

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON XXXIII : PAUL CLOSES THE EPISTLE — CHAP 16:1-27

“Paul does six things in this section:

- he commends to the Roman Christians a sister in the Lord, Phoebe (vv. 1-2)
- he urges the Roman Christians to greet various of their number (vv. 3-15) and one another (v. 16a)
- he sends greetings to the Roman Christians from others (vv. 16b, 21-23)
- he warns the believers in Rome about false teachers (vv. 17-19)
- he assures the believers of final spiritual victory (v. 20a)
- he prays that ‘the grace of our Lord Jesus’ might be with them (v. 20b)

Every one of these topics is also found in one or more of the concluding sections of Paul's other letters. But Paul treats two of these matters quite differently than he does anywhere else. In no other letter does Paul even come close to the number of personal greetings he asks to be conveyed in vv. 3-15; and in no other letter does he launch so suddenly in the midst of concluding greetings into a substantial warning about false teachers (vv. 17-19). But not only are these topics unusual in comparison with Paul's other letters; scholars also allege that neither fits well into Paul's letter to the Romans. So large a number of personal greetings seems strange in a letter written to a church that Paul had never visited. And Paul has said nothing in the letter previously to prepare us for so urgent a warning about false teachers.

These alleged inconsistencies, along with several important textual variations, have led a number of scholars to think that Rom. 16 does not belong to Paul's letter to the Roman Christians. We treated this issue in the Introduction; here we need only reiterate our conclusion: Rom. 16 is an integral part of Paul's letter to the Romans. Each of the alleged inconsistencies can be explained once we (1) recognize the considerable variety found in Paul's epistolary conclusions; and (2) take into sufficient account certain factors peculiar to the occasion of Romans.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 912]

Commendation of Phoebe (16:1-2)

I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also. (Rom 16:1-2 KJV)

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. 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. (Rom 16:1-2 NIV)

And I commend you to Phebe our sister — being a ministrant of the assembly that [is] in Cenchrea — that ye may receive her in the Lord, as doth become saints, and may assist her in whatever matter she may have need of you — for she also became a leader of many, and of myself. (Rom 16:1-2 Young's Literal Translation)

“Paul often brings to the attention of his readers at the end of his letters fellow Christians who may come into contact with his readers (cf. 1 Cor. 16:10-12, 15-18; Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9; 2 Tim. 4:20). Only here, however, does Paul request the assistance of a church in the private matter of a fellow believer. Phoebe is mentioned nowhere else in the NT, but it is clear from what Paul says about her here that she was a prominent member of the church at Cenchreae, that she was actively involved in ministry, and that she was planning a trip to Rome. Probably she was the person who carried Paul's letter to the Roman Christians.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 913]

V 1 — CENCHREAE — “Corinth itself lies inland several miles from the sea (the Gulf of Corinth to the northwest and the Saronic Gulf to the northeast). Cenchreae was a seaport on the Saronic Gulf and was connected to Corinth by a series of forts. Paul, like other travelers taking shop for the east, left from Cenchreae after his first stay in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:18). Note that 2 Corinthians is addressed to ‘all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 913]

PAUL COMMENDS PHOEBE — “Letters of commendation were common in the ancient world. People who were traveling in an age with few public facilities often depended on the assistance of people they had never met; and this assistance was easier to be had if the traveler could produce a letter of introduction from someone known to the potential host / assistant. So Paul writes to ‘commend’ Phoebe to the Roman Christians. She is a fellow believer (Gk. ἀδελφή [adelphē], ‘sister,’ used only rarely in the NT in this sense; cf. also 1 Cor. 7:15; 9:5; Phlm. 2; Jas. 2:15), probably a Gentile (suggested by her name, Φοίβη, which is taken from Greek mythology), and comes from Cenchreae. Paul would have had plenty of opportunity to get to know her, for Cenchreae is only eight miles from Corinth, where Paul spent 18 months at one point (cf. Acts 18:1-18; cf. v. 11) and is now staying as he writes to the Romans.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 913]

A “DEACONESS” — “But Phoebe is more than an ordinary believer; she is a ‘servant,’ or ‘deacon.’ The word Paul uses here, *diakonos*, is one that is applicable to any Christian, for every Christian is a ‘servant’ or ‘minister’ of the risen Christ and

*of other Christians Paul may, then, simply be highlighting the fact that Phoebe has effectively ‘served’ the church to which she belongs. Others, noting that Paul often applies the term to himself and his coworkers, think that the title here marks Phoebe as the leader and preacher of the church. But the qualification of diakonos by ‘of the church’ suggests, rather, that Phoebe held at Cenchreae the ‘office’ of ‘deacon’ as Paul describes it in 1 Tim. 3:8-12 (cf. Phil. 1:1). We put ‘office’ in quotation marks because it is very likely that regular offices in local Christian churches were still in the process of being established, as people who regularly ministered in a certain way were gradually recognized officially by the congregation and given a regular title. Moreover, the NT furnishes little basis on which to pinpoint the ministries carried out by deacons. But based partially on hints within the NT and partially on the later institution of the diaconate, it is likely that deacons were charged with visitation of the sick, poor relief, and perhaps financial oversight. ... See especially the cognate verb διακονέω [diakoneō] in 1 Pet. 4:10. Paul uses the word διάκονος [diakonos] 20 other times. Twice he uses it to refer to secular rulers (Rom. 13:4) and twice to describe Christ (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 2:17). Paul uses it especially often to refer to himself and his coworkers (1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4; Eph. 3:7; 6:21; Col. 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7; 1 Tim. 4:6) or to those who sought a position similar to his (2 Cor. 11:15 [twice], 23). Only in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8, 12 does the word denote an ‘office.’ ... We use the term ‘semi-official’ because evidence for a fixed ‘office,’ with a definite ‘job description,’ is lacking for this early period. We must recognize something of a transitional phase, in which people who regularly involved themselves in certain ministries were beginning to be recognized by the church as more-or-less permanent ‘servants.’ A few commentators use the term ‘deaconess’ (see RSV); and, at a later date, when the office was officially recognized, the feminine term διακόνισσα [diakonissa] was used of ‘female deacons’ (cf. *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.19, 20, 28). But διάκονος [diakonos] is used of female officeholders in the early church (cf. the texts cited in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 2.193-94; 4:239-41); in this period, it was clearly used of both men and women.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 913f]*

*“It is perhaps just conceivable that the word διάκονος [diakonos] should be understood here as a quite general reference to her service of the congregation; but it is very much more natural, particularly in view of the way in which Paul formulates his thought, to understand it as referring to a definite office. We regard it as virtually certain that Phoebe is being described as ‘a (or possibly “the”) deacon’ of the church in question, and that this occurrence of διάκονος [diakonos] is to be classified with its occurrences in Phil 1.1 and 1 Tim 3.8 and 12. And, while it is true that the functions of a διάκονος [diakonos] are not expressly indicated in Phil 1.1 or in 1 Tim 3.8ff or in the present two verses, there is nothing in any of these passages in any way inconsonant with the inherent probability that a specialized use of διάκονος [diakonos, noun: ‘servant, deacon’] in NT times will have corresponded to the clearly attested specialized use of διακονεῖ [diakonei, verb: ‘she serves’] and διακονία [diakonia, noun: ‘ministry, serving, attendance’] with reference to the practical service of the needy, and there are some features, for example, what is said about Phoebe in v. 2b, which would seem to afford it some support. That a port would provide plenty of scope for the practical expression of Christian compassion and helpfulness is hardly to be doubted.” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 781]*

“Paul begins his final section by commending Phoebe to the Roman churches. She was a lady of some stature who had acted as patron or protector for many, that is presumably mostly, but not necessarily exclusively Christians, including Paul himself. She was also deacon of the nearby church at Cenchreae and must have used some of her means and influence in the service of the Christians there. She had business in Rome, quite probably a lawsuit. Paul probably had known ahead of her intention to travel to Rome and took the opportunity to write the whole letter, with the commendation of Phoebe attached, so that on passing through to Corinth’s western port, she could pick up the letter and carry it forward. Whatever the business Phoebe was to be engaged in at Rome, people like Prisca and Aquila, themselves of some means and influence, and others, probably freedmen in the great households of Rome, including the emperor’s, could provide a variety of help — hospitality, advice on the current state of Roman politics and law, friendship, and Christian company. The verses therefore contain an intriguing glimpse of the combination of business affairs and social influence on which contacts between the early churches in significant part depended (in which women evidently played leading parts) — a not unimportant reminder of the historical and social realities within which Christianity first made its mark.... [Diakonos] (which can serve either as masculine or feminine – BGD) could be understood simply in terms of a regular pattern of service undertaken by Phoebe on behalf of her local church; but this would probably have been expressed by use of [diakoneō] or [diakonia]; so NIV’s ‘servant’ is inadequate. [Diakonos] together with [ousa, ‘being a servant...’] points more to a recognized ministry or position of responsibility within the congregation.... At the same time it would be premature to speak of an established office of diaconate, as though a role of responsibility and authority, with properly appointed succession, had already been agreed upon in the Pauline churches. We are still at the stage of ministry beginning to take regular and formal shape, and the form in each case would depend very much on the context and needs of particular congregations.... *It is significant that one of the earliest of the diverse roles within the Christian churches to begin to gain a more formal status was that of ‘servant.’ Lagrange notes a sixth century inscription found on the Mount of Olives which describes a deaconess called Sophie as ‘the second Phoebe.’*” [Dunn, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 887, 890f]

Respected comments —

- “Were women deacons? Very probably yes.” [Piper, article: ‘*What Did Deacons Do?*’, 3/8/87; see attached appendix]
- “We regard it as virtually certain that Phoebe is being described as ‘a (or possibly “the”) deacon’ of the church in question, and that this occurrence of διάκονος [diakonos] is to be classified with its occurrences in Phil 1.1 and 1 Tim 3.8 and 12.” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 781]

- “The case of Phoebe in connection with hints here and elsewhere, particularly 1 Timothy 3:11, sandwiched between verses 10 and 12, seems to prove the office of deaconess in the apostolic churches, of the propriety and apparent necessity of which there can be no question.” [B. H. Carroll, *Interpretation of the English Bible: Galatians, Romans, Philippians, Philemon*, vol 5 pg 205]
- “We need now to consider only one other sentence: ‘Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.’ As this verse is sandwiched between two paragraphs on the deacon’s office, and is a part of the section on church officers, it would be out of all connection to interpret it of women in general. And as there is no similar requirement concerning the pastor’s higher office, we should not render it ‘wives’ meaning the wives of deacons. The context requires the rendering: ‘women deacons.’ This rendering not only has the support of Romans 16:1, commending Phoebe as a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea and as doing work supplemental to the preacher and the administrator of charity help, but meets a need as obvious as the need of a male deacon. In every large church there is deacon’s work that cannot be well done except by a female deacon. In the administration of charity in some cases of women — in the preparation of female candidates for baptism, and in other matters of delicacy there is need for a woman church official. The Waco church of which I was pastor for so many years, had, by my suggestion and approval, a corps of spiritually minded, judicious female deacons who were very helpful, and in some delicate cases indispensable. In churches on heathen mission fields the need is even greater than in our country. Many an embarrassment did the worthy deaconess save me from, even on the subject of visitation. In some cases appealing for charity, only these women could make the necessary investigation.” [B. H. Carroll, *Interpretation of the English Bible: The Pastoral Epistles of Paul, and 2 Peter, Jude, and 1, 2, and 3 John*, vol 6 p45f]
- “The deacons’ wives, mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:2, were probably not the wives of deacons, as has usually been inferred, but deaconesses or female assistants, appointed by the churches to minister to the sick and perform other services to those of their own sex, which could with more propriety be done by them than by the deacons or other male members. A few churches retain the practice; and since female members in all the churches are the more numerous, and as a rule, the more efficient in charitable ministrations, it is difficult to see why such a class of helpers, more or less formally designated for Christian work, should not be continued in our churches.” [Edward T. Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, pg 115f]
- “Of this church Phebe was a servant, or, as the word signifies, a minister or deacon; not that she was a teacher of the word, or preacher of the Gospel, for that was not allowed of by the apostle in the church at Corinth, that a woman should teach; see 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35; and therefore would never be admitted at Cenchrea. Rather, as some think, she was a deaconess appointed by the church, to take care of the poor sisters of the church; though as they were usually poor, and ancient women, that were put into that service, and this woman, according to the account of her, being neither poor, nor very ancient; it seems rather, that being a rich and generous woman, she served or ministered to the church by relieving the poor: not out of the church’s stock, as deaconesses did, but out of her own substance: and received the ministers of the Gospel, and all strangers, into her house, which was open to all Christians; and so was exceeding serviceable to that church, and to all the saints that came thither: though it is certain that among the ancient Christians there were women servants who were called ministers. Pliny, in an epistle of his to Trajan the emperor, says, that he had examined two maids, *who were called ministers [deacons]*, to know the truth of the Christian religion.” [John Gill, *Gill’s Commentary*, vol 6 pg 141]
- “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.” [Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol 1 pg 565]
- “‘Servant’ translates *diakonos*, the term from which we get deacon. The Greek word here is neuter [*Editor’s note: MacArthur is the only author I read which states this word is neuter; all other commentators that referred to this stated the word was feminine or neuter – MSM*] and was used in the church as a general term for servant before the offices of deacon and deaconess were developed. It is used of the household servants who drew the water that Jesus turned into wine (John 2:5, 9), and Paul has used the term earlier in this letter (Rom. 13:4, twice) to refer to secular government as ‘a minister of God to you for good’ and even of Christ as ‘a servant to the circumcision,’ that is, to Jews (15:8). When *diakonos* obviously refers to a church office, it is usually transliterated as ‘deacon’ (see, e.g., Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:10, 13).

In 1 Timothy 3:11, Paul declares that ‘women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.’ Some argue that he is referring to wives of deacons, rather than to an office of women deacons. But it makes no sense that high standards would be specified for the wives of deacons but not for wives of overseers (or bishops, who are also called elders, see Titus 1:5), whose qualifications he has just given in verses 1-7. In this context (3:1-10, 12-13), the office of deaconess is clearly implied. The ‘likewise’ in verse 11 ties the qualifications of these women to those already given for the offices of overseer and deacon. In verse 11, Paul did not refer to those women as deaconesses because *diakonos* has no feminine form [*Editor’s note: MacArthur here contradicts others knowledgeable in Greek – MSM*].

During the first few centuries of the church, the role of a woman servant (*diakonos*) was to care for the fellow believers who were sick, for the poor, for strangers passing through, and for the imprisoned. They also were responsible for helping to baptize and disciple new women converts and to instruct children and other women.

Whether or not Phoebe held some official title or not, Paul commended her as a highly-proven servant of Christ and implored the church at Rome to receive her in the Lord.” [MacArthur, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 360]

● “She was a diakonos, ‘a fellow-Christian who holds office in the congregation at Cenchreae’ (NEB); in a church context the word should be rendered ‘deacon’, whether masculine or feminine. That the duties of a deacon could be performed by either men or women is suggested by 1 Timothy 3:11, where ‘the women’ are to be understood as ‘deacons’ (like the men of verses 3-10).” [Bruce, *Romans*, pg 252]

● “By calling Phoebe a *servant* of Cenchrea’s church Paul probably means that she occupied a stable position, performed a definite and important function, in and for that church. She is accordingly called a *diakonos* of that congregation. In Rom. 15:8 Christ was described as having become a *diakonos*, that is, a *servant*, of the circumcised. To them he *ministered*. However, the word *diakonos* can also be used in a more specialized or technical sense. In Phil. 1:1 and I Tim. 3:8 it refers, in the plural, to deacons. If that technical sense pertains to the word as used here in Rom. 16:1, then Paul is calling Phoebe a *deaconess*. Now it must be granted that in a later century the ecclesiastical office of deaconess was not unknown. The question, however, is ‘Does the New Testament either here (Rom. 16:1) or anywhere else, refer to such an ecclesiastical office, namely that of deaconess?’ On this subject there is a division of opinion.” ... The absence of any mention of deaconesses in the rest of the New Testament is a fact.” [Hendriksen, *Romans*, pg 499f]

V 2 — “TWO PURPOSES IN COMMENDING PHOEBE — Paul’s purpose in commending Phoebe is twofold. *First, he wants the Roman Christians to ‘receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints.’* ‘Receiving’ includes, of course, welcoming Phoebe into fellowship. But it would also mean assisting her to find lodging, food, and the like (the verb is different than that used in 14:1 and 15:7; for usage, see Luke 15:2; Phil. 2:29). The qualification ‘in the Lord’ / ‘in Christ’ is typical of the personal greetings and references in this chapter. We should avoid seeking some exact nuance for the phrase; by it Paul simply means that the Roman Christians are to give Phoebe a ‘Christian’ welcome. The additional qualification, ‘in a manner worthy of the saints,’ expands on this same point. *Paul’s second purpose in commending Phoebe is that the Roman Christians would ‘assist her in the matter in which she has need of you.’* The ‘matter’ on which Phoebe requires assistance cannot be determined, although it is possible that a legal dispute is involved.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 915]

ASSIST HER IN WHATEVER MATTER — “The Greek word is πράγμα [pragma], a very general term meaning ‘act, deed, matter.’ But in 1 Cor. 6:1 it is used to describe a legal dispute; and this meaning would fit this context well. On the other hand, the indefinite construction Paul uses might point to the general meaning. The indefinite construction also tells against the suggestion of Jewett that the ‘matter’ was Phoebe’s sponsorship of Paul’s mission to Spain.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 915]

A PATRON OR BENEFACTOR: PROVIDING HOUSING, FINANCIAL AID — “The Greek word *prostatēs* is found only here in biblical Greek. It comes from a verb that means (1) ‘care for, give aid to,’ or (2) ‘direct, preside over.’ If Paul is applying to the noun this first meaning of the verb, he would simply be characterizing Phoebe as a ‘helper’ of many Christians (cf. NASB; RSV; NIV). But if we use the meaning of the cognate verb to define *prostatēs*, Pauline usage would favor a different rendering. For Paul seems to use the verb only to mean ‘direct,’ ‘preside over.’ Noting this, some recent scholars have argued that Paul intends to characterize Phoebe as a ‘leader’ of the church. But it is difficult to conceive how Phoebe would have had the opportunity to be a ‘leader’ of Paul. Moreover, the fact that Paul designates her at the leader ‘of many’ rather than as the leader of ‘the church’ (contrast v. 1) suggests that the term here does not denote an official, or even semi-official, position in the local church. The best alternative, then, is to give to *prostatēs* the meaning that it often has in secular Greek: ‘patron,’ ‘benefactor.’ A ‘patron’ was one who came to the aid of others, especially foreigners, by providing housing and financial aid and by representing their interests before local authorities. Cenchreae’s status as a busy seaport would make it imperative that a Christian in its church take up this ministry on behalf of visiting Christians. Phoebe, then, was probably a woman of high social standing and some wealth, who put her status, resources, and time at the services of traveling Christians, like Paul, who needed help and support. Paul now urges the Romans to reciprocate.... προστάτις [prostatēs] is the feminine form of προστάτης [prostatēs], which is often used in this sense [‘benefactor’], and sometimes with reference also to one who is the ‘guardian’ of a particular god or religious shrine. The feminine form of the word has recently been discovered with this general meaning in a second-century papyrus. The ‘patron’ sometimes had an official legal status; but this is not clear with respect to Phoebe.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 915f]

Greetings to Roman Christians (16:3-16)

Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles,

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. 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. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the

Salute Priscilla and Aquilas, my fellow-workmen in Christ Jesus — who for my life their own neck did lay down, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the assemblies of the nations — and the assembly at their house; salute Epaenetus, my beloved, who is first-fruit of Achaia to Christ. Salute Mary, who did labour much for us; salute Andronicus and Junias, my kindred, and my fellowcaptives, who are of note among the apostles, who also have been

who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. (Rom 16:3-16 KJV)

apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. Greet Ampliatius, whom I love in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. 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. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings. (Rom 16:3-16 NIV)

in Christ before me. Salute Amplias, my beloved in the Lord; salute Arbanus, our fellow-workman in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved; salute Apelles, the approved in Christ; salute those of the [household] of Aristobulus; salute Herodion, my kinsman; salute those of the [household] of Narcissus, who are in the Lord; salute Tryphaena, and Tryphosa, who are labouring in the Lord; salute Persis, the beloved, who did labour much in the Lord. Salute Rufus, the choice one in the Lord, and his mother and mine, salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren with them; salute Philologus, and Julias, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints with them; salute one another in a holy kiss; the assemblies of Christ do salute you. (Rom 16:3-16 Young's Literal Translation)

PAUL'S POSSIBLE PURPOSE IN THE NUMEROUS GREETINGS — “At the end of his letters, Paul habitually asks the Christians to whom he writes to ‘greet one another’ (Phi. 4:21a; Tit. 3:15b), often by means of a ‘holy kiss’ (cf. 1 Cor. 16:20b; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26). He does so here in Romans also (v. 16a). But what is remarkable about this section is that Paul precedes this customary general exhortation with commands that the church in Rome greet on his behalf 26 individuals, two ‘families,’ and three ‘house churches’ (it is not clear whether ‘those of Aristobulus’ and ‘those of Narcissus’ represent house churches or not). This procedure is not, however, completely without parallel; see Col. 4:15, where Paul requests that the Colossians convey his greetings to ‘the fellow believers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house,’ and 2 Tim. 4:19, where Paul asks Timothy to greet ‘Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.’ And it may be significant that Colossians, like Romans, is directed to a church that Paul did not personally know. As many have conjectured, then, *Paul’s extensive request for greetings in Rom. 16 may reflect his desire to mention all the Christians in Rome he knows — a procedure plainly impossible in those letters directed to churches where he has ministered. But the large number of greetings may also have a role in Paul’s strategy in Romans. For it is clear that one of the motives in Paul’s writing is to secure a welcome for himself when he comes to visit the church and seek support for his Spanish mission. A public recognition — the request for greetings were probably read aloud to the assembled church — of those Christians in Rome whom Paul already knows would encourage them to think favorably of him and remind the church as a whole of the number of ‘supporters’ he already has.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 917f]

“A GOLD MINE OFTEN OVERLOOKED” — “The list of names in this section does not make very interesting reading for most students of Romans. But for those few who are especially interested in the socioeconomic composition of the early church, it is a gold mine. For there was a tendency in the ancient world to give certain names to certain kinds of people; for example, wealthy people high on the social ladder would give their children certain names; slaves or former slaves would use (or be made to use) others. Several such studies of the names in this list have been done (see P. Lampe, ‘The Roman Christians of Romans 16’ and Lightfoot’s appendix on ‘Caesar’s Household’ in his ‘Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians’)... Lampe concludes that four names are definitely not those of slaves or freedmen; ten definitely are; and 12 cannot be determined. He further acknowledges that we cannot know whether this pattern obtained for the church as a whole. However, if it did, the composition of the church would mirror rather closely the society as a whole.... But I might note here two conclusions from the most recent and most thorough such study: (1) a majority of the names are Gentile (confirming the mainly Gentile makeup of the church at Rome); and (2) the majority of the names are those of slaves and ‘freedmen’ (slaves who had been given their freedom), or the descendants of slaves / freedmen. Another point that the list makes clear is the pattern of church organization in Rome, for Paul identifies at least three, and perhaps five, separate house churches (vv. 5, 14, 15; cf. also vv. 10, 11). Early Christians did not have large public facilities for meeting, so they used their own houses. And since even the largest house of the wealthiest Christian would hold no more than seventy or eighty for worship, growth beyond that point required that the Christians split up into house churches.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 918f]

v 3 – 5a — “Paul begins sixteen sentences in a row with the second person plural imperative, ‘greet’ (the Greek word used is claimed to be the ‘technical term for conveying the greetings at the end of a letter’). And, with the exception of the last of these imperatives, with its reciprocal (‘one another’) construction, it is clear that Paul is asking the Roman Christians to convey his own

greetings to the respective individual or groups; cf. the REB and TEV, ‘Greetings to ...’.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 919]

PRISCILLA / PRISCA AND AQUILA — “The first sentence, in which Paul conveys greetings to Prisca and Aquila, is the longest in the list (vv. 3-5a). This is probably because the couple was in the best position to mediate Paul’s ministry to the church in Rome. For Paul had been especially close to this missionary wife-and-husband team. Paul first met them at Corinth, on his second missionary journey. Luke tells us that Prisca (or Priscilla) and Aquila, who was originally from Pontus, had ‘come from Italy ... because Claudius had issued a decree that all Jews must leave Rome’ (Acts 18:2). In addition to their commitment to Christ, they had in common with Paul a secular trade: tent-making (Acts 18:3). After ministering with Paul for some time in Corinth, Paul dropped them off at Ephesus to begin the work there (Acts 18:18). They were instrumental in bringing Apollos to a better understanding of Christ (Acts 18:26); and Paul joined them in Ephesus for a lengthy ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 16:19). We do not know when they returned to Rome. But it is only natural that they would want to return to their home after Claudius’s decree of banishment lapsed at his death (AD 54). Whether they returned specifically to resurrect a business, or to help prepare the way for Paul’s coming, is impossible to say.... Considerable debate surrounds the name that should be read here. Since the issue hinges on the accent, and most MSS are without accents, the issue is not basically a textual one.... Luke prefers ‘Priscilla,’ the diminutive form of ‘Prisca.’ We do not know why Priscilla / Prisca comes first in four of the six NT mentions of the couple. Scholars have suggested that she may have been the more dominant of the two, the more gifted, the one who brought most money into the marriage, or the one who was most significant for their ‘home-based’ ministry.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 919]

FELLOW MINISTRY WORKERS WHO “RISKED THEIR NECK” FOR PAUL — “What Paul emphasizes as the basis for his greeting is not, of course, any of these prosaic details, but their commitment to both ministry and to Paul. They are ‘fellow workers’ (the term always denotes work in ministry, but the kind of ministry undertaken is not specified), called to labor in the cause of the gospel along with Paul. In the course of that co-laboring, they ‘risked their neck’ on behalf of Paul’s soul; that is, they saved his life. When this happened we have no way of knowing, although one naturally thinks of the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41). Paul himself therefore has good reason to ‘give thanks’ for them; but so do ‘all the churches of the Gentiles.’ We do not know whether these thanks from the Gentile churches are due specifically to Prisca and Aquila’s rescue of Paul, the ‘apostle to the Gentiles,’ or, more generally, to their significant ministry in these churches over many years.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 920]

FAIRLY WEALTHY COUPLE WHO PROVIDED A MEETING PLACE FOR A HOUSE-CHURCH — “[In v. 5] Paul adds, after his threefold description of Prisca and Aquila, a second object to the main verb, ‘greet’: ‘the church of their house.’ This means ‘the church that meets in their house.’ Prisca and Aquila are apparently (as their travels also suggest) a fairly wealthy couple; thus they are able to provide a decent-size meeting room for a group of Christians in Rome.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 520]

v 5b — EPAENETUS: FIRST CONVERT IN ASIA (EPHESUS, UNDER PRISCA / AQUILA?) — “Epaenetus is mentioned nowhere else in the NT. By calling him ‘my beloved one,’ Paul suggests that he knows him personally. But we should not over-interpret ‘beloved’ since Paul clearly tries to say something complimentary about every person he greets. The characterization, while undoubtedly sincere, is also semi-formalized (the term is virtually equivalent here, and in vv. 8, 9, and 12, to ‘fellow believer’). In calling him the ‘first fruits of Asia,’ Paul indicates that he was the first convert in the Roman province of Asia, whose cultural center was Ephesus. Paul may, then, mention him here because he was brought to faith through the ministry of Prisca and Aquila, and has now come with them to Rome (as a business associate? or ministry worker?).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 920f]

v 6 — MARY: HARD WORKER IN THE MINISTRY — “‘Mary’ is a very common name, especially among Jews. For this reason, most commentators think that she is Jewish. But the name is also used of Gentiles, so we cannot be certain about her ethnic status. Mary, Paul says, is one who has ‘worked hard for you’ (some MSS read ‘for us’). Attempts have been made to identify a semi-technical sense for the verb ‘work’ in Paul, as a reference to early Christian missionary ministry. But a preponderance of reference to missionary work in the letters of Paul is to be expected, granted their subject matter. The frequency of reference does not establish a technical meaning for the word.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 921]

v 7 — ANDRONICUS AND JUNIA: JEWISH HUSBAND AND WIFE (?) — “Paul now sends greetings to two fellow Jews, who, as Paul’s description indicates, had considerable stature in the early church. Andronicus is a common Greek name, so he must have been a ‘Hellenistic’ Jew. The identity of Andronicus’s ‘partner’ is a matter of considerable debate. The problem arises from the fact that the Greek form used here, Iouinian, depending on how it is accented, could refer either (1) to a man with the name Junianus, found here in its contracted form, ‘Junias’ (cf. NIV; RSV; NASB; TEV; NJB); or (2) to a woman with the name of Junia (KJV; NRSV; REB). Interpreters from the thirteenth to the middle of the twentieth century generally favored the masculine identification. But it appears that commentators before the thirteenth century were unanimous in favor of the feminine identification; and scholars have recently again inclined decisively to this same view. And probably with good reason. For while a contracted form of Junianus would fit quite well in this list of greetings (for Paul uses several other such contractions), we have no evidence elsewhere for this contracted form of the name. On the other hand, the Latin ‘Junia’ was a very common name. Probably, then, ‘Junia’ was the wife of Andronicus (note the other husband and wife pairs in this list, Prisca and Aquila [v. 3] and [probably], Philogus and Julia [v. 15]).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 922f]

PARTAKERS OF PRISON FOR THE GOSPEL, JUST AS PAUL — “In addition to their natural relationship (‘kindred’), Paul shared with Andronicus and Junia also a spiritual relationship, in both ministry and suffering. For they were Paul’s ‘fellow

prisoners.’ Implied is that their imprisonment, like those of Paul’s that we know about, were for the sake of the gospel (Luke records only one imprisonment of Paul before the writing of Romans: an [interrupted] overnight incarceration in Philippi, Acts 16:24-34; but Paul himself, writing just before Romans, acknowledges many imprisonments, 2 Cor. 11:23; and many scholars think that Paul was imprisoned for a time during his Ephesian ministry, Acts 19). But whether they were in prison with Paul at the same time or simply shared with him this kind of experience in the service of the Lord is impossible to say.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 923]

HIGHLY ESTEEMED AMONG THE MISSIONARY WORKERS — “The first description might mean that Andronicus and Junia were ‘esteemed by the apostles.’ But it is more natural to translate ‘esteemed among the apostles.’ And it is because Paul thus calls Junia(s) an ‘apostle’ that earlier interpreters tended to argue that Paul must be referring to a man; for they had difficulty imagining that a woman could hold such authority in the early church. Yet it is just for this reason that many contemporary scholars are eager to identify Junia(s) as a woman, for Pauline recognition of a female apostle would support the notion that the NT places no restrictions on the ministry of women. But many scholars on both sides of this issue are guilty of accepting too readily a key supposition in this line of reasoning: that ‘apostle’ here refers to an authoritative leadership position such as that held by the ‘Twelve’ and by Paul. In fact, Paul often uses the title ‘apostle’ in a ‘looser’ sense: sometimes simply to denote a ‘messenger’ or ‘emissary’ (see 2 Cor. 8:3; Phil. 2:25) and sometimes to denote a ‘commissioned missionary.’ ... See esp. the probably distinction in 1 Cor. 15 between ‘the twelve’ (v. 5) and ‘all the apostles’ (v. 7); also 1 Cor. 9:5-6; Gal. 2:9; Acts 14:4, 14. Even Paul’s reference to the teachers bothering the Corinthians as false ‘apostles’ (11:5; 12:11) implies a broader use of the term.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 924]

“[I]t is much more probable — we might well say, virtually certain — that the words mean ‘outstanding among the apostles,’ that is, ‘outstanding in the group who may be designated apostles,’ which is the way in which it was understood by the patristic commentators (it would seem, without exception). ***On this interpretation ‘the apostles’ must be given a wider sense as denoting those itinerant missionaries who were recognized by the churches as constituting a distinct group among the participants in the work of spreading the gospel.*** That Paul should not only include a woman among the apostles but actually describe her, together with Andronicus, as outstanding among them, is highly significant evidence of the falsity of the widespread and stubbornly persistent notion that Paul had a low view of women and something to which the Church as a whole has not yet paid sufficient attention.” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 789]

“IN CHRIST” BEFORE PAUL — “***The last words of the verse indicate that Andronicus and Junia were converted before Paul and are senior to him as Christians. They must then have been converted within a very short time from the earliest beginnings of the church.*** Did they perhaps belong to the Greek-speaking Jewish Christian group in Jerusalem of which we hear in Acts 6?” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 790] “Since Paul ... acknowledges that they were ‘in Christ’ before him, we might infer that Andronicus and Junia were among those early ‘Hellenistic’ Jews in Jerusalem and that, like Peter and his wife (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5), they moved about in the eastern Mediterranean (where they encountered and perhaps were imprisoned with Paul), seeking to bring men and women to faith in Christ.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 924] ***This brings balance to the teaching of being “eternally in Christ.” The proper emphasis is that we were “chosen in Christ” eternally, and in the mind of God this is so. But the actual moment of becoming “in Christ” is the moment of our conversion, not before! For this reason, Paul can state with theological accuracy that Andronicus and Junia were “in Christ” before Paul.***

v 8 — AMPLIAS — Probably a slave or freedman and may be the Ampliatius referred to in a catacomb inscription.

v 9 — URBANE — Probably a slave or freedman but unlike Epaenetus and Ampliatius (*my* beloved one’) and Prisca and Aquila (*my* fellow workers’), Paul may have known him *only* by reputation (*our* fellow worker’). Lightfoot conjectures that he may have been part of ‘Caesar’s household’ (cf. Phil. 4:22), that is, the imperial staff.

STACHYS — Nothing is known about this man.

v 10 — APELLES — Relatively rare name; nothing else is known about him. Paul mentions he is ‘approved’ in Christ, meaning either that he had proven himself in a difficult test of faith or simply that he was a respected believer.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF ARISTOBULUS — Probably members, especially slaves, of the household of a man named Aristobulus. By not greeting Aristobulus directly, Paul implies he was not a believer. He may have been dead since there is reason to identify this Aristobulus with the brother of King Herod Agrippa I; and this Aristobulus died AD 48 or 49. According to Josephus and Lightfoot: Agrippa went to Rome, accompanied by his brother Aristobulus, as a hostage. Aristobulus never held public office. Most commentators support this identification since Aristobulus is a rare name in Rome. [Moo, *Romans*, pg 925]

v 11 — HERODION, FELLOW JEW — “The identification of Aristobulus with the Herodian family gains some strength from the fact that Paul next greets a man who was apparently a freedman (and a Jew) in the service of one of the Herods. This, at least, is the only likely explanation of the name ‘Herodian,’ which is otherwise unattested in Rome.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 925]

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF NARCISSUS — “Paul may continue to think of Roman Christians who were socially prominent or who had connections with those who were. For Narcissus is the name of a well-known freedman who served the

Emperor Claudius and who committed suicide just before Paul wrote Romans. As in v. 10, the people Paul greets will have been members of Narcissus's household." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 925]

v 12 — TRYPHAENA AND TRYPHOSA — "Tryphaena and Tryphosa were probably slaves or freedwomen (both names are found at about Paul's time for servants in the imperial household) and may have been sisters (it was common to give children names from the same Greek root). Their names come from a word that means 'delicate' or 'dainty'; but it is unclear whether Paul deliberately intended the irony involved in calling them 'worked hard in the Lord.'" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 925]

PERSIS — probably also a slave or freedwoman (the name comes from 'Persia' and perhaps denotes a slave captured in that region), is also 'beloved' and 'worked hard in the Lord.'

v 13 — RUFUS: SON OF SIMON WHO CARRIED THE CROSS (?) — "'Rufus' may be the son of Simon of Cyrene, who carried the cross of Christ part of the way to Golgotha.... Mark identifies Simon as 'the father of Alexander and Rufus' (Mark 15:21), perhaps to connect him with two well-known Christians in Rome, from where Mark is probably written. Rufus was, however, a fairly common name.... In calling Rufus 'the elect one,' Paul may intend to single him out as a specially 'outstanding' or 'choice' believer (Dunn thinks that the word suggests that Rufus had been chosen for some special task and theorizes that it might have something to do with his father's carrying of Christ's cross). But probably Paul simply means that he was a Christian, 'chosen' as all Christians are (note Paul uses other terms such as 'beloved' in this list without any special emphasis). Paul also conveys greetings to Rufus' mother, who had on some occasion also apparently provided hospitality and care to Paul." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 925f]

v 14 — UNKNOWN BELIEVERS — "We know nothing specifically about 'Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas,' and 'Hermas' except that Hermes was probably a slave or freedman (Hermes is among the commonest of slave-names). The additional phrase 'and those with them' refers to other Christians who met in the same house church as they did." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 926]

v 15 — PHILOLOGUS AND JULIA, NEREUS, HIS SISTER, AND OLYMPAS — "The pairing of the masculine 'Philologus' with the feminine 'Julia' suggests to most commentators that they were husband and wife. 'Nereus' (a masculine name) and 'his sister' may then have been their children. They, too, have apparently made their house available for Christians to meet in. Paul knows only one other member of their house church by name, 'Olympas,' mentioning the others only generally: 'all the saints with them' (as in v. 14)." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 926]

v 16 — THE HOLY KISS — "Having conveyed greetings to perhaps every individual believer and house church that Paul knew about in Rome, he now adds a final catchall: 'Greet one another with a holy kiss.' Such requests are standard at the end of Paul's letters (cf. 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; cf. 1 Pet. 5:14). The kiss was a common form of greeting in the ancient world generally and in Judaism especially. Evidence from the second century indicates that the 'kiss of peace' had by that time entered into the typical Christian liturgy as a standard feature. Whether this was true as early as Paul's day is hard to say; but many commentators think that Paul may here be envisaging a worship gathering in which his letter is being read aloud and which is concluded with such a kiss." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 926]

GREETINGS FROM THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST — "Paul also often passes on greetings from other churches. Only here, however, are the greetings sent, generally, from 'all the churches of Christ.' The designation is probably not universal, however; Paul refers to those churches that he has been instrumental in planting in his ministry 'from Jerusalem to Illyricum.' By conveying greetings from so many of the churches, Paul again hints at his strategy to bring the Roman church into the sphere of churches that know and support him." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 926f]

PRACTICAL: (1) NO "LONE RANGER" MISSIONARIES, (2) THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN — "As interesting as these greetings might have been for the first-century Christians (for who does not like to hear his or her name read aloud and honored?), modern readers are to be forgiven for thinking that this section of Romans is not the most edifying in the letter. We don't learn much about Christian theology or the Christian life from a list of names! But there are two indirect lessons to be learned from it. *First, Paul's reference to coworkers (vv. 3, 9; cf. v. 7) reminds us that Paul was not a 'lone ranger' kind of missionary. At every point in his ministry, Paul depended on a significant number of others who were working along with him. And if Paul needed such help, how much more do we. There is no room in modern ministry for the lone ranger approach either.*

Second, Paul's mention of nine women in this list reminds us (if we needed the reminder) that women played an important role in the early church. Moreover, five of these women — Prisca (v. 3), Junia (v. 7), Tryphaena and Tryphosa (v. 12), and Persis (v. 12) — are commended for labor 'in the Lord.' Ministry in the early church was never confined to men; these greetings and other similar passages show that women engaged in ministries that were just as important as those of men. We have created many problems for ourselves by confining 'ministry' to what certain full-time Christian workers do. But it is important that we do not over-interpret this evidence either. For nothing Paul says in this passage (even in v. 7) conflicts with limitations on some kinds of women's ministry with respect to men such as I think are suggested by 1 Tim. 2:8-15 and other texts." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 927]

A Warning, a Promise, and a Prayer for Grace (16:17-20)

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf; but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. (Rom 16:17-20 KJV)

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. 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. 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. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. (Rom 16:17-20 NIV)

And I call upon you, brethren, to mark those who the divisions and the stumbling-blocks, contrary to the teaching that ye did learn, are causing, and turn ye away from them; for such our Lord Jesus Christ do not serve, but their own belly; and through the good word and fair speech they deceive the hearts of the harmless, for your obedience did reach to all; I rejoice, therefore, as regards you, and I wish you to be wise, indeed, as to the good, and harmless as to the evil; and the God of the peace shall bruise the Adversary under your feet quickly; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you. Amen! (Rom 16:17-20 Young's Literal Translation)

“We group these verses together for convenience’ sake; for they really fall into three separate parts: a warning about false teachers (vv. 17-19); a promise of deliverance (v. 20a); and a grace wish (v. 20b). The last of these has parallels in Paul’s other letters: he includes such a grace wish at the end of all of his letters. And the second element, the promise of deliverance, has at least partial parallels in 1 Cor. 16:22b — ‘Our Lord come!’ (marana tha) — and 1 Thess. 5:24 — ‘Faithful is he who called you, and he will do it.’ The first section, however, is not typical of Paul’s letter endings; only here does he launch into an attack on false teachers, an attack, moreover, that interrupts Paul’s greetings (vv. 3-16, 21-23).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 928]

v 17, 18 — WHO WERE THESE FALSE TEACHERS? — “Identifying these false teachers is almost impossible. This is because Paul is concerned to characterize them rather than identify them. He therefore presses into service certain stock imagery that communicates to the Romans the decisive points: they are divisive, self-centered, persuasive, teach what is contrary to the gospel, and must therefore be avoided at all costs.... The two identifications that have had the most support are (1) (gnostic) libertines; and (2) Judaizers. Perhaps, since we know that Jewish-oriented teachers plagued Paul throughout his ministry (cf. Galatians; 2 Cor. 10-13; Phil. 3), the latter suggestion has the most to commend it. But Paul simply does not give enough information to enable us to be at all certain. In any case, it seems likely that the false teachers had not yet come to Rome; his purpose is not to get the Roman Christians to exercise ‘church discipline’ against heretical church members but to put them on their guard against such teachers who might make their way to Rome.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 929]

LOOK OUT FOR FALSE TEACHERS — The translation ‘look out for’ brings out the warning nuance that the verb *skopeō* has here (cf. also NRSV and REB: ‘keep an eye on’).

CHARACTERISTICS: CAUSING DIVISION, TEACHING FALSE DOCTRINE; OUR RESPONSE: SHUN THEM — “As false teachers usually do, they create disunity in the Christian community. But more serious is their heretical doctrine. They create, Paul says, ‘stumbling block,’ which translates a word that Paul uses in Romans to refer to a spiritual problem that has the potential of leading to damnation. Bu further describing these stumbling blocks as being ‘against the teaching that you learned,’ Paul makes clear that he is thinking mainly of false doctrine. The seriousness of the threat they post demands a correspondingly serious response from the Roman Christians: they must ‘turn away from them’; ‘shun’ them. Again, Paul is not necessarily implying that the false teachers are already present. His point is that the Roman Christians must be on their guard against them and be determined to avoid them should they appear.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 930]

REASON TO SHUN THEM #1: THEY SERVE THEMSELVES AND NOT THE LORD — “[P]eople such as these are not serving our Lord Christ but their own belly.’ What Paul means by ‘serving their belly’ is not clear. Paul uses similar language to describe false teachers in Phil. 3:19 — ‘their god is their belly’ — but the identity of the false teachers in that text is as uncertain as in this one. Some scholars think the reference should be taken in its most straightforward sense and that Paul refers to gluttony and, by metonymy, to a greedy and dissipated lifestyle. Others, however, think that Paul refers to the Jewish tendency to put too much stock in food laws. Most think, however, that ‘belly’ has virtually the same meaning here as the word ‘flesh’ often does in Paul; ‘serving their belly’ would then refer to egocentrism. Perhaps a combination of the first and third views makes best sense: these false teachers are interested in their own pleasure. In any case, the decisive point is really the negative one: they are not serving ‘our Lord Christ.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 930f]

REASON TO SHUN THEM #2: THEY DECEIVE THE NAIVE — “To be ‘innocent’ and ‘guileless’ (this word can have a very positive nuance, as when Christ is called ‘innocent’ in Heb. 7:26, the only other NT use of this word; but it clearly has something of a pejorative meaning here: note KJV, ‘simple’; NRSV: ‘simple-minded’; NIV, ‘naive’) can be a good thing; but it can also leave people open to the subtle machinations of those who would take advantage of them. It is this that Paul is concerned

about. For Paul well knows that these false teachers are clever at dressing up their heresies in ‘smooth talk and fine words.’ Those who are not on the watch for these people and who do not listen closely enough to what they are teaching might be led astray and into ultimate spiritual ruin.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 931]

v 19 — “INNOCENT” WITHOUT BEING NAIVE — “Paul suggests that v. 19 explains or gives the basis for something in v. 18. How it does so is not, however, immediately clear. But perhaps the clue lies in what seems to be an intentional play on the idea of ‘innocence.’ Paul warns that the false teachers are adept at deceiving the ‘innocent’ (v. 18b). And he issues this warning just *because* the Roman Christians have such a universal reputation for being ‘obedient,’ that is, innocent. Paul rejoices in this, for it is, of course, a good quality. But at the same time, he wants them to combine this innocence with ‘wisdom’ about what is good and to confine their ‘innocence’ to what is evil. In other words, Paul is recognizing and encouraging the Roman Christians’ ‘innocence’ in one sense — their freedom from sin as a result of their obedience to the gospel message — while he subtly warns them about another kind of ‘innocence’ — that kind that lacks wisdom and discernment about truth and error. As Bruce puts it, they should not be ‘so “simple-minded” as to swallow whatever is offered.’ Understood in this way, Paul probably alludes to Jesus’ saying about being ‘wise as serpents and innocent as doves’ (Matt. 10:16), for the meaning is much the same.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 932f]

v 20 — GOD WILL BRUISE THE SATAN UNDER YOUR FEET — “*With a final flourish Paul pens a slogan of victorious hope: ‘the God of peace will crush the Satan under your feet speedily.’ Here too the continuity with earlier and contemporary Jewish apocalyptic hope is strong: Christians share with their fellow members of God’s election the confidence of a final triumph of good over evil, of God over the most powerful force of evil that afflicts this world. Not only does the slogan reflect this continuity of hope, but it reflects the eschatological expectation which seems to have been characteristic of the Christian movement from the beginning — of the final power of God already pushing back the frontiers of evil, of a victory already being won and soon to be completed. Above all, the slogan, with its echo of Gen 3:15, effectively ties together the whole sweep of salvation-history: God’s purpose is nothing less than the complete destruction of all the evil which has grown like a large malignant cancer within the body of humankind and the restoration of his creation to the peace and well-being he originally designed for it. ... The hope of Satan being ‘crushed under foot’ is part of a larger eschatological hope for the final binding or defeat of the angelic power hostile to God. That there is an influence from Gen 3:15 is probable, but not necessarily direct (LXX uses different language) and quite likely through the influence of Gen 3:15 on the whole strand of Jewish hope. It is hard to diminish the strong eschatological note here.*” [Dunn, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 905, 907]

“The promise of deliverance in the first part of this verse may be a general promise, complete independent of Paul’s warning about false teachers in vv. 17-19. On the other hand, it could be part and parcel of that warning, Paul concluding with a promise that God would give the Roman Christians victory over those Satan-inspired heretics. But perhaps a mediating position is best, in which we view the promise as a general one, similar to others that occur in Paul’s letter endings, but with obvious relevance to the false teachers that Paul has just warned the church about. The language of the promise may allude to the ‘proto-gospel’ of Gen. 3:15d: ‘you [Adam, or his seed] will strike his [the serpent’s] heel.’ If our interpretation is correct, the promise of victory over Satan, while including victory over the false teachers of vv. 17-19, is much broader, extending to the final eschatological victory of God’s people when Satan is thrown into the ‘lake of fire.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 932f]

PAUL’S BENEDICTION PRAYER-WISH — “Paul’s prayer-wish that ‘the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you’ finds a parallel in every other letter he wrote; and it also takes us back to the beginning of the letter.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 933]

Greetings from Paul’s Companions (16:21-24)

Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. (Rom 16:21-24 KJV)

Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives. I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. 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. (Rom 16:21-23 NIV)

Salute you do Timotheus, my fellow-workman, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kindred; I Tertius salute you (who wrote the letter) in the Lord; salute you doth Gaius, my host, and of the whole assembly; salute you doth Erastus, the steward of the city, and Quartus the brother, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you all. Amen. (Rom 16:21-24 Young’s Literal Translation)

“Paul usually passes on greetings from fellow workers or local Christians at the end of his letters. But he usually joins them with the greetings he himself extends to his addressees (The only exception is 2 Timothy, where he interrupts the greetings with some remarks about his fellow workers, 4:19-21). Because these greetings from associates are so typical in his letters, it is unlikely that they were added as an afterthought. Rather, as we have seen, the greetings Paul conveys from ‘all the churches’ (v. 16b) sparked his concern about the potential of the false teachers who plagued those churches to disrupt the Roman community also. Thus he departs from his normal epistolary practice to interject a warning about these false teachers before returning to his usual end-of-the-letter format.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 933]

v 21 — TIMOTHY — “Timothy, whom Paul simply introduces here as ‘my fellow worker’ (cf. also vv. 3 and 9), was Paul’s closest ministry associate. A native of Lystra, in South Galatia, Timothy joined Paul’s missionary team at the beginning of the second missionary journey (Acts 16:2-3). Timothy worked with Paul throughout the rest of that journey (cf. Acts 17:14-15; 18:5). He was perhaps left behind in Greece or Macedonia when Paul returned to Palestine, and met up with Paul again when he returned to these regions on the third missionary journey. He was later with Paul during his Roman imprisonment and worked with the apostle after his release in the eastern Mediterranean again (cf. 1 and 2 Timothy). As this verse makes clear, then, Timothy was with Paul during his stay in Greece at the end of the third missionary journey (cf. Acts 20:3-4). Timothy’s importance can be gauged from the fact that Paul introduces him as ‘co-author’ of six of his letters (2 Corinthians; 1 Thessalonians; 2 Thessalonians; Philippians; Colossians; Philemon). Paul probably does not do so in Romans because Timothy is unknown to most of the Roman Christians and because at stake in the letter is Paul’s unique apostolic mission to the Gentiles.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 934]

The following three men were fellow Jews (although it is not clear if this applies to all three or only to the last two men) and they were probably also delegates from the churches selected to escort Paul with the collection for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

LUCIUS — “Lucius’ has been identified with ‘Lucius of Cyrene,’ a prophet / teacher in the church at Syrian Antioch (Acts 13:1) or with Luke the evangelist (‘Luke’ can be a variant of ‘Lucius’). But neither identification is very likely.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 934]

JASON — ‘Jason’ is very likely the Jason who gave hospitality to Paul during his brief and tumultuous stay in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-9).

SOSIPATER — Almost certainly the ‘Sopater’ of Beroea whom Luke tells us accompanied Paul when he left Greece toward the end of the third missionary journey (Acts 20:4).

v 22 — TERTIUS, PAUL’S EMANUENSIS — “Tertius is otherwise unknown to us. He identifies himself in this verse as Paul’s ‘amanuensis’ for Romans: the one who ‘wrote down’ what Paul dictated. After his hard work, Paul gives him the opportunity to extend Christian greetings to the Roman Christians in his own name.... It was customary for ancient authors to use a scribe to write out their letters; and authors gave to their scribes varying degrees of freedom in the actual wording of the contents. Most scholars agree that the directness of the style of Romans, as well as its similarity to the style of Galatians and 1 Corinthians, suggests strongly that the wording of Romans is Paul’s own. Tertius probably simply copied out Paul’s dictation.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 935]

v 23 — GAIVS OF CORINTH (?) — “Gaius’ was a common name; and at least three different men in the NT bore it: Gaius ‘of Derbe’ (Acts 20:4; cf. 19:29); a Gaius from Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14); and a Gaius who was a church leader in Asia Minor (3 John 1). The Gaius whom Paul greets here was almost certainly Gaius of Corinth, since Paul was writing Romans from Corinth. He may very well be identified also with Titius Justus, who gave Paul lodging on his first stay in Corinth (Acts 18:7; his full name would then have been Gaius Titius Justus, Gaius being his praenomen). The role that Gaius played in Corinth is not completely clear, for Paul’s description of Gaius could mean either that he was the ‘host’ of the entire church in Corinth or that he was the ‘host’ to any Christian from ‘the whole church’ who might pass through Corinth. Certainty is impossible, but the second option might be preferable since it is unlikely that the entire church at Corinth would have met in one house.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 935]

ERASTUS THE “AEDILE” (?) — “Erastus’ may be the same Erastus whom Paul sends from Ephesus to Macedonia during the third missionary journey (Acts 19:21-22; cf. also 2 Tim. 4:20). But the identification is complicated by the existence of an inscription in Corinth that names an Erastus as ‘aedile’ of the city (the aedile was appointed for one year and was responsible for the city streets and buildings and for certain finances). The term that Paul uses here to describe Erastus, *oikonomos*, identifies him as a financial officer in the city government; and it is not clear whether this title would be equivalent to ‘aedile.’ If not, it is still possible that Erastus, having served as ‘treasurer,’ was promoted to aedile at a later date. On the whole, the identification of Paul’s Erastus with the Erastus names in this inscription is not probable.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 935f]

QUARTUS — an unknown; his name is not found elsewhere in the NT and Paul simply identifies him as a fellow believer.

[v 24] — A note for those interested in manuscript evidence: “A number of MSS, including the ‘western’ uncials, D, F, and G, Ψ, and the majority text, add after v. 23 a grace wish: [*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*] (there are minor variations among these witnesses, particularly in the names of Christ); and the KJV therefore has v. 24. But the verse is omitted in the earliest and most important MSS (P⁴⁶, x, B, the secondary Alexandrian uncial C, P⁶¹, 0150, and a few minuscules) and is clearly a later addition to the text.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 933] The question here is not whether or not we agree with what is said; the question is whether it was originally part of Paul’s letter to Rome. Questions which are worth prayer and consideration: *What if this short addition is not part of Paul’s original letter? Does it really make a difference to our understanding of scripture? Does it change any doctrine we believe? Is it worth causing division and splitting churches over whether or not something like this was really penned by Paul or added later?*

Concluding Doxology (16:25-27)

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. (Rom 16:25-27 KJV)

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, 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 — to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Rom 16:25-27 NIV)

And to Him who is able to establish you, according to my good news, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the secret, in the times of the ages having been kept silent, and now having been made manifest, also, through prophetic writings, according to a command of the age-during God, having been made known to all the nations for obedience of faith — to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to him [be] glory to the ages. Amen. (Rom 16:25-27 Young's Literal Translation)

“Paul ends his majestic letter to the Romans with a doxology in praise of the God who has in the gospel of Jesus Christ revealed the climax of salvation history. Paul deliberately echoes in these verses the language and themes of the letter, and particularly its opening section:

‘who is able’ (power) — cf. 1:4, 16
‘strengthen you’ — 1:11
‘[my] gospel’ — 1:1, 9, 16; cf. 2:16
‘revelation’ / ‘manifested’ — 1:17; 3:21
‘prophetic writings’ — 1:2; 3:21
‘obedience of faith’ — 1:5
‘all the nations (Gentiles)’ — 1:5; *passim*
‘only God’ — 3:29-30
‘wise God’ — 11:33-36

“Prominent here again is the theme of the revelation of the gospel as the pinnacle of salvation history and as a message of universal applicability. Paul ends as he began. Paul clearly intends to stimulate the Roman Christians’ praise of God by reminding them of what he has told them of God’s wonderful plan for their salvation in Jesus Christ.

Paul uses a repeated threefold structure to enhance the liturgical tone of the doxology: note ‘gospel,’ ‘preaching,’ and ‘revelation’ in v. 25b, the three participial modifiers of revelation — ‘kept secret,’ ‘manifested,’ and ‘made known.’ Perhaps it is the very complexity of this arrangement that lands Paul in syntactical difficulties: for vv. 25-27 are one long incomplete sentence.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 937f]

v 25a-c — “Paul begins, not by naming God, but by characterizing him as the one who ‘is able to strengthen you.’ What Paul hopes to do when he comes to Rome (1:11), he acknowledges to be possible only through divine aid. ‘According to my gospel’ might modify ‘able’: God is able to strengthen you, as my gospel says he is. But it should probably be taken with ‘strengthen,’ in which case it might denote the means of the strengthening (‘through’) or the norm in accordance with which the strengthening takes place (‘in accordance with,’ ‘in’). But perhaps we need not decide between these options: Paul’s point is that the gospel is the source of the strengthening.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 938]

“‘Preaching of Jesus Christ,’ which we can paraphrase ‘preaching about Jesus Christ,’ is a further definition of ‘my gospel.’ And ‘according to the revelation’ could be a third, roughly parallel, description of the same message. But it is better to subordinate this phrase to ‘preaching,’ or ‘gospel and preaching,’ or, perhaps best, ‘gospel’: the gospel is ‘in accordance with,’ ‘based on,’ the revelation of the mystery. Paul speaks of the gospel as consisting in the ‘revelation of the righteousness of God’ in his statement of the theme of the letter (1:17). Here he echoes this revelatory concept. Paul has used ‘mystery’ in 11:25, but its application here to the basic content of Paul’s gospel and preaching is closer to Paul’s use of the term in passages such as 1 Cor. 2:7, Eph. 3:3-9, and Col. 1:26-27.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 928f]

v 25d, 26 — Paul gives a threefold description of this ‘mystery.’ “First, Paul says, it was ‘kept secret for long ages.’ Here Paul reflects a motif typical in apocalyptic: the hiddenness of God’s plan and purposes. This hiddenness, as Paul will make clear in v. 26, does not mean that one could have no knowledge of the content of the mystery. What it means, rather, is that one could not fully understand it nor — and this is the special emphasis — experience it. Following a typical NT salvation-historical scheme, Paul indicates that the mystery that has been ‘kept secret’ has ‘now been manifested.’ The ‘and’ that follows this clause suggests that the four prepositional modifiers in the verse all go with the third participle Paul uses to describe the mystery, ‘made known’ at the end of the verse. These last two participles are obviously very close in meaning; perhaps Paul uses both for stylistic reasons (to keep his threefold scheme) or to accentuate the idea. The first of the prepositional phrases describes the means through which the mystery was made known: ‘through the prophetic writings.’ Since we would expect the gospel, or the NT, to be the source of this revelation, some scholars think that Paul may allude here to the apostles’ writings or to the Scriptures as a whole. But Paul has

made sufficiently clear that the mystery of God's work in Christ, while not experienced or understood in its fullness in the OT period, was nevertheless 'testified to' by the OT (cf. esp. 1:2; 3:21). 'Prophetical writings' will therefore refer to the OT. 'According to the command of the eternal God' stresses that it was God's own determination to make known the mystery at the time that he did. The 'command' is not any specific historical divine command, but refers to the expression of God's will. The last two prepositional phrases indicate the purpose of the mystery being 'made known' — that people might come to believe and obey the gospel — and the object of its being made known — 'all the nations.' Paul returns for the last time to a theme with which the letter opened (1:5) and to which he has continually returned: the universal applicability of the gospel of Jesus Christ." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 938f]

v 27 — "Paul finally returns to the construction with which he opened his doxology, identifying now the 'one who is able' as 'the only wise God.' God's 'wisdom,' as in 11:33, has to do with his 'wise' plan for salvation history, now understood, lived out, and given thanks for by the saints. This plan, of course, culminated in a person and his work: God's Son, Jesus Christ (cf. 1:3-4). It is therefore appropriate that the saints give glory to God 'through Jesus Christ.'" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 940f]

APPENDIX: WOMEN DEACONS

The following is from an article by John Piper as his own Baptist church considered the role of women as deaconesses:

Were women deacons? Very probably yes.

- The Greek word for deacon can be masculine or feminine. So the word does not settle the issue.
- In the middle of the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 Paul says, 'The women likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things.' This could be the wives of the deacons, but could also be the women deacons. The latter is suggested by the fact that the elders' wives are not mentioned in 3:1-7.
- The deacons were distinguished from the elders in that they were not the governing body in the church nor were they charged with the duty of authoritative teaching. So the role of deacon seems not to involve anything that Paul taught in 1 Timothy 2:12 is inappropriate for women to perform in the church.
- In Romans Phoebe is very probably called a deacon. 'I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon(ess) of the church at Cenchreae, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well.'
- The word 'deacon' comes from the Greek word diakonos. It usually has the general meaning, 'servant,' in a broad range of contexts. For example:
 - The servants at the wedding who carried the water containers (John 2:5,9). His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'
 - Christ is called servant to the circumcision (Romans 15:8). Christ became a servant to the circumcision to show God's truthfulness.
 - Paul calls himself a servant (=minister) of the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6) God has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant. and of the gospel (Colossians 1:23) Do not shift from the hope of the gospel ... of which I Paul became a minister. and of the church (Colossians 1:24). I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister. See also 1 Corinthians 3:5.
 - Tychichus is called a faithful servant in the Lord (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7). Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister of the Lord will tell you everything.
 - Timothy is called God's servant (1 Thessalonians 3:2). We sent Timothy, our brother and God's servant in the gospel of Christ.
 - The disciples are told that if they would be great they must be servants (Matthew 20:26). Whoever would be great among you must be your servant.
- The Greek noun that describes what a diakonos does is diakonia and has meanings just as broad:
 - Martha is concerned with too much serving (Luke 10:40).
 - The apostleship is called a ministry (Acts 1:17,25).
 - The widows of the Hellenists were being overlooked in the daily "distribution" (Acts 6:1).
 - But three verses later Luke refers to the task of the apostles as the "ministry" of the word.
 - The raising of money for the poor saint was called a "ministry" (Acts 11:29; 12:25; Romans 15:31; 2 Corinthians 8:4;

9:1, 12, 13.).

- Paul calls his own assignment from the Lord a “ministry” (Acts 20:24 21;19; Romans 11:13; 2 Corinthians 4:1).
- It is listed in the gifts between prophecy and teaching in Romans 12:7.
- And “various ministries” is listed between “various gifts” and “various workings” in 1 Corinthians 12:5.
- The old covenant is called a ministry of death and condemnation as compared to the new covenant which called a ministry of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:7,8,9).
- Paul calls his work a ministry of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:18.
- Pastor/teachers are to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12).
- The verb form of this Greek word is diakoneo. It has the general meaning of “serve”.
 - Jesus came to serve not be served (Matthew 20:28).
 - Therefore he taught that a good leader is one who serves (Luke 22:26).
 - Jesus said that if anyone serves him the Father would honor him (John 12:26).
 - In Acts 19:22 Timothy and Erastus are described as those who serve Paul.
- But there is a strong tendency of this verb (diakoneo) to refer to the kind of serving that involves very practical acts of supplying material needs, and literally table-service.
 - Angels came to serve Jesus in the wilderness, i.e. tend to his needs (Matthew 4:11).
 - Peter’s mother in law rose from her sick bed to serve her guests (Matthew 8:15).
 - The women who followed Jesus served out of their own pockets (Matthew 27:55; Luke 8:3).
 - Martha served from the kitchen (Luke 10:40; John 12:2).
 - Paul’s carrying money to Jerusalem is doing service (Romans 15:25; 2 Corinthians 8:19).
- The serving of Onesiphorus is described as often refreshing Paul in connection with his not being ashamed of Paul’s chains, which I take to mean that he visited him in prison (2 Timothy 1:16-18).
- Paul wants to keep Onesimus, the converted slave, with him so he can serve him in prison (Philemon 13).
- The saints of Hebrews are described as serving the saints in love (6:10) and later they are described as visiting saints in prison (10:32-34).
- In 1 Peter 4:10-11 speaking and serving are treated separately as though there may have been a word ministry (perhaps the teaching of elders) and a non-word-serving ministry (perhaps the service of deacons).
- Matthew 25:44 may be the best summary in the NT of the kinds of activities done by one who “serves”. “Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?’”

Conclusion — The basic meaning of the diakon- word group is practical, active, helping with respect to the basic necessities of life. From Matthew 25:44 we could include dire needs arising from hunger, thirst, alienation, nakedness, sickness, imprisonment. That would imply that the basic notion of “serving” in the sense of being a deacon is to help meet needs for

- food,
- water,
- acclimatization,
- clothing,
- health,
- and whatever needs arise from emergencies (like imprisonment).

Probably the term is applied to ministries of the word and apostleship and Christ’s own ministry to show that they are to be done humbly and in compassion and for the benefit of others. But when Jesus says in Luke 22:26 that the leader should become as one who serves (as he did!) he does not mean that there are no differences between a leader and a non-leader. He means that the lowliness that is natural for a table waiter should also characterize those in positions of leadership.

So even though the highest offices (eg. apostle) are called “ministry” this does not mean that there is no office in the church with a special focus on practical and more material needs. [Piper, article: ‘What Did Deacons Do?’ dated Mar 8, 1987; from <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/87/030887p.html>; Mar 28, 2005]

MEET YOUR TEACHER ...

Douglas J. Moo, *New International Commentary Series: The Epistle to the Romans* [Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI] 1996

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On a plaque mounted in my office are the words of the great pietist theologian Johann Albrecht Bengel: ‘Apply yourself wholly to the text; apply the text wholly to yourself.’ In my academic career, I have applied myself to the text by teaching New Testament and writing commentaries on the text — on James, 2 Peter and Jude, and Romans. I have also sought — undoubtedly less successfully — to apply the text I teach and write about to myself. Yet since the text I deal with is no less than God’s word to his people, I must grapple not only with original meaning but with application to myself and to the contemporary church. Toward that end, I have also been active in my local church, serving as elder most years, in teaching and preaching to the church, and in conducting home Bible studies. Also very rewarding has been my service on the Committee on Bible Translation, the group of scholars charged with revising the text of the NIV.

For over twenty years my ministry was based at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, in Deerfield, IL. Now that I am at Wheaton Graduate School, I am enjoying the challenge of adapting to a new institution, discovering the delights of new colleagues, and meeting the challenges posed by a different type of student. My academic interests revolve around the interface of exegesis and theology. I seek to model to students a rigorous approach to the Greek text that always asks the ‘so what’ questions of ultimate significance and application. The Pauline and general letters have been my special focus within the NT canon; and I am especially interested in developing over the next years a theology of the Mosaic law in the NT. My wife Jenny and I have five children, three married and two in college.

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