

Romans Lesson 21 Articles

It seems that the believers in Rome did not meet in one general assembly but were members of various household flocks. Note vv. 5, 10, 11, and 15. There was no “church at Rome” in the organized sense (compare Phil. 1:1). Rome was a large city, and it is possible that some of the assemblies were composed mainly of Jewish believers.

Phoebe was evidently a deaconess on her way to Rome, and hence the bearer of the epistle. “Receive her and assist her” (v. 2) are good admonitions for Christians today. Some scholars suggest that she was going to Rome for assistance with a legal problem, and thus Paul was asking the saints to aid her with this special problem.

We meet Priscilla and Aquila again! What dear friends they were to Paul! Review Acts 18:2–28, 1 Cor. 16:19, and 2 Tim. 4:19. The incident where these two saints risked their lives for Paul is not recorded in the NT, but how indebted the church is to them for saving him! They had left Rome because of persecution, had met Paul in Corinth, and now were building a church in their house back in Rome. How wonderful are the ways of the Lord and the workings of His providence!

Nine women are mentioned in this chapter: Phoebe, v. 1; Priscilla, v. 3; Mary, v. 6; Tryphena, v. 12; Tryphosa, v. 12; Persis, v. 12; the mother of Rufus, v. 13; Julia, v. 15; and the sister of Nereus, v. 15. Some critics have accused Paul of being against women, but no man ever did more to emancipate women from heathen bondage and dignify them in the manner God intended from the beginning. Paul teaches that women have a special and important place in the ministry of the local church.

In several verses, Paul mentions his “kinsmen” (vv. 7, 11, 21). This does not necessarily mean blood relative, but more likely fellow Jews, possibly of the tribe of Benjamin.

Verse 7 mentions two men who were saved before Paul was, and were also noted by the apostles. They were not apostles themselves, but were held in repute among the apostles.

Rufus is an interesting man (v. 13). Mark 15:21 states that the Simon who carried the cross was the father of Alexander and Rufus, as though these two men were well-known among the churches at the time Mark wrote his Gospel. It is possible that Simon was actually the father of the Rufus of v. 13, and that he also won his mother to the Lord. If he and his family stayed in Jerusalem, it is possible that they had Paul in their home, and that Paul “adopted” Rufus’s mother as his own.¹

16:17 — *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*

Division is a sure mark of the evil one. Factions and schisms and rancor and bitter interactions all point to the activity of Satan. God calls His people to unity to demonstrate His love to the world.

16:19 — *I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.*

We’re on the wrong track if we’re constantly asking ourselves, “What’s wrong with it?” That’s a question for immature believers, not growing ones. God wants us to focus on what’s good, not on what might be bad.

16:25 — *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel*

All Christian growth ultimately comes down to our willing partnership with God, the only One who causes that growth. “So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase” (1 Cor. 3:7).²

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (pp. 411–412). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Stanley, C. F. (2005). *The Charles F. Stanley life principles Bible: New King James Version* (Ro 16:17–1 Co). Nashville, TN: Nelson Bibles.