

Romans 16:1-20

Reading a long list of names, especially unfamiliar names, can be challenging. As seemingly mundane as Old Testament genealogies might appear to be, they trace a thread through redemptive history that begins with Adam and Eve and runs all the way to Christ. They looked back to God's initial promise that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent and deliver God's people from the tyranny of Satan, sin, and death.

Summary

In Romans 16:1-20, Paul's list of names constitutes a new covenant genealogy that has its roots in the promise God gave to Adam and Eve; that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent.

1. Personal Commendation vv. 1-2

Paul introduces and warmly commends a lady named Phoebe to the church at Rome (**Rom 16:1-2**). She most likely carried Paul's letter to Rome. She undertook some particular and notable area of service for the church at Cenchrea.

Phoebe was a Christian lady of some means (patron of many), blessed with an alert mind and with a heart overflowing with the spirit of kindness and helpfulness.

Two extremes should be avoided: ordaining women to an ecclesiastical office when there is no warrant for doing so in Scripture, and ignoring the very important and valuable services devout and alert women are able to render to the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2. Various Greetings vv. 3-16

The apostle now moves to a fairly lengthy list of personal greetings.

These names read like an Old Testament genealogy but these people were not related by blood but were related by their faith in Christ and shared in the same desire to see the gospel spread throughout the nations. All these names also demonstrate that the kingdom of God advanced not through the work of Paul alone but through the work of many laborers. This list also shows us that God's saving grace extends into all walks of life and that the body of Christ is diverse.

Paul then instructs the church regarding greeting each other: "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (**Rom 16:16**). It was to be an outward demonstration not only of genuine affection but it should also be holy. "The holy kiss symbolizes Christ's love mutually shared." **1 Peter 5:14**, "a kiss of love." Hence it is also a kiss of harmony and peace. Paul came into contact with ever many churches. From them he would gather information to be passed along to others (**Rom 16:16**).

3. Solemn Warning vv. 17-19

Paul warns the congregation to watch out for people whose purpose it is to disturb this harmony and to create divisions. Note Paul does not say, "Oppose them." He urges the brothers to avoid these divisive individuals altogether (**Rom 16:17**).

When Paul says, "For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites" (**16:18**) the apostle is saying, "We either serve our Lord Jesus Christ or we serve ourselves. This is a general warning against all kinds of troublemakers.

They make use of smooth talk and flattery. It is the hearts of the simple, unsuspecting, naive, gullible, that are led astray by these charlatans.

Paul continues in **Rom 16:19a** For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. He lays down a simple yet comprehensive rule, **Rom 16:19b** I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

In verses 17-19 Paul has been telling the Romans how they should conduct their lives. Yet man can do nothing apart from the strength imparted to him by God.

4. Crushed Evil One vs. 20

Right at the beginning of the Bible God promised that the seed of the woman would crush Satan (**Gen. 3:15**). The seed of whom God spoke is Christ, but as Paul indicates, the genealogical line of the woman had now spread out into the nations (**Gal. 3:28**). Because of their union with the crucified, risen, and ascended Messiah, these sons of Abraham now saw the fulfillment of the long-awaited promise (**16:20**). Satan's destruction was one of the main goals of Christ's work (**1 John 3:8**).

At His first coming, Christ conquered sin and death, which we can classify under the category of the "already" At Christ's return, He will completely destroy the forces allied with Satan. We place this under the category of the "not yet."

Paul consoles and comforts this list of coworkers with the hope of the imminent, final, and utter destruction of Satan. That he lists these people as fellow Christians means they will be beneficiaries of Christ's victory.

5. All-Ready and Not-Yet

Paul's words are a glorious testimony of God's grace. The apostle names these saints in his gospel genealogy and reminds them of Christ's accomplished work and the hope of the conclusion of all things.

Paul's message to the believers at Rome and to us this morning is simple.

Christ is victorious, and you have begun to reap the benefits of His victory.

Nevertheless, greater days of glory and peace await the saints.

Rejoice at the inaugurated reign of Christ and the daily progress that the church makes but remember that Christ will secure our final victory when He returns on the last day.