

# Romans 16:13-16

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*Paul finishes listing the believers whom he wishes to greet in Rome, and likely also his allies in contending against the competing Jewish “authorities” who have slandered Paul’s gospel of grace.*

*Rufus is called a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine (v 13). Paul considers Rufus's mother as his own, likely due to the kindness and hospitality she had shown him in the past. One of the great rewards/benefits Jesus promised to believers is relationships with other believers that are as close as family (Mark 10:30). We do not know much about *Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, or Hermas* (v 14). Presumably, since the names are listed together, they have something in common, perhaps leaders of a church, since Paul said, *and the brethren with them* (v 14).*

It is interesting to note how many people Paul knows in the Roman church, although he had never been to Rome. Since Rome was the center of the world at that time in every way politically, economically, and culturally, it is not surprising that there may have been a mass immigration to Rome of people Paul had met in his travels.

Paul says to *greet Philologus and Julia*, who were likely either husband and wife or brother and sister. Paul names *Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them* (v 15), indicating that these people were likely connected to another house church in Rome. Paul then instructs the believers to *greet one another with a holy kiss* (v 16). The *holy kiss* was a customary gesture of shared brotherhood in Christ. Paul closes his greetings by saying *all the churches of Christ greet the believers in Rome* (v 16).

Paul listed many Christians he knew personally, and could attest to their virtue and devotion to God. There is a story of success in faith with each person he acknowledges. Epaphroditus is noted as the first convert to Christianity in Asia, and a beloved friend to Paul (v 10). Mary is a believer who is described as a hard worker, as are Urbanus, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis (v 12).

Paul expresses a deep love for Epaphroditus, Ampliatus, Stachys, and Persis. Paul has a rich history with these saints, one made up of dedication, suffering, and love for one another. Andronicus and Junias were imprisoned with Paul at some point. They are called “kinsmen,” most likely fellow Israelites, and they are revered by the apostles for their ministry. Herodion too is apparently a kinsman of Paul, a fellow Jew.

All of these people are brethren and saints, as are all who believe in Jesus Christ. Paul views life as a team effort. He described the church as a body in Chapter 12 to show what righteous living looks like. Jesus is the head of the body. It is inferred that these saints are examples of the body of Christ functioning together in unity. These people helped Paul; his ministry was supported by the believers he acknowledged. Paul taught throughout this letter that Christians should live harmoniously together and care for one another with love.

It is likely that Paul mentions all these people to further combat the slander waged against him by competing Jewish “authorities” in Rome (Romans 3:8). Paul’s gospel and position as an apostle had been called into question by this slander; Paul had not visited the Roman church at the writing of the letter (Romans 1:10) and not every believer in Rome knew Paul personally.

So, Paul closes his letter by referencing all the people he knows who are there in Rome, who can validate his apostleship and are on the side of operating under God’s grace rather than becoming subject to religious rules. These are people with a great reputation right there in the Roman community, and they can vouch for Paul as well as contend for the faith.

It would not be surprising to find that this group of saints in Rome were the ones that alerted Paul of the slander taking place against the gospel of grace. It could be that they requested Paul’s help in combatting the rival Jewish “authorities,” and that Paul wrote this letter to arm them in contending for the faith. If so, by listing them and giving them special commendation, Paul is endorsing their leadership with his apostolic authority, thus providing them with additional credibility in fighting for the gospel of grace.

We know Paul has done ministry with some of these people in other parts of the world, most notably Prisca and Aquila (Romans 16:3). Through them, the Roman believers can have better insight into the gospel of grace, which is supported by Paul’s authority and ministry. Paul has written this letter to uphold the gospel of God’s grace since Paul’s teaching had been slandered and misrepresented.

Paul is also pointing to people whom he trusts, admires, and loves. These people are sources of faith and leadership. Paul’s words are encouraging, edifying, and point to what the body of Christ looks like when it lives in harmony, affecting the world through its unity in obeying God by faith.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>13</sup> Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. <sup>14</sup> Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. <sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. <sup>16</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.**