

Romans 15. 14 – 16. 27. Bethesda Bible Teaching. 15 December 2014.

Having been allocated a *mere* 47 verses for this evening, I don't know whether to say that I have drawn the short straw – or the long straw.

This evening, I want you to exercise your imagination, and to join me back in first century Corinth. It is early in the year AD 57,¹ and we are in the home of Gaius² – a Christian convert baptised during a previous visit by the apostle Paul.³ The apostle is about to dictate the closing section of a rather lengthy letter, while brother Tertius is poised to capture in writing his every word.⁴ Along with us, there are several other believers, including the converted City Treasurer, and Paul's son in the faith, Timothy,⁵ who wasn't with us when, a short time ago, Paul began his letter.⁶

In the recent past, the apostle decided to take advantage of a journey being undertaken to Rome by a sister from the nearly assembly at Cenchrea,⁷ and, along with providing her with a necessary letter of commendation,⁸ to outline for the saints at Rome the gospel which he believed and which he preached.⁹

He has already covered a tremendous amount of ground, reminding his intended readers of many doctrinal and practical matters. We have sat enthralled as we have heard him sketch out the subject of 'righteousness' from many angles – drinking in every word as he has plumbed the depths of human sinfulness,¹⁰ scaled the heights of the believer's blessedness,¹¹ and probed the mystery of God's wisdom and ways.¹²

And, in one sense, you could say that he has concluded his letter.¹³ And yet – sorry, Tertius – he is now poised to add a kind of postscript, a whole range of (not so much doctrinal or practical, but) personal matters and salutations, together with a final ascription of glory to God.¹⁴

So, let's tune in, and let the man speak ...

I myself am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to instruct one another.

But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be 'a ministering priest' of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering in priestly service the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

I have therefore something to boast of in Christ Jesus in the things pertaining to God. For I will not venture to speak of anything save that which Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, and by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum¹⁵ I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

In this way, I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, 'Those who have never been told of Him will see, and those who have never heard will understand'.

For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you. But now, since I no longer have any place for pioneering work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you when passing through to Spain,¹⁶ and to be helped on my journey there by you, after I have enjoyed your company as much as time will allow.¹⁷

But now, I am first going to Jerusalem ministering practically to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and they owe it to them. For, if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to minister to them in material blessings.

When therefore I have completed this, and have secured to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. And I know that, when I come to you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.

But I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love which the Spirit imparts,¹⁸ to strive together with me in prayer to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and my practical ministry for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed together with you.

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever way she may need from you, for she has been a helper of many, and of myself.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church in their house.

Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the first-fruits of Asia for Christ.

Greet Mary, who laboured much for you.

Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, and who were in Christ before me.

Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.

Greet Urbanus, our fellow-worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.

Greet Apelles, approved in Christ.

Greet those of Aristobulus.

Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of Narcissus in the Lord.

Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord.

Greet the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord.

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.

Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren with them.

Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints with them.

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the churches of Christ greet you.

Now I beseech you, brethren, to watch out for those who create divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.

For such do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve.

For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I would have you wise as to what is good, and innocent as to what is evil.

And the God of peace shall crush Satan under your feet shortly.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Timothy, my fellow-worker, greets you; as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

I Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Gaius, my host and of the whole church, greets you.

Erastus, the City Treasurer greets you, as does brother Quartus.

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 was kept secret through times eternal, but has now been made manifest, and, according to the command of the eternal God, through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, to bring about the obedience of faith — to the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

Surprise, surprise! We shall *not* be attempting a verse-by-verse exposition of *that* reading. You may have noticed that the first section – to the close of chapter 15 – reads very much like a standard missionary report letter, beginning with a brief explanation of why the letter was being sent at that time,¹⁹ then detailing something of the writer's past labours,²⁰ present programme,²¹ and future plans,²² and finishing with several specific prayer requests,²³ that the readers may partner with the writer²⁴ in earnestly imploring God for his safety in the face of opposition from unbelievers,²⁵ and for a successful²⁶ and stimulating²⁷ ministry among the Lord's people.

But for the remainder of the available time I want to focus with you on verses 3 to 15 of the following chapter. As you know, missionary reports (whether given in person or in writing) are often accompanied by at least one photo, sometimes of the workers, sometimes of the whole church. I noticed, for example, that, over the last three months, the Echoes Mission Magazine has included such photos from Lusaka in Zambia, Nantes in France, and Lubumbashi in the Congo.²⁸

And in one sense these verses from Romans 16 provide us with a group photograph of Paul's friends and acquaintances at Rome. It will not be possible for us to take a close look at everyone. But we will home in on just a few of those we can see there.

First, we see several faces which take us back to very infancy of the Christian church. There, standing together, are **Andronicus and Junias**.²⁹ They shared at least two attributes with Paul; for, like him, they were both Jews,³⁰ and like him they both had a prison record, perhaps having shared one of his not infrequent imprisonments, to which he referred a short time before in his second letter to the church where we are now.³¹

Although the Book of Acts lists only *four* occasions when the apostle was imprisoned, Clement, an elder in one of the churches in Rome, reported a little later³² that, in all, the apostle had been ‘seven times in chains’.³³ Whether or not Andronicus and Junias actually shared one of those imprisonments with him, at some point they, as he, had suffered imprisonment as a result of their Christian faith.

And not only so, but they were, Paul says, ‘of note among the apostles’, which I take to mean, not only (as in the ESV) that they were ‘*well known to the apostles*’, but that they were indeed ‘*very highly regarded by*, were held in the highest esteem by’ the Jerusalem apostles.³⁴

And I cannot help wondering whether these two good men were instrumental in first taking the gospel to Rome. Paul makes it clear that they were converted before him, and in all likelihood *he* was converted within three or four years of our Lord’s death and resurrection.³⁵

In Acts 2, Luke informs us that, among those who heard Peter preach on the day of Pentecost, were ‘visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes’.³⁶ We know that, in all, ‘about three thousand souls’ were saved that day, and it *could* be – I can say no more – that Andronicus and Junias were among them, and that subsequently, along one of the ‘all roads’ which proverbially ‘led to Rome’, they took the gospel message back home from Jerusalem with them.

Not far from them stands **Epaenetus**.³⁷ He has the honour of being the first convert to Christ from the whole of the Roman province of Asia – modern-day Turkey. Paul’s use of the word ‘first-fruits’ to describe Epaenetus ... as elsewhere to describe ‘the household of Stephanas’ who were the first converts in the separate province of Achaia and who were now working in the assembly from where he writes³⁸ ... his use of the word ‘first-fruits’ to describe Epaenetus derives of course from the sacrificial language of the Old Testament.³⁹

And this fits well with the priestly terms which the apostle had used in the previous chapter to describe his apostolic ministry, speaking of himself, as we read, as ‘a ministering priest’ of Christ Jesus, who ministered the gospel of God in priestly service, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable to God.⁴⁰ And I suspect that as far as Paul was concerned, this first convert from Asia represented an early instalment of his ‘offering up of the Gentiles’.

The date today is the 15th of December. It is 104 years ago to the day that C. T. Studd – the famous English cricketer – having already served as a missionary in both China⁴¹ and India⁴² – sailed from Liverpool to Kenya.⁴³ ‘I cannot tell you’, he once wrote, ‘what joy it gave me to bring the first soul to the Lord Jesus Christ. I have tasted almost all the pleasures that this world can give ... but those pleasures were as nothing compared to the joy that the saving of that one soul gave me’.⁴⁴ I suspect that Paul – or was it Aquila?⁴⁵ – could have said the same of the conversion of Epaenetus.

And I think it likely that – just as in the case of the household of Stephanas at Corinth⁴⁶ – so Epaenetus had some prominent role to play among the saints at Rome. And I have my eye in particular on the claim made a little later by Clement of Rome (to whom I referred earlier) that the apostles, and I quote, ‘appointed their first-fruits, having first proved them by the Spirit, to be overseers and deacons to those who should believe’.⁴⁷ This would, of course, have been altogether consistent with the apostolic principle of not accepting a new convert as an overseer in the local church.⁴⁸

As we study Paul’s group photograph, we next spot a married couple who provide an outstanding example of courage. Their names are **Prisca** (known also – by Luke – as Priscilla) and **Aquila**.⁴⁹ Paul and they had a lot in common. They shared not only the same nationality (at least Aquila did),⁵⁰ trade,⁵¹ and faith,⁵² but their Christian service.⁵³ Paul had first met them some six or seven years before in the very city where we are now, following an edict of the then Emperor Claudius, expelling all Jews from Rome. This edict was in response to riots, which possibly followed the spread of the gospel of Christ into the Jewish community there.⁵⁴ Claudius was now dead, his edict revoked,⁵⁵ the Jewish community flourished in Rome once more, and clearly Aquila and Priscilla had returned there. Paul and they had worked together as tentmakers at Corinth,⁵⁶ from where they accompanied him to Ephesus.⁵⁷ This secular trade may possibly explain Paul’s reference to his hands in Acts 20,⁵⁸ for no doubt his (I take it, outstretched) hands were roughened and darkened by the constant handling of coarse Cilician cloth.

But Aquila and Priscilla were not only co-workers *with* Paul; at some time they had risked their very lives *for* him. Metaphorically speaking, they had laid their necks on the executioner’s block under the raised axe or sword. We do not know the circumstances which led them to hazard their lives for the apostle, but more than likely it was during the time they spent together at Ephesus.⁵⁹ Certainly, as he made clear in his earlier letters to Corinth, the apostle had experienced a very rough time there. ‘Humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus’, he wrote;⁶⁰ a figurative reference I take to his conflict with extremely hostile and vicious human adversaries.⁶¹ Expanding on that episode, he spoke of ‘the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death’.⁶²

Grim! And it was likely during that time that this 'dynamic duo' hazarded their lives for him. For which act of courage, not only Paul himself, but the Gentile churches in general were most grateful – and expressed it!

I have a suspicion that the apostle's interest in visiting Rome⁶³ may well have stemmed from the times he spent with Aquila and Priscilla. Certainly, the first time of which we know when he expressed any intention of going to Rome was at Ephesus about two years before, of which Luke records that 'Paul resolved ... to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome"'.⁶⁴ And we know that Aquila and Priscilla were with him in Ephesus at the time.⁶⁵ And that declared intention had remained in his diary to the day he dictated this letter!

Shortly before his execution at Rome some six or seven years later,⁶⁶ Paul sent his greetings to Aquila and Priscilla, then living back at Ephesus.⁶⁷ Rather surprisingly perhaps, they were the *only* named individuals to whom he then sent his greetings. But then it is perhaps fitting that, as far as we know, one of the last messages he ever sent – coming just four verses from the close of his last letter we possess – was to this fine Christian couple, who had gone through so much with him and for him. They had been – and were – very good friends.

But, back to Paul's group photograph. And we can hardly miss the way in which many in the group are said to have excelled in their activity for the Lord. **Urbanus**, for example, is afforded the same honour as Aquila and Priscilla in being described as 'our fellow-worker in Christ'.⁶⁸

But it has to be said that it is *the womenfolk* who carry off the highest awards. As you may well know, the word translated 'labour' throughout this passage is the strongest word which the Greek language possessed to express effort and toil. It signifies to give the job everything you have got, to work until you are weary, to beaver away to the point of exhaustion. And, we must note, *every one* of the four Christians of whom Paul uses it was a lady.

There are **Tryphena and Tryphosa**.⁶⁹ These two ladies are thought by some to be, not only natural sisters, but twins, because it was not uncommon then to give twins names derived from the same root. And both the names Tryphena and Tryphosa come from a root word meaning '*to live luxuriously*'. But, in marked contrast to the meaning of that root word, Paul bears record that these two ladies were those '*who toil laboriously*'. Indeed, I have a feeling that if you watch his eyes as he dictates this bit, you will detect them twinkling ... and I should not be the least surprised if the public reading of his greeting later brought smiles to many faces at Rome. For the testimony he gives Tryphena and Tryphosa is the very opposite to that which their names suggest. As if he is saying, 'You may be called "Delicate" and "Dainty" (and that is exactly what their names meant!) ... you may be called "Delicate" and "Dainty", but you certainly *don't* live up to your names – for you both work like Trojans for the sake of Christ'.

Alongside this worthy pair stand two other, somewhat older, ladies. They are **Mary**,⁷⁰ and **Persis**.⁷¹ We cannot miss that there are two features which distinguish their service. First, the addition of the telling word 'much'. It seems that, in terms of labouring, they had excelled even Tryphena and Tryphosa. And second, we note the use of the past tense: 'who laboured **ed** much'. This suggests to me that both these dear ladies were now advanced in years, old age had caught up with them, and their days of wearisome toil were just a distant memory. No, Malcolm, not 'just a distant memory'. For, although their labouring days may now be past, they had not been forgotten – certainly not by Paul, nor, and more important still, by the Lord Himself.⁷² And I note that the apostle speaks of Persis as '*the beloved*', and not, as in the case of three brethren separately,⁷³ as '*my beloved*'. Although I suppose the description 'the beloved' *may* indicate that Persis was regarded affectionately by all who knew her, I think it more likely that Paul – ever circumspect and tactful in how he expressed himself – was careful not to call any lady – of any age – 'my beloved'.

But we cannot leave the ladies in Paul's group photo without drawing attention to a fifth. She is another **ageing lady**, and we see her standing alongside a man young enough to be her son - and that for the simple reason that that is just what he is! We don't know *her* name, but we do know *his*. His name is Rufus.⁷⁴

We cannot be *absolutely* sure, but I am satisfied that all the evidence points to this particular lady as being the wife (probably widow) of Simon of Cyrene – yes, the 'passer-by' Simon of Cyrene⁷⁵ who was compelled by the Roman soldiers to carry our Lord's cross for Him to Golgotha.⁷⁶ And I note that, in *his* gospel record, Mark portrays Simon as 'the father of Alexander *and* Rufus'.⁷⁷

There is a strong 2nd century tradition that Mark's gospel comprises the memoirs of Peter, permanently recorded by Mark for the benefit of the churches of Rome.⁷⁸ (And I believe that there is a great deal within the Gospel itself to confirm this tradition.⁷⁹)

Given that Mark identified Simon so precisely by the names of his sons, we can assume that his sons were therefore well known to the readers of Mark's gospel – namely, to the Christians at Rome. There would have been no other reason for Mark doing so. There is therefore, as one commentator put it bluntly, 'a better than even chance' that the Rufus in our passage is to identified with the son of Simon of Cyrene.⁸⁰

If that identification is correct, then this lady is the widow of the man from the Mediterranean coast of North Africa who was once pressed into service to carry the Saviour's cross. We can assume, I think, that both Rufus and his mother have themselves (metaphorically speaking) also 'taken up' His cross and followed after Him.⁸¹ You might say, I suppose, that 'salvation came to that house' as a result, not of a man *shinning down* a tree,⁸² but of a man *holding up* a tree.⁸³

Rufus himself is distinguished by the epithet 'chosen in the Lord', which I take to mean that he was 'something special', that he was, as we would say, 'choice'. J. B. Phillips paraphrases Paul's description as 'that splendid Christian'. Clearly Rufus was an outstanding believer.

And the lady alongside him? The apostle speaks of her in the *most* affectionate of terms. Sometime, somewhere, somehow she had played the part of a mother to him – she then, he says, 'treated me like a son'. We have no way of knowing how Paul's own family – his blood relations – reacted to his conversion. We do know that his father had been a Pharisee⁸⁴ before Paul (Saul at the time) ever was, and it is by no means impossible that 'young' Saul⁸⁵ had been disowned and cast out.⁸⁶

I have seen 'hospitality' defined as , 'the art of making your guests feel at home, when that is where you wish they were'. Well, that was certainly not the kind of hospitality this dear lady had extended to the apostle. She had clearly done everything she could to make *him* feel at home in *her* home – opening not only her home to him, but her heart. Hence his sincere salutation: 'I have come to regard her', Paul is saying, 'not only as Rufus's mother, but as mine as well'. She was truly a wonderful lady.

But we cannot help but notice a man whose worn features tell us that he has *weathered many storms* in his life. His name is **Apelles**, to whose name Paul adds simply, 'approved in Christ'.⁸⁷ We know nothing whatever of the circumstances, but evidently this man has faced severe trials in the cause of Christ. He has been tried – as the word Paul uses suggests – like some precious metal as silver or gold in a crucible,⁸⁸ and, having patiently endured the testing, he has come out victorious, winning the approval both of his brethren and of the Lord. We honour you, Apelles.

As we hold the picture a little further away, we're struck by the many differences which exist between those we see. Certainly, the twenty-four *named* individuals, and those with them, comprise a very mixed group.

There were **Jews and Greeks**. Going by their names, the majority of those mentioned by name were Greeks. But at least four of the men⁸⁹ were Jews, and it is *possible* (I put it no higher) that Priscilla and Mary were Jewesses.

There were **slaves and freemen**. I was rather surprised to find that no less than fourteen of *the names* mentioned by Paul occur in ancient inscriptions or documents concerned with the imperial household.⁹⁰ And, for the most part, they were common slave names.

Probably some at least among 'those of Aristobulus', and 'those of Narcissus' were slaves.⁹¹ Just possibly the 'Aristobulus' referred to is none other than a famous grandson of Herod the Great of that name.⁹² We know that he lived and died at Rome as a private citizen,⁹³ and that he was a friend of Emperor Claudius. When Aristobulus died, his household, including his many slaves, although then incorporated into Caesar's household, would continue to bear its former name – being still known as 'the Household of Aristobulus' ... as 'those of Aristobulus' ... the expression the apostle uses here.

And it may be no coincidence that Paul greets one 'Herodion' immediately afterwards, whose name suggests that he was connected in some way – though not related by blood – to the family of Herod.⁹⁴ It is at least possible then that *this* Herodion may have been a distinguished member of the Household of Aristobulus, and as such was known personally to Paul.

Just possibly also the 'Narcissus' referred to was a well-known freedman of that name whose wealth was proverbial and who had great influence with Claudius. He was executed shortly after Nero's accession, some three or four years before Paul's letter was written. If so, then again, his slaves would likely have become the property of the Emperor and merged into the imperial household, while still retaining the description, 'those of Narcissus'.⁹⁵

As we have noted before, some subjects of the photo were **male and** some were **female**, at least seven being women.⁹⁶

Yes, Paul's friends and acquaintances at Rome certainly comprised a mixed group: Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female. I find it interesting that, in one of his earlier – indeed, one of his earliest – letters, *in the context of the blessings of the gospel*, the apostle had written, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female'⁹⁷, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'.⁹⁸

And, as has often been pointed out, that assertion contrasts dramatically with three consecutive benedictions of the Jewish Synagogue Prayer Book, which benedictions are traced back by the Rabbis to the 'Men of the Great Synagogue', who lived several centuries BC.⁹⁹ These morning benedictions which the men recite – and recite to this day – run, 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast not made me a heathen. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast not made me a slave. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast not made me a woman'.¹⁰⁰

Well, here is *one* converted Pharisee *at least* who no longer recited *those* benedictions! And his smattering of friends in the churches of Rome which we have viewed in our photograph was living proof of that.

It goes without saying, of course, that there is no way in which the saints of Rome can send Christian greetings to us today. And yet they each do have something to say to us. And I imagine a little photo bubble coming out of each mouth in this group photograph. What is it then that they would say to us this evening?

Andronicus and Junias. 'You can have complete confidence in the Christian message. We should know, we were there from the beginning'. In a word, ***Be confident.***

Aquila and Prisca. 'Christian life sometimes calls on us to make a costly sacrifice for the good of others'. In a word, ***Be courageous.***

Tryphema and Tryphosa, Mary and Persis. 'Your labour is not in vain in the Lord'. In a word, ***Be industrious.***

Rufus and his mother. 'The Master Himself said, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me"'. In a word, ***Be caring.***

Apelles. 'When the going is rough, hold on, keep going, and win through'. In a word, ***Be steadfast.***

And **the whole group together** would call out to us in chorus, 'You are all one in Christ Jesus'. In a word, ***Be united.***

And what was the sequel? We know that, about three years after the letter was written, Paul realised his ambition ... although not quite as he expected. He arrived at Rome,¹⁰¹ but as a prisoner of Caesar. He had prayed that, in the will of God, he might succeed in reaching the saints there.¹⁰² I have no way of knowing whether he regarded swimming part of the way¹⁰³ as constituting a 'successful' journey! But I *do* know that, as he was escorted along the Via Appia towards the city, the brethren heard of his approach, and trekked out to meet him 'as far as' (Luke says) forty miles south of Rome.¹⁰⁴

And when Paul saw them, his face lit up. And the man who, in his letter, spoke of thanking God for the report of their faith,¹⁰⁵ stopped in the road to thank God for the sight of their faces.

But just a few years later again the churches of Rome took the full brunt of Nero's ruthless persecution, when many believers perished.¹⁰⁶ For all we know, *some of the men and women in our photo* went to the wild beasts in the arena or the stake in Nero's gardens. But, thanks in part to the trustworthiness of Phoebe, we have in our hands this evening the letter which Paul dictated for their benefit.¹⁰⁷

Let's close with the same note of triumph we did when I spoke here just over a month ago ...

I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Footnotes

¹ F. F. Bruce, Romans in the Tyndale Commentaries, page 12.

² Rom. 16. 23.

³ 1 Corinthians 1. 14-17.

⁴ Rom. 16. 22.

⁵ 1 Tim. 1. 2, 18; 2 Tim. 1. 2.

⁶ Rom. 1. 1, contrasted with 2 Cor. 1. 1; Phm. 1.

⁷ Rom. 16. 1.

⁸ Rom. 16. 1-2; cf. Acts 18. 27; 2 Cor. 3. 1.

⁹ Rom. 1. 15; 2. 16; 15. 19; 16. 25.

¹⁰ E.g. Rom. 1. 21-32.

¹¹ E.g. Rom. 8. 28-39.

¹² Rom. 11. 33-35.

¹³ Rom. 15. 13.

¹⁴ Rom. 16. 25-26; with Rom. 9. 5; 11. 36; 15. 13.

¹⁵ Modern day North Albania – but stretching to Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹⁶ 'Because of jealousy and strife Paul by his example pointed out the way to the prize for patient endurance. After he had been seven times in chains, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, and had preached in the East and in the West, he won the genuine glory for his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of the West. Finally, when he had given his testimony before the rulers, he thus departed from the world and went to the holy place, having become an outstanding example of patient endurance', *The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, paragraph 5.

¹⁷ See The Pulpit Commentary note on Rom. 16. 21-24.

¹⁸ See F. F. Bruce, Romans in the Tyndale Commentaries, page 265.

¹⁹ Rom. 15. 14-17.

²⁰ Rom. 15. 18-22.

²¹ Rom. 15. 25-27.

²² Rom. 15. 23-24, 28-29.

²³ Rom. 15. 30-32.

²⁴ Rom. 15. 30.

²⁵ Rom. 15. 31a.

²⁶ Rom. 15. 31b.

²⁷ Rom. 15. 32.

²⁸ Pages 453, 512, 567.

²⁹ Rom. 16. 7.

³⁰ Cf. the use of the word 'kinsmen' in Rom. 9. 3. Apart from which, it is most unlikely that the apostle (who himself was 'of Tarsus') should have three close relatives in Rome, vv. 7, 11, and three close relatives in Corinth, v. 21. Also it seems that Sosipater, v. 21, was from Macedonia, Acts 20. 4.

³¹ 2 Cor. 6. 5; 11. 23.

³² AD 95-96.

³³ See Endnote 16.

³⁴ I take the expression 'the apostles' to refer to 'the twelve'; cf. Acts 1. 2; 15. 2, 4, 6, 22; 16. 4; 1 Cor. 15. 9. For a similar use of *ἐν* which differentiates the one spoken of from those that he is 'among', compare Luke 2. 44; John 1. 14; 1 Corinthians 2. 2; Galatians 3. 1.

³⁵ F. F. Bruce gives AD 30 as the year of the crucifixion, and AD 33 as the year of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus; 'The Acts of the Apostles', Tyndale Press, page 55.

³⁶ Acts 2. 10.

³⁷ Rom. 16. 5b.

³⁸ 1 Cor. 1. 16; 16. 15-16.

³⁹ Especially the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy, and the prophecy of Ezekiel.

⁴⁰ Rom. 15. 16. Cf. 'things pertaining to God' in Rom. 15. 17 with Heb. 2. 17; 5. 1 – 'A technical phrase in Jewish liturgical language to denote the functions of worship', Vincent Word Studies. If, in Rom. 15. 16-17, we have Paul 'the *Priest*', in Rom. 15. 18-19, we have Paul 'the *Preacher*', and in Rom. 15. 20-21, we have Paul 'the *Pioneer*'.

⁴¹ He was one of the original 'Cambridge Seven' who offered themselves to Hudson Taylor for service in China.

⁴² Between 1900 and 1906, he was pastor of a church at Ootacamund in Southern India.

⁴³ On 15 December 1910. See ... <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/biostudd4.html>

⁴⁴ Quoted from C. T. Studd: *Cricketer & Pioneer*, by Norman P. Grubb.

See ... <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/biostudd.html> ... http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Studd

C. T. Studd wrote the poem, 'Only One Life, 'Twill Soon Be Past'. Its memorable verse states: 'Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last'.

⁴⁵ Acts 18. 18-19 – 'When Augustus became emperor in 27 BC, he made Ephesus the capital of proconsular Asia (which covered western Asia Minor) ... According to Strabo, it was second in importance and size only to Rome', http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#Roman_period.

⁴⁶ 1 Cor. 16. 15-16.

⁴⁷ *The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, paragraph 42.

⁴⁸ 1 Tim. 3. 6.

⁴⁹ Rom. 16. 3-5a. This remarkable couple is mentioned six times in the New Testament, three times by Luke in the book of Acts, Acts 18. 2, 18, 26, and three times by Paul, Rom. 16. 3; 1 Cor. 16. 19; 2 Tim. 4. 19.

In four of those six references, Priscilla's name is given first. No reason for that unexpected order is given in the texts themselves. She may have had a higher social standing.

⁵⁰ Acts 18. 2.

⁵¹ Acts 18. 3.

⁵² Acts 18. 26.

⁵³ '... my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus', Rom. 16. 3.

⁵⁴ Acts 18. 2. 'He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus', Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*, paragraph 25.

⁵⁵ The Jews were allowed to return to Rome about five years later, at the beginning of Emperor Nero's reign in AD 54.

⁵⁶ Acts 18. 3.

⁵⁷ Acts 18. 18-19.

⁵⁸ 'You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me', Acts 20. 34.

⁵⁹ Acts 18. 18-19; 19. 1-20. 1.

⁶⁰ 1 Cor. 15. 32.

⁶¹ Including perhaps Demetrius and Alexander, Acts 19. 24-27; 2 Tim. 4. 14.

⁶² 2 Cor. 1. 8-9.

⁶³ Rom. 1. 9-13; 15. 23-24, 28-29.

⁶⁴ Acts 19. 21.

⁶⁵ 'I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost ... the churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you warmest greetings in the Lord', 1 Cor. 16. 8, 19. Compare 1 Cor. 16. 5 with Acts 20. 1.

⁶⁶ 'It is ... recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day'. Eusebius of Caesarea (circa 265-340 AD), *Church History*, Book II, Chapter 25, Paragraph 5.

See too ... http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/classics/barnes-scenes-in-life/death-of-the-apostle-paul.html> and <http://www.biblestudy.org/question/sauldie.html>.

⁶⁷ 1 Tim. 1. 3; 2 Tim. 4. 19.

⁶⁸ Rom. 9; cf. Timothy in v. 21.

⁶⁹ Rom. 16. 12.

⁷⁰ Rom. 16. 6.

⁷¹ Rom. 16. 12.

⁷² 1 Cor. 15. 58; Heb. 6. 10.

⁷³ Rom. 16. 5, 8, 9.

⁷⁴ Rom. 16. 13.

⁷⁵ The Cyrenians had a synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6. 9), and this Simon may well have been one of those who had come up to keep the Passover.

⁷⁶ Mark 15. 21-22.

⁷⁷ Mark 15. 21b.

⁷⁸ '... when the divine word had made its home among them [the Christians in Rome], ... with all sorts of entreaties they besought Mark, a follower of Peter, and the one whose Gospel is extant, that he would leave them a written monument of the doctrine which had been orally communicated to them. Nor did they cease until they had prevailed with the man, and had thus become the occasion of the written Gospel which bears the name of Mark'.

Eusebius of Caesarea, 'Church History', Book II, Chapter 15 – quoting from the Hypotyposes of Clement of Alexandria (born around AD 150 and died around AD 215).

So too in Book VI, Chapter 14. (Clement gives the tradition of the earliest presbyters ... in the following manner: The Gospel according to Mark had this occasion. As Peter had preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had followed him for a long time and remembered his sayings, should write them out. And having composed the Gospel he gave it to those who had requested it.)

Accessed from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm>

⁷⁹ The explanation of Jewish customs (e.g. Mark 7. 3; 14. 12; 15. 42) and the translation of Aramaic expressions into Greek (e.g., 3. 17; 5. 41; 7. 11, 34; 9. 43; 10. 46; 14. 36; 15. 22, 34) indicate that they probably were not Aramaic-speaking Jews. Referring to four watches of the night (6. 48; 13. 35), Mark employs a Roman system of time instead of the traditional Jewish three. The inclusion of transliterated Latin terms in reference to the military (e.g. legion in 5. 9; praetorium in 15. 16; centurion in 15. 39), the courts (e.g. speculator in 6. 27; flagellare in 15. 15), and commerce (e.g. denarius in 12. 15; quadrans in 12. 42) and kenos (census), 12. 14 implies a Rome destination, as Latin speakers would have been found most readily there.

⁸⁰ James R. Edwards, Romans, New International Biblical Commentary (Hendrickson Publishers, 1992).

⁸¹ Mark 8. 34; Luke 23. 26 ('carry it behind Jesus').

⁸² Luke 19. 5-9.

⁸³ Acts 5. 30; 10. 39; 13. 29; Gal. 3. 13; 1 Pet. 2. 24.

⁸⁴ Acts 23. 6.

⁸⁵ Acts 7. 58.

⁸⁶ His nephew seems to have been sympathetic, Acts 23. 16, but this does not mean that closer members of Paul's family were.

⁸⁷ Rom. 16. 10.

⁸⁸ 'Receive instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than *tried* gold', Prov. 8. 10 (Septuagint).

'As silver and gold are *tried* in a furnace, so are choice hearts with the Lord', Prov. 17. 3 (Septuagint).

'Blessed is the man that endures trial: for when he hath been *approved*, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him', James 1. 12.

⁸⁹ Aquila, Andronicus, Junias and Herodion.

⁹⁰ Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, Aristobulus, Narcissus, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Rufus, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus and Nereus. Source : J. B. Lightfoot, Epistle to the Philippians', pages 174-177.

⁹¹ Rom. 16. 10-11.

⁹² Surnamed 'the Younger', J. B. Lightfoot, Epistle to the Philippians', page 174.

Lightfoot adds (page 175), 'The emperor Claudius, writing at this time, speaks of Aristobulus as entertaining most dutiful and friendly sentiments towards himself. When the slaves of a household passed into the hands of a new master, by cession or inheritance or confiscation, they continued to be designated by the name of their former proprietor ... Now it seems not improbable, considering the intimate relations between Claudius and Aristobulus, that at the death of the latter his servants, wholly or in part, should be transferred to the palace. In this case they would be designated 'Aristobuliani', which I suppose St Paul's 'τους εκ των αριστοβουλου' to be an equivalent. It is at least not an obvious phrase and demands explanation. And, as the household of Aristobulus would naturally be composed in a large measure of Jews, the Gospel would the more easily be introduced to their notice. Moreover it is worth observing that after saluting them of the household of Aristobulus, St Paul immediately singles out one whom he designates his kinsman, i.e. his fellow-countryman, and whose name Herodion we might expect to find among the slaves or freedmen of a distinguished member of the Herodian family. This interpretation of the expression will, I think, be confirmed by the salutation which follows'.

⁹³ 'There was besides another brother of his *that died a private person, his name was also Aristobulus*, who left behind him a daughter, whose name was Jotape', Flavius Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 2, Chapter 11, Paragraph 6. ('Aristobulus, the third brother of Agrippa, married Jotape, the daughter of Sampsigeramus, king of Emesa; they had a daughter who was deaf, whose name also was Jotape', Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18, Chapter 5, Paragraph 4.)

⁹⁴ Herod the Great, while trying to live as a Jew, was not a Jew. He was an Idumean. Herodion here is labelled 'my kinsman' by Paul, but may well have been given a name indicating his proprietor.

⁹⁵ '... here, as in the case of Aristobulus, the expression seems to point to some famous person of the name. And the powerful freedman Narcissus, whose wealth was proverbial (Juv. Sat. xiv. 329), whose influence with Claudius was unbounded, and who bore a chief part in the intrigues of this reign, alone satisfies this condition. He was put to death by Agrippina shortly after the accession of Nero (Tac. Ann. xiii. I, Dion Cass. lx. 34), about three or four years before the Epistle to the Romans was written. As was usual in such cases, his household would most probably pass into the hands of the emperor, still however retaining the name of Narcissus'.

J. B. Lightfoot, Epistle to the Philippians', page 175

⁹⁶ Prisca, Mary, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, the mother of Rufus and the sister of Nereus. There is some debate over the gender of Junias/Junia in verse 7.

⁹⁷ Not that this effects differing roles for the man and the woman, both in the home or the assembly. Any more than it endorses 'gay' marriages! Or that the verse condones slaves thumbing their noses up at their earthly masters.

⁹⁸ Gal. 3. 28.

⁹⁹ See ... <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2931-benedictions>

¹⁰⁰ See ... <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/spb/spb05.htm>

Compare the Babylonian Talmud, Menachoth 43b. 'Every one must offer three benedictions daily, namely: " . . . who hast not made me a heathen"; " . . . who hast not made me a woman"; " . . . who hast not made me a slave]". Tosef., Ber. vii. 18; Yer. Ber. ix. 2, p. 13b; Men. 43b; "Halakot Gedolot," p. 77.

'Hermippus in his Lives refers to Thales the story which is told by some of Socrates, namely, that he used to say there were three blessings for which he was grateful to Fortune: "first, that I was born a human being and not one of the brutes; next, that I was born a man and not a woman; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian". Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Chapter 1, Paragraph 33.

[Paragraph 34: 'It is said that once, when he was taken out of doors by an old woman in order that he might observe the stars, he fell into a ditch, and his cry for help drew from the old woman the retort, "How can you expect to know all about the heavens, Thales, when you cannot even see what is just before your feet?"]

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0258%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3>

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¹⁰¹ 'We came to Rome', Acts 28. 16.

¹⁰² Rom. 1. 10.

¹⁰³ Acts 27. 43.

¹⁰⁴ The Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns, Acts 28. 15.

See ... http://www.welcometohosanna.com/PAULS_MISSIONARY_JOURNEYS/4voyage_7.html

¹⁰⁵ Rom. 1. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, Book XV, 44 ...

[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Annals_\(Tacitus\)/Book_15#44](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Annals_(Tacitus)/Book_15#44). See also Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* II. 25. 5 – which mentions the tradition of the executions of Paul and Peter.

¹⁰⁷ The many allusions made by Clement of Rome some thirty years later strongly suggests that the letter continued to be highly valued by the churches there.