

THE DESIRE TO GO TO VISIT FACE-TO-FACE | ROMANS 15:22-33

Verses 22-27 in Session 47 (Sheet may be marked Session 46)

- Verse 28 - In taking the offering to Jerusalem, Paul's life came into danger, and he was arrested and removed to Caesarea, and eventually taken to Rome where he was under "house arrest." It was from Rome that he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon (and perhaps others).
- Verse 29 - Though Paul came to them in chains, He was, nonetheless, with them **in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ**, for such blessing is not material, but spiritual, and cannot be taken away by man nor government.
- Verses 30-31 - Though Paul would add a postscript, he concludes his epistle with a three-fold prayer request:
 - That Paul would be **delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea**. Was this prayer request answered? Compare Acts 23:21-35.
 - That his ministry in Jerusalem **may be accepted of the saints**. Was this prayer answered? Compare Acts 21:17-26.
 - That he would be able **to come unto you with joy...and be refreshed**. Was this prayer answered? Compare Acts 28:15-16, 30, 31.

FINAL GREETINGS | ROMANS 16:1-24

- Verses 1-2 –
 - Nothing is known of **Phebe** (or Phoebe) than what is shown here.
 - She was **our sister and a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea** (near Corinth).
 - The word for **servant** is διάκονος [deaconos]. This is a word that requires interpretation. The word *deacon* or *deaconess* is a transliteration, and all transliterated words require interpretation.
 - The reception of Phoebe should be **as becometh saints**.
 - Saints are those of the Jewish lineage who are believers.
 - Grammar does not conclude whether the Romans or Phoebe are the saints, or both. In my opinion, the Romans were a mixed audience of mostly believing Jews and Phoebe was a Jew.
 - We are not told why Phoebe was coming to Rome. Did she carry the letter? Was she working with Paul in the offering for the Jerusalem saints? We do not know.
 - The Romans were commended to **assist her in whatsoever business she hath need**.
 - Phoebe was a **succourer of many**, including Paul. The Greek προστάτις [prostasis] literally means "to stand in front of," as in a helper or defender. Only used once in the Biblical text, other Greek texts translate as *patron/patroness*, using the Latin *patron* as "one who advances a cause."
- Verses 3-4 - We know far more of **Priscilla** and **Aquila** than of Phoebe.
 - They were Jews who departed Rome (and were presumably from Rome) under the edict of Claudius (49AD), and fled to Corinth.
 - They were Tentmakers who opened their home to Paul when he was in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3).
 - They left Corinth with Paul, going to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19) and taught **the way of God more perfectly** to Apollos after Paul's departure from Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28).
 - Paul also mentions that they are with him when he wrote the book of 1 Corinthians (from Ephesus).

- By the time the book of Romans was written (58AD), they had returned to Rome, the temporary edict being ended.
- Paul does not give information as to how they **laid down their own necks** on his behalf, but it appears to be common information for which **all the churches of the Gentiles** were grateful.
- Verse 5 –
 - **The church that is in their house** - This little statement is of great value in understanding the early church. The "church at ____" was more than one church, as this statement displays. Paul specifies *which church*, namely the one **that is in their house**. These churches, then, each 1) had their own elder and 2) had their own autonomy and 3) had cooperation with other churches. However, related to #3, this was prior to the schisms that have come to the church over doctrinal matters in post-apostolic days.
 - **Epaenetus** - We know nothing of **Epaenetus** save what is written here.
 - Note that there is a textual difference and texts built on the Textus Receptus say that he was the **firstfruits of Achaia** while the critical texts say "Asia." The text of Romans speaks of **Achaia** in Romans 15:26, and it seems unlikely that a mistake would have been made in Romans 16:5. Furthermore, all of the Middle East and the ancient Greco-Roman world in which the book of Acts took place was in Asia (until Paul went to Thyatira) , so how could Epaenetus have been the first convert in Asia? There are many reasons to be suspicious of the modern texts, this is just one of them.
- Verse 6 - Nothing is known of this **Mary** except what is written here. The name *Mary* was a popular Jewish name, *Miriam*.
- Verse 7 –
 - As with most of the others, this couple is not mentioned elsewhere. Since they were **of note among the apostles** they were most certainly Jewish.
 - The most intriguing information is Paul's statement that they **were in Christ before me**. If Paul was the first convert of this dispensation (saved completely outside the covenants / commonwealth / Law of Israel), then how could this couple be **in Christ before** Paul?
 - Note that Priscilla and Aquila were **my helpers in Christ Jesus** (v. 3). However, they could have been saved under Paul's teachings. It is also said of Urbane in v. 9.
 - Paul speaks of others being **in Christ** before him also - see Galatians 1:22. These believers were necessarily **in Christ** prior to the mystery being revealed to them by Paul.
 - Paul mentions Judean churches which are **in Christ** in 1 Thessalonians 2:14 (though no timing of when they came **in Christ** is mentioned).
 - Paul speaks of **the promise of life which is in Christ** in 2 Timothy 1:1. This promise is not given to this dispensation alone. It is the *manner of acceptance* for the promise that is unique to this dispensation.
 - Timothy knew of the **salvation through faith which is in Christ** from the time he was a child, long before he met Paul, and during the time he was living in at least partial Judaism (2 Timothy 3:15).
 - Peter, the Jewish apostle, speaks of his Jewish flock as being called to **his eternal glory in Christ**, and gives no indication that this calling came after Paul (1 Peter 5:10 - note that the KJV says **by Christ** but the Greek is the same).
 - Therefore it would be inaccurate to say that they were not saved. Instead, we would say that they were *not saved in the same manner as Paul* and others (like you and me) who follow after his pattern in the age of Grace.
- Verses 8-15 - Nothing is known of these individuals beyond what is given in these verses. From these greetings we can conclude that individual relationships should be valued within the church.