

**Romans 16**  
**October 18, 2015**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: When you think about all the mediums churches us to get the gospel message out, it is mind-boggling! What are some examples?

- Provide a place of worship
- Livestreaming video
- Listen to messages on your iPod or iPad
- Multi-sites
- Archiving sermons for later retrievals
- TVs that televise worship services
- Radio programs
- Retreats
- Revivals
- Christian books
- Small Group bible studies

Q: When Paul was sharing the gospel message, what tools were available to him? [House churches, fellow Christians, and his testimony!]

Q: So how was Paul able to accelerate the growth of the NT church if he had “so little?” [It goes to show that when the power of the Holy Spirit is at work, the Lord was able to use his personal testimony to infect as many people as possible to share the good news that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah.

**Transition:** I keep reading statistics that the percentage of Christians in the USA is decreasing because other faith systems are increasing (<http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>). It is being said that we are losing our influence and will someday be in the minority. However, I think we can reverse the trend because all of us CAN be multipliers in the Kingdom of God BY emulating the THINGS Paul did over the years that made his ministry so effective. Let’s read the text and then process the THINGS you observed that Paul did so well.

**BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Romans 16:1-16]**

V.1:

- I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.

V.2:

- I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

V.3:

- Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

V.4:

- They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.
- V.5:
- Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.
- V.6:
- Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.
- V.7:
- Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.
- V.8:
- Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord.
- V.9:
- Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.
- V.10:
- Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.
- V.11:
- Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.
- V.12:
- Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.
- V.13:
- Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.
- V.14:
- Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them.
- V.15:
- Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them.
- V.16:
- Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: Let's open it for observations. What did Paul do that made his ministry so successful?

- Paul not only made friends, but he also was a soul winner. He did not try to live an isolated life; he *cultivated friendships in the Lord* and appreciated them.
- Paul used *women in ministry*. (Phebe - The word "servant" is the feminine of *deacon*, and some students believe she was a "deaconess" in the church. This is possible, because there were women in the early church who served by visiting the sick, assisting the young women, and helping the poor.)
- People *gathered in homes* to hear the gospel.
- God used *people who were willing to open their homes and build relationships* with others.

- God used *husband-wife teams* like Priscilla and Aquila (v. 3) and Andronicus and Junias (v. 7)
- Paul surrounded himself with *people who were as committed to ministry as he was*. Phoebe was a “succourer” or “protectress” of many. Priscilla and Aquila were “helpers” and “laid down their own necks” for Paul. The conversion of Epenetus led to the salvation of others in Asia. Mary “bestowed much labor.” Andronicus and Junias went to prison with Paul.

Transition: Not everyone was working with Paul for the spreading of the Gospel. There were some who, for selfish reasons, were dividing the churches by teaching false doctrine. Let’s read the rest of the text.

**[Read Romans 16:17-27]**

V.17:

- I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.

V.18:

- For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

V.19:

- Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

V.20:

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

V.21:

- Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.

V.22:

- I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

V.23:

- Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city’s director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.

V.24:

- (May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.) – Not in all manuscripts

V.25:

- Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,

V.26:

- but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—

V.27:

- to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q v 17-20: Paul warns his readers to be on the lookout for certain people who weren't about spreading the gospel. How did he describe them? [those who caused division or were false teachers]

Q v.20: Where does Paul suggest these false teachers come from? [Satan – observation: the God of “peace” will “crush” Satan under His feet]

Q v25: How are churches established? [By the gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the ultimate revelation in the personhood of Jesus as prophesied.]

### **LOOK:**

Paul did basic things to spread the good news to others. He went town to town. He mentored those new in the faith and then placed them in leadership roles. He encouraged many to open their homes to build relationships to lead others to Christ.

So here's the seed I'd like to plant: What if each of us were willing to open our homes once a month to start cultivating friendships with our neighbors. I wouldn't start bible studies or prayer groups at this point. The only goal is to get to know your neighbors over a cup of coffee. In fact, we ought to consider inviting neighbors for one-to-one gatherings first to get a sense of who they are and assess their level of interest in getting to know other neighbors on a monthly basis. The end goal is to love our neighbors, encourage one another, carry each other's burden, and then the hope is to draw them to Christ over time.

But what I want you to hear is that I don't think we should put pressure on ourselves to lead a bible study or prayer group. I'm suggesting you don't need to put pressure on to provide a meal. Most people like a casual, comfortable setting to sip tea or coffee.

I think if all of us would pray about this, we could begin reversing the trend of Christians becoming a minority and have house churches filled with people we're ministering to. At some point, the Lord will prompt us when it's time to take it to another level. This is how Paul spread the good news through all of his helpers and husband/wife teams, etc. Let's strongly consider this for 2016. Let's be intentional!

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 565–566). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

### **The Believers' Ministry to Paul (Rom. 16:1–27)**

What a remarkable chapter! In it Paul greeted at least twenty-six people by name, as well as two unnamed saints; and he also greeted several churches that were meeting in homes. He closed with greetings from nine believers who were with him in Corinth when he wrote the letter. What is the significance of this? It shows that Paul was a friend maker as well as a soul winner. He did not try to live an isolated life; he had friends in the Lord, and he appreciated them. They were a help to him personally and to his ministry. In my own reading of Christian biography, I have discovered that the servants whom God has used the most were people who could make friends. *They multiplied themselves in the lives of their friends and associates in the ministry.* While there may be a place for the secluded saint who lives alone with God, it is my conviction that most of us need each other. We are sheep, and sheep flock together.

*Some friends to greet (vv. 1–16).* He began with Phebe, a member of the church at Cenchrea, and the lady who carried the letter to the saints at Rome. Never did a messenger carry a more important letter! Cenchrea was the seaport of Corinth, so Phebe was probably won to Christ during Paul's year and a half of ministry in Corinth. The word "servant" is the feminine of *deacon*, and some students believe she was a "deaconess" in the church. This is possible, because there were women in the early church who served by visiting the sick, assisting the young women, and helping the poor. Paul confessed that Phebe had been a helper (literally "protectress") of himself and other Christians. And he encouraged the church to care for her.

How we wish we had the details of the stories behind each of these names! We have met Priscilla and Aquila in the Book of Acts (18:1–3, 18–19, 26). Where and when they risked their lives for Paul, we do not know, but we are glad they did it! (see also 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19) At the time of this writing, they were in Rome and a church met in their house. In this chapter, Paul greeted a number of such assemblies (Rom. 16:10–11, 14–15).

Four persons are called "beloved" by Paul: Epenetus (Rom. 16:5), Amplias (Rom. 16:8), Stachys (Rom. 16:9), and Persis (Rom. 16:12). Paul would remember Epenetus in particular, for he was the first of the converts in Asia. Apparently he belonged to the household of Stephanas, for in 1 Corinthians 16:15 these people are also called "the firstfruits of Achaia."

Andronicus and Junias are called "kinsmen," which may mean blood relatives of Paul, or only that they too were Jewish, possibly of the tribe of Benjamin like Paul. At one time they had been in prison with Paul. The word "apostle" here does not imply that they held the same office as Paul, but rather that they were "messengers" of the Lord. The word "apostle" has both a narrow and a broad meaning.

The Rufus mentioned in Romans 16:13 may be the same as the one named in Mark 15:21, but we cannot be certain. If so, then Simon's experience at Calvary led to his conversion and that of his household. Paul and Rufus were not related. "His mother and mine" means only that Rufus' mother had been like a mother to Paul (see Mark 10:30).

This list shows the parts that people played in Paul's ministry and the ministry of the churches. Phebe was a "succourer" of many. Priscilla and Aquila were "helpers" and "laid down their own necks" for Paul. The conversion of Epenetus led to the salvation of others in Asia. Mary "bestowed much labor." Andronicus and Junias went to prison with Paul. One can only

give thanks for these devoted saints who fulfilled their ministries to the glory of God. May we follow in their train!

*Some foes to avoid (vv. 17–20).* Not everyone was working with Paul for the spreading of the Gospel. There were some who, for selfish reasons, were dividing the churches by teaching false doctrine. These people were probably the same Judaizers who had given Paul trouble in other churches (see Phil. 3:17–21). Instead of preaching the truth, these men spread their own religious propaganda, using deceit and clever speeches. We have the same problem today, and Christians must beware of false teachers. They come to your front door with magazines, books, and tapes, trying to convince you that they are teaching the truth. Paul gives two instructions: mark them (identify them), and avoid them.

It is a matter of obedience to the Lord and testimony to others. The issue is not making or keeping friends, but pleasing the Lord and maintaining a consistent testimony. Romans 16:20 suggests that these false teachers really come from Satan, and one day even he shall be completely defeated.

*Some faithful servants to honor (vv. 21–27).* What a roll call of heroes! Timothy was mentioned often in the Book of Acts and the Epistles. He was Paul's "son in the faith" and labored with Paul in many difficult places (see Phil. 2:19–24). Lucius was a fellow Jew, as were Jason and Sosipater. We have no proof that this is the same Jason who protected Paul in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–9). That Jason was probably a Gentile.

Tertius was the secretary who wrote the letter as Paul dictated it. Gaius was the man in whose home Paul was residing at Corinth. First Corinthians 1:14 told how Paul won Gaius to Christ and baptized him when he founded the church in Corinth. Apparently there was an assembly of believers meeting in his house. Erastus held a high office in the city, probably the treasurer. The Gospel reached into high places in Corinth as well as into low places (1 Cor. 1:26–31; 6:9–11).

Romans 16:24 was probably written by Paul's own hand, since this was his "official seal" in every letter (see 2 Thes. 3:17–18).

The closing benediction is the longest one Paul ever wrote. It reflects his special ministry to the Gentiles. "The mystery" has to do with God's program of uniting believing Jews and Gentiles in the one body, the church (see Eph. 3). This was Paul's special message. It was because of this message that the Judaizers persecuted Paul, because they wanted to maintain Jewish privileges. Both Jews and Gentiles in the Roman churches needed to know what God's program was. Some of this Paul had explained in Romans 9–11.

Christians are established by the truth, which explains why Paul wrote this letter: to explain God's plan of salvation to Christians so they would be established, and so they would share the truth with the lost. After all, we cannot really share with others something we do not have ourselves.

This means that our own study of Romans should make us more stable in the faith, and more excited to share Christ with others. And the result: "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever!"

**Witmer, J. A. (1985). Romans. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 498–502). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

*B. Personal greetings (16:1–16)*

The capital city of Rome was a magnet that drew people from all over the empire. In addition Paul's travels to many of the major population centers—Jerusalem, Syrian Antioch, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus—brought him into contact with the mobile segment of Roman society. These factors help explain the presence of Paul's many friends in Rome, but his knowledge of their whereabouts remains a tribute to his deep concern for people.

16:1–2. Phoebe (which means “bright, radiant”) was Paul's emissary to deliver this letter, so he wrote officially, **I commend to you our sister Phoebe**. The relationship mentioned is spiritual, not familial. Phoebe was **a servant of the church in Cenchrea**, a seaport a few miles east of Corinth (cf. Acts 18:18; and see the map between Acts and Rom.). The word *diakonon*, “servant,” is used for the office of deacon (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 10, 12) as well as used generally (Rom. 15:8; 1 Cor. 3:5). Use of the word with the phrase “of the church” strongly suggests some recognized position, a fact appropriate for a person serving as Paul's emissary. Paul not only officially commended her (cf. 2 Cor. 3:1), but also asked the Roman Christians **to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help** (lit., “and to stand by her in whatsoever matter”) **she may need from you**. Paul explained, **for she has been a great help** (*prostat*, “a protectress, succorer”) **to many people, including me**. So they should help her since she had helped others.

16:3–5. This list of greetings (vv. 3–16) that Paul wanted conveyed to friends in Rome is the longest in any of his epistles. He mentioned 26 people by name, and referred to many others (vv. 5, 10–11, 13–15). Several women are included in the list: Priscilla (v. 3), Mary (v. 6), Tryphena and Tryphosa (v. 12), Persis (v. 12), Rufus' mother (v. 13), and Nereus' sister (v. 15). Two others are possibly women—Junias (v. 7) and Julia (v. 15).

Paul first met **Priscilla and Aquila** when he arrived in Corinth on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:2) and worked with them at their trade of tentmaking. They had come to Corinth from Rome because of Claudius' decree that all Jews must leave Rome. They accompanied Paul when he left Corinth (Acts 18:18), but stayed in Ephesus when the party stopped briefly (Acts 18:19). There they ministered to Apollos (Acts 18:26) and undoubtedly to Paul during his stay in Ephesus on his third journey, because they sent greetings to the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. 16:19). Shortly after that, they must have moved back to Rome and still later returned to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:19).

Paul paid them great praise, calling them **my fellow workers in Christ Jesus** and revealing that **they risked their lives for me** (lit., “they lay down their own neck for my soul”). In what way they risked their lives is not known. **All the Gentile churches**, Paul added, were **grateful to them**. Paul also sent greetings to **the church that met at their house**. The Christians in Rome apparently worshiped in numerous homes such as Priscilla and Aquila's. This couple had had a house church in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:19) and probably wherever they lived. Other churches in homes are mentioned in Colossians 4:15 and Philemon 2.

**Epenetus**, to whom greetings were sent, is mentioned only here, but is called by Paul **my dear friend** (lit., “the one loved by me”; cf. Stachys, v. 9). He **was the first convert** (lit., “the firstfruits”) **to Christ in the province of Asia**. Paul reached Asia, the western portion of modern-day Turkey, on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:10), after having been prevented from going there on his second journey (Acts 16:6).

16:6–7. **Mary** is identified simply as one **who worked very hard** (“toiled much”; cf. v. 12). Some Greek manuscripts read Mariam, the Hebrew form, which probably identifies this woman as a Jew.

**Andronicus and Junias**, greeted together, may have been husband and wife; Junias can be either masculine or feminine. Paul called them **my relatives**, which probably refers to a tribal, not a family kinship (cf. 9:3). He also mentioned four other “relatives” (16:11, 21). He said Andronicus and Junias had **been in prison with him** (lit., “my fellow prisoners”); when or where this occurred is not mentioned (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23). Paul commended them as **outstanding** (*episēmoi*, lit., “having a mark [*sēma*] on them,” therefore “illustrious, notable, outstanding”) **among the apostles**. The word “apostles” is probably used here in the broader, general sense in which Barnabas, Silas, and others were called apostles (Acts 14:14; 1 Thes. 2:7). Or it could mean the apostles in the limited sense, referring to the reputation this pair had among the Twelve. Paul added, **They were** (perf. tense, “they came to be and still are”) **in Christ before I was**. So they had been believers for about 25 years.

16:8–11. **Ampliatius** was one Paul loved **in the Lord**. This was high praise from the apostle. **Urbanus** was called **our fellow worker in Christ**, and **Stachys** was addressed as **my dear friend** (lit., “the one loved by me”; cf. Epenetus, v. 5). Paul said **Apelles** was **tested and approved** (*ton dokimon*, “the one approved through testing”; cf. the same word trans. “approved,” 14:18; the related infinitive *dokimazein* is trans. “to test and approve,” 12:2). Without naming other individuals Paul sent greetings to **those who belong to the household of Aristobulus**, perhaps a grandson of Herod the Great. (See the chart on the Herods at Luke 1:5.) A household may have included family members and servants. (However, the Gr. simply has “those out of, belonging to Aristobulus”; cf. Rom. 16:11).

**Herodion** was greeted as **my relative**, but once again the relationship was probably tribal and not familial (cf. vv. 7, 21). The name may identify this person as belonging to Herod’s family. Once again without naming individuals Paul sent greetings to **those in the household of Narcissus** (lit., “those out of, belonging to Narcissus”; cf. v. 10). But Paul restricted his greetings to the ones **who are in the Lord**, which probably indicated Narcissus’ family was divided spiritually.

16:12–13. Paul sent greetings jointly to **Tryphena and Tryphosa**, identifying them as **those women who work hard** (“toil”) **in the Lord**. Some believe they were sisters, possibly even twins. Then **Persis**, addressed as **my dear friend** (lit., “the one loved”), was **another woman who has worked very hard** (“toiled much”) **in the Lord**. Interestingly four women were said to have “worked hard” (cf. Mary, v. 6).

Whether **Rufus** is the same person mentioned in Mark 15:21 or not is uncertain. If so, then he, as a son of Simon of Cyrene, was a North African. Paul said Rufus was **chosen in the Lord**, a statement true of every believer (cf. Eph. 1:4). Consequently the word translated “chosen” may mean “eminent,” since it was given to Rufus as a statement of distinction. The greeting included Rufus’ **mother who**, Paul said, had also **been a mother to him**. Paul obviously did not say she was his actual mother, but he had been the recipient of her motherly care.

16:14–16. The next five names mentioned together (v. 14) evidently had something in common, perhaps as leaders of another house church. This may be indicated by the reference to **the brothers with them**. They are all common names, particularly among slaves.

**Julia** may have been the wife of **Philologus**. Two other husband-wife teams were Priscilla and Aquila (v. 3) and (possibly) Andronicus and Junias (v. 7). **Nereus and his sister** were then greeted, though the sister’s name is not given. And finally, greetings were sent to **Olympas and all the saints with him**. This group may have been the leaders of another house church (cf. v. 14).



Of all these individuals only Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament for certain; yet Paul knew them all individually and sent personal greetings to them and their associates. Paul cannot properly be charged with not being “a people person.” He closed this section with the command, **Greet one another with a holy kiss**, the mode of salutation similar to the handshake today (cf. comments on 1 Cor. 16:20; also cf. 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14) and with a general word of salutation, **All the churches of Christ send greetings** (lit., “greet you”).

### C. Final words (16:17–27).

16:17–20. Paul could not resist giving a final word of warning that they **watch out for spiritual enemies: those who** are divisive and seek to hinder the Lord’s work (who **put obstacles** [*skandala*, “traps, snares”; cf. 14:13] **in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned**). Believers are to **keep away** (pres. imper., “keep on turning away”) **from** such false teachers, who were **not serving** (*douleousin*, “serving as slaves”; cf. 14:18) **Christ**, but were slaves to **their own appetites** (lit., “bellies”; cf. Phil. 3:19). They were selfish gluttons. The problem, however, was that **by smooth talk and flattery they** deceived **the minds** (lit., “hearts”) **of naive people** (*akakōn*, “innocent, unsuspecting”).

Paul hastened to assure the Romans that he did not consider *them* naive. Their **obedience** (to Christ; cf. Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 1 Peter 1:2) was well known and Paul was glad for them. But he was concerned that they **be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil** (*kakon*). The word for “innocent” is *akeraious*, “unmixed, simple, pure.” In Greek it was used of wine that was not diluted and of metal that was not weakened in any way. The word is used in the New Testament in only two other places: Matthew 10:16 (“innocent”) and Philippians 2:15 (“pure”). Christians should be innocent about evil, not following the ways of the world (Rom. 12:2).

To conclude this warning Paul added the promise, **The God of peace** (cf. 15:33; Heb. 13:20) **will soon crush Satan under your feet** (cf. Gen. 3:15). The false teachers (Rom. 16:17–18) were under Satan’s influence, but he will be destroyed and God will establish peace (Rev. 20:1–6). Then Paul gave another benediction (cf. Rom. 15:13, 33) about God’s **grace**. (See the chart, “Paul’s Concluding Benedictions in His Epistles.”)

16:21–24. These few verses contain personal **greetings** from some of Paul’s associates: first, **Timothy, my fellow worker**, and then **Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my relatives**. Once again these men were not members of Paul’s family, but fellow countrymen (cf. vv. 7, 10). These may be the men of the same names mentioned elsewhere (Acts 13:1; 17:5–9; 20:4; cf. 2 Cor. 9:4).

Then **Tertius**, who was Paul’s stenographer for this epistle, sent his greetings. So did **Gaius**, Paul’s host in Corinth, who apparently had a church meeting in his home. This Gaius was probably not the same Gaius who was from Macedonia and traveled with Paul (Acts 19:29) nor the Gaius who was from Derbe (Acts 20:4). The Gaius mentioned here in Romans was probably Paul’s convert whom he baptized (1 Cor. 1:14). **Erastus sent greetings**. He was **the city’s director of public works** (lit., “the city’s steward,” a high position in Corinth). Paul called **Quartus our brother**, undoubtedly meaning a spiritual brother, not a physical one. Romans 16:24 (NIV marg.), which repeats the benediction in verse 20b, is not found in a number of the major Greek manuscripts and is not considered genuine.

16:25–27. The apostle finally came to his closing benediction. This letter to the Romans is Paul’s longest and most complete statement of the message he proclaimed, what he here called **my gospel** (cf. 2:16; 2 Tim. 2:8) **and the proclamation of** (i.e., concerning) **Jesus Christ**. The

truth of this message is the means of spiritual life and stability, as Paul expressed his praise to God **who is able to establish you** (cf. 1 Peter 5:10).

Paul said that aspects of this message (e.g., Rom. 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:51; Eph. 5:32) and in a sense the total message (cf. Eph. 3:3–9; Col. 1:26–27) are **the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known**. The message of the gospel of Christ was “hidden” in the Old Testament, but is revealed in the New. In **the prophetic writings** (of the OT; cf. Rom. 1:2), given **by the command of the eternal God** (1 Tim. 1:17), Christ was referred to (Luke 24:44–45), but even the prophets themselves were not fully aware of all they wrote (1 Peter 1:10–12). **But now** in the Church Age their writings are understood.

The goal of this “revelation of the mystery” (Rom. 16:25) is **that people of all nations might believe and obey** Christ (cf. 1:5; 15:18; 1 Peter 1:2). Paul’s concern for the geographical spread of the gospel is evident here (cf. Matt. 28:19), appropriate in view of his writing to the believers at the empire’s capital city.

Paul then identified specifically the object of his benediction: **To the only wise God**. In the Greek this phrase is followed immediately by the words **through Jesus Christ**. This indicates that the wisdom of God is displayed supremely through Christ (cf. Col. 2:3). According to the Greek text the benediction then ends, to whom **be glory forever! Amen** (cf. Rom. 11:36). God the Father ultimately is the One to be praised and to whom glory belongs (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24–28).

**Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (pp. 1704 – 1705). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.**

**16:1–2** Paul called his helper Phoebe a *diakonos* of the church. Bible versions differ on whether to translate this term as “servant” or “minister” or to transliterate it as “deacon[ess],” since by the time Paul wrote to the Romans this term could already have designated the office of deacon (Php 1:1; 1 Ti 3:8, 12). Probably the latter is more likely, though it is far from certain.

**16:7** Many claim that Junia (or Junias), designating one of Paul’s relatives, could be either a man’s or a woman’s name. In fact, the masculine form, Junias (as a contraction of Junianus), has not been located elsewhere, whereas the feminine Junia is common. Of course, if this person was a woman, this would be an intriguing fact, particularly since Paul called Andronicus and Junia “apostles.” J. D. G. Dunn suggests they were husband and wife—a reasonable assumption.

The precise status of all who are called apostles isn’t clear. Some were close associates of the apostles, such as Barnabas (Acts 14:14) and James (Gl 1:19), but also see the Greek term *apostolos* in 2 Co 8:23 and Php 2:25.

**16:17** The term “the doctrine” implies that by this time the gospel had already been taught to the point that it could be followed and understood and also should have been defended against corruption (see 2 Th 3:6).