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Some Friends to Greet 16: 13-16

Some Friends to Greet DIG: Go through verses 1-16, listing all the things for which Paul commends these people. What does this show you about how we ought to measure a person's success in life? Although Paul had never been to Rome, how aware was he of this church?

REFLECT: Who are some people you know whom you consider real servants of Messiah? What impresses you about them? Have you reached out to them lately? Why not do so now? How do you let your love show to believers and unbelievers, not merely in words, but actions?

Don't let love be a mere outward show. Recoil from what is evil, and cling to what is good.

Paul continues **his greetings**. It's as if **he** wants to make certain **he** doesn't overlook anyone who has touched **his** life in a significant way. **His love** isn't self-promoting, but thoughtful, genuine, and **Messiah**-oriented, for all of these people are ambassadors for **Messiah**. **Their** history is our history. They carried the banner of **Messiah** in **their** generation. **They** fulfilled the warnings of **their** teacher and friend, **Paul**, who taught: **Don't let love be a mere outward show. Recoil from what is evil, and cling to what is good. Love each other devotedly and with brotherly love; and set examples for each other in showing respect. Don't be lazy when hard work is needed, but serve the Lord with spiritual fervor (12:9-11).**[402]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for how wise **Your love** is – loving good, and also wisely hating evil. In this day when everyone chooses what is his own truth and so supposedly sin/evil no longer exists – it is refreshing to see **Your love** which hates evil. **You** do not gloss over sin, nor ignore it – but **You** forgive sin when sinners repent. **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (First John 1:9**). Thank **You** for **Your** complete forgiveness to those who have a holy fear of **You**. **For as high***

as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us (Psalms 103:11-12). Your love *is so awesome to willingly plan to give* ***Yeshua's*** *righteousness to those who l****ove You****. **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21).** It is a joy to* ***love*** *and follow* ***You****! In* ***Yeshua's*** *holy name and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*

Greet Rufus, chosen by the Lord, an extraordinary believer in every sense of the word **(16:13a)**. We learn from **Mark's** Gospel, which was written around 58-59 AD from **Rome** after **Paul** wrote **his** letter to **Rome** in 57 AD from Corinth, that **Simon of Cyrene**, a city on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa, who was pressed into service by the soldiers to carry **Yeshua's** cross **(Mark 15:21).** Only **Mark** mentions **Simon's sons, Alexander and Rufus**, suggesting that **they** were known to the church in **Rome**.

Scholars therefore agree that the **Rufus** mentioned here by **Paul** was one of **the sons** of **Simon the Cyrene**, who may have been brought to saving faith through that contact with **Yeshua** on the way to Calvary (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Ls – Then They Brought Jesus to Golgotha, the Place of the Skull**). If so, **he** must have died before **Paul's** letter to **the Romans**, or else **he** surely would have been greeted and commended by **Paul**. If **Simon**, the man privileged to have carried **Yeshua's** cross and to have walked beside **Him** to Golgotha, had become a believer, **he** would have been among the most honored men in the early church. It is obvious that **his wife**, **the mother** of **Rufus**, believed and it seems safe to assume that **Alexander** likewise was saved, giving **Mark** the reason to mention **him** along with **his brother**. **Alexander** was either dead or did not live in **Rome** at the time, or else **Paul** would have greeted **him** also. **And his mother, who has been a mother to me too (16:13b).** Like many Jews saved at Shavu'ot (see the commentary on **Acts An – Peter Speaks to the Shavu'ot Crowd**), **Simon** and **his** family may have chosen to stay in Jerusalem and therefore had the opportunity to know and befriend **Paul** during **his** visits there.[403]

Paul makes no comment about **Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers** and sisters **who are with them (16:14).** The mention of **the brothers** and sisters **who are with them** indicates that the five men named here were leaders of one of the many assemblies of believers in **Rome**.

Paul's greetings here were to another such congregation of believers, **Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all of God's people who are with them (16:15).** These were men and women who were obedient in planting seeds of faith that have been passed along one person at a time to the present day. If this is but a sampling of the early church, we can conclude that this church was distinguished by its faithful workers and their **love** for each other.[404]

The careful research of William Barclay sheds light on one of the people **Paul** mentions in this beautiful passage. About **Nereus**, Barclay writes: In 95 AD there happened an event that shocked **Rome**. Two of the most distinguished people in **Rome** were condemned for being believers of **the Way (Acts 9:2)**. They were husband and wife. The husband was Flavius Clemens. He had been consul of **Rome**. The wife was Domatilla and she was of royal blood. She was the granddaughter of Vespasian, a former Emperor, and the niece of Domitian, the reigning Emperor. In fact, the two sons of Flavius Clemens and Domatilla had been designated Domitian's successors in the imperial power. Flavius was executed and Domatilla was banished to the island of Pontia where "she [Domatilla] drew out a long martyrdom for the name of **Christ**." And now the point – the name of the servant of Flavius and Domatilla was **Nereus**. Is it possible that **Nereus** the slave had something to do with making two believers of Flavius Clemens the ex-consul and Domitila the princess of royal blood? Maybe this is merely an idle speculation, for **Nereus** was a common name . . . but then again, it may be true.[405]



Greet one another with a holy kiss, which is a Middle-Eastern custom **(First Corinthians 16:20; Second Corinthians 13:12; First Thessalonians 5:26; First Peter 5:14).** In recent years hugging and holy kissing has come back in vogue in some other countries as well, after centuries of being out of fashion (a handshake is obviously a much weaker expression of body language). When

between members of the opposite sex, care must be taken that it is a **holy kiss** and not an unholy one! More generally, in an age of transition when customs are changing, the principle of **Chapter 14**, not causing distress to another for whom **Messiah** died, applies here: those who experience discomfort from a given form of bodily expression should not be made to suffer it against their will.[406]

Finally, **Paul** said that **all the Messiah's congregations send their greetings to you,** doubtless referring to all the congregations that **he** had recently visited **(16:16).** We know from the B'rit Chadashah that there were differences of opinions in the early Messianic Community, even among the most spiritual leaders, including the apostles. Even serious factionalism, such as that in the church at Corinth, was not unknown, but there were no denominations as we know of them today, no splinter groups within the body of orthodox believers. They **all** simply were **Messiah's congregations**. Those believers, **Jews** and **Gentiles**, wealthy and poor, free and slave, famous and unknown, enjoyed in **Messiah** the depth of fellowship and partnership the world has no way of understanding.

But the world can observe it, and **God's people** should give the world more opportunity to do so. **Yeshua** assured us: **Everyone will know that you are my talmidim by the fact that you have love for each other (John 13:35).** That **love** must be genuine and pure for it to strengthen the Church or to have an impact on the world. For that reason, **Paul** had earlier commanded: **Don't let love be a mere outward show. Recoil from what is evil, and cling to what is good. Love each other devotedly and with brotherly love; and set examples for each other in showing respect . . . Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be sensitive to each other's needs – don't think yourselves better than others, but make humble people your friends. Don't be conceited (12:9-10** and **15-16).**

That kind of **love** characterized the church at Ephesus, of whom **Paul** wrote that he had **heard about their trust in the Lord Yeshua and their love for all God's people (Ephesians 1:15).** Again, linking faith in **Messiah** with **love for all God's people**, **he** told the Colossian believers: **For we have heard of your trust in the Messiah Yeshua and of the love you have for all God's people (Colossians 1:4).** Finally, **he** would say to the church at Thessalonica: **Concerning love for the brothers we do not need to write you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other (First Thessalonians 4:9).**[407]