

Introduction

Many have chosen to bypass this chapter, not spending much time in it. This is a great loss for them for there is a mountain of information to be found here both historically and doctrinally.

Verse Commentary

Verse 1 *I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:*

Phebe = bright, to give light.

Servant - Deaconess, minister, teacher, a waiter of tables.

Qualifications of Deacons:

1 Timothy 3:7-13

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

- a. Grace - dignified, reputable
- b. Not double tongued. - repeating ones self; telling a different story
- c. Not given to much wine.
- d. Nor greedy of filthy lucre. (gain)
- e. Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.
- f. First be proven.(to test, examine, to see whether a thing is genuine or not)
- g. Then use the office....found blameless (irreproachable, unaccused)
- h. Husband of one wife
- i. Ruling their children well.

Phebe, called a deaconess by the scripture, would no doubt possess these same qualifications.

Verse 2 *That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also.*

“Receive her in the Lord:

- **Romans 15:7.** *Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*

The church should be devoted to receiving one another. Paul exhorts in **Philippians 1:27** to strive together in one mind for the faith of the gospel. The church was to assist her in whatsoever business she had need of them. This means they were to join her and work along side of her.

- **Philippians 1:7** *Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.*

Succourer: *An assistant; a woman set over others; a female guardian, caring for the affairs of others and aiding them with her resources.*

- She was a helper of many. It also conveys more. According to the Greek lexicon, it means to be a prefect, a presider, magistrate, a curator, guardian, patron. Tradition sometimes causes us to be hesitant to recognize someone in the place given to them of the Lord. We should recognize what the word says and follow it. The scripture does not call the women elders, but it is obvious that Phebe held an important place in the assembly at Cenchrea.

Verse 3 & 4 *Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*

Priscilla and Aquila were Jews that had been commanded to leave Rome along with all the rest. They became helpers of Paul and traveled to Syria with him. It was probably at Corinth that they hazarded their lives protecting Paul. It was not uncommon for Paul to be in trouble because of his being in places of civil unrest.

Verse 5 *Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.*

The synagogues of the Jews had meeting places, but the Christians did not, so they used their homes for that purpose. Epaenetus was probably converted during Paul's long stay in Achaia.

Verse 6 *Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.*

Paul was careful to speak of those who spent much time helping him. Much of the labor was in connection with the church.

Verse 7 *Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*

It is agreed that these two were kinsmen of Paul, and had been in prison with him. It is not known where because Paul was often in prison. These were converted before Paul and probably had a hand in his experience.

Verse 8 *Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.*

Amplias - he is one of whom little is known other than he was probably a convert of this apostle.

Verse 9 *Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.*

Urbane and Stachys - helpers and beloved. It is obvious that Paul had love and many memories of these people.

Verse 10 *Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.*

Apelles - It is safe to say this man had proven himself faithful to God. Those of Aristobulus- he was the grandson of Herod the Great who was brother of Herod Agrippa of Judea.

- **Philippians 1:14** *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

The faithfulness of men, both then and now, to lead men to our Lord is a beautiful thing to see.

Verse 11 *Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.*

Herodion - He also was part of the ones employed by various parts of government.

Narcissus - secretary to Emperor Claudius.

Verse 12 *Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord.*

Tryphena and Tryphosa - these were sisters, possibly of Caesar's household, either as related or servants. In any case, remembering these names, shows how deeply Paul's ministry reached into the high places of government.

- **Acts 9:15 & 16** *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

Persis - Paul said of this man, 'he labored much in the Lord.' Some were more zealous for the Lord than others.

Verse 13 *Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.*

Rufus- the son of Simon the Cyrene who bore the cross for Jesus. His mother is also remembered. Paul calls her his mother also. This shows the depth of how the Spirit joins us together in Christ. It is also an example of the tender love that develops between God's people.

Verse 14 *Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.*

These five men followed Paul and some other brothers with them. We can't help but wonder what motivated these men to follow this Christian way. There must be something they found to satisfy their hunger for the deeper things of Christ. We say deeper things because the average Christian is so shallow.

Verse 15 *Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.*

Looking at this group gives some insight as to how the Gospel spreads. There is something about this Gospel; when you find it, you want to share it. The blessed result is people are saved.

Verse 16 *Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*

This is a custom of the Middle East and still is today.

Verse 17 *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

We read this verse and realize Paul is expressing great concern for the people he loves. It is surprising that this divisiveness was present in the church at this early stage of history. For a man to be willing to insist on his will being followed, shows a selfishness and carnality. These men usually are persuasive and have a certain ministry they want to promote or to seek a following for themselves. This man does not know how to let the Spirit guide him and enable him to have the fruit he should have. The fact that Paul said to "mark them", shows how unspiritual these people are.

- **Philippians 3: 17-19** *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)*

This seems harsh, but when we realize how hurtful these ones are to the church, then we understand the gravity of this thing. In our verse 17, we hear Paul saying to “mark them”. This means to look, watch, reconnoiter. The word “reconnoiter” has this definition: to investigate or inspect for the purpose of gaining information as to how to help or to point him out. There is a possibility that our Christian love and carefulness would cause us to be hesitant to obey this instruction. When we are able to see the danger in this selfish attitude, we are more ready to follow the instruction. Paul spent two chapters, 14 and 15, telling us how to receive one another and love each other and now, he was lead of the Spirit to warn against some who cause trouble.

- **Acts 20:29-31** *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears*

In our Acts 20 reference, notice there are at least two sources these men who cause division can arise from; outside the church and inside the church.

Verse 18 *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

This verse describes the attitude and character of such men. We must realize that a saved person might do these very wrong things. If we are unwilling to deal with them, according to the scripture, the church will encounter some very serious hurt. This hurt could influence for a very long time. Often these men seem so helpful and likable, but by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of some in the church.

Verse 19 *For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.*

This verse gives a good understanding concerning this troublesome problem. He calls it being wise unto that which is good and simple regarding this evil.

Verse 20 *And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

This is a promise for those church leaders who are willing to follow the scriptures concerning the solution of these kinds of problems. This promise works in all issues of the church.

Verse 21 *Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.*

Timothy: He was a man that could be sent almost anywhere, even in difficult places and he would clear up the issues. Paul said, “I have no man likeminded who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. (**Philippians 2:20**) In other words, following Jesus with a whole heart.

Lucius, Jason, Sosipater - It is felt by most that though Paul calls these men, my kinsmen, the meaning is fellow Christians.

Verse 22 *I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.*

Tertius - The man who wrote the epistle.

Verse 23 *Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.*

Gaius - Apparently this man was very hospitable to Paul and the whole church. Paul taught them to be given to hospitality.

Erastus - The chamberlain was the treasurer. Sometimes this is translated steward. To be sure, Paul's ministry reached the men who took care of the city.

Verse 24 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

A proper ending to a book that is of inestimable value to the Christian community. This apostle gave himself to the Lord and allowed God to be glorified in him. He taught us how to do the same.

Verse 25 *Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,*

Paul knew there was no other way to establish a man before God and make him ready for the coming of Jesus Christ. It was not an ego trip but a realizing that God uses men to do His work in this world. Paul's gospel is the guideline and the preaching of Jesus Christ is the power to accomplish the work. The revelation of this mystery is that the Gentiles would be brought into the Kingdom of God, and the church is formed, which is the grand finale and fully glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 26 *But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:*

This great mystery was prophesied and Paul the apostle, was given the job of making this mystery known to men. It is a very rewarding reality to realize God did not call on angels to make this mystery known but called on men. We are part of that group who are given the task of preaching this gospel. God manifested Himself first through His Son. Then He sent His Son to the cross, which enabled Christ to take residence in His people and preach this wonderful good news.

Verse 27 *To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*

We can quickly say, "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever, Amen."