It is sad indeed that believers in general are so ignorant of these Sacred Secrets which were so near and dear to the heart of the apostle Paul. There is a body of truth which was hidden and locked up in the loving heart of God during all the past ages, but which now in this present age God desires to make known to His saints. And yet the ignorance of "mystery truth" in our day is astounding. At ordination councils the question has been asked: "What does it mean to be a steward of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1-2) and how important is this to your ministry?" In some cases they don't have a clue. How ignorant we are when it comes to understanding the riches and glories of this mystery which God delights to make known (Col. 1:27)! Paul's great burden was to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and **to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages hath been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ**" (Eph. 3:8-9). May this be near and dear to our heart as well.

"According to my gospel"—The expression "my gospel" is found in only two other places in the Bible: 1) Romans 2:16—"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to **my gospel**"; 2) 2 Timothy 2:8—"Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to **my gospel**." When Paul spoke of "my gospel" he was not necessarily referring to "mystery truth" as this last passage indicates. That the Messiah would be of the seed of David and that He would be raised from the dead were truths that were revealed in the Old Testament and were not mysteries.

What did Paul mean by "my gospel"? In what sense did the gospel belong to Paul? Remember, in Romans 1:1 Paul had made it very clear that the good news that he preached was "the gospel of God." It was God's good news! In what sense was it Paul's good news? There are at least two reasons why Paul personalized the good news: 1) **It was Paul's gospel in the sense that it was entrusted to him:** "The glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust" (1 Tim. 1:11). "A dispensation (stewardship) of the gospel is committed unto me . . . for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:17,16). Paul took very seriously his gospel responsibility. 2) **It was Paul's gospel in the sense that it was uniquely revealed to him:** "The gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12). "My gospel . . . according to the revelation of the mystery" (Rom. 16:25-26). "I went up by revelation, and communicated to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles" (Gal.2:2). "By revelation He made known unto me the mystery" (Eph. 3:3 and compare v.6—"by the gospel").

Paul's good news included mystery truth: "that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19). In light of this, there are two ultradispensational errors that must be avoided: 1) **Paul was the only person who received the revelation of the mystery.** This error is corrected by Ephesians 3:5 which teaches that mystery truth was revealed to God's holy apostles and prophets. No doubt Paul was the chief revelator of mystery truth but it was not given to him exclusively. He was not the only steward of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1-2). 2) **Mystery truth was not made known until Paul revealed it.** The mysteries of God are revealed in all the fulness of their preciousness in Paul's epistles, but Paul was not the first to reveal these secrets.

It should be noted that mystery truth had been revealed, at least in germ form, by the chief Revelator of all, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is seen especially in the mysteries of Matthew 13 and in the Upper Room Discourse of John 14-17. Here are some examples:

1. **The mystery of the church** was anticipated in Matthew 13:45-46.
2. **The mystery of "Christ in you"** (Col. 1:27) was anticipated in John 14:20 and 17:23.
3. **The mystery of the oneness of Christ and His church** (Eph. 5:31-32) was anticipated in John 17:21-23.
4. **The mystery of the rapture** (1 Cor. 15:51-52) was anticipated in John 14:1-3.
5. **The mystery of the present status of the nation Israel** (Romans 11:25) was anticipated in Matthew 13:44.
6. **The mystery of iniquity** working throughout the course of this present age (2 Thess. 2:9) was anticipated in the parables of the mustard seed and leaven.
7. **The mystery of Jews and Gentiles being united together in one body** (Eph. 3:5-6) was anticipated in John 10:16.

Lewis Sperry Chafer also discovered a significant correspondence between the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" as delineated in Matthew 13 and the mysteries revealed by Paul in the New Testament epistles:

In Matthew 13 there is given by Christ Himself, and under seven parables, the characteristics of this age. In this Scripture this age is itself declared to be a mystery, or sacred secret (13:11), and the parables develop the truth that there are three major features present throughout this age, namely, (a) that which is acceptable—the wheat, the pearl, and the good fish; (b) that which represents blinded Israel (verses 14-15), who are the treasure hid in the field—the field is the world—and (c) the presence of evil—the tares, evil birds, leaven, and bad fish. It should be observed that, in the New Testament, each of these three factors is itself declared to be a mystery, or sacred secret: (a) the Church composed of Jews and Gentiles in one Body (Eph. 3:4-6), (b) Israel blinded until the Church is called out (Rom. 11:25; cf. Acts 15:13-18), and (c) the presence and character of evil in this age (2 Thess. 2:7). See *Systematic Theology*, Vol. IV, p. 44.

As already stated, ultradispensationalists teach that mystery truth was not revealed prior to Paul and that it was revealed exclusively by Paul. Dr. Ernest Pickering answers this: "To say that 'church truth' was never revealed before Paul is to deny the places in Scripture where the Lord Himself taught such truth. The Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17) is most certainly applicable [specifically and exclusively] to the church. The blessed position of the saints in Christ, the access in prayer, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the rapture of the Church—all and more are taught in the Upper Room Discourse" (*Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism*).

"And the preaching of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 16:25). Paul's gospel centered in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He not only preached Christ (2 Cor. 4:5) but he rejoiced whenever others preached Christ (Phil. 1:18). Paul made it clear from the start of this epistle that Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son, was the center and the core of the gospel (Rom. 1:1-4). And when Paul preached the mystery of the gospel among the Gentiles he ceased not to preach among them the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8). Only as we are separated unto and devoted to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ can we be separated unto and devoted to the gospel (Rom. 1:1).

"According to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began"—This mystery, once kept secret, is now revealed! It is a secret no longer! That which was hidden is now being made known! "It is the secret 'hushed' throughout the long ages of the past, but now spoken out" (Moule). The phrase "since the world began" is literally rendered, "in the times of the ages" (Darby) or "in everlasting times" (Kelly). It is the mystery that has been hidden from ages and from generations (Col. 1:26).

There are five passages which clearly define what a New Testament mystery is. They are as follows:

1. "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ **which in other ages [generations] was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed** unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph. 3:4-5).
2. "And **to make all men see** what is the fellowship of the mystery, **which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God**, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:9).
3. "Even the mystery **which hath been hid from ages and from generations**, but **now is made manifest** to his saints" (Col. 1:26).
4. "I will open my mouth in parables; **I will utter** things **which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world**" (Matthew 13:35).
5. "According to **the revelation** of the mystery, which was **kept secret since the world began**, but **now is made manifest**, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **made known** to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26).

In light of these five passages we can derive the following definition of a New Testament mystery: *A New Testament mystery is that which was hidden, kept secret, and not made known to men in previous generations [prior to Paul's generation] but was made manifest and revealed in the New Testament era to and by the New Testament apostles and prophets.*

According to this Bible-based definition, dispensationalists have long maintained the position that a New Testament mystery is something which had never been revealed in previous generations (in the Old Testament period) but which God was pleased to make known in Paul's time. As already outlined, such mysteries were made

known first by Christ (partially) and then by His apostle Paul (fully). Contrary to this position is Reformed Theology (or Covenant Theology) which says that the New Testament mysteries were revealed in Old Testament times, but they were not as clearly understood as they are today. They teach that such mysteries were not altogether absent from the Old Testament (see note in The New Geneva Study Bible under Eph. 3:5). Thus they teach that the mysteries were partially revealed, but not fully understood until later. However, this is contrary to the five passages previously listed. These verses do not say that the mystery was partially made known but that it was not made known at all. It was hidden and kept secret and locked up in the loving heart of God, as it were.

Let's illustrate this with a specific example. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Paul makes known a mystery which had been hidden in previous ages. The secret which he revealed was that there would be a whole generation of living believers who would not taste of physical death. The Old Testament nowhere says anything about such an event. Moses, Elijah, David and Isaiah never had the slightest hint that such a thing would one day take place. It was completely hidden from them and it could not be found in their holy Scriptures. God never breathed out a word of it until New Testament times when it was hinted at by our Lord (John 14:1-3) and fully explained by Paul (1 Cor. 15:51-52 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18). This is a true New Testament mystery.

The mystery which Paul spoke of in Romans 16 was that Jews and Gentiles were now being dealt with by God on the basis of total equality and that upon believing on Christ they would be united together into one body for the purpose of showing forth the excellencies of the One who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light! Out of two, God made ONE NEW MAN (Eph. 2:11-18) and ONE NEW FLOCK (John 10:16). And it is our privilege, in the day in which we live, to make known this mystery, to reveal the secret, to uncover the revelation that had once been hidden! This is one case where God wants us to be good secret tellers (in contrast to Prov. 11:13 where revealing secrets is condemned).

Romans 16:26

"But now is made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets"

The mystery which was once kept secret is now made known. The phrase: "by the Scriptures of the prophets" is a poor translation. It should be rendered "by prophetic scriptures" (Kelly, Darby). God has made known this mystery by the writings of His prophets.

It is difficult to understand how non-dispensational interpreters can take this to be a reference to the Old Testament writings, especially after Paul has just stated that the mystery was kept secret in previous ages. Paul must be referring to New Testament prophets. In Ephesians 3:5 we learn that the mystery which was not made known unto the sons of men in other ages is now being revealed to God's holy apostles and prophets. These are New Testament apostles and prophets, the same men referred to in Ephesians 2:20 (see also 1 Cor. 12:10,29; Eph. 4:11). Of course, the prophetic writings which most clearly and most fully set forth the mysteries are Paul's epistles, Paul being the chief but not the only revelator of mystery truth. When it came to mystery truth, the Old Testament prophets were totally in the dark. The only One who knew about the mysteries in the O.T. period was God Himself.

"According to the commandment of the everlasting God"

The word "command" means "command, order, injunction." It is not the same word for "commandments" which is used of the Lord's Great Commission in Acts 1:2 (referring to those commands the Lord gave to His disciples after the resurrection and before the ascension).

Paul uses this word, in reference to his mission, in only two other places: 1) "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment (order) of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1). Paul was an apostle (a "sent-one") by order of the living God, and there is a sense in which this is true of every believer: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world,, even so have I sent them into the world" (John 17:18 and see 20:21 and see our paper, *The Great Commission According to John*). God's command and order is that we should represent Him rightly in the world and make known His glorious gospel to all nations. 2) "But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment (order) of God our

Saviour" (Tit. 1:3). Paul knew that he had a gospel responsibility and a preaching responsibility committed unto him. He was under orders to make known and manifest God's Word through preaching.

Certainly these statements are in full harmony with the Great Commission which includes Christ's command to go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15), to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20), to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, starting with the Jews first (Luke 24:47) and to be Christ's witnesses throughout the world, beginning first with Israel (Acts 1:8; and compare Romans 1:16—"to the Jew first," and see our paper, *To the Jew First*). But as time went on the early disciples learned more and more about church truth and mystery truth, and these further revelations served to deepen and enrich their understanding of the gospel of grace and of God's purpose for the present age. But none of these further revelations ever diminished their obligation to preach Christ and His gospel according to the original marching orders which they had received during the 40 days between the resurrection and ascension.

"Made known to all nations for the obedience of faith"

The language here is very similar to Romans 1:5—"for obedience to the faith among all nations." All men from all nations are commanded to believe and be saved (compare Acts 17:31 and 1 John 3:23a). All men everywhere are responsible to OBEY the gospel by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who DISOBEY the gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:8-9). We need to let people know that God has commanded them to be saved, and strongly urge them to respond to the gospel imperative in the right way (compare 2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

Jesus, I long, I long to be winning
Men who are lost, and constantly sinning;
O may this hour be one of beginning
The story of pardon to tell!
-----Herbert Tovey

Romans 16:27

To God,
only wise,
Be glory
through Jesus Christ
forever.
Amen

Romans 16:27

To God,
only wise,
Be glory
through Jesus Christ
forever.
Amen

**A WALK WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL
IS REQUIRED.**

“Only let your conduct be as it becometh the gospel of Christ”
(Phil. 1:27).

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10).

“We preached unto you *the gospel of God*. Ye are witnesses, and God also, *how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe*” (1 Thessalonians 2:9-10).

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that *as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more*”
(1 Thess. 4:1).

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. *And this I do for the gospel's sake*, that I might be partaker thereof with you” (1 Cor. 9:22-23).

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, *separated unto the gospel of God*” (Romans 1:1).

