

13.

Romans 16:1-16

Be Honourable

Big hearted people aren't afraid of others getting the lime-light or of applauding the efforts of those who might otherwise be considered competitors. The apostle Paul's list of notable Christian leaders in Rome is very revealing and should give us pause to evaluate our own preparedness to honour those who serve alongside us. This is especially so when you consider that the great apostle Paul pays tribute to the Christian leaders now in Rome — eight of whom are women!

1. Who does Paul commend to the Romans first, and what does he say about this minister? What had been Paul's relationship to this minister? (Romans 16:1-2)
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It appears that the first minister Paul commends was a seasoned *apostolic* minister who had a proven track-record of ministry in Cenchreae, Greece (see Acts 18:18). Some English bibles describe this minister as a "deaconess" in their translator notes on Paul's description of her as 'a servant'. But the Greek word used by Paul here is *diakonos* which is exactly the same word he uses to describe Timothy in First Timothy 4:6.

The next person and her husband that Paul greets were Roman Jewish converts to Christ whom he had met when Caesar Claudius had banished Jews from Rome (Acts 18:1-2)

2. Who are these people why did Paul feel so fond of them? (Romans 16:3-5a)
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The expansion of Christianity is marked by the taking of cities — *the usual centres of influence in a culture*. What is particularly striking about Paul's list greetings is just how many of these believers he had already established a relationship with - and how, after their conversion to Christ during Paul's previous travels, were prepared to go to Rome as an ambassador of Christ to reach the people of this great metropolis. Epaenetus (Romans 16:5b) is a further example of this.

3. Do you know of any believer/s who have moved from their comfortable neighbourhood into a troubled neighbourhood/community/city in order to be an ambassador for Christ? Share.

4. Who are the other husband and wife ministry team which Paul greets (Romans 16:7) and how does Paul commend them and their ministry?

5. Some people have a very harsh view of the apostle Paul; but what do his greetings to these various people actually reveal about him?

6. Paul's charge for the believers to 'greet one another with a holy kiss' (Romans 16:16) may sound odd to our western ears, but probably not if you live in the Middle East. What might the point of this affectionate greeting have been, and what principle might we draw from it for today?

Amen.