

CHAPTER 16

Paul is now concluding this long and excellent epistle, and he does it with a great deal of affection. As in the main body of the epistle he appears to have been a very knowing man, so in these appurtenances of it he appears to have been a very loving man. So much knowledge and so much love are a very rare, but (where they exist) a very excellent and amiable-composition; for what is heaven but knowledge and love made perfect? It is observable how often Paul speaks as if he were concluding, and yet takes fresh hold again. One would have thought that solemn benediction which closed the foregoing chapter should have ended the epistle; and yet here he begins again, and in this chapter he repeats the blessing (v. 20), “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, Amen.” And yet he has something more to say; nay, again he repeats the blessing (v. 24), and yet has not done; an expression of his tender love. These repeated benedictions, which stand for valedictions, speak Paul loth to part. Now, in this closing chapter, we may observe,

- I.** His recommendation of one friend to the Roman Christians, and his particular salutation of several among them (v. 1-16).
- II.** A caution to take heed of those who caused divisions (v. 17-20).
- III.** Salutations added from some who were with Paul (v. 21-24).
- IV.** He concludes with a solemn celebration of the glory of God (v. 25-27).

~~51~~ ROMANS 16:1-16

APOSTOLIC SALUTATIONS

Such remembrances as these are usual in letters between friends; and yet Paul, by the savouriness of his expressions, sanctifies these common compliments.

I. Here is the recommendation of a friend, by whom (as some think) this epistle was sent — one *Phebe*, v. 1, 2. It should seem that she was a person of quality and estate, who had business which called her to Rome, where she was a stranger; and therefore Paul recommends her to the acquaintance of the Christians there: an expression of his true friendship to her. Paul was as well skilled in the art of obliging as most men. True religion, rightly received, never made any man uncivil. Courtesy and Christianity agree well together. It is not in compliment to her, but in sincerity, that,

1. He gives a very good character of her.

(1.) As a sister to Paul: *Phebe our sister*; not in nature, but in grace; not in affinity or consanguinity, but in pure Christianity: his own sister in the faith of Christ, loving Paul, and beloved of him, with a pure and chaste and spiritual love, as a sister; for there is neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus, ^{<418>}Galatians 3:28. Both Christ and his apostles had some of their best friends among the devout (and upon that account honourable) women.

(2.) As a *servant to the church at Cenchrea*: *diakonon*, a servant by office, a stated servant, not to preach the word (that was forbidden to women), but in acts of charity and hospitality. Some think she was one of the widows that ministered to the sick and were taken into the church's number, ^{<419>}1 Timothy 5:9. But those were old and poor, whereas Phebe seems to have been a person of some account; and yet it was no disparagement to her to be a servant to the church. Probably they used to meet at her house, and she undertook the care of entertaining the ministers, especially strangers. Every one in his place should strive to serve the church, for therein he serves Christ, and it will turn to a good account another day. Cenchrea was a small sea-port town adjoining to Corinth, about twelve furlongs distant. Some think there was a church there, distinct from that at Corinth, though, being so near, it is very probable that the church of Corinth is called *the church of Cenchrea*, because their place of meeting might be there, on account of the great opposition to them in the city (^{<412>}Acts 18:12), as at Philippi they met out of the city by the water-side, ^{<413>}Acts 16:13. So the reformed church of Paris might be called *the church at Charenton*, where they formerly met, out of the city.

(3.) As a *succourer of many*, and particularly of Paul, v. 2. She relieved many that were in want and distress — a good copy for women to write after that have ability. she was kind to those that needed kindness, intimated in her succouring them; and her bounty was extensive, she was a succourer of many. Observe the gratitude of Paul in mentioning her particular kindness to him: *And to myself also*. Acknowledgment of favours is the least return we can make. It was much to her honour that Paul left this upon record; for wherever this epistle is read her kindness to Paul is told for a memorial of her.

2. He recommends her to their care and kindness, as one worthy to be taken notice of with peculiar respect.

(1.) “*Receive her in the Lord*. Entertain her; bid her welcome.” This pass, under Paul’s hand, could not but recommend her to any Christian church. “*Receive her in the Lord*,” that is, “for the Lord’s sake; receive her as a servant and friend of Christ.” *As it becometh saints* to receive, who love Christ, and therefore love all that are his for his sake; or, as *becometh saints* to be received, with love and honour and the tenderest affection. There may be occasion sometimes to improve our interest in our friends, not only for ourselves, but for others also, *interest* being a price in the hand for doing good.

(2.) *Assist her in whatsoever business she has need of you*. Whether she had business of trade, or law-business at the court, is not material; however being a woman, a stranger, a Christian, she had need of help: and Paul engaged them to be assistant to her. It becomes Christians to be helpful one to another in their affairs, especially to be helpful to strangers; for we are members one of another and we know not what need of help we may have ourselves. Observe, Paul bespeaks help for one that had been so helpful to many; he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

II. Here are commendations to some particular friends among those to whom he wrote, more than in any other of the epistles. Though the care of all the churches came upon Paul daily, enough to distract an ordinary head, yet he could retain the remembrance of so many; and his heart was so full of love and affection as to send salutations to each of them with particular characters of them, and expressions of love to them and concern for them. *Greet* them, *salute* them; it is the same word, *aspasasthe*. “Let them know

that I remember them, and love them, and wish them well.” There is something observable in several of these salutations.

1. Concerning Aquila and Priscilla, a famous couple, that Paul had a special kindness for. They were originally of Rome, but were banished thence by the edict of Claudius, ^{<448D>}Acts 18:2. At Corinth, Paul became acquainted with them, wrought with them at the trade of tent-making; after some time, when the edge of that edict was rebated, they returned to Rome, and thither he now sends commendations to them. He calls them his *helpers in Christ Jesus*, by private instructions and converse furthering the success of Paul's public preaching, one instance of which we have in their instructing Apollos, ^{<448E>}Acts 18:26. Those are helpers to faithful ministers that lay out themselves in their families and among their neighbours to do good to souls. Nay, they did not only do much, but they ventured much, for Paul: They have *for my life laid down their own necks*. They exposed themselves to secure Paul, hazarded their own lives for the preservation of his, considering how much better they might be spared than he. Paul was in a great deal of danger at Corinth, while he sojourned with them; but they sheltered him, though they thereby made themselves obnoxious to the enraged multitudes, ^{<448D>}Acts 18:12, 17. It was a good while ago that they had done Paul this kindness; and yet he speaks as feelingly of it as if it had been but yesterday. *To whom* (says he) *not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles*; who were all beholden to these good people for helping to save the life of him that was the apostle of the Gentiles. Paul mentions this, to engage the Christians at Rome to be the more kind to Aquila and Priscilla. He sends likewise greeting to the *church in their house*, v. 5. It seems then, a church in a house is no such absurd thing as some make it to be. Perhaps there was a congregation of Christians that used to meet at their house at stated times; and then, no doubt, it was, like the house of Obed-Edom, blessed for the ark's sake. Others think that the church was no more than a religious, pious, well-governed family, that kept up the worship of God. Religion, in the power of it, reigning in a family, will turn a house into a church. And doubtless it had a good influence upon this that Priscilla the good wife of the family was so very eminent and forward in religion, so eminent that she is often named first. A virtuous woman, that looks well to the ways of her household, may do much towards the advancement of religion in a family. When Priscilla and Aquila were at Ephesus, though but sojourners there, yet there also they had a church in their house, ^{<460>}1 Corinthians

16:19. A truly godly man will be careful to take religion along with him wherever he goes. When Abraham removed his tent, he renewed his altar, ^{<1133>}Genesis 13:18.

2. Concerning Epenetus, v. 5. He calls him his *well-beloved*. Where the law of love is in the heart the law of kindness will be in the tongue. Endearing language should pass among Christians to express love, and to engage love. So he calls Amplias, *beloved in the Lord*, with true Christian love for Christ's sake; and Stachys, his *beloved*: a sign that Paul had been in the third heaven, he was so much made up of love. Of Epenetus it is further said that he was the *first-fruit of Achaia unto Christ*; not only one of the most eminent believers in that country, but one of the first that was converted to the faith of Christ: one that was offered up to God by Paul, as the first-fruits of his ministry there; an earnest of a great harvest; for in Corinth, the chief city of Achaia, God had much people, ^{<4130>}Acts 18:10. Special respect is to be paid to those that set out early, and come to work in the vineyard at the first hour, at the first call. The *household of Stephanas* is likewise said to be the *first-fruits of Achaia*, ^{<4135>}1 Corinthians 16:15. Perhaps Epenetus was one of that household; or, at least, he was one of the *first three*; not the first alone, but one of the first fleece of Christians, that the region of Achaia afforded.

3. Concerning Mary, and some others who were laborious in that which is good, industrious Christians: *Mary*, who *bestowed much labour on us*. True love never sticks at labour, but rather takes a pleasure in it; where there is much love there will be much labour. Some think this Mary had been at some of those places where Paul was, though now removed to Rome, and had personally ministered to him; others think Paul speaks of her labour as bestowed upon him because it was bestowed upon his friends and fellow-labourers, and he took what was done to them as done to himself. He says of Tryphena and Tryphosa, two useful women in their places, that they laboured in the Lord (v. 12), and of the beloved Persis, another good woman, that she laboured much in the Lord, more than others, abounding more in the work of the Lord.

4. Concerning Andronicus and Junia, v. 7. Some take them for a man and his wife, and the original will well enough bear it; and, considering the name of the latter, this is more probable than that they should be two men, as others think, and brethren. Observe,

(1.) They were Paul's *cousins*, akin to him; so was Herodion, v. 11. Religion does not take away, but rectifies, sanctifies, and improves, our respect to our kindred, engaging us to lay out ourselves most for their good, and to rejoice in them the more, when we find them related to Christ by faith.

(2.) They were his fellow-prisoners. Partnership in suffering sometimes does much towards the union of souls and the knitting of affections. We do not find in the story of the Acts any imprisonment of Paul before the writing of this epistle, but that at Philippi, ⁴¹⁶³Acts 16:23. But Paul was *in prisons more frequent* (⁴¹¹³2 Corinthians 11:23), in some of which, it seems, he met with his friends Andronicus and Junia, yoke-fellows, as in other things, so in suffering for Christ and bearing his yoke.

(3.) They were *of note among the apostles*, not so much perhaps because they were persons of estate and quality in the world as because they were eminent for knowledge, and gifts, and graces, which made them famous among the apostles, who were competent judges of those things, and were endued with a spirit of discerning not only the sincerity, but the eminency, of Christians.

(4.) *Who also were in Christ before me*, that is, were converted to the Christian faith. In time they had the start of Paul, though he was converted the next year after Christ's ascension. How ready was Paul to acknowledge in others any kind of precedency!

5. Concerning Apelles, who is here said to be *approved in Christ* (v. 10), a high character! He was one of known integrity and sincerity in his religion, one that had been tried; his friends and enemies had tried him, and he was as gold. he was of approved knowledge and judgment, approved courage and constancy; a man that one might trust and repose a confidence in.

6. Concerning Aristobulus and Narcissus; notice is taken of their household, v. 10, 11. Those of their household who *are in the Lord* (as it is limited, v. 11), that were Christians. How studious was Paul to leave none out of his salutations that he had any knowledge of or acquaintance with! Aristobulus and Narcissus themselves, some think, were absent, or lately dead; others think they were unbelievers, and such as did not themselves embrace Christianity; so Pareus: and some think this Narcissus was the same with one of that name who is frequently mentioned in the life of Claudius, as a very rich man that had a great family, but was very

wicked and mischievous. It seems, then, there were some good servants, or other retainers, even in the family of a wicked man, a common case, <sup>¹ Timothy 6:1. Compare v. 2. The poor servant is called, and chosen, and faithful, while the rich master is passed by, and left to perish in unbelief. Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.

7. Concerning Rufus (v. 13), *chosen in the Lord*. He was a choice Christian, whose gifts and graces evinced that he was eternally chosen in Christ Jesus. He was one of a thousand for integrity and holiness. — *And his mother and mine*, his mother by nature and mine by Christian love and spiritual affection; as he calls Phebe his sister, and teaches Timothy to treat the elder women as mothers, <sup>¹ Timothy 5:2. This good woman, upon some occasion or other, had been as a mother to Paul, in caring for him, and comforting him; and Paul here gratefully owns it, and calls her mother.

8. Concerning the rest this is observable, that he salutes the *brethren who are with them* (v. 14), and the *saints who are with them* (v. 15), with them in family-relations, with them in the bond of Christian communion. It is the good property of saints to delight in being together; and Paul thus joins them together in his salutations to endear them one to another. Lest any should find themselves aggrieved, as if Paul had forgotten them, he concludes with the remembrance of the rest, as brethren and saints, though not named. In Christian congregations there should be smaller societies linked together in love and converse, and taking opportunities of being often together. Among all those to whom Paul sends greeting here is not a word of Peter, which gives occasion to suspect that he was not bishop of Rome, as the Papists say he was; for, if he was, we cannot but suppose him resident, or at least how could Paul write so long an epistle to the Christians there, and take no notice of him?

Lastly, He concludes with the recommendation of them to the love and embraces one of another: *Salute one another with a holy kiss*. Mutual salutations, as they express love, so they increase and strengthen love, and endear Christians one to another: therefore Paul here encourages the use of them, and only directs that they may be holy — a chaste kiss, in opposition to that which is wanton and lascivious; a sincere kiss, in opposition to that which is treacherous and dissembling, as Judas's, when he betrayed Christ with a kiss. He adds, in the close, a general salutation to them all, in the name of the churches of Christ (v. 16): “*The churches of Christ salute*

you; that is, the churches which I am with, and which I am accustomed to visit personally, as knit together in the bonds of the common Christianity, desire me to testify their affection to you and good wishes for you.” This is one way of maintaining the communion of saints.

ROMANS 16:17-20

APOSTOLIC SALUTATIONS

The apostle having endeavoured by his endearing salutations to unite them together, it was not improper to subjoin a caution to take heed of those whose principles and practices were destructive to Christian love. And we may observe,

I. The caution itself, which is given in the most obliging manner that could be: *I beseech you, brethren*. He does not will and command, as one that lorded it over God's heritage, but for love's sake beseeches. How earnest, how endearing, are Paul's exhortations! He teaches them,

1. To see their danger: Mark those who cause divisions *and offences*. Our Master had himself foretold that divisions and offences would come, but had entailed a woe on those by whom they come (~~4XTE~~ Matthew 18:7), and against such we are here cautioned. Those who burden the church with dividing and offending impositions, who uphold and enforce those impositions, who introduce and propagate dividing and offending notions, which are erroneous or justly suspected, who out of pride, ambition, affectation of novelty, or the like, causelessly separate from their brethren, and by perverse disputes, censures, and evil surmisings, alienate the affections of Christians one from another — these cause divisions and offences, contrary to, or different from (for that also is implied, it is *paraten didachen*), the *doctrine which we have learned*. Whatever varies from the form of sound doctrine which we have in the scriptures opens a door to divisions and offences. If truth be once deserted, unity and peace will not last long. Now, *mark* those that thus cause divisions, *skopein*. Observe them, the method they take, the end they drive at. There is need of a piercing watchful eye to discern the danger we are in from such people; for commonly the pretences are plausible, when the projects are very pernicious. Do not look only at the divisions and offences, but run up those streams to the fountain, and mark those that cause them, and

especially that in them which causes these divisions and offences, those lusts on each side whence come these wars and fightings. A danger discovered is half prevented.

2. To shun it: “*Avoid them.* Shun all necessary communion and communication with them, lest you be leavened and infected by them. Do not strike in with any dividing interests, nor embrace any of those principles or practices which are destructive to Christian love and charity, or to the truth which is according to godliness. — *Their word will eat as doth a canker.*” Some think he especially warns them to take heed of the judaizing teachers, who, under convert of the Christian name, kept up the Mosaical ceremonies, and preached the necessity of them, who were industrious in all places to draw disciples after them, and whom Paul in most of his epistles cautions the churches to take heed of.

II. The reasons to enforce this caution.

1. Because of the pernicious policy of these seducers, v. 18. The worse they are, the more need we have to watch against them. Now observe his description of them, in two things: —

(1.) The master they serve: not *our Lord Jesus Christ*. Though they call themselves Christians, they do not serve Christ; do not aim at his glory, promote his interest, nor do his will, whatever they pretend. How many are there who call Christ Master and Lord, that are far from serving him! But they *serve their own belly* — their carnal, sensual, secular interests. It is some base lust or other that they are pleasing; pride, ambition, covetousness, luxury, lasciviousness, these are the designs which they are really carrying on. Their *God is their belly*, ~~see~~ Philipians 3:19. What a base master do they serve, and how unworthy to come in competition with Christ, that serve their own bellies, that make gain their godliness, and the gratifying of a sensual appetite the very scope and business of their lives, to which all other purposes and designs must truckle and be made subservient.

(2.) The method they take to compass their design: *By good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple*. Their words and speeches have a show of holiness and zeal for God (it is an easy thing to be godly from the teeth outward), and show of kindness and love to those into whom they instil their corrupt doctrines, accosting them courteously when they intend them the greatest mischief. Thus by good words and fair

speeches the serpent beguiled Eve. Observe, They corrupt their heads by deceiving their hearts, pervert their judgments by slyly insinuating themselves into their affections. We have a great need therefore to keep our hearts with all diligence, especially when seducing spirits are abroad.

2. Because of the peril we are in, through our proneness and aptness to be inveigled and ensnared by them: “For *your obedience has come abroad unto all men* — you are noted in all the churches for a willing, tractable, complying people.” And,

(1.) Therefore, because it was so, these seducing teachers would be the more apt to assault them. The devil and his agents have a particular spite against flourishing churches and flourishing souls. The ship that is known to be richly laden is most exposed to privateers. The adversary and enemy covets such a prey, therefore look to yourselves, ~~GOE~~ 2 John 1:8. “The false teachers hear that you are an obedient people, and therefore they will be likely to come among you, to see if you will be obedient to them.” It has been the common policy of seducers to set upon those who are softened by convictions, and begin to enquire what they shall do, because such do most easily receive the impressions of their opinions. Sad experience witnesses how many who have begun to ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, have fatally split upon this rock, which proves it to be much the duty of ministers, with a double care, to feed the lambs of the flock, to lay a good foundation, and gently to lead those that are with young.

(2.) Though it were so, yet they were in danger from these seducers. This Paul suggests with a great deal of modesty and tenderness; not as one suspicious of them, but as one solicitous for them: “You *obedience has come abroad unto all men*; we grant this and rejoice in it: *I am glad therefore on your behalf.*” Thus does he insinuate their commendation, the better to make way for the caution. A holy jealousy of our friends may very well comport with a holy joy in them. “You think yourselves a very happy people, and so do I too: but for all that you must not be secure: *I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.* You are a willing good-natured people, but you had best take heed of being imposed upon by those seducers.” A pliable temper is good when it is under good government; but otherwise it may be very ensnaring; and therefore he gives two general rules: —

[1.] To be *wise unto that which is good*, that is, to be skilful and intelligent in the truths and ways of God. “Be wise to try the spirits, to prove all things, and then to hold fast that only which is good.” There is need of a great deal of wisdom in our adherence to good truths, and good duties, and good people, lest in any of these we be imposed upon and deluded. *Be ye therefore wise as serpents* (^{<406>}Matthew 10:16), wise to discern that which is really good and that which is counterfeit; wise to distinguish things that differ, to improve opportunities. While we are in the midst of so many deceivers, we have great need of that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way, ^{<418>}Proverbs 14:8.

[2.] To be *simple concerning evil* — so wise as not to be *deceived*, and yet so simple as not to be deceivers. It is a holy simplicity, not to be able to contrive, nor palliate, nor carry on, any evil design; *akeraious* — *harmless*, unmixed, inoffensive. *In malice be you children*, ^{<440>}1 Corinthians 14:20. The wisdom of the serpent becomes Christians, but not the subtlety of the old serpent. We must withal *be harmless as doves*. That is a wisely simple man that knows not how to do any thing against the truth. Now Paul was the more solicitous for the Roman church, that it might preserve its integrity, because it was so famous; it was a city upon a hill, and many eyes were upon the Christians there, so that an error prevailing there would be a bad precedent, and have an ill influence upon other churches: as indeed it has since proved in fact, the great apostasy of the latter days taking its rise from that capital city. The errors of leading churches are leading errors. When the bishop of Rome fell as a *great star* from heaven (^{<418>}Revelation 8:10), *his tail drew a third part of the stars* after him, ^{<414>}Revelation 12:4.

3. Because of the promise of God, that we shall have victory at last, which is given to quicken and encourage, not to supersede, our watchful cares and vigorous endeavours. It is a very sweet promise (v. 20): *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet*.

(1.) The titles he gives to God: *The God of peace*, the author and giver of all good. When we come to God for spiritual victories, we must not only eye him as the Lord of hosts, whose all power is, but as the God of peace, a God at peace with us, speaking peace to us, working peace in us, creating peace for us. Victory comes from God more as the God of peace than as the God of war; for, in all our conflicts, peace is the thing we must contend for. God, as the God of peace, will restrain and vanquish all those

that cause divisions and offences, and so break and disturb the peace of the church.

(2.) The blessing he expects from God — a victory over Satan. If he mean primarily those false doctrines and seducing spirits spoken of before, of which Satan was the prime founder and author, yet doubtless, it comprehends all the other designs and devices of Satan against souls, to defile, disturb, and destroy them, all his attempts to keep us from the purity of heaven, the peace of heaven here, and the possession of heaven hereafter. Satan tempting and troubling, acting as a deceiver and as a destroyer, the *God of peace* will *bruise under our feet*. He had cautioned them before against simplicity: now they, being conscious of their own great weakness and folly, might think, “How shall we evade and escape these snares that are laid for us? Will not these adversaries of our souls be at length too hard for us?” “No,” says he, “fear not; though you cannot overcome in your own strength and wisdom, yet the God of peace will do it for you; and through him that loved us we shall be more than conquerors.”

[1.] The victory shall be complete: *He shall bruise Satan under your feet*, plainly alluding to the first promise the Messiah made in paradise (~~GEN~~Genesis 3:15), that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, which is in the fulfilling every day, while the saints are enabled to resist and overcome the temptations of Satan, and will be perfectly fulfilled when, in spite of all the powers of darkness, all that belong to the election of grace shall be brought triumphantly to glory. When Joshua had conquered the kings of Canaan, he called the captains of Israel to set their feet upon the necks of those kings (~~JOSH~~Joshua 10:24), so will Christ, our Joshua, enable all his faithful servants and soldiers to set their feet upon Satan's neck, to trample upon, and triumph over, their spiritual enemies. Christ hath overcome for us; disarmed the strong man armed, broken his power, and we have nothing to do but to pursue the victory and divide the spoil. Let this quicken us to our spiritual conflict, to fight the good fight of faith — we have to do with a conquered enemy, and the victory will be perfect shortly.

[2.] The victory shall be speedy: He shall do it *shortly*. Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come. He hath said it, *Behold, I come quickly*. When Satan seems to have prevailed, and we are ready to give up all for lost, then will the God of peace cut the work short in righteousness. It will

encourage soldiers when they know the war will be at an end quickly, in such a victory. Some refer it to the happy period of their contentions in true love and unity; others to the period of the church's persecutions in the conversion of the powers of the empire to Christianity, when the bloody enemies of the church were subdued and trampled on by Constantine, and the church under his government. It is rather to be applied to the victory which all the saints shall have over Satan when they come to heaven, and shall be for ever out of his reach, together with the present victories which through grace they obtain in earnest of that. Hold out therefore, faith and patience, yet a little while; when we have once got through the Red Sea, we shall see our spiritual enemies dead on the shore, and triumphantly sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. To this therefore he subjoins the benediction, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you* — the good-will of Christ towards you, the good work of Christ in you. This will be the best preservative against the snares of heretics, and schismatics, and false teachers. If the grace of Christ be with us, who can be against us so as to prevail? *Be strong therefore in the grace which is in Christ Jesus*. Paul, not only as a friend, but as a minister and an apostle, who had received grace for grace, thus with authority blesses them with this blessing, and repeats it, v. 24. Romans.

ROMANS 16:21-24

APOSTOLIC SALUTATIONS

As the Apostle had before sent his own salutations to many of this church, and that of the churches round him to them all, he here adds an affectionate remembrance of them from some particular persons who were now with him, the better to promote acquaintance and fellowship among distant saints, and that the subscribing of these worthy names, known to them, might the more recommend this epistle. He mentions,

1. Some that were his particular friends, and probably known to the Roman Christians: *Timotheus my work-fellow*. Paul sometimes calls Timothy his son, as an inferior; but here he styles him his work-fellow, as one equal with him, such a respect does he put upon him: and *Lucius*, probably Lucius of Cyrene, a noted man in the church of Antioch (~~Acts~~ Acts 13:1), as Jason was at Thessalonica, where he suffered for entertaining

Paul (~~Acts~~ Acts 17:5, 6): and *Sosipater*, supposed to be the same with Sopater of Berea, mentioned ~~Acts~~ Acts 20:4. These Paul calls his kinsmen; not only more largely, as they were Jews, but as they were in blood or affinity nearly allied to him. It seems, Paul was of a good family, that he met with so many of his kindred in several places. It is a very great comfort to see the holiness and usefulness of our kindred.

2. One that was Paul's amanuensis (v. 22): *I Tertius, who wrote this epistle*. Paul made use of a scribe, not out of state nor idleness, but because he wrote a bad hand, which was not very legible, which he excuses, when he writes to the Galatians with his own hand (~~Galatians~~ Galatians 6:11): *pelikois grammasi* — with what kind of letters. Perhaps this Tertius was the same with Silas; for Silas (as some think) signifies *the third* in Hebrew, as *Tertius* in Latin. Tertius either wrote as Paul dictated, or transcribed it fairly over out of Paul's foul copy. The least piece of service done to the church, and the ministers of the church, shall not pass without a remembrance and a recompence. It was an honour to Tertius that he had a hand, though but as a scribe, in writing this epistle.

3. Some others that were of note among the Christians (v. 23): *Gaius my host*. It is uncertain whether this was Gaius of Derbe (~~Acts~~ Acts 20:4), or Gaius of Macedonia (~~Acts~~ Acts 19:29), or rather Gaius of Corinth (~~1~~ 1 Corinthians 1:14), and whether any of these was he to whom John wrote his third epistle. However, Paul commends him for his great hospitality; not only my host, but of the *whole church* — one that entertained them all as there was occasion, opened his doors to their church-meetings, and eased the rest of the church by his readiness to treat all Christian stranger that came to them. *Erastus, the chamberlain of the city* is another; he means the city of Corinth, whence this epistle was dated. It seems he was a person of honour and account, one in public place, steward or treasurer. Not many mighty, not many noble, are called, but some are. His estate, and honour, and employment, did not take him off from attending on Paul and laying out himself for the good of the church, it should seem, in the work of the ministry; for he is joined with Timothy (~~Acts~~ Acts 19:22), and is mentioned ~~2~~ 2 Timothy 4:20. It was no disparagement to the chamberlain of the city to be a preacher of the gospel of Christ. *Quartus* is likewise mentioned, and called a brother; for as one is our Father, even Christ, so all we are brethren.

ROMANS 16:25-27

THE APOSTLE'S DOXOLOGY

Here the apostle solemnly closes his epistle with a magnificent ascription of glory to the blessed God, as one that terminated all in the praise and glory of God, and studied to return all to him, seeing all is of him and from him. He does, as it were, breathe out his soul to these Romans in the praise of God, choosing to make that the end of his epistle which he made the end of his life. Observe here,

I. A description of the gospel of God, which comes in in a parenthesis; having occasion to speak of it as the means by which the power of God establishes souls, and the rule of that establishment: *To establish you according to my gospel*. Paul calls it his gospel, because he was the preacher of it and because he did so much glory in it. Some think he means especially that declaration, explication, and application, of the doctrine of the gospel, which he had now made in this epistle; but it rather takes in all the preaching and writing of the apostles, among whom Paul was a principal labourer. Through their word (~~5170~~ John 17:20), the word committed to them. Ministers are the ambassadors, and the gospel is their embassy. Paul had his head and heart so full of the gospel that he could scarcely mention it without a digression to set forth the nature and excellency of it.

1. It is the *preaching of Jesus Christ*. Christ was the preacher of it himself; it began to be spoken by the Lord, ~~5103~~ Hebrews 2:3. So pleased was Christ with his undertaking for our salvation that he would himself be the publisher of it. Or, Christ is the subject-matter of it; the sum and substance of the whole gospel is Jesus Christ and him crucified. We preach not ourselves, says Paul, but Christ Jesus the Lord. That which establishes souls is the plain preaching of Jesus Christ.

2. *It is the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, and by the scriptures of the prophets made known*. The subject-matter of the gospel is a mystery. Our redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ, in the foundation, method, and fruits of it, are, without controversy, a great mystery of godliness, ~~5106~~ 1 Timothy 3:16. This bespeaks the honour of the gospel; it is no vulgar common thing, hammered out by any human

wit, but it is the admirable product of the eternal wisdom and counsel of God, and has in it such an inconceivable height, such an unfathomable depth, as surpass knowledge. It is a mystery which the angels desire to look into, and cannot find the bottom of. And yet, blessed be God, there is as much of this mystery made plain as will suffice to bring us to heaven, if we do not wilfully neglect so great salvation. Now,

(1.) This mystery was kept secret since the world began: *chronois aioniois sesigemenou*. It was *wrapped up in silence from eternity*; so some — *a temporibus aeternis*; it is no new and upstart notion, no late invention, but took rise from the days of eternity and the purposes of God's everlasting love. Before the foundation of the world was laid, the mystery was hid in God, ^{48B}Ephesians 3:9. Or, *since the world began*, so we translate it. During all the times of the Old-Testament this mystery was comparatively kept secret in the types and shadows of the ceremonial law, and the dark predictions of the prophets, which pointed at it, but so that they could not stedfastly look to the end of those things, ^{48B}2 Corinthians 3:13. Thus it was hid from ages and generations, even among the Jews, much more among the Gentiles that sat in darkness and had no notices at all of it. Even the disciples of Christ themselves, before his resurrection and ascension, were very much in the dark about the mystery of redemption, and their notion of it was very much clouded and confused; such a secret was it for many ages. But,

(2.) It is now made manifest. The veil is rent, the shadows of the evening are done away, and life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel, and the Sun of righteousness has risen upon the world. Paul does not pretend to have the monopoly of this discovery, as if he alone knew it; no, it is made manifest to many others. But how is it made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets? Surely, because now the event has given the best exposition to the prophecies of the Old Testament. Being accomplished, they are explained. The preaching of the prophets, as far as it related to this mystery, was in a great measure dark and unintelligible in the ages wherein they lived; but the scriptures of the prophets, the things which they left in writing, are now not only made plain in themselves, but by them this mystery is made known to all nations. The Old Testament does not only borrow light from, but return light to, the revelation of the New Testament. If the New Testament explains the Old, the Old Testament, by way of requital, very much illustrates the New. Thus the Old-Testament prophets prophesy again, now their prophecies are

fulfilled, *before many people, and nations, and tongues*. I refer to ^{<611>}Revelation 10:11, which this explains. Now Christ appears to have been the treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament. To him bear *all the prophets witness*. See ^{<420>}Luke 24:27.

(3.) It is manifested *according to the commandment of the everlasting God* — the purpose, counsel, and decree of God from eternity, and the commission and appointment given first to Christ and then to the apostles, in the fulness of time. They received commandment from the Father to do what they did in preaching the gospel. Lest any should object, “Why was this mystery kept secret so long, and why made manifest now?” — he resolves it into the will of God, who is an absolute sovereign, and gives not an account of any of his matters. The commandment of the everlasting God was enough to bear out the apostles and ministers of the gospel in their preaching. *The everlasting God*. This attribute of eternity is here given up to God very emphatically.

[1.] He is from everlasting, which intimates that though he had kept this mystery secret since the world began, and had but lately revealed it, yet he had framed and contrived it from everlasting, before the worlds were. The oaths and covenants in the written word are but the copy of the oath and covenant which were between the Father and the Son from eternity: those the extracts, these the original. And,

[2.] He is to everlasting, intimating the eternal continuance to us. We must never look for any new revelation, but abide by this, for this is according to the commandment of the everlasting God. Christ, in the gospel, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

(4.) It is *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*. The extent of this revelation he often takes notice of; that whereas hitherto in Judah only God was known, now Christ is salvation to the ends of the earth, to all nations. And the design of it is very observable; it is for the obedience of faith — that they may believe and obey it, receive it and be ruled by it. The gospel is revealed, not to be talked of and disputed about, but to be submitted to. The obedience of faith is that obedience which is paid to the word of faith (see that phrase, ^{<406>}Acts 6:7), and which is produced by the grace of faith. See here what is the right faith — even that which works in obedience; and what is the right obedience — even that which springs from faith; and what is the design of the gospel — to bring us to both.

II. A doxology to that God whose gospel it is, ascribing glory to him for ever (v. 27), acknowledging that he is a glorious God, and adoring him accordingly, with the most awful affections, desiring and longing to be at this work with the holy angels, where we shall be doing it to eternity. This is praising God, ascribing glory to him for ever. Observe,

1. The matter of this praise. In thanking God, we fasten upon his favours to us; in praising and adoring God, we fasten upon his perfections in himself. Two of his principal attributes are here taken notice of: —

(1.) His power (v. 25): *To him that is of power to establish you.* It is no less than a divine power that establishes the saints. Considering the disposition there is in them to fall, the industry of their spiritual enemies that seek to overthrow them, and the shaking times into which their lot is cast, no less than an almighty power will establish them. That power of God which is put forth for the establishment of the saints is and ought to be the matter of our praise, as ^{<612>}Jude 1:24, *To him that is able to keep you from falling.* In giving God the glory of this power we may, and must, take to ourselves the comfort of it — that whatever our doubts, and difficulties, and fears, may be, our God, whom we serve, is of power to establish us. See ^{<615>}1 Peter 1:5; ^{<619>}John 10:29.

(2.) His wisdom (v. 27): *To God only wise.* Power to effect without wisdom to contrive, and wisdom to contrive without power to effect, are alike vain and fruitless; but both together, and both infinite, make a perfect being. He is only wise; not the Father only wise, exclusive of the Son, but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, only wise, compared with the creatures. Man; the wisest of all the creatures in the lower world, is born like a wild ass's colt; nay, the angels themselves are charged with folly, in comparison with God. He only is perfectly and infallibly wise; he only is originally wise, in and of himself; for he is the spring and fountain of all the wisdom of the creatures, the Father of all the lights of wisdom that any creature can pretend to (^{<507>}James 1:17): with him are strength and wisdom, the deceived and deceiver are his.

2. The Mediator of this praise: *Through Jesus Christ. To God only wise through Jesus Christ;* so some. It is in and through Christ that God is manifested to the world as the only wise God; for he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Or rather, as we read it, *glory through Jesus Christ.* All the glory that passes from fallen man to God, so as to be

accepted of him, must go through the hands of the Lord Jesus, in whom alone it is that our persons and performances are, or can be, pleasing to God. Of his righteousness therefore we must make mention, even of his only, who, as he is the Mediator of all our prayers, so he is, and I believe will be to eternity, the Mediator of all our praises.