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Servants of Messiah
16: 1-12

Servants of Messiah DIG: Why was Phoebe chosen to carry this only copy of this letter from Corinth to Rome? What kind of a woman was she? How were Priscilla and Aquilla involved in the church in Rome? How did Paul know them? How can Paul know such a socially wide range of people? What is the significance of so many personal greetings?

REFLECT: Who would you trust to carry something very valuable to a far away place? If you went out of town and wrote a letter to your place of worship, who would you greet and what would you say to them? If someone were to write a letter to your place of worship, what would it say about you? What would it mean to you to have your name on Paul's list?

Paul was a friend maker as well as a soul winner. We are sheep, and sheep flock together.

Paul continues the personal epilogue that began in **15:14** and reveals still more of **his** inner thoughts and feelings, not so much as **an apostle**, but as a fellow servant of **the Lord Yeshua Messiah**. In **15:14-33 he** focused on **his** relationship to **the Lord** in **his** ministry. In **Chapter 16 he** focuses on **his** relationship to other believers with whom **he** has been associated in one way or another in **his** ministry. **He** specifically identifies, and sometimes briefly comments about, those whom **he** felt the closest. **He** reveals **his love** for those fellow laborers for **the Lord, his** mutual accountability with them before **God, his** dependence on them for **his** own ministry, and for **his** own well-being. In many ways, this chapter reflects the personal and practical *agape* **love he** had beautifully described earlier (**to see link click Dd – Walking in Love**), and had portrayed in **Chapter 13** of **his** first letter to the church at Corinth.[398]

Phoebe was **Paul's** emissary to deliver this letter, so **he** wrote officially: **I am introducing to you our sister Phoebe** (art by Sarah Beth Baca: see more information on Links and Resources)**, a shammash** (Greek: *diakonon*, meaning *a servant, from which we get the word deaconess*) **of the congregation at Cenchrea,** a seaport a few miles east of Corinth **(16:1).** There were, of course, no copiers or emails in those days, and even the simplest writing materials were very expensive. It is therefore highly unlikely that **Paul**, through the hand of **Tertius (16:22)**, made more than one copy of this letter. Since **Paul** realized that it would be part of **God's** written Word, **he** made certain that it would be entrusted to only the most reliable of persons. And, although **ADONAI** inspired no woman to write a part of Scripture, **He** used **Phoebe** to transport the first copy of this wonderful letter. **She** carried under the folds of **her** robe the bedrock of our theology. **She** is symbolic of those countless women of **God** who **He** has used and honored with great distinction to accomplish **His** divine plan.

Paul had sent the letter with **Phoebe** over the long and dangerous journey to **Rome**, **so he** said: **Welcome her in the Lord, as God's people should, and help her in whatever matter** (Greek: *pragmati*, meaning *business,* or *anything that was need to be done, from which we get the word pragmatic*) **she may have need; for she has been a big help to many people – including myself (16:2).** So, **Paul** was not only giving **Phoebe** a letter of commendation as a faithful believer, but also giving a letter of reference, as it were, in regard to whatever business **matter she** had in **Rome**. That idea is reinforced by **Paul's** speaking of **her** as **a big help,** which translates *prostatitis*, and was commonly used to signify a patron, a wealthy person who encouraged and financially supported an organization

or cause, as in a patron of the arts. In other words, **Phoebe** was no ordinary **helper**, but one of high esteem and integrity and likely was a business woman of considerable wealth. **She** used **her** influence and **her** financial means, as well as **her** personal time and effort, as a servant of **her Lord**.

Paul continues **his** outpouring of love and affection for a host of beloved **friends** and fellow believers. Doubtless **he** could have included many more, but the ones **he** chose to acknowledge here were especially close and dear. As with **his** comments about **Phoebe, he** was not speaking as their authority so much as a **friend** in **Messiah**.

Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, husband and wife who were **Paul's fellow workers for the Messiah Yeshua (16:3). They** were not apostles or prophets but, nonetheless, were invaluable **workers** in the early Church. **They** had fled from **Rome** when all **Jews** were expelled by Emperor Claudias. It is possible that **she** was a Gentile, and perhaps a **Roman** citizen like **Paul**, and **Aquila** a **Jew**, but the expulsion would have applied to both of **them**, even if only one was **Jewish**. **They** were tent makers like **Paul**, who stayed in **their** home while **he** began **his** ministry in Corinth **(Acts 18:1-3)**. **Aquila and Priscilla** later moved from Corinth to Ephesus with **Paul** and remained there (see the commentary on **Acts Cf – Priscilla and Aquila Teach Apollos**). **They risked their necks to save my life.** It is not known on what occasion **they** were at risk because of **Paul**. This may have happened during the disturbance in Ephesus (see the commentary on **Acts Ch – Idol-Makers Start a Riot in Ephesus**), since **they** hosted **a congregation** in **their home** there **(Acts 19:10; First Corinthians 16:19)**, just as **they** did in **Rome**. **Not only I thank them, but also all the Messianic communities among the Gentiles.** When the ban against **Jews** was lifted, **they** had evidently returned to **Rome** and **Paul** said: **And give my greetings to the congregation**

that meets in their house (16:4-5a).[399]

Give my greetings to my dear friend Epaenetus, who was the first person in the province of Asia, today referred to as **Asia** Minor, the general area of modern Turkey, **to put his trust in the Messiah (16:5b).** Because **Paul** speaks of this man so affectionately, it could well be that **he** not only won **him** to **Messiah** through **his** preaching, but also discipled **him**. Through the intervening years, **Paul** had evidently kept track of **Epaenetus** and was pleased to understand that **he** was now a part of the church at **Rome**.

Give my greetings to Miryam, Paul continues, **who has worked very hard for you (16:6).** We do not know where **Mary** came from, how or when **she** converted, or anything else about **her** except that **she worked very hard** for the church in **Rome**. The phrasing of this verse suggests that **Miryam** may not have known **Paul** personally and that **he** knew of **her hard work** from the reports of others, possibly **Aquila and Priscilla**. The context also suggests that **she** had ministered in the church at **Rome** for some time, and possibly was a founding member who had labored selflessly to establish the fellowship in the capital of the empire.

Greetings to Andronicus and his wife **Junia, relatives of mine,** probably meaning that **they** were fellow Messianic **Jews. Paul** must have felt a special bond in seeing **his relatives** in the flesh become brothers and sisters in **Messiah**.

Besides being **Paul's relatives**, these two believers were at some point **in prison with him.** Because **Paul** was so often in prison **(Second Corinthians 11:23), their** shared **imprisonment** could have been in any number of places. Because **they** were **well known among the emissaries,** we can be sure, like **Paul**, they were **imprisoned** because of **their** faith.

Because **they came to trust in the Messiah before Paul** did **(16:7),** it is quite possible that **they** had suffered persecution under **Paul**, whose great zeal against the church **(Acts 8:1-3**) would not have been diminished by **their** being **his relatives**. It is also possible that the prayers of **Andronicus and Junia** may have been instrumental in **his** eventual salvation. If those things were true, **their** reconciliation would have been all the more gratifying.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, How wonderful that **You** care so passionately for our families and relatives. We long for them to be filled with the peace you give **Your** children. Please work in the hearts of each of our relatives to the third and fourth generations, to come to see how wonderful **You** are and to be willing to accept **You** as their **Lord** and their **Savior**. May they realize how wonderful heaven will be with no worries or pain **(Revelation 21:1-4)** and may they turn in repentance from old sinful habits and run to **You** for help and guidance. Thank **You** for working in their lives by bringing them new friends who will encourage them to come to **You** and may **You** please fill even their sleeping thoughts with the sure hope of eternal peace and joy that **You** give to each of **Your** children. This world and its problems will soon be over but heaven's joys are eternal! **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** In your Holy **Yeshua's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Greetings to Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord (16:8). We know from history and archaeology that **Ampliatus** was a common name for slaves. And because slaves were not allowed to bear the name of free men, this **dear friend** of **Paul** must have been, or possibly still was, a slave. Many slaves in the imperial households of that day had that name, and because **Ampliatus** was in **Rome**, it is conceivable that **he** was among the believers in **Caesar's household** mentioned by **Paul** in **his** letter to the church at Philippi **(Philippians 4:22)**.[400]

Greetings to Urbanus, our fellow worker for the Messiah, and to my dear friend Stachys (16:9). Urbanus was a common **Roman** name, suggesting that **he** may have been a **Roman** citizen. Unlike **Urbanus**, the name **Stachys**, which

means *ear of corn*, was a Greek and uncommon. Since **he** is called **Paul's dear friend**, **he** would have been closely associated with **him**, but we don't know where or in what relationship. Many of those to whom **Paul** sent **greetings** were not outstanding leaders in the early Messianic Community. That fact reveals **Paul's** deep and sincere love for fellow believers, no matter how little known they were or how seemingly insignificant their service was from a purely human perspective.

Greetings to Appeles, whose trust in the Messiah has been tested and proved (16:10a). We know nothing about **Paul's** relationship with **Appeles**, and cannot be certain how the two were personally acquainted. But whether from **his** own experience with this man or from reliable reports from others, **Paul** recognized **Appeles** as being **tested and proved in Messiah.**

Greet those in the household of Aristobulus (10:b). Paul's next **greeting** was to a group of believers whose names and numbers we do not know. Because **he himself** was not **greeted**, it seems certain that **Aristobulus himself** was not a believer. How many of **his household** were believers, and whether **they** were family members, servants, or both, we are not told. From his careful study of B'rit Chadashah times, noted biblical scholar J. B. Lightfoot suggests that **Aristobulus** may have been the brother of **Herod Agrippa I** (see the commentary on **Acts 8I – Herod Agrippa Gets His Due**). If so, **he** would have been a close ally of the Emperor Claudius. When **Aristobulus** died, **his** household – including **his** wife, children, slaves and possessions – would have become the property of the emperor, although **they** would still be referred to as **the household of Aristobulus.** It is therefore possible that this group of believers could have been a part of the imperial household.

Greet my relative, Herodion, and greet those of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord (16:11). Herodion, therefore, would have been a **Jew**, as well as a spiritual brother in **the Lord** with **Paul**. As the name indicated, **Herodion** was related to the family of **Herod** in some way, and as a result, may have been associated with **the household of Narcissus.** Some scholars believe that **Narcissus** mentioned here was closely connected to the Emperor Claudius as his secretary. Because all contact with the emperor had to be channeled through the secretary, he became extremely wealthy through the many bribes he received for granting access to, or simply for corresponding with, the emperor. It is therefore possible that at least two **households** within the palace had believers in them. If so, those believers may have been among those **of Caesar's household** who joined **Paul**, then imprisoned in **Rome**, in sending greetings to the church at

Philippi **(Philippians 4:22)**.

Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, possibly twin sisters, whose names mean *delicate* and *dainty*. Those words may have characterized **their** lives before salvation, but spiritually, there were **women who** were **working hard for the Lord (16:12a).**

Greet Persis, no doubt receiving **her** name from her native land of Persia. Not only was **she the beloved,** suggesting (by the definite article **the**) **she** was loved by everyone who knew **her**, but **she** was also one who had **done a lot of hard work for the Lord (16:12b).** Because the **work** of **Tryphaena and Tryphosa** is spoken of in the present tense and that of **Persis** in **the** past tense, it may have been that the first two were younger women and still active, and that **Persis** was an older woman who had already lived most of **her** productive years. But all three were noted for **their work for** and **in the Lord**.[401]