

**Prayer:**

**Slide # 1**

**Romans**

**Theme:** The Righteousness of God – The Gospel of God

**Outline:**

- **Prologue:** 1:1-17
- **Doctrinal:** 1:18-8:39  
God’s holiness – man’s sinfulness – 1:18-3:20  
Justification by grace through faith – 3:21-5:21  
Sanctification of the believer – 6:1-8:39
- **Dispensational:** 9:1-11:36 (The place of Israel and the church)
- Practical: 12:1-15:33 (Duties and privileges of the believer)
- **Epilogue:** 16:1-27

Paul, in the letter of Romans, has covered the basics related to the faith. He has emphasized justification by faith alone; he has emphasized the believer's identification with Christ; and he has emphasized how we should then live. Then, he laid out his future missionary plans and emphasized the need for it all to be bathed in prayer.

And that brings us to Romans 16 -which we call the Epilogue of the letter. Here we see into the heart of Paul in terms of him being a PEOPLE PERSON. We see that Paul was no recluse but rather a team player. In Romans 16, there is a great application in terms of body life and how we should function and love each other in our one common mission.

Here Paul names 35 people – not counting various house churches or other groupings. He uses the word “Greet” 19 times. He sends greetings to 26 people and relays greetings from 9. This is amazing when you consider that Paul had never been to Rome. He addresses a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, of men and women, of single and married, of rich and poor, of leaders and followers, of those in government and civilians, of those with a background of slavery and those of high society. The church is a motley crew indeed as represented in Paul’s greeting the saints in Rome.

No other letter has an extended format of greeting like this. Why? Well, perhaps because Paul had never visited Rome before, and therefore, it would be expected that there would be many people he would not address personally. On the other hand, in places that he had been, if he started naming people, he would dare not leave anyone out -lest they feel slighted, and so he kept it general in those cases.

### **Romans 16:1–7 (NKJV)**

**1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,**

The first person Paul speaks about is Phoebe. Often, critics call Paul a woman hater, but that is so far from the truth. He was no misogynist! One third of the people he addresses here in chapter 16 are women and they played a vital role in the ministry as he brings out.

I do think that sometimes some conservatives can be unbiblically chauvinistic and go to far. Of course, others go to far the other way and put women in unbiblical positions of leadership and authority. This is a place where we want to rightly divide the Word and be biblically balanced.

But the point is women have an invaluable role in the life of the church! They are not second-class citizens but rather fellow heirs and spiritual equals before the Lord. Yes, there are, at some points, differing roles, but there is spiritual equality and equal importance (Gal. 3:28).

Paul begins chapter 16 by commending Phoebe to the saints in Rome. It was common practice in the early church for believers who were traveling to a new place to carry with them letters of recommendation (Acts 18:27; 2 Cor. 3:1; 8:18-24; 3 Jn. 9-10).

Here in Rom. 16:1-2 Paul says four things about Phoebe.

He begins by commending Phoebe to them, saying she is a sister! This emphasizes that believers in Jesus Christ are a spiritual family and that she is a member of the family. In a family brothers and sisters are equally siblings – and we are all equally children of God.

Furthermore, Paul describes her as being “a servant of the church in Cenchrea”. Cenchrea was a seaport town about 7 miles from Corinth.

**Slide # 2**



It may well be that Paul led Phoebe to the Lord when he was in Corinth on his second missionary journey (cf. Acts 18). And it may be that the church in Cenchrea was a church plant of the church founded in Corinth with Phoebe being a foundational part of the work.

We believe it was from Corinth that Paul wrote the letter of Romans on his third missionary journey and most probably sent it along with Phoebe who was going to Rome on business. Most believe that is most likely.

The word “servant” here in verse 1 is the common word for “deacon”. This word is used in reference to the official office of deacon in the New Testament (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). However, it is also used in a general sense in the sense of servant. This has resulted in debate over whether Phoebe held the office of deacon or whether she is simply being described in terms of her servant character.

In the surrounding context Paul loosely uses a form of this same word in different ways. For example, in Romans 15:8, Jesus Christ Himself is said to be a servant, which is the same word diakonos rendered elsewhere as deacon.

### **Slide # 3**

#### **Romans 15:8 (NKJV)**

**8** Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant [deacon] to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,

In Romans 15:25 Paul said, “I am going to Jerusalem to minister [to serve as a deacon] to the saints.” In 15:31 he spoke of his “service” [a form of the word deacon] for the saints in Jerusalem (cf. Mt. 20:26; 1 Cor. 3:5).

All this to say that Paul may well be simply describing the nature of Phoebe's servant ministry that characterized her. After all, he is writing a letter of commendation. In context, he is clearly describing her character and not necessarily her official position in the church.

But this is a legitimate debate and 1 Tim. 3:11 does make room for women having a special deacon-like role without officially calling them deacons.

Remember the emphasis on the role of a deacon is that it is a servant role and not an overseer or a major leadership role. Certainly, many women serve in a very important servant role, whether their official title is that of a deacon or not.

#### **Slide # 4**

##### **1 Timothy 3:11 (LSB)**

**11 Women** must **likewise** be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.

#### **Slide # 5**

Those referred to in verse 11 are compared with but also distinguished from those in view in verses 8-10 and 12-13 by the words *in the same way* (or "likewise"). Those in view in verses 8-10 and 12-13 are specifically designated "deacons" but those in view in verse 11 are not, and furthermore a deacon in verse 12 is said to be the husband of one wife. – ***Evangelical Commentary on the Bible***

#### **Slide # 6**

The reference is too general to postulate with certainty a distinct order of deaconesses, but some feminine ministrations were necessary. For such work certain moral qualities would be essential.

– ***Donald Guthrie***

**2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.**

To receive her in the Lord meant to receive her as a fellow Christian who is joined to the Lord. The sense is to show her Christian love. We give to fellow Christians the right hand of fellowship.

And then, to put an emphasis on it, Paul says, “***in a manner worthy of the saints***”. The word “saint” means “set apart one” or “holy one”. Saints are set apart as belonging to the Lord and are to receive each other as the special people that they are in the Lord.

Saints are those bought with the precious blood of Jesus! They are God’s blood-bought children. They are the most precious thing in the universe! All people are exceedingly valuable because they are made in the image of God – but now add to that being set apart to God for all eternity on the basis of the blood of Christ.

“It is a serious thing ... to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship...  
— **C.S. Lewis**, [The Weight of Glory](#)

We are to love all people, but there is a special place of acceptance and treatment for those who are family. And so it is in the family of God.

### **Slide # 7**

#### **Galatians 6:10 (NKJV)**

**10** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, **especially to those who are of the household of faith.**

There is a special bond of love between saints and the saints are to reflect this.

And so Paul instructs, “***and assist her in whatever business she has need of you***”.

The word “assist” means “to stand by” with the sense of helping (2 Tim. 4:17). He doesn’t say what business she was on, but evidently, it was something important.

And then Paul adds, “***for indeed she has been a helper of many of myself also.***”

The word “**helper**” [Gk. *prostatis*] was often used in reference to a wealthy patron or benefactor who helped people financially or legally in some way. She may have helped out many with financial assistance or hospitality or some such combination.

**Helper**...often meant “patron, one who supports another from his or her resources.” – *The Moody Bible Commentary*

It is because of this that many commentators think this hints that Phoebe may well have been a wealthy businesswoman and used her wealth to support various Christian causes, including the ministry of Paul.

Many women with some means supported Jesus during His earthly ministry (cf. Mt. 27:55; Mk. 15:41). But exactly how Phoebe helped these many people, including Paul, is not spelled out. Perhaps part of it included her taking the letter of Romans to Rome.

Commentators point out that it was very unlikely that a woman would travel alone, and so suggest Phoebe may have had servants traveling with her – which again would suggest she was wealthy – perhaps a wealthy widow or a businesswoman of means like Lydia in Acts 16. But we don’t know the details. However, being a HELPER of many would suggest she was well off and therefore able to help many.

There were not many wealthy in the early church, but there were some, and Phoebe may well have been one of them. But she wanted to be used by the Lord and, therefore, was a HELPER of many.

### **3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,**

Paul here begins a running series of greetings. He doesn’t just lump them all together and say, “Hi everybody!” No, rather, he takes the time to single them out individually.

“Love delights to single out its objects and recall them one by one.”  
– *John Phillips*

Jesus calls His sheep out by name and leads them (Jn. 10:3, 27).

He begins by greeting Priscilla and Aquila who were fellow tentmakers. They are mentioned 6 times in the NT and always together (cf. Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom. 16:2; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Tim. 4:19).

Pastor Eddie Masters was instrumental in leading me to the Lord. He had a wonderful wife named JoAnn. When they came to visit me they were together. She played the piano at church and he preached. They consistently ministered together.

And when he left the church he told the people they had gotten two for the price of one. That is what (so to speak) you have with Priscilla and Aquilla. They were in it together. They were a husband and wife team if there ever was one.

Four out of the six times she is mentioned first as is the case here in Rom. 16:3.

Paul here calls out people by name. Names were important to Paul. People love to be called by their NAME.

**I work at names** and I still often fail. But for example, a week ago, there was a person in church who had visited before, and now I hadn't seen him for a couple of months or so. When I called him by name – he loved it. It shows special interest in them. It shows you care enough to nail down their name. It conveys really caring. It is a simple but important thing.

Some people never even go out of their way to meet new people. Shame on them! Something is wrong! Work at making new friends. Work at remembering their name. And it helps to put them on your prayer list – when you pray for them regularly it will help you to remember their name. I am sure Paul had all these people on his prayer list.

### **Slide # 8**

#### **Romans 1:9 (NKJV)**

**9** For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing **I make mention of you always in my prayers,**

Now don't hold me to remembering all your names all the time – because sure as the world if you call me out on this I am going to have a senior moment and not even remember my own name – let alone yours.

I remember some years ago we have a person visit the church and then they didn't come for several months – so I had to ask them their name again. They again they didn't come for several months and so I had to ask what their name was yet again. At this point this person was all over me for not remembering their name. And so I asked them if they knew what my name was and they said yes they did. So asked

what is it? And they said, “Pastor”. There you go they were exposed. They didn’t know my name either.

But my point is we need to work at it. We won’t be perfect but we need to work at it.

**Charles Spurgeon** in his day pastored the largest evangelical church in the world – having 6000 members. It is claimed that Spurgeon knew the names of all 6000 people in his church. That just ain’t fair! Obviously, Spurgeon had a much greater intelligence than me! If all I did was work on names I don’t think I could keep 6000 of them straight. But even Spurgeon had to work at it – and he did. That is the point.

We need to work at it, and one thing that really helps besides praying for people is working with people, communicating with people. If you never talk to people, you probably won’t remember them.

Normally the man would be mentioned first but in the majority of cases that is reversed with Priscilla and Aquilla. The reason for this is not certain, but it is often suggested that she may have the more outgoing one or had a more dominant personality.

To GREET did not merely mean to say “hello” but rather express a warm, hearty appreciation. It communicated Christian love and affection.

Paul met them on his second missionary journey at Corinth. Because both Paul and them were fellow tentmakers they connected up (Acts 18:2-3). Looking at the long list of greetings here in Romans 16 it becomes apparent that Paul made friends (and converts) wherever he went. He was great at connecting with people. He showed interest in people as exhibited here in Romans 16.

In my own reading of Christian biography, I have discovered that the servants whom God has used most were people who could make friends. – ***Warren Wiersbe***

Isn’t that profound! Simple really! If you want to win people, if you want to influence people – make friends of them. There is something to be said for “drive by evangelism” where you just share cold turkey, but I think the real key to winning people starts with befriending them. Work at being friendly. People love it when you take an interest in them. I think the Scriptures indicate this is the most natural way to lead into sharing the gospel.



**Slide # 9****1 Peter 3:15 (NKJV)**

**15** But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to **everyone who asks you** a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

If people are asking you about your faith they probably have ample opportunity to see it on display in your life. We are to live out our life in front of them in such a unique way that they ask us about it. This implies a relationship with them where they feel free to talk on this level.

When you work with people you get to know them – at least on some level. That was how Paul got to know Priscilla and Aquilla as seen in Acts 18. And they became very close. Paul mentions them here in Romans 16 but also in his salutations in 1 Cor. 16:19 and 2 Tim. 4:19.

In the context Paul's second missionary journey Acts 18 verse 2 indicates Priscilla and Aquilla had recently come to Corinth from Rome because the emperor Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave the city of Rome.

Perhaps Paul on meeting them at Corinth on his second missionary journey then led them to the Lord. Claudius then died 5 years later and Priscilla and Aquilla evidently returned to Rome where Paul was now sending them greetings.

Here is the trajectory of their maneuverings as far as we know.

**Slide # 10*****Movements of Priscilla and Aquila***

Expelled from Rome – A.D. 49

Met Paul at Corinth - c. A.D. 50 (Acts 18:1-3)

Followed Paul to Ephesus – c. A.D. 53 (Acts 18:19)

Instructed Apollos at Ephesus c. A.D. 54 (Acts 18:26)

Back in Rome c. A.D. 58 (Rom. 16:3-5)

Later returned to Ephesus c. A.D. 64 (2 Tim. 4:19)

Priscilla and Aquilla were not merely fellow tentmakers they had become fellow workers in Christ Jesus. In the NT the term “fellow workers” always indicates working together in the fellowship of the gospel. They were co-workers with Paul for the cause of Christ.

They didn't just move around for the fun of it – they were now in effect doing mission work – the same mission work as Paul, and their tentmaking work allowed them to move around accordingly.

**4 who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.**

Not only were Priscilla and Aquila fellow workers with Paul but they loved Paul so much that they had risked their very lives for him.

Now we don't know exactly what occasion this refers to or what was involved. Perhaps it took place while Paul was at Corinth (cf. Acts 18:6-10), or more likely while he was at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:28-31; 1 Cor. 15:32, 16:9; 2 Cor. 1:8-10). It seems that everywhere Paul went trouble followed him – kind of like the devil stirs up trouble for every gospel serving saint. It just goes with the turf.

But although we don't know what was involved in them risking their necks for Paul the churches of the Gentiles generally knew about it and were very thankful for them intervening to save Paul's life. It was widely known on the contemporary scene.

Won't it be interesting to get to heaven and learn all these details?

But here is the point: Being willing to lay down your life for a fellow servant of Christ speaks to character. It speaks to how close they were. It speaks to Christian love exemplified in a powerful way.

### **Slide # 11**

**John 15:13 (NKJV)**

**13 Greater love** has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

**1 John 3:16 (NKJV)**

**16** By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And **we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**

During the 17th century, Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, sentenced a soldier to be shot for his crimes. The execution was to take place at the ringing of the evening curfew bell. However, the bell did not sound.

The soldier's fiancée had climbed into the belfry and clung to the great clapper of the bell to prevent it from striking. When she was summoned by Cromwell to account for her actions, she wept as she showed him her bruised and bleeding hands. Cromwell's heart was touched and he said, "Your lover shall live because of your sacrifice. Curfew shall not ring tonight!" - ***Our Daily Bread***

Priscilla and Aquila were all in. They were faithful teammates – willing to risk their lives for Paul. Paul never shared anything negative about them in any of his writings – it was always positive. They were true team players – totally faithful – proving it to the point of being willing to risk all for Paul! No wonder Paul spoke so highly of them. You can't get any better co-workers than that! They were all in for Christ – they were all in for Paul!

**5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.**

Note the church was in their house. The HOUSE was not the church. Rather the church met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. The Church is the people. God lives in us. The physical brick and mortar are not God's house. His people are! Yes, it all generically belongs to God, but His sacred house that God lives in is His people.

**Slide # 12**

**Ephesians 2:21–22 (NKJV)**

**21** in whom the **whole building**, being fitted together, grows into a **holy temple** in the Lord,

**22** in whom **you also are being built together** for a **dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**

The Church meets somewhere – often in some building or facility, but the building is not the church. The church is the people. We ourselves are the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16).

We are certainly thankful for the physical facility that God has given to us. We are BLESSED, but there is nothing especially sacred about where the church meets. It is not a holy place. It is not God's special place. Now God's people are the building He lives in. We ourselves are the Church Building! We ourselves are God's HOUSE!

**Justin Martyr** was killed by the Roman Government in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. When he was on trial before the Roman perfect (judge) – the perfect said to him:

“Where do you Christians assemble?” Justin Martyr said, “We do not, as you suppose, meet in one place; for our God, the God of the Christians, fills heaven and earth and therefore He is present anywhere. We can meet anyplace and have communion and fellowship with Him.”

For the first 3 centuries, churches largely met in houses – often in the large houses of wealthy Christians (cf. Acts 12:12; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phile. 2).

**You recommend Christians form small groups, pray, and encourage one another. Do you foresee the growth of smaller churches or even underground churches?** We are very naïve if we think that certain movements can’t shut churches down. If we drift toward a nation without God, without our heritage, we could very easily move into a totalitarian society. A society in which we have freedom of speech on the books but also lawsuits and other ways to force churches out of business. Then we are going to have to think about meeting in small groups and smaller churches. I’m not sure that we’re there yet, but we certainly seem to be on the way. – **Erwin Lutzer** in World Mag. – Jan. 2025, p. 31

I love this! No one is going to shut down the church because the CHURCH is the people! You might shut down a physical building – but you can’t shut down the church. Christ said He would build His Church - and He will. Now, they might shut down our physical buildings. We might have to meet in homes once again. We might have to function differently in a practical way, - but the church is not going anywhere.

And in fact, the first 3 centuries, when churches largely met in homes, they saw an EXPLOSION of the Church. Then came the “Christianizing” of the Roman empire under Constantine which led to the Dark Ages. Then they built great buildings and the greater the buildings the further the church got from God. It doesn’t have to be this way – but often it has been.

Often in apostate denominations those who break away from the apostasy are then not allowed to keep the physical facility which is considered owned by the denomination. In such a case the cry has often been: **“You kept the furniture – but we kept the faith.”** God always has a remnant and come what may that is not going to change. The Church cannot be stopped because God cannot be stopped.

Evidently, Priscilla and Aquila were people with some means because they had a house (evidently a large house) in which the church met while they lived in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:19) and now we see the same reality again in here in Rome (Rom. 16:5). They were all in – being hospitable to the point where the meeting place for the church was their home! That involves a lot of work – a lot of inconvenience – a lot of sacrifice. Your life at that point revolves around the church. Your house is not longer your own – but given over to the use of the church in a BIG way.

And then Paul says, “**Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.**”

The older manuscripts read “Asia” instead of “Achaia”. On his first his second missionary journey Paul was not allowed to go into Asia (Acts 16:6). The timing wasn’t right. But on his third missionary journey he did go into Asia (Acts 19:10) and Epaenetus was his first convert there.

### **Slide # 13**



Asia corresponds to modern day Turkey. Paul doesn’t give us any details other than Epaenetus was the first convert. And he calls him “my beloved”. As the first convert in Asia he held a special place in Paul’s heart.

I still remember some of the first people I led to the Lord. Each one to this day is special!

Firstfruits indicates he was merely the FIRST of a great harvest of souls to follow. And certainly, that was true as we think about places such as Colossae, Ephesus, and so forth. Paul had an extended teaching ministry at Ephesus “**so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks**” according to Acts 19:10 (cf. Acts 20:31).

### **6 Greet Mary, who labored much for us.**

There are six different Marys mentioned in the NT (cf. Mt. 1:16; Lk. 8:2; Acts 12:12; Lk. 10:42; John 19:25; Rom. 16:6).

The Mary mentioned here is otherwise unknown. All we know about her is that she worked hard at serving the saints. But what exactly this entailed, we are not told.

The older manuscripts read “**labored much for you**” referring to the Christians in Rome. Evidently, Paul knew her and had heard about all she was doing for them.

The word “labored” means “to work to the point of exhaustion” (cf. Lk. 5:5; Jn. 4:6).

Many believers work very hard for the cause of Christ in serving the saints but are not widely known for their efforts. Often their work is largely unnoticed and underappreciated. But God takes note and will reward them accordingly.

### **Slide # 14**

#### **Hebrews 6:10 (NKJV)**

**10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.**

Of the 26 people Paul sends greetings to – at least 9 of them are women. One third are women. This shows the important role they played in the ministry as seen through the eyes of Paul. Phoebe was commended for her hard work; Priscilla is commended for her work; Mary is commended for her work. They were all workers and Paul appreciated that very much!

As we sometimes say about women, They were the last at the cross and the first to the tomb. They have a very important role to play in serving the Lord. Just read through the extended greetings of the apostle Paul!

**7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.**

Andronicus and Junia are closely linked together. Part of the discussion here has been that the name “Junia” could be taken as either masculine or feminine – meaning it could potentially be referring to a man or a woman. However, most commentators think a woman is probably in view and that Andronicus and Junia were probably husband and wife. This is consistent with how early commentators understood this.

Paul here states four things about them.

First, he identifies them as “**my countrymen**,” which more literally is “my kinsmen”. It could refer to them as Paul’s relatives, but more probably, it is signifying that they are fellow Jews as Paul uses the term in Romans 9:3.

Paul uses the term again in verse 11 and again in verse 21. It is unlikely that all these people were blood relatives of Paul, but more likely that they were all fellow Jewish Christians.

Next he identifies them as “my fellow prisoners”. They had evidently been in prison for the faith just like Paul and, in fact, may have been in prison at the same time on some occasion. We don’t know when this may have been but Paul was often in prison (cf. 2 Cor. 6:5).

### **Slide # 15**

#### **2 Corinthians 11:23 (NKJV)**

**23** Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, **in prisons more frequently**, in deaths often.

Andronicus and Junia shared with Paul in a commitment to the truth so strong they were willing to go to prison for it. They refused to compromise.

Thirdly, Paul says of them: “who are of note among the apostles”.

We need to realize that in the NT the word “apostle” simply means “sent one”. It is someone who has been sent out by someone.

There are two categories of apostles in the NT. The word is used in a technical sense referring to the 12 apostles of Jesus. They were personally commissioned by Jesus to be His authoritative representatives. These 12 were unique in their calling. We might call them Apostles with a capital A.

After Judas died in apostasy he was replaced. I don’t think Matthias who was selected by the disciples in Acts 1 was his replacement. For one thing he was not personally chosen and sent out by Jesus as were the others. But Paul was! I think Paul was the one personally chosen by Christ and authorized to be the replacement apostle.

I would note that in the New Jerusalem the wall of the city has the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. There are not 13 names there – only 12 and I believe Paul is one of them (Rev. 21:14).

However, the word “apostle” is also used in a general sense in the NT referring to those who were uniquely commissioned and sent out by the church -much like we do with missionaries today. These people were apostles sent out by the church in distinction from the Apostles sent out personally by the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Slide # 16**

#### **2 Corinthians 8:23 (NKJV)**

**23** If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are **messengers** [*lit. apostles (sent ones)*] of the churches, the glory of Christ.

#### **Philippians 2:25 (NKJV)**

**25** Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your **messenger** [*lit. apostle (sent one)*] and the one who ministered to my need;

Andronicus and Junia as “apostles” can be taken in one of two ways.

It may be taken as translated in the NKJV that they are “of note among the apostles” meaning they were held in high regard by the apostles of the Lord because of their distinguished commitment and service. Or it may mean that as “missionaries” sent out by the church they have served with distinction.

Either one of these two views is possible.

Finally, Paul says of them, “***who also were in Christ before me.***”

This makes them among the very earliest of people who were saved in Church Age.

It is thought that Christ was crucified in AD. 33. Paul was converted in about AD 35. This would mean that Andronicus and Junia must have gotten saved in about AD 34 – perhaps even on the Day of Pentecost or soon thereafter. Indeed, if they were converted before Paul – they were saved very early in the Church Age and had been Christians for about 25 years at the time of this writing.



A couple of footnotes:

- 1) For Paul being “*in Christ*” means to be “united to Him”. And to be “*in Christ*” is shown to mean that one is also *in the Church*. To be in Christ is to be in the Church. This means that if Andronicus and Junia were in Christ before Paul the Church also had to be in existence before the time of Paul’s conversion. To further show you this is true note that Paul repeatedly speaks of persecuting the church prior to his conversion (1 Cor. 15:9; Phil. 3:6; Gal. 1:13). This shows that indeed the church began on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and not at some later date such as in Acts 9, Acts 13 or Acts 28 as various lines of ultra-dispensationalism try to claim.

Further, note that since “*in Christ*” carries with it the idea of being in the Church then when 1 Thess. 4:16 speaks of the dead in Christ rising first and then we who are alive being caught up together with them – this then means that the RAPTURE is a Church-only event. “*In Christ*” is thus a technical term that strictly applies only to the Church. The Rapture is an “in Christ” event – that is a Church-only event.

- 2) Romans 16:7 indicates that no one is in Christ until the time of their conversion. This presents a conundrum for those who have a theology that says believers have actually been “in Christ” from eternity past.

Admittedly, there is great mystery here. On the one hand Paul in , Eph. 1:4 says to believers, “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,” but on the other hand he also indicates in Romans 16:7 that he was not in Christ until the time of conversion.

On the one hand, Rev. 13:8 and 17:8 speak of those written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, and yet at the same time, no one is actually “in Christ” until the time of conversion – again, as indicated here in Rom. 16:7.

We are back to the inscrutable realities of God’s sovereignty. These are quandaries that the Bible ultimately does not address and I believe that a true “Biblicist” position holds them in the exact tension as presented in the Scriptures. Both are true. The saved were written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world – and yet, at the same time, we are not “in Christ” until the time of saving faith. Some things we must leave with God!

Paul, at the end of the book of Romans, focuses on people! Ministry is all about people. No one is an island to themselves. We are all part of one BIG team and we all have a part to play. We thus need to value one another and affirm one another. Paul championed this!

Perhaps the most significant and overlooked aspect of his life and ministry was Paul's awareness of and appreciation for his missionary team. All the way thru the New Testament we can see that Paul surrounded himself with helpers and co-workers. -**Dun Gordy** (Pastor and long-time representative of New Tribes Mission).

Many years ago an accomplished organist was giving a concert. (In those days someone had to pump large bellows backstage to provide air for the pipes.) After each selection, the musician received the thunderous applause of a delighted audience. Before his final number, he stood up and said, "I shall now play," and he announced the title. Sitting down at the console, he adjusted his music and checked the stops. With feet poised over the pedals and hands over the keys, he began with a mighty chord. But the organ remained silent. Just then a voice was heard from backstage, "**Say 'We'!**" (*Source unknown*).

First we want to say "He" (the Lord) and then "We" as He uses us in concert to accomplish His purposes and to build His Church.

As Paul says in 1 Cor. 3:9 "we are God's fellow workers".

God help us to be team players who serve Him well!

**Never forget:** We're in this thing together, and it's all about the Lord!