

**Romans 16:1-27 Answers**  
**Women Deacons & Apostles, House Churches, Holy Kisses**

\*\*\*\***What shameless plug did Paul put in for a sister named Phoebe (16:1-2)?** Paul commended her as a true servant of the church and as one of Paul's supporters.

**1. What Baptist controversy is there over Paul's statement that Phoebe was a servant of the church (16:1)?** "Servant" (16:1) is from *diakonos*, which fundamentally simply means servant. However, it is also the basis for the word deacon in the English Bible, an official church office. If Paul simply meant Phoebe was a true servant of the church, there is no controversy at all. However, if Paul meant she was an official church deacon(ness) then in some Baptist situations it becomes more controversial.

In the structure of the New Testament church, both elder and deacon were leadership positions. However, the position of elder carried much more authority than the position of deacon and the position of elder is reserved for the men. There arguably were women deacons in the New Testament. In some modern Baptist churches, however, the deacons essentially serve as elders. In such churches, to make a woman a deacon is to make her an elder, which would violate the biblical principle of men taking the lead in the church.

**Where is Cenchreae (16:1)?** Cenchreae is a city in Greece near Corinth. Its modern name is Kichries (NBD, p. 181). Since Paul was in Corinth when he wrote Romans, it is quite possible that Phoebe is the one who delivered Paul's letter to the church there, bringing it with her when she came.

**What did Paul want the church in Rome to do for Phoebe (16:2)?** He wanted them to welcome her as a true sister and give her any help (support) she needed.

**In what sense was Phoebe a patron of many people including Paul (16:2)?** It sounds as if she was a wealthy woman who financially supported missionaries, including Paul. Women played a large role in supporting Jesus during His ministry as well:

ESV **Luke 8:1-3** . . . he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women . . . Mary, called Magdalene . . . and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

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\*\*\*\***What in 16:3-16 indicates several different congregations meeting in Rome? 1)** That Paul greeted the church in the home of Prisca and Aquila means there were other churches in Rome that did not meet in the home of Prisca and Aquila. **2)** Paul's greeting to the "brothers who are with" the people listed in 16:14 suggests a church there and the greeting to the "saints who are with" the people listed in 16:15 implies yet another church grouping. Thus there were at least three churches in Rome, and very probably more.

**2. Even though he'd never been there, Paul seemingly knew everyone in Rome. How did Paul already know these people (16:3-16)?** As was commonly said, all roads lead to Rome! Rome was a city of transplants (16:3-16). These people likely used to live somewhere else, places where Paul had already been, but moved to Rome. Prisca and Aquila, for example, knew Paul from their time together in Ephesus (Acts 19). They were from Rome, but Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews, so they moved to Corinth where they met Paul (all three were tent makers), then they moved with Paul to Ephesus. Now they were back in Rome.

Most of these people are not mentioned anywhere else in New Testament.

**How did Paul describe Prisca and Aquila in 16:4?** He described them as his fellow workers in Christ Jesus. In China, the church leaders call each other co-workers.

Historical Finding: In A.D. 91 Emperor Trajan executed a consul named Marcus Acilius Glabrio, evidently for being a Christian. In his catacomb is found the name Priscilla. Some speculate she played a role in the family's conversion and so was buried in the family catacomb (Cranfield, p. 784).

**3. How had Prisca and Aquila risked their necks for Paul (16:3)?** See Acts 19. Scripture never records exactly how they helped Paul, but it likely was related to the danger Paul faced during his two years in Ephesus.

**4. What can we learn about where the early church met from 16:5?** Paul greeted the church that met in the house of Prisca and Aquila. Christians did not build dedicated church buildings until the A.D. 300s (roughly 200 years after Paul wrote). New Testament churches were small, relational, participatory, intimate, accountable groups of believers who met in homes.

**ESV 1 Corinthians 16:19** The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.  
(A reference to Aquila and Prisca's house church in Ephesus).

**ESV Colossians 4:15** Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

**ESV Philemon 1:1-2** Paul . . . to Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house . . .

**NAS James 2:2-4** . . . if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?  
(“footstool” (NAS) is from *hupopodion*. Footstools are found in homes, not public buildings).

**Graydon F. Snyder:** “The New Testament Church began as a small group house church . . . and it remained so until the middle or end of the third century. There are no evidences of larger places of meeting before 300” (*Church Life Before Constantine*, p. 166-167. Snyder is Professor of New Testament at Chicago Theological Seminary).

**Word Study:** The Greek word for church, *ekklesia*, fundamentally refers to a meeting of people. By extension it means assembly or congregation. Unlike our English word “church”, *ekklésia* was never used to refer to a building. Thus, when we read about the church in Ephesus or the church in Corinth, we should never envision a church building, but rather a gathering of people. The church is said to be made of “living stones . . . built up as a spiritual house” with Christ as the cornerstone (1Pe 2:5-7). Whereas the apostles evangelized in such places as the Temple courts, synagogues or the Areopagus, those converted through their witness subsequently gathered as churches in private homes.

**Home Sizes:** There clearly were rich people in the early church (1Ti 6:17-19, Ja 2:1-4). It is clear from Scripture that the early church met in the private homes of its more affluent members. For example Philemon, who was wealthy enough to own a slave, also hosted the church (Phlm 2b). Church hostess Lydia was a prosperous businesswoman who sold expensive purple fabric and could afford servants (Ac 16:14). Aquila and Priscilla were tent makers, a lucrative first century trade (Ac 18:1-3). Gaius’ home was big enough to host the whole church (Ro 16:23); John indicated that Gaius had the means to generously support missionaries (3Jn 1-5).

A typical wealthy Roman home often doubled as a business. The two rooms facing the street were typically store fronts. A hallway between the two stores led into the atrium of the home. At the far end of the atrium was the household business office. In short, their houses had large areas that could accommodate a gathering of Christians. It is thought the church met in either the atrium or else the outer courtyard. Surrounding the atrium were the bedrooms and dining rooms (one early house church had the wall removed between two of the side rooms). Jerome Murphy-O’Connor measured six homes in Pompeii and found the average atrium to be 797 square feet (*Saint Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), p. 180).

A house known to be a Christian meeting place at Dura-Europos (in Syria) could, according to the Yale archaeologists who excavated it, seat 65 to 70 people. This private home had been modified to be used exclusively as a meeting place for the church. The impluvium in the atrium had been tiled over and benches were added around the walls (Snyder, p. 70).

**Acts 1:13-15** records 120 believers assembled together, presumably in the upper room.

**Goldilocks & Just the Right Size:** While we don’t know an exact number, there were more people in a New Testament house church than would fit into the typical American living room, but not nearly so many as in a modern American mega church. There were probably more than just 10 or 20 people present, but there weren’t hundreds and hundreds of people either, and certainly not thousands upon thousands. Think scores of people.

**Sum:** Everything the New Testament counts as normative for church practice works best in a relatively smaller group: participatory worship, elder led consensus, the Lord's Supper as a family meal, church discipline, genuine relationships, encouraging one another, accountability and disciple making.

**What can we learn about Epäenetüs from 16:5?** He was the first convert in Asia (Turkey).

**According to 16:6, what was true of Mary?** She worked hard for the church in Rome. (There are many women named Mary in the New Testament).

**To what distinguished club did Andronicus and Junia belong (16:7a)?** Like Paul, they had been in prison due to their faith (though not necessarily with Paul). In China today, many of the co-workers speak of being arrested like we might speak of it raining yesterday. For many, it is not a matter of if, but when. They also had become Christians before Paul had, meaning they most probably were Jewish (since Paul was the missionary to the Gentiles).

**5. How might Andronicus and Junia have become well known to the apostles (16:7b)?** They obviously were active in the work of the Lord, so much so they had been arrested, and had become known for their zeal to the apostles.

**6. How might some misuse the facts concerning Junia to advance feminism (16:7)?** It is possible to translate the text in such a way as to make Andronicus and Junia well-known as apostles. Feminists seek to use Junia as an argument for women in positions of leadership. However, the Greek construction here is used other places to mean "well known to" someone. Further, the word translated apostle in 16:7, *apostolos*, fundamentally simply means messenger. We get our concept of missionaries from this word. Finally, it is quite possible Junia is a man's name.

**Creative Compliments:** It looks as if Paul started off trying to write something different about each person he greeted (fellow workers, first convert, worked hard, kinsman, beloved in the Lord, approved in Christ, etc.), but then he gave up and simply started listing people to greet!

**Aristobulus (16:10):** This man was not greeted, meaning he either was not a Christian or was dead. His was a name common to Herod's family back in the Middle East. It is possible this man was grandson of Herod the Great and brother of Agrippa I. He lived in Rome and was a close friend of Emperor Claudius. He died in A.D. 45-48 but his household still bore his name and had believers in it (Cranfield, p. 791).

**Herodion (16:11):** This unknown believer must have had some connection to the family of Herod, further indication that the Aristobulus of 16:10 was Herod's grandson.

**Narcissus (16:11):** Like Aristobulus, Narcissus was not greeted, meaning he was either not a believer or was deceased. In Rome during this time was a wealthy freeman named Narcissus, notorious for his influence on Emperor Claudius. He was forced to commit suicide when Nero became emperor, just before Paul wrote (Cranfield, p. 792-793).

**Rufus (16:13):** Mark 15:21 lists Rufus as a son of Simon of Cyrene (who carried Jesus' cross). There would have been no reason for Mark to mention Rufus unless he had become a well known believer in the church. This may well be the same man.

**When was the last time you obeyed 16:16?** Not many today greet one another with a holy kiss.

**7. Why don't we greet one another with a holy kiss (16:16)?** The Bible was written for us, but not to us. We cannot greet any of these people. It was their custom to greet with a holy kiss, even as the French still do today. It would be meaningless to us. The dynamic equivalent would be to greet one another with a holy hand shake or a holy hug.

**Whoa Mule:** This would have been a good place to conclude the letter, but Paul kept going (a previous good place to end would have been 15:33).

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**\*\*\*\*What type of people were the brothers warned to watch out for (16:17-19)?** They were warned to watch out for those who deceitfully caused divisions and create obstacles contrary to what they had been taught, 16:17-18.

**8. What type of division did Paul mean (16:17)?** The word divisions is from *dicostasia*, literally "to stand apart". People with bad motives will try to pull you away from the church and unto themselves. They stand apart from historic Christian orthodoxy and practice. This is a classic mark of a cult.

**9. In their first century context, what obstacles contrary to right doctrine might have been erected (16:17)?** The obstacles may have to do with putting Christians back under the Law of Moses (especially its ceremonial laws). Those who attempted to enslave the church were called Judaizers. However, the problem may have been antinomians, Gnostics or even the "strong" of Romans 14-15 who had become selfish (Cranfield, p. 801).

**10. What would it mean to avoid them (16:17)?** It would mean not to get involved with them, not to listen to them, not to go to their Bible studies, not to socialize with them, etc.

**11. Based on 16:18, what modus operandi do these persons use?** They specialize in smooth talk, flattery and deceit. If these false teachers were not convincing, no one would be suckered in by them. The motive was to serve their own appetites (to live sumptuously, greed, egotism), serving themselves, walking according to the flesh (Cranfield, p. 800).

**Irony:** I drove past a Unitarian Universalist Church. The study topic advertised on the church marquee was "The Signs of A Cult" (!).

**ESV 2 Corinthians 11:3, 14-15 . . .** I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ . . . And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

**According to 16:18, who within the church is most vulnerable to false teaching?** Evil teachers target the naive. Little children have to be taught to beware of strangers. The Greek word here means simple, fearing no evil from others. One reason churches need shepherds is to watch out for weak sheep.

ESV **Jeremiah 14:14** The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.

ESV **Matthew 7:15** Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

ESV **Acts 20:29** I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock . . .

**12. In 16:19, even though Paul rejoiced over the obedience of the Romans, why did Paul warn them about false teachers?** Paul wanted them to be wise about what is good and he wanted them to be innocent about what is evil. Getting mixed up with false teachers will hurt you. Experience can be very expensive teacher; with false teaching it is better to learn from other's experience.

**Good Book:** *The Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin.

**What perspective did Paul offer in 16:20?** Paul wanted them to know that God would soon crush Satan under their feet.

**What time frame indicator was given for the fulfillment of this prophecy (16:20)?**

**13. How does the word soon help us interpret the fulfillment of this prophecy (16:20)?** The prophecy was made to the believers living in Rome who originally read this letter ("your" feet). Whatever Paul meant, its fulfillment had to have been back in the first century for the word "soon" to have any real meaning.

**Does the word soon (16:20) indicate when God will crush Satan (right away) or how God will crush Satan (all of a sudden)?** "Soon" (16:20) is from *tachos* (tachometer) and means speed, quickness, swiftness, haste. A tachometer tells you how fast your engine is running. Thus with respect to an action it would indicate how that action is to be done (in a hurry). With respect to time it indicated when in time something would happen. In that case it would mean without delay, soon, in a short time, shortly (BAGD, p. 807). In our verse the translators clearly thought *tachos* had to do with time, that God would crush Satan under their feet soon.

**14. From the context, in what area could the Romans expect to crush Satan under their feet (16:20)?** Paul had just been warning them about false teachers. It is possible Paul was assuring the church in Rome of victory over the false teachers that presently were troubling them. It was local, specific, temporary crushing, one victory in one battle in a long and on-going war.

This would be similar to the situation after Jesus sent out the 70 to do ministry:

**ESV Luke 10:17-19** The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy . . ."

**15. How could we apply Romans 16:20 to our lives?** We too can have victory over Satan. In the grace of Jesus (16:20b) we don't have to be defeated by him.

**ESV James 4:7** . . . Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

**The End Is Near:** Verse 20 makes a third, good, would-be conclusion to Paul's letter. However, it is not yet the end.

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**\*\*\*\*Who besides Paul sent greetings to the Romans (16:21-23)?** Timothy, Jason, Sosipater, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus and Quartus sent greetings.

**16. Timothy traveled widely with Paul. What books of the New Testament were written by Paul to Timothy (16:21)?** Paul wrote 1 & 2 Timothy to Timothy.

**17. Which one of these guys had a church meeting in his home (16:21-23)?** Gaius was host to both Paul and the whole church. It is thought that Paul was in Corinth when he wrote to the church in Rome, the same Gaius mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14. Gaius must have been a wealthy man to have a house big enough to host the entire church, a considerable number of people based on the great diversity of spiritual gifts dealt with in 1 Corinthians 14.

**One Church in Corinth, But Not in Rome:** Thus it appears there was only one house church in Corinth, but many in Rome. Thus Paul never addressed "the" church in Rome (since there were many house churches in Rome) but he did write to "the" church (singular) in Corinth (1Co 1:2).

**What did Erastus do for a living (16:23)?** He was the city treasurer for Corinth. In a possible reference to this same man, an inscription was found in the pavement near the Corinthian theater which reads, "Erastus in return for his aedileship laid (the pavement) at his own expense" (*ESV Study Bible*, p. 2185; *NBD* p. 341). An aedile was a man elected to oversee the city finances. Such archaeological finds as this demonstrate the historicity of the Bible.

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**\*\*\*\*Paul made his final landing approach in 16:25-27. How did he conclude this colossal letter?** He concluded it with praise to God, a doxology.

**18. What is the mystery kept secret for long ages (16:25)?** The mystery is that God purposed to count the Gentiles (all nations) as His people (not just the Jews).

ESV **Romans 11:25** . . . I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

ESV **Ephesians 3:4-6** . . . the mystery of Christ . . . was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

**19. What is the obedience of faith (16:26)?** We are saved by faith alone, but a saving faith is never alone; it always produces obedience.

**20. In 16:27, what is the main point of Paul's doxology?** The point is that God deserves all praise and glory for planning our salvation in this way.

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at [www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF](http://www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF).

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