



How Shall We Then Live? Part 5

(In re: to those coming from the outside and claiming to be Christian)

1. Recommendation from reliable sources is necessary for those Christians attempting to transfer their church membership or raise support as missionaries. In the early church, written forms of recommendation was the common way of confirming one's legitimacy as a minister or transferring their membership from one church to another (2Co 3:1; Phi 2:19-30 [Timothy and Epaphroditus]; Col 4:10 [Mark]; Act 15:22-27 [Judas and Silas]).

1.1. Transferring membership: Phoebe (1-2) = Paul was Phoebe's reliable source. "welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints" = ML: welcome her into the membership of your church. "help her in whatever she may need from you" = Help her get established in Rome (e.g. Act 4:32-35 w/Pentecost event). "she has been a patron [literally, minister] of many and of myself as well" = Phoebe's influence and input had made many people – including Paul, better Christians. Great question to ask ourselves: "has my influence and input made my bros/sis better Christians?" How Paul knew Phoebe (plausible theories): 1) she was a member of the Corinthian church where Paul had spent considerable time (Act 18:1-11 = 18 mos, 20:1-3 = 3 mos; "Cenchreae" was the eastern seaport of Corinth). 2) Paul entrusted her to carry his letter to the Romans from Corinth - his place of residence at the time of writing (Rom 15:22-25 [Jerusalem then Rome] w/Act 19:21 w/Act 20:1-3 [makes a pit stop at Corinth]; Consider also the greetings from Corinthian members Gaius and Erastus – 23 w/1Co 1:14 and 2Ti 4:20).

1.2. Raising support as a missionary: Paul. Though an apostle, the Roman church was not one Paul had planted (tradition credits its planting to Peter). As a result, he too provides reliable sources to bolster the church at Rome's support of him as a missionary to Spain (Rom 15:24). His sources included: 1) famous church planters (3-5a - Prisca and Aquila [P&A had planted multiple churches including one in/near Rome and one near Corinth - 1Co 16:19]). 2) members of good standing in the Roman church who knew Paul (5b-6, 8-13), 3) men of spiritual renown in the Christian world (7 "well known" = Outstanding). 4) other local churches and their members (14-15) = Scholars view the phrases "the brothers [or brothers and sisters] who are with them" (v14) and "all the saints who are with them" (v15) as indicating members of different churches also located in the area in/near Rome. 5) important members in the Corinthian church (21-23) = Besides Tertius (Paul's secretary), and Timothy (missionary companion of Paul in Corinth - Act 20:4¹), those mentioned were likely leaders in the Corinthian church or other men of spiritual renown in the Christian world (e.g., "Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen" = Possible missionary companions with Paul. Hence the proximity of their mention to Timothy).

PNTM: "Stranger danger" also applies to those professing to be Christian. IOW: don't trust somebody simply because they claim to be Christian (Mat 7:15-20 = Recognize them by their practice *not their profession* – Tit 1:16). The gullibility of modern Christianity in this respect is why so many people have been abused, manipulated, raped and robbed by individuals or institutions claiming to be Christian².

(In re: to false brethren and teachers)

2. Christian Unity/Fellowship requires more than Christian profession given Satan's strategy of seeding churches with false brethren and teachers in order to divide/destroy God's kingdom and people (16-17) "holy kiss" = Jewish (platonic) gesture indicating that the recipient has been found to be "holy" – i.e., a loyal follower of God and His Law. As such, it was only given to those people whose lives could be testified to by the church or other reliable sources. In this light, consider Jesus' response to Judas' kiss (Luk 22:48) "...a [holy] kiss?" = IOW: You are using as a sign of disloyalty (Mar 14:44) what God has designated as the sign of loyalty. In relation to Satan seeding false brethren and teachers for the purpose of destroying God's church and people (Mat 13:24-30, 36-43; 2Co 11:1-5 w/13-15).

¹ Hence no mention of prior residence before accompanying Paul (like the others listed in the verse).

² Example: between 1998 and 2001, at least 80,000 people lost \$2 billion in religious scams (Christianity Today, "The Fraud Buster").

3. False brethren and teachers are:

3.1. guilty of questioning or projecting doubt toward God's appointed teachers in the church (17) "causes divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine you have been taught" = They will (by their words/actions) encourage questioning (doubt) among God's people in relation to their teachers and their teaching (Gen 3:1 "Did God actually say?"; e.g., "What's your take on pastor's teaching from Sunday?"; "Does it seem reasonable to you that people should have to move to Denver to attend a biblical church?" "I'm concerned that we may be baptizing people too young to know what they are getting into."). "Avoid them" [ἐκκλίνω = exclude] = Do not have fellowship with them (exclude them from fellowship).

3.2. attracted to those they think are "naïve" (too trusting, weak when it comes to discernment) or can easily be won over through "flattery" and "smooth talk" (18) "flattery" [εὐλογία = eulogy] = Agreeableness and praise for the purpose of manipulation (nice people). "smooth talk" = Intelligent sounding bullsh*t (people who use big words yet are confusing or say nothing – e.g. "it is within our self-interest to understand the topography of our lives unto ourselves. The future states that there is no time other than the collapsation of that sensation of the mirror of the memories in which we are living. Common knowledge but important nonetheless." – Reggie Watts³).

3.3. a real threat to the faithfulness of the true Christian (can shipwreck their soul – 2Co 11:1-4; 1Ti 1:19-20 w/2Ti 2:16-18; 2Pe 2:18-22) who does not possess the "wisdom" (or knowledge) to spot them (19) "be wise to what is good and innocent as to what is evil" = Be knowledgeable as to who is a legitimate follower of God and who is not – or no longer (e.g., Judas).

(Final thoughts/additional truths to be gleaned from the final chapter of Romans)

4. Receiving the Father's peace and the Son's favor includes rescuing us from Satan's powerful worldly forces (20) "crush Satan" = Satan's persecution of Christians through Nero (the beast of Revelation) and the Jews (the false prophet and whore of Babylon of Revelation) would soon come to an end. Within a span of about a dozen years from the time Paul writes to the Romans (A.D. 57-59), Nero – Rome's last Caesar, would commit suicide and Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed by Roman armies (A.D. 64-70 A.D.). These two events would usher in the "age of the church," a time when Satan's activity in the world would become greatly restricted (relative to what it had been in the past) (Rev 20:1-2). "under your feet" = Under the feet of Rome. Rome or the Roman empire would be at the center of Satan's fall from global influence.

5. Women play a crucial role in advancing God's kingdom and church (1 – Phoebe [ministered to the Apostle Paul - i.e., he was a better Christian because of her], 3 – Prisca [supported missionaries, disciplined future pastors and hosted churches in her house – Act 18:18, 26], 6 – Mary ["worked hard for you" = The Roman church = Possibly a reference to her help in starting the Roman church], 12 – Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis [workers in the Lord", "who has worked hard in the Lord" = ML a reference to gospel-related labor since this is Paul's favorite way to use the term "work" in the book of Romans when referring to the kingdom-advancing labor of God's people– e.g., 14:20, 15:17, 15:23, 16:3, 6], 13 – Rufus' mother [provided motherly support/comfort to Paul who may have been separated from his mother due to his conversion; Psa 27:10; Mat 19:29], 15 – Julia and Nereus' sister ["all the saints with them" = Once more, a reference to a house church. These women [most likely of the same family w/those mentioned in the verse] made their house available for church – Similar v14]; Consider also Jesus' mother, Mary and the eight women who supported Jesus and His disciples – Luk 1:26-33, 8:1-3).

6. The only gospel that will give us the strength (or perseverance) to get to heaven is the one that agrees with the OT prophetic message of a coming King whose salvation would be granted to all those nations (or peoples) willing to give faithful obedience to Him and His Law (25-27 w/Isa 2:1-3 [Mic 4:1-4]; Dan 7:13-14 w/26-27 "all dominions [peoples/nations] shall serve Him and obey Him" = Those Gentiles who follow Him will obey Him).

7. Like Enoch, some verses "walked with God, and were no more"(Gen 5:24) (24).

³ See on YouTube: [TED TALK] "Reggie Watts disorients you in the most entertaining way"