SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Romans

Chapter Sixteen, Verses 1–27

The Names, the Warning, and the Glory — A Courier from Cenchrea, a Household of Saints, a Crushed Serpent, and a Doxology for All the Nations

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Twenty-six people greeted in Rome, eight sending greetings from Corinth, one woman carrying the most important letter ever written — and then a warning, a promise that Satan will be crushed, and a doxology that ties the whole letter back to its first five verses. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Romans 16:1–27

commend · greet · beware · glorify

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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A courier, a church of names, a crushed serpent, and glory to the only wise God

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"to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen." — Romans 16:27

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Romans 16:1–27

The Names, the Warning, and the Glory — Phoebe carries the letter, Paul greets a church by name, warns it of dividers, and closes where he began

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Romans 16 in 5 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
△ God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 16:20

"△The God of peace will soon ☆crush Satan under your feet. △The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

† Before the Passage

Romans 16 is the last page of the letter, and it reads at first like the end of a phone book. It is not. Chapter 15 closed with Paul's plans — Jerusalem with the Gentiles' gift, then Rome, then Spain (15:24–28) — and a benediction, "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen" (15:33). Chapter 16 adds what every real letter carries: a word for the person delivering it (vv. 1–2), greetings to friends by name (vv. 3–16), a last warning (vv. 17–20), greetings from the people in the room where it was written (vv. 21–23), and a closing doxology (vv. 25–27). The theology of chapters 1–11 and the ethics of 12–15 now have faces.

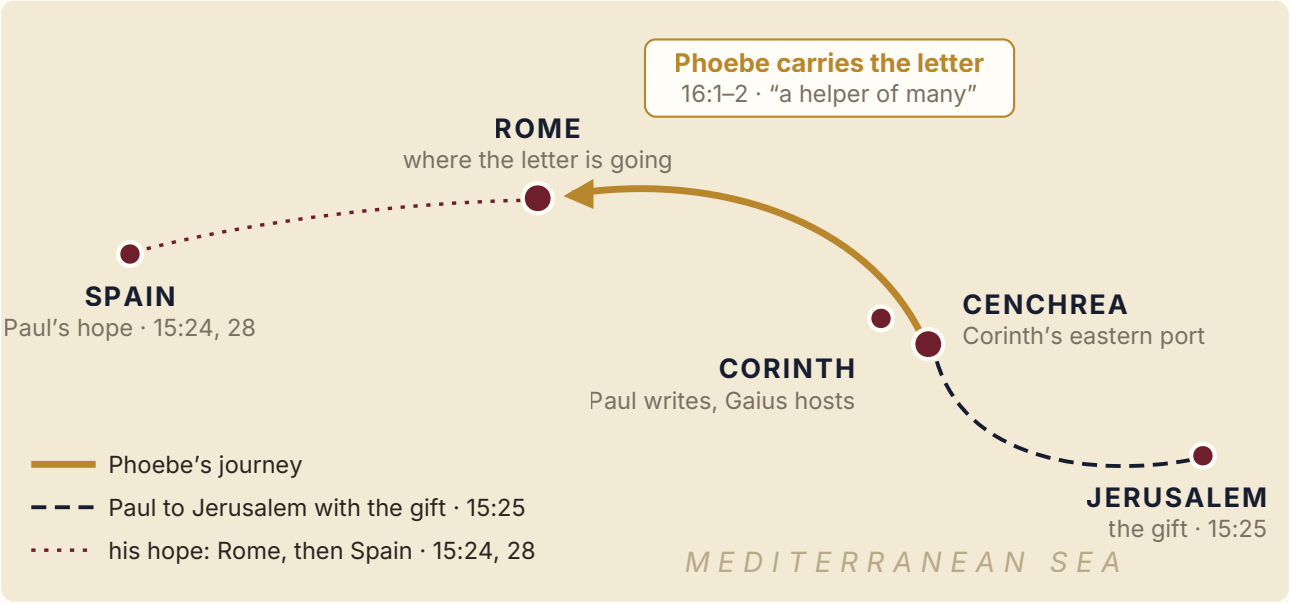
The letter was written from Corinth. Phoebe serves the church at Cenchrea, Corinth's eastern port (v. 1); Gaius, Paul's host, is the Gaius he baptized there (1 Corinthians 1:14); Erastus "remained at Corinth" (2 Timothy 4:20), and a pavement inscription found in Corinth, usually dated to the first century, names an Erastus who laid it at his own expense in return for his aedileship — perhaps, though not certainly, the same

man. Paul had never yet been to Rome (1:13; 15:22), yet he knows two dozen believers there. Prisca and Aquila, expelled when "Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome" (Acts 18:2), are back. People moved; the gospel moved with them.

Look for the women and the households. Ten women stand in this chapter (Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Junia if the name is feminine, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus's mother, Julia, Nereus's sister), several of them "worked hard." There is no church building: there is "the church that is in their house" (v. 5) and at least four other circles — two households (vv. 10–11) and two groups "with them" (vv. 14–15). Jew and Gentile sit side by side: Paul calls Andronicus, Junias, Herodion, Lucius, Jason and Sosipater his "kinsmen," fellow Jews, while most of the other names are Greek and Latin. The unity of Jew and Gentile that Romans has argued for (15:7–12) is here in a list.

The Old Testament runs under the last lines. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (v. 20) is the first gospel promise of Genesis 3:15 — the serpent bruised on the head — handed to a church. And the doxology says the gospel was made known "by the Scriptures of the prophets" (v. 26), the same claim the letter opened with: the gospel "He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures" (1:2). Even the manuscripts bear witness to how the ending was treasured: verse 24 repeats verse 20's blessing and is missing from the oldest copies, and the doxology itself stands at the end of chapter 14 in many later ones. NASB95 brackets verse 24; we explain why in Movement IV.

FIGURE · FROM CENCHREA TO ROME



Follow the gold line: the letter left Corinth's harbor in Phoebe's hands, while Paul turned east to Jerusalem with the gift, hoping afterward to come to Rome and go on to Spain.

I
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 16:1–2

Our Sister Phoebe

A servant of the church at Cenchrea carries the letter — receive her, help her, she has helped many

> [1] *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea;* [2] *that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.*
>
> ROMANS 16:1–2

διάκονον

DIAKONON · "SERVANT" · G1249

Diakonos is the ordinary word for one who serves — a table waiter, an attendant — and it is also the word Paul uses for the church office of deacon (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8, 12). Here it is joined to a place: *diakonon tēs ekklēsias tēs en Kenchreais*, "a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." The participle *ousan* ("being") presents it as her standing role, not a one-time errand. Whether Paul means a recognized office or a recognized ministry, our teachers divide (see below); everyone agrees she was trusted with the letter to Rome. Note the masculine form: Greek had no separate word "deaconess" yet.

προστάτις

PROSTATIS · "HELPER" · G4368

Used only here in the New Testament. The related verb *proistēmi* means to stand before, to lead or care for (12:8, "he who leads"; 1 Thessalonians 5:12), and the noun was used of a patron — someone with means and standing who looks after others. Paul uses a pleasing wordplay: "help her (*parastēte*, stand beside her) … for she herself has been a *prostatis* (one who stood before, a protector) of many, and of myself as well." The Romans are to stand by the woman who stood by Paul. KJV's "succourer" keeps the sense of practical, costly help.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads verses 1–2 as an advance recommendation: "Apparently Phoebe was on her way to Rome (probably entrusted with this precious letter)." He points out that "servant is the same word translated deacon in other places," and concludes that "Phoebe seems to be a female deacon in the church, either by formal recognition or through her general service." He leaves the question of office open rather than pressing it. Paul's two requests — receive her in the Lord, and help her in whatever she needs — rest on her record: she had been a helper of many, Paul included. Later in the chapter Guzik lists the women Paul names, Phoebe first, and says simply, "These are women who worked for the Lord."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul starts with her name: "Her name is taken from a pagan goddess," and he notes that early Christians kept such names once their pagan meaning had faded, as we keep the names of the days of the week. He then turns to the word "servant," *diakonia*, and recalls a paper he wrote on deaconesses for the PCA, in which he argued that "there is no connotative description of the term *church office*" — office is "extrapolated from the biblical examples given to us." Yet he does not shrink the word: "The Greek indicates one who holds a more specific office of important assistance to the Apostolic ministry." Women played major roles in the early church, he insists, "although no woman was selected for the office of Apostle."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In his sermon on verses 1–16, “Romans, But Not Romanists,” Spurgeon makes Phoebe the first entry in a roll of honor: “Phebe shall have her name inscribed in this golden book of Christ’s nobility, because she is the servant” of the church. What marks the people of this chapter, he says, is not wealth or rank or office but service — “It is a distinction among Christians to be allowed to serve.” And the rule runs all the way down the list: “Degrees in honour among believers are graduated by the scale of service done.” The humblest work done for the church is among the most honorable, and Phoebe’s errand to Rome put her name where the whole church would read it.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry calls Phoebe a sister by grace, not by blood, and “a servant by office, a stated servant” of the church at Cenchrea — serving, as he understands it, in works of charity and hospitality rather than in preaching. As a “succourer,” he says, “She relieved many that were in want and distress,” and Paul himself among them. Henry draws two lessons. Those who have helped others deserve help when they are in need, so Rome must receive her in the Lord and assist her in her business. And Paul’s gratitude is written down so that, wherever this letter is read, her kindness is remembered.

II
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 16:3–16

Greet Them by Name

Twenty-six people, two households, three house circles — the gospel of Romans with faces

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; 5 also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. 6 Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. 10 Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. 11 Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. 12 Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. 15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

ROMANS 16:3–16

FIGURE · WHO'S WHO IN ROME (16:3–15)

Prisca & Aquila vv. 3–5
fellow workers · risked their necks · house church

Epaenetus v. 5
first convert, Asia

Mary v. 6
worked hard for you

Andronicus & Junias* v. 7
kinsmen · fellow prisoners · in Christ before me

Ampliatus v. 8
beloved in the Lord

Urbanus v. 9
fellow worker

Stachys v. 9
my beloved

Apelles v. 10
approved in Christ

Herodion v. 11
my kinsman

Tryphaena v. 12
worker in the Lord

Tryphosa v. 12
worker in the Lord

Persis v. 12
worked hard in the Lord

Rufus v. 13
a choice man

his mother v. 13
"and mine"

Household of Aristobulus v. 10
the house is greeted, not the man

Household of Narcissus v. 11
"those … who are in the Lord"

A GATHERED CIRCLE · V. 14
Asyncritus · Phlegon · Hermes
Patrobas · Hermas
+ "the brethren with them"

A GATHERED CIRCLE · V. 15
Philologus · Julia · Nereus
his sister · Olympas
+ "all the saints who are with them"

woman · man · couple / pair · household · * NASB95 "Junias"; KJV "Junia" — see 16:7

24 named + 2 unnamed women = 26 greeted · 2 households · 3 house circles · plus Phoebe

Every chip is a real person in the order Paul greets them; notice how many are women, how many "worked hard," and that the church met in houses and circles, not a building.

Ἰουνίαν … ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις

IOUNIAN · EPISĒMOI EN TOIS APOSTOLOIS · "JUNIAS … OUTSTANDING AMONG THE APOSTLES" · G2458, G1978

The name in verse 7 is in the accusative, *Iounian*, and only the accent tells male from female: *Iounian* with the acute is the feminine Junia (a common Latin name); *Iouniān* with the circumflex would be a masculine Junias. The Textus Receptus, Tischendorf, Westcott-Hort, Nestle (1904), the Byzantine text of Robinson-Pierpont and the SBLGNT all print the acute; a number of twentieth-century critical editions printed the circumflex. NASB95 reads "Junias"; KJV reads "Junia." Then *episēmos*, "marked, notable," with *en tois apostolois* — either "outstanding among the apostles" (counted with them, in the wider sense of sent missionaries) or "well known to the apostles." The Greek allows both; our teachers lean differently. What is certain: they were Jews, they had been in prison with Paul, and they were Christians before he was.

Ῥοῦφον τὸν ἐκλεκτὸν ἐν κυρίῳ

ROUPHON TON EKLEKTON EN KYRIŌ · "RUFUS, A CHOICE MAN IN THE LORD" · G1588

Eklektos is the word for "chosen, elect" (8:33, "God's elect"), and it can also mean "choice, excellent," as of choice fruit. NASB95 takes the second sense ("a choice man"), KJV the first ("chosen in the Lord"). Mark alone among the Gospels names Simon of Cyrene as "the father of Alexander and Rufus" (Mark 15:21) — and Mark's Gospel is traditionally tied to Rome — so many identify this Rufus with Simon's son. Paul adds "also his mother and mine": a woman in Rome had mothered the apostle somewhere along his road.

φιλήματι ἁγίῳ

PHILĒMATI HAGIŌ · "WITH A HOLY KISS" · G5370

Philēma, from *phileō* (to love as a friend), was the ordinary greeting of family and friends in the ancient Mediterranean — Jesus noticed when Simon the Pharisee withheld it (Luke 7:45), and Judas betrayed with it (Luke 22:48). Paul makes it "holy": the family greeting of people who are now family in Christ. He gives the same command three other times (1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26), and Peter once (1 Peter 5:14). The verb in this whole section is *aspazomai*, "greet" — sixteen imperatives in fourteen verses (NASB95 adds a seventeenth "greet" in v. 5 for clarity).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik quotes Morris: Romans "was a letter to real people and, as far as we can see, ordinary people; it was not written to professional theologians." He adds that "of the 24 names here, 13 also appear in inscriptions or documents connected with the Emperor's palace in Rome." Priscilla and Aquila's house "gives us a clue to the organization of the early church" — "Each house church probably had its own 'pastor.'" On Andronicus and Junia he allows that "of note among the apostles" may make them apostles in the broad sense, "though not of the twelve," then weighs it honestly: "If there ever were women recognized as apostles ... this is the strongest Scriptural evidence. It isn't very strong." Rufus "may be" Simon of Cyrene's son, but "Rufus was a common name."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul ties Priscilla and Aquila to the riot at Ephesus: Paul's escape "was probably due in some measure to the heroic courage and assistance of Priscilla and Aquila." He explains why the church met in their home in plain terms: "The reason for home churches in the first century was that there were no other places to meet." On verse 7 he is careful — "Junia could be a man or a woman, depending on how you render the Greek there." He reads Rufus as Simon of Cyrene's son: Mark names him as "the father of Alexander and Rufus," so "Mark, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, honored these local church members." The holy kiss was a real practice, especially at the Lord's Supper, "but it is a custom, not a principle."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon reads the list as a gallery of households. "In ver. 3 you have a household in which the husband and the wife were joined to the Church" — and he guesses Priscilla is named first because she "was first in energy of character and attainments in grace." Aristobulus is missing from his own household's greeting: "Why leave Aristobulus out?" ... "Where are you, Aristobulus?" So he presses his hearers, "Pray unceasingly that your life-companions may be converted to God," and over Nereus and his sister, "Brother, let not your sister go to heaven alone." He notices that Persis "laboured much," that "Mary was one of those useful women who took personal care of the preacher," and that this church "did not overlook the most obscure members."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry sees in "the church that is in their house" a rebuke to those who scorn small gatherings: "It seems then, a church in a house is no such absurd thing as some make it to be." Where Spurgeon and Guzik read Rufus's "chosen" as "choice," Henry holds both together: "He was a choice Christian, whose gifts and graces evinced that he was eternally chosen in Christ Jesus." The households of Aristobulus and Narcissus show "there were some good servants, or other retainers, even in the family of a wicked man." He wants the holy kiss chaste and sincere, not Judas's. And he notices a silence: "Among all those to whom Paul sends greeting here is not a word of Peter," which makes him doubt Peter was then bishop of Rome.

III
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 16:17–20

Wise in What Is Good

Watch the dividers, turn away from them — and the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet

17 *Now I urge you, brethren, ⚠ keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.* 18 *For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of ⚠ their own appetites; and by their ⚠ smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.* 19 *For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.* 20 *△ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The ⟲ grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

ROMANS 16:17–20

"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

GENESIS 3:15

χρηστολογίας καὶ εὐλογίας

CHRĒSTOLOGIAS KAI EULOGIAS · "SMOOTH AND FLATTERING SPEECH" · G5542, G2129

Chrēstologia, used only here in the New Testament, is "useful-talk," kind and plausible words; *eulogia* is ordinarily "blessing" (15:29, "the fullness of the blessing of Christ"), here the fine-sounding words of flattery. The dividers do not sound dangerous; they sound gracious. Their target is *tōn akakōn* (G172), "the unsuspecting" — literally the "un-evil," people with no guile in them. Their master is named bluntly: they serve not Christ but *tē heautōn koilia*, "their own belly" (G2836) — NASB95 "their own appetites." And the command is two verbs: *skopein*, keep a watchful eye on them, and *ekklinete*, bend away from them.

ἀκεραίους δὲ εἰς τὸ κακόν

AKERAIOUS EIS TO KAKON · "INNOCENT IN WHAT IS EVIL" · G185

Akeraios means "unmixed, unalloyed" — wine not watered, metal without dross. Jesus used it: "be shrewd as serpents and innocent (*akeraioi*) as doves" (Matthew 10:16). Paul wants the Romans *sophous eis to agathon*, wise toward the good, and unmixed toward evil — expert in one, amateurs in the other. The protection against clever error is not to become clever in error, but to be thoroughly wise in the truth they "learned" (v. 17).

συντρίψει τὸν Σατανᾶν

SYNTRIPSEI TON SATANAN · "WILL CRUSH SATAN" · G4937

Syntribō is to shatter, crush to pieces — the word for breaking an alabaster vial (Mark 14:3) and for the rod of iron that breaks pottery (Revelation 2:27). The subject is "the God of peace" — the One who gives peace is the One who crushes the troubler of it — and the place is "under your feet": God does the crushing, the church does the standing. *En tachei* (G5034), "soon, quickly." Genesis 3:15 promised that the woman's seed would bruise the serpent's head; Paul hands that promise to a church troubled by dividers.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that the danger comes from people who cause divisions and offenses against the doctrine the Romans had learned, serving their own belly and deceiving "the hearts of the simple." He quotes Newell: "Mad dogs are shot; infectious diseases are quarantined" — and teachers who divide must be taken just as seriously. The best defense is verse 19: "This is the best defense against dividers and deceivers." Then a line men in recovery will recognize: "It is of far more use to know the good than it is to know the evil, to learn about the genuine rather than the counterfeit." On verse 20: "We see that God does the crushing, but Satan ends up under the feet of believers," with the full fulfillment in Revelation 20:1–3.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul guards the verse from a misreading: "Paul does not say to avoid doctrine." He says the opposite — "Avoid heretics. Avoid those who come into the church teaching false doctrine." He warns teachers too about flattering speech. On verse 19 he draws a line between maturity and immaturity: "there is a difference between a *childlike* faith and a *childish* faith." "In evil, be babes." "Do not be pros in wickedness; be amateurs in your sin." "But in your understanding, be men." On "soon" in verse 20 he offers a possibility without forcing it — the destruction of Jerusalem shortly after the letter arrived — "Or it could refer to something different that Paul does not tell us here."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon treats verse 17 with the seriousness of a plague. In "Contagion of False Doctrine" he recalls how a bale of goods from the East once carried pestilence into London, and argues that if a church tolerates one sin or false doctrine "knowingly and wittingly," no one can predict how far it will spread: "The Church, therefore, is to be purged of practical and doctrinal evil as diligently as possible." Yet in "Satan Under the Control of God" he will not let the church be afraid. He once watched a creature that seemed loose but was tethered: "whether we see it or not, the tether is there." "Dread not the foe, but bless God for the chain." In *Faith's Checkbook* on verse 20: "Let us bravely tread upon the tempter!"

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry hears tenderness in Paul's "I beseech you" and steel in "mark them … and avoid them." The dividers "serve their own belly—their carnal, sensual, secular interests," and they win the simple with good words and fair speeches. Rome's good name for obedience made her a target, so she must be "wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." On verse 20 Henry looks back to Eden — the promise is "plainly alluding to the first promise the Messiah made in paradise" — and forward to the end: "we have to do with a conquered enemy, and the victory will be perfect shortly." The God of peace will do it for them.

IV
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 16:21–24

Greetings from the Room in Corinth

A co-worker, three kinsmen, a scribe, a host, a treasurer, a brother — and a blessing the manuscripts debate

> 21 *Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.* 22 *I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.* 23 *Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother.* 24 *[The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.]*
>
> ROMANS 16:21–24

FIGURE · THE ROOM WHERE ROMANS WAS WRITTEN

WRITTEN AT CORINTH · EIGHT SEND GREETINGS · 16:21–23

Timothy my fellow worker v. 21	**Lucius** my kinsman v. 21	**Jason** my kinsman v. 21	**Sosipater** my kinsman v. 21
Tertius "who write this letter" the scribe · v. 22	**Gaius** host to me and to the whole church · v. 23	**Erastus** the city treasurer v. 23	**Quartus** the brother v. 23

Timothy and Erastus: Acts 19:22 · Gaius: 1 Corinthians 1:14 · Erastus "remained at Corinth": 2 Timothy 4:20

Eight voices send greetings from Corinth — a young co-worker, three Jewish kinsmen, the scribe holding the pen, the host of the house church, a city official and a brother known only as "the brother."

Τέρτιος ὁ γράψας τὴν ἐπιστολήν

TERTIOS HO GRAPSAS TĒN EPISTOLĒN · "TERTIUS, WHO WRITE THIS LETTER" · G5060, G1125

Ho grapsas is an aorist participle, "the one who wrote" — Greek letters were dated from the reader's point of view, so NASB95 renders it present, "who write." Tertius ("Third," a Latin name, perhaps a slave or freedman) was Paul's *amanuensis*, his secretary. Paul says so elsewhere by contrast — "The greeting is in my own hand—Paul" (1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17) — but only here does the secretary step forward and speak in the first person.

ὁ ξένος μου … ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως

HO XENOS MOU · HO OIKONOMOS TĒS POLEŌS · "MY HOST … THE CITY TREASURER" · G3581, G3623

Xenos means both "stranger" and "host" — the one who receives strangers; Gaius is host "to me and to the whole church," so the believers of Corinth met in his house. *Oikonomos* is a household manager or steward (Luke 16:1; 1 Corinthians 4:1–2); "of the city" makes it a civic officer — NASB95 "city treasurer," KJV "chamberlain." A Latin pavement inscription found at Corinth (usually dated to the first century) records that "Erastus, in return for his aedileship, laid the pavement at his own expense"; scholars weigh whether he is Paul's Erastus, perhaps at a later stage of his career, and cannot be certain.

[Ἡ χάρις … μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν. ἀμήν.]

VERSE 24 · A TEXTUAL NOTE · NASB95 IN BRACKETS

The NASB95 prints verse 24 in brackets: "[The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.]" It is verse 20's blessing again with "all" added. It is wanting in the oldest group of manuscripts and is omitted by the critical editors — the SBLGNT apparatus lists Westcott-Hort, Tregelles and the NIV's Greek text as omitting it — while the Byzantine text of Robinson-Pierpont and the Textus Receptus, and so the KJV, include it. The same manuscripts also move the doxology: many later copies place 16:25–27 after 14:23, a very few have it twice. Nothing in doctrine turns on it — the blessing stands in verse 20 in every text — but we mark it honestly: read verse 24 as an early copyist's, or Paul's, repeated farewell, preserved in brackets so you can see the question.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Timothy, Paul's trusted son in the faith, heads the list from Corinth. Of verse 22 he says plainly, "Tertius was Paul's writer as the apostle dictated the letter," and he observes that this is the one letter where Paul's secretary appears by name. Gaius is the believer whose open door had become a church address: "This brother had such a reputation for hospitality that Paul can say he was regarded as the host of the whole church." Guzik prints the verse 24 benediction with his text but adds no separate comment on it; the teaching weight of the chapter's close, for him, falls on the doxology that follows.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul explains the secretary at length: "We know that in the vast majority of Paul's writings, he did not write with his own hand." "It was normal, in Paul's case as well as others, to have a private secretary called an *amanuensis*." So when Tertius speaks — "I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord" — we are hearing the man who held the pen for the whole letter. Sproul also notes Erastus, the treasurer of the city, as one of the Corinthians in the room. And he lingers over the benediction of grace that Paul keeps repeating, because grace is the note on which the letter means to leave its readers.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached an entire sermon on the bracketed verse — No. 988, "The Pastor's Parting Blessing," on the KJV's Romans 16:24, "before leaving home for a journey." The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, he said, is grace revealed in Christ, grace coming through Christ, and grace enjoyed with Christ: "It is a very full, rich, and large benediction." He applied it to assurance, forgiveness, holiness and peace, to poor and rich, young and old, and he insisted, "There is not one among you who can do without the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Conscious weakness is our true strength." Whatever the manuscripts decide about verse 24, every word he preached stands in verse 20.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry reads the room. Timothy is Paul's "work-fellow, as one equal with him," not a junior. Tertius "either wrote as Paul dictated, or transcribed it fairly over out of Paul's foul copy" — an honorable service. Gaius kept open house for the church. Of Erastus he writes, "It was no disparagement to the chamberlain of the city to be a preacher of the gospel of Christ" — a public office and a gospel ministry in one man. And Henry hears the heart behind the repeated blessing: "nay, again he repeats the blessing (ver 24), and yet has not done; an expression of his tender love." "These repeated benedictions, which stand for valedictions, speak Paul loth to part."

V
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 16:25–27

To the Only Wise God

The gospel that establishes, the mystery now revealed, the obedience of faith for all the nations

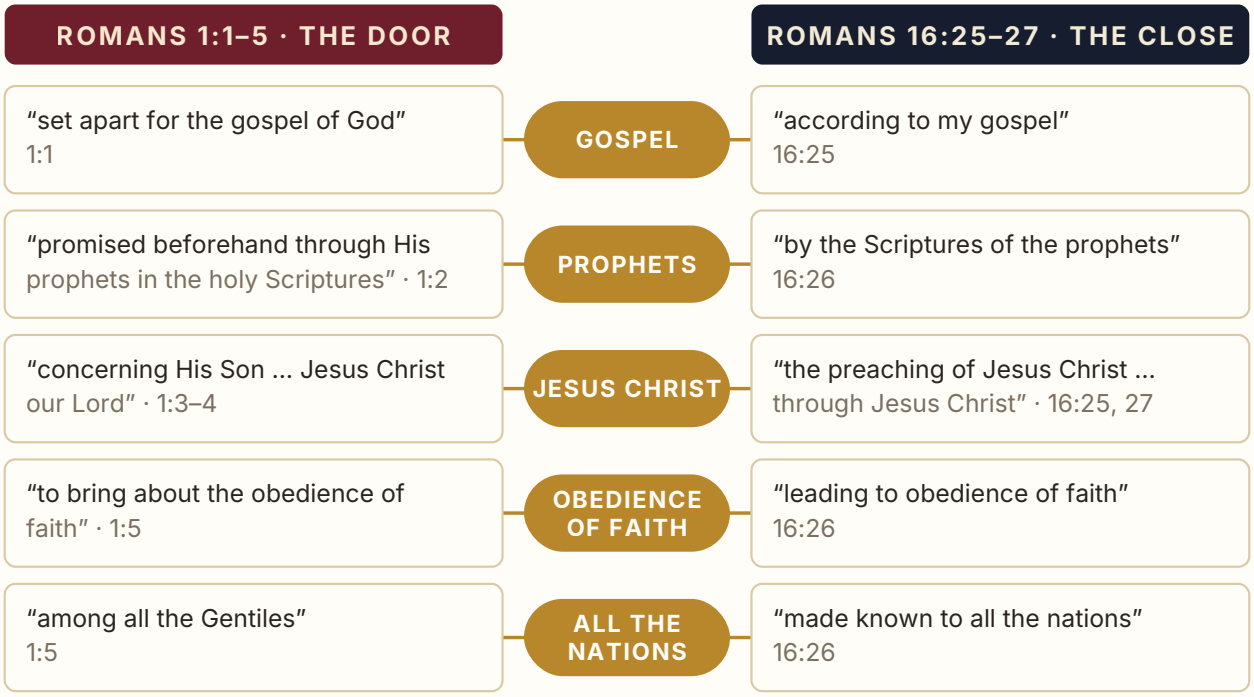
25 *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,* 26 *but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;* 27 *to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.*

ROMANS 16:25–27

"through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,"

ROMANS 1:5

FIGURE · THE DOXOLOGY CLOSES THE DOOR THE LETTER OPENED



"Gentiles" (1:5) and "nations" (16:26) are one Greek word, ethnē — the letter ends where it began.

Read across each row: the five themes of Paul's first five verses return in his last three, so the whole letter sits between two statements of the same gospel.

στηρίξαι

STĒRIXAI · "TO ESTABLISH" · G4741

Stērizō is to set fast, make firm, prop up so it will not fall. Paul used it at the start: "I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established (*stērichthēnai*)" (1:11). The letter that began with Paul wanting to establish them ends by handing them to the One "who is able" (*tō dynamenō*) to do it. The standard is "according to my gospel and the preaching (*kērygma*) of Jesus Christ" — not a different gospel from the other apostles, but the gospel Paul has just laid out across fifteen chapters.

μυστηρίου χρόνοις αἰωνίοις σεσιγημένου

MYSTĒRIOU … SESIGĒMENOU · "THE MYSTERY … KEPT SECRET" · G3466, G4601

A *mystērion* in Paul is not a puzzle but a secret God has now told (11:25; Ephesians 3:5–6). *Sesigēmenou*, from *sigaō*, "to keep silent," is a perfect participle: the plan was kept in silence "for long ages past" (*chronois aiōniois*) — *phanerōthentos de nyn*, "but now is manifested" (G5319). The secret is the gospel itself, and particularly that Gentiles would be "fellow heirs and fellow members of the body" (Ephesians 3:6). The silence was not God hiding; the prophets wrote it, and now it is preached.

εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως … μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ

EIS HYPAKOḒN PISTEŌS · MONŌ SOPHŌ THEŌ · "OBEDIENCE OF FAITH … THE ONLY WISE GOD" · G5218, G3441, G4680

Hypakoē pisteōs appears in the whole New Testament only here and in 1:5 — the two ends of the letter. *Hypakoē* is "listening under," hearing that submits; the genitive makes it the obedience that faith is and that faith produces. And the doxology ends on God's wisdom: *monō sophō theō*, "to the only wise God." The chapter that warned against clever talkers (vv. 18–19) and the letter that cried "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (11:33) close by giving all the glory to the only One who is wise.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears Paul commend the church to God, who is able to establish them, and "this will be done according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ." The mystery, he says, is no secret code: "Paul means this as the whole plan of redemption through Jesus Christ." "In this conclusion Paul reflects on the wisdom of God's plan in the gospel and the fact that such wisdom is beyond man." And he ends his commentary on the whole letter with one sentence: "The good news Paul preached presented the God who chose to glorify Himself through the person and work of Jesus Christ, and who will glorify Himself that way forever. Amen!"

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul ties "establish you" to Jesus' house built on the rock and to the doctrine at the center of Paul's gospel, justification by faith alone. "Do you realize how severely the biblical gospel is under attack in the church today?" he asks, even among evangelicals and Reformed believers. His summary is a chain: "Without imputation there is no justification, and without justification by faith alone there is no gospel." He closes his whole Romans series on *Soli Deo Gloria* — "To God—and to God alone—is the glory" — and on the letter's last word, "coming from the Hebrew *emeth*, which is translated 'truth.'" "The word is *amen*."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry walks the doxology phrase by phrase. "To him that is of power to establish you" — the believer's stability is in God's power, not his own. "This mystery was kept secret since the world began," but it is now manifest and "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." He defines the phrase carefully: "The obedience of faith is that obedience which is paid to the word of faith" — the gospel is to be obeyed, not merely discussed. "To God only wise": "He only is perfectly and infallibly wise." And the glory goes up "Through Jesus Christ," the Mediator through whom every praise of ours reaches God.

VI THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

Where these names appear again, and where the crushed serpent and the revealed mystery were first promised

"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

GENESIS 3:15

> *"They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross."*
>
> MARK 15:21

> *"And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,"*
>
> ACTS 18:2

> *"The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 16:19

> *"And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while."*
>
> ACTS 19:22

> *"I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,"*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 1:14

> *"Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus."*
>
> 2 TIMOTHY 4:20

> *"to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,"*
>
> EPHESIANS 3:6

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul reads Mark 15:21 alongside Romans 16:13: Mark identifies Simon as "the father of Alexander and Rufus," because the church knew them — "Mark, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, honored these local church members" — and "it would indicate that Rufus had a particular role and influence with the Apostle." The man who carried Christ's cross may have raised a son who became a pillar of the church that received this letter.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry sends verse 20 back to Genesis 3:15 — "plainly alluding to the first promise the Messiah made in paradise." The enmity God put between the serpent and the woman's seed in the garden ends under the feet of a church in Rome, because the Seed has already won: "we have to do with a conquered enemy."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one closing chapter. Guzik keeps the facts and the names straight; Sproul weighs the words that churches still argue over — servant, apostle, custom; Spurgeon turns every name into a sermon about households, service and the tether on Satan; Henry gathers it all into practical counsel. Note where they differ: on Phoebe's office, on Junia(s), on Rufus's "chosen," and on what "soon" means in verse 20. Spurgeon is absent from the doxology only because we found no sermon of his on verses 25–27.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Phoebe (1–2)	Courier of the letter; "a female deacon … by formal recognition or … general service."	Pagan name kept; diakonia; "a more specific office of important assistance."	Her name in Christ's "golden book"; honour graduated by service done.	"A servant by office, a stated servant" — in charity, not preaching.
II · The names (3–16)	Real, ordinary people; 13 of 24 names linked to Caesar's palace; Junia's apostleship "isn't very strong."	House churches had nowhere else to meet; Junia man or woman; kiss a custom, not a principle.	Households: "Where are you, Aristobulus?" Pray for your family; the obscure not overlooked.	A church in a house is no absurdity; Rufus choice and chosen; no word of Peter.
III · The warning (17–20)	Know the good more than the evil; God crushes, Satan under believers' feet.	Not "avoid doctrine" — avoid heretics; childlike, not childish; "soon" perhaps AD 70.	False doctrine spreads like plague; Satan is tethered — bless God for the chain.	Their own belly; Rome a target; Genesis 3:15 fulfilled; a conquered enemy.
IV · From Corinth (21–24)	Tertius wrote as Paul dictated; Gaius host of the whole church.	The amanuensis explained; Erastus the treasurer; grace repeated.	Whole sermon on 16:24 (KJV): grace in, through and with Christ.	Timothy an equal; Erastus official and preacher; Paul "loth to part."
V · Doxology (25–27)	Established by Paul's gospel; the mystery is the whole plan of redemption.	Justification by faith alone; Soli Deo Gloria; Amen from emeth, truth.	No sermon on 25–27 found — his voice is left out here.	Power to establish; obedience paid to the word of faith; glory through Christ.

ROMANS 16:1–27 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The theology has faces.** Twenty-six people greeted, eight sending greetings, one courier: the doctrine of chapters 1–15 was written for, and carried by, real men and women. THE TEXT
- **Phoebe carried Romans.** The letter that has shaped the church for twenty centuries reached Rome in the hands of a woman from a harbor town; Guzik calls her "probably entrusted with this precious letter." GUZIK
- **A helper is helped.** *Prostatis* (v. 2) — she stood before many as a patron, so the Romans are to stand beside her (*parastēte*). Those who have served deserve to be served. THE GREEK
- **Honor is measured by service.** "Degrees in honour among believers are graduated by the scale of service done." Note how many in the list "worked hard." SPURGEON
- **The church met in houses.** "The church that is in their house" (v. 5) and four more circles — there were no other places to meet, and the gospel spread through homes. SPROUL
- **One accent, one debate.** *Iounian* is Junia with an acute, Junias with a circumflex. NASB95 reads "Junias," KJV "Junia"; Guzik leans Junia but says of the case for women apostles, "It isn't very strong"; Sproul leaves it open. THE GREEK

- **The households were mixed.** Aristobulus and Narcissus are named but not greeted; their households are. Henry: "some good servants … even in the family of a wicked man." HENRY
- **The dividers sound kind.** *Chrēstologia* and *eulogia* — smooth, gracious talk — aimed at the *akakoi*, the guileless. Be expert in good, amateurs in evil. SPROUL
- **Genesis 3:15 comes to Rome.** "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." God does the crushing; the church does the standing; the enemy is already conquered. HENRY
- **The letter ends where it began.** Gospel, prophets, Jesus Christ, "obedience of faith," all the nations — 1:1–5 and 16:25–27 are bookends, and *hypakoē pisteōs* appears only in those two places. THE TEXT

† Questions for the Table

1 **Phoebe was "a helper of many." Who has been a Phoebe to you — and whom are you standing beside this month?**

Paul asks the Romans to help the helper; service received becomes service owed.

16:1–2; GALATIANS 6:10

2 **Paul knew two dozen people by name in a city he had never visited. Whose name would you put in your own Romans 16, and have you told them what they mean to you?**

Greeting someone by name is a spiritual act — seventeen times in fourteen verses.

16:3–16

3 **Aristobulus's household is greeted, but Aristobulus is not. Who in your family is still outside, and how are you praying for them?**

"Pray unceasingly that your life-companions may be converted to God."

16:10–11; 1 PETER 3:1

4 **Paul warns against "smooth and flattering speech" that deceives the unsuspecting. What smooth voice — a person, a feed, a habit's excuse — have you been giving a hearing it has not earned?**

Keep your eye on it, then turn away from it: both verbs are commands.

16:17–18

5 **Where do you need to be "innocent in what is evil" — an amateur rather than a pro — instead of an expert in it?**

The defense against counterfeit is to know the genuine: wise in what is good.

16:19; MATTHEW 10:16

6 **"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." What fight are you trying to win with your own hands that God has promised to finish under your feet?**

God does the crushing; you do the standing — on a conquered enemy.

16:20; GENESIS 3:15

The longest list of names in Paul's letters ends the deepest letter he wrote, because the gospel of Romans is for people — a courier, a couple, a mother, a scribe, a host. The serpent will be crushed under their feet, and the glory goes to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; the Romans volume of his *Commentary* was completed by his successors (John Evans) from his notes and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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