

CEC Bible Study: Romans

Session 9: Romans 16: What the Lectionary Doesn't Tell You
Sept. 30, 2020
Christ Episcopal Church
Cape Girardeau, MO

Opening Question: What's in a name?¹

Romans 16: A List of Greetings

- Why it's important to pay attention to Paul's greetings lists
 - God (and the Devil) are in the details
- “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord...” (16:13)
 - Compare [Mark 15:21](#)
 - Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 2.15:
 - “But a great light of religion shone on the minds of the hearers of Peter, so that they were not satisfied with a single hearing or with the unwritten teaching of the divine proclamation, but with every kind of exhortation besought Mark, whose Gospel is extant, seeing that he was Peter's follower, to leave them a written statement of the teaching given them verbally, nor did they cease until they had persuaded him, and so because the cause of the Scripture called the Gospel according to Mark...”
 - Peter and Mark in Rome? (1 [Peter 5:13](#))
- Another example: Luke, the beloved physician
 - See greetings list of [Col. 4:10–17](#)
 - Also: [Philemon 23–24](#) and [2 Tim. 4:9–15](#)
 - Lukas or Lucius?
 - Compare [Rom. 16:21](#), [Acts 13:1](#) (Note: “Simeon who was called Niger”)
- Women in the Roman Church
 - Andronicus and Junia
 - Married
 - Both “apostles”
 - “Apostle” the most important church role for Paul (Of course! He *was* one.)
 - Paul's “relatives”
 - Became Christians before Paul ([16:7](#))
 - Phoebe
 - Described as a “deacon” or “minister” ([16:1–2](#))
 - No “official” church titles yet at this time

¹ The majority of information in this week's outline taken from Beverly Roberts Gaventa, [When In Romans: An Invitation to Linger with the Gospel according to Paul](#) (Baker Academic, 2016), pp.1–21; and Michael Peppard, [“Household Names,”](#) *Commonweal*, April 23, 2018.

- But early evidence shows widespread support for female deacons
- Recent evidence also suggests the possibility of female bishops as late as the fifth century ([Bishop Cerula, San Gennaro catacombs in Naples, Italy](#))
- Probably wealthy, because Paul also describes her as a “benefactor” (προστάτις)
 - **προστάτις** can also mean: leader, ruler, administrator, someone who oversees a community
- What does Paul mean when he says “receive her” or “welcome her”? ([16:2](#))
 - Either Phoebe is already on her way to Rome, or it is Phoebe who is carrying the letter to the Romans herself
 - There was no FedEx in the ancient world. Letters were usually carried by friends or mutual acquaintances.
 - Some early manuscripts even say at the end of Romans that “this letter was sent through Phoebe”
- Why is this important?
 - If Phoebe was the deliverer of Paul’s letter, she also would have had the authority to clarify its meaning if the Roman church had any questions.
 - Peppard: “When the courier was a real confidant of the sender, he or she could be trusted not only to deliver the letter, but also to comment on its contents, clarify its background, and relay the intentions of the author. In other words, trusted couriers sometimes had authority to interpret.”
- To whom is the letter being delivered? What happens when Phoebe arrives in Rome?
 - Prisca (“Priscilla” in Acts) and Aquila, and the church that meets in their home ([16:3–5](#))
 - Referenced a number of times in the New Testament:
 - [Acts 18:2–4](#)
 - [Acts 18:18–19](#)
 - [Acts 18:24–26](#)
 - [1 Cor. 16:19](#)
 - [Rom. 16:3–5](#)
 - “Co-workers” of Paul
 - In the closing of Romans, *five* of the seven people Paul describes as “co-workers” are women!
 - Of the six times Prisca and Aquila are mentioned in the New Testament, Prisca’s name comes first four times
 - Patriarchal society: men/husbands tended to be listed first (For example: Andronicus and Junia in [16:7](#))
- “The church that meets in their home”
 - The home was usually the domain of women

Conclusion:

- The letter to the Romans was delivered by a woman, likely received by a woman, and in all likelihood read in a house church in which a woman served in some sort of leadership role.