

be translated “and” or “but”, and again we could imagine either translation working in this case; regarding “the God of peace”, we might reflect on the Divinely-inspired St. Paul’s choice of “peace as an attribute of God to emphasize; Sanday-Headlam calls “peace” a “keynote of the Epistle”, and Cranfield notes its Old Testament background and suggests peace “signifies the sum of all true blessings including final salvation”; in the Greek text, “the God of peace” is predicated without a verb to the prepositional phrase “with all of you-all”, and we might wonder about whether the predication should be the optative “may” as the ESV has it [Sanday-Headlam says, “St. Paul concludes his request for a prayer with a prayer of his own for them”; Cranfield calls it a “prayer-wish”] or what perhaps would be the more usual implicit “is” [confer *TLSB* on the possibility of “is” and the comment, “Paul assures them of God’s promised presence”, and, we might note, regardless of when or even whether St. Paul would get there]; “Amen” is a Hebrew transliterated liturgical affirmation that the Small Catechism teaches us to say means “Yes, yes, it shall be so” [*TLSB* applies the passage by commenting that God “will give us joy, refreshment, and peace as well”]; at this point, we might discuss various matters related to the “end” of the letter [for example, Franzmann refers to the benediction’s closing “the main body of the letter” and calls Romans 16 “a long postscript”, even if that, we might add, Romans 16 is in some ways integrally connected to the other content of the letter; Cranfield notes at least one manuscript’s putting the doxology of 16:25-27 after this verse and remarks that we should expect mention of “grace” if this were the concluding greeting of the whole Epistle)] ...

16:1-27 – Commendation and Greetings

After an “Introduction”, including the theme of God’s righteousness (Romans 1:1-17), the Divinely-inspired St. Paul in major sections addressed the universal need for that righteousness of God (Romans 1:18-3:20), that righteousness’s being at least universally offered in order to be received by faith (Romans 3:21-5:21), that righteousness’s being lived out (Romans 6:1-8:39), that righteousness’s being vindicated in regards to the seeming problem of its large-scale rejection by the ethnic/religious Jews, and that righteousness’s being practiced (Romans 12:1-15:13). We have considered what can be regarded as the epistle’s “Conclusion” (15:14-33), and so all that remains for us to consider is the final chapter, what can be regarded as St. Paul’s “Commendation and Greetings” (16:1-27). As noted above, even the commendation and greetings to people in Rome are integrally related to the preceding content of the letter. Generally speaking, the critical edition of the Greek text that I usually use divides 16:1-27 into five paragraphs (the ESV is somewhat similar), and, while not everyone does so, we will follow those subdivisions in what follows with the subheadings indicated: “Commendation” (16:1-2), “Greetings to” (16:3-16), “Warning and Promise” (16:17-20), “Greetings From” (16:21-23), and “Benediction and Doxology” (16:24-27). For the sake of completeness, we note here that *Lutheran Service Book*’s Three-Year Lectionary appoints Romans 16:25-27 as the Epistle Reading for Advent 4 B but that no passages from this section of Romans are listed in the *LSB: Hymn Selection Guide* as being associated with any *LSB* hymns.

- 16:1-2 – Commendation: As outlined immediately above, we are beginning the final chapter of Romans, what can be regarded as “Commendation and Greetings” with its first subdivision that we have given the subheading “Commendation”. Worth noting at this point may be Grothe’s observation that the commendation of Phoebe (16:1-2) and the sending of greetings from all the churches in Christ (16:16b) frame the encouragements that all the Roman Christians greet the others (16:3-5) with the holy kiss (16:6a)... **V.1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe**, (although omitted by the ESV, the Greek text has a coordinating continuative conjunction that can be translated “and” or “but” [Cranfield refers to the section’s connectedness, as does Grothe; perhaps the conjunction’s omission in translation is less of an issue in this case than in other cases]; though not identified as such, the Divinely-inspired St. Paul as the primary human “author” of the letter is the subject of the verb, which is first-person singular, and the verb is in the present tense and so could just as easily be “I am commending”, which better reflects an ongoing commendation; the particular Greek verb used is a compound of a Greek pronoun for “with” and a Greek verb for “stand” or “put” or “place” or “set” [confer the root of the second verb in v.2 and the noun translated “patron”], and the sense in this case seems to be St. Paul’s presenting or introducing Phoebe to the hearers/recipients of the letter [confer Grothe’s “no less than *all* the Christians in Rome”], as in the “to you-all” that follows [at least implicitly we might see St. Paul himself in some sense to be “standing with” Phoebe; the idea behind the “commendation” arguably is elaborated on with the purpose /result clause that follows in v.2; note also that for all the greetings to and from the individuals that follow in this major section, the only one “commended” is Phoebe, who admittedly is the only one in motion at this point; Sanday-Headlam comments, “These letters played a very large part in the organization of the Church, for the tie of hospitality, implying also the reception to communion, was the great bond which united the separate local Churches together, and some protection became necessary against imposture” {we might discuss “card-carrying confessional-Lutherans”}; Grothe refers to “letters of recommendation as a protection against dangers”]; next in the Greek text is “Phoebe”, presumably the carrier of the letter, though one would think that at least she would not be traveling by herself [confer Grothe; Franzmann suggests she was “on her way from Cenchreae to Rome on business that can justly claim the aid of the Romans Christians” and says it would be interesting to know just what business took her there; Sanday-Headlam note that “Nothing is otherwise known of Phoebe, nor can we learn anything from the name”, though Cranfield deduces her being a Gentile Christian and suggests she was a freedwoman {confer Grothe}]; “the sister” refers to her as a “sister in Christ” [CSSB says “In the sense of being a fellow believer”], the feminine singular is appropriate in referring to Phoebe alone [as opposed to when sisters are included with “brothers” being used in a “gender-neutral” sort of way; confer v.15]; last in the Greek text is the first-person plural genitive pronoun “of us”) ... **a servant of the church at Cenchreae**, (although omitted by the ESV, the Greek text has the present-tense active-voice participle “being” in the feminine-singular accusative form agreeing with the forms of “Phoebe” and “sister” [the ESV might could have said “who is”, if it did not want to use “being”]; next in the Greek text

may be a word that could be translated “also”, though its place in the Greek text is debated enough that it is placed in square brackets in the critical edition of the Greek text that I use [Cranfield says the word should be in the text and emphasizes an additional consideration in Phoebe’s favor {to some extent confer Grothe}]; the word translated “servant” not surprisingly is also feminine-singular accusative, agreeing with, for example, the participle; whether the word should be translated “deaconess” and, if so, whether it refers to an “office” in the Church, are other matters, as would be such translation and interpretation’s applicability to the Church today [to be sure, by human right, the Synod is free to create other positions, such as school teachers and “DCX”es, though perhaps the Synod is not served well when those positions that are separate from the one Office of the Holy Ministry are considered in some ways equal to that Divinely-established Office and so filled via “call” the same way]; *TLSB* notes the word can be used of general service [Sanday-Headlam notes a distinction between deaconesses and widows and says the deaconesses probably “were for the most part chosen from the widows” and mentions various functions women might carry out among other women; Cranfield seems to think of practical service of the needy and draws the connection with what is said in v.2b]; “of the Church” uses a genitive form of the usual Greek word for the “Church” [Cranfield notes used here for the first time in Romans], though in this case we might think more of a local congregation, pastor and people together, as also would seem to be the case in vv.4, 5, and 16 [and other places where the word refers to a specific assembly in a particular point, as what follows makes clear is the case in this use of the word]; the following Greek text might be more-literally translated “the *one* in Cenchreae”, Corinth’s eastern port [*CSSB* says six miles away on the Saronic Gulf], with Corinth as from where St. Paul is thought to be dictating the letter, in part precisely because of this reference to a woman from the nearby congregation who seems to be carrying the letter [Sanday-Headlam refers to St. Paul’s stay at Corinth and apparently Cenchreae as the center of missionary activity throughout all Achaia and further refers to its position on the gulf as giving Phoebe opportunities to show hospitality; Cranfield refers to compassion and helpfulness]) ... **V.2 that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints**, (the Greek subordinating final conjunction translated “that” can introduce a purpose or result, which ideally would be the same [that is, the purpose ideally should lead to the result], and we note that what the ESV translates as “welcome” in this clause and “help” in the next clause are both connected by this conjunction arguably back to the commendation of v.1 [confer Cranfield]; second in the Greek text is the accusative pronoun “her”, arguably with some emphasis [she is the object of the commendation]; the subject of the verb is a second-person-plural “you-all”, so all of the hearers/recipients of the letter are to welcome and help her; the Greek verb translated “welcome” has at its root the Greek verb that the Lord uses when He says that whoever welcomes the apostles welcomes Him and that whoever welcomes Him welcomes the One Who sent Him [for example, Matthew 10:40; Grothe refers to the Christians’ holy vocation of providing hospitality as to Phoebe]; the prepositional phrase “in the Lord” most immediately modifies the verb “welcome” but may at least indirectly reinforce the idea of Phoebe’s being a

“sister in Christ”; what follows may be translated more-literally “worthily of the holy-ones”, with the adverb obviously further modifying the verb “welcome” and reasonably supporting the ESV’s paraphrasing in “in a way”; the masculine plural “holy-ones” are presumably at least the subjects of the verb and not the feminine-singular Phoebe [there would seem to be no obvious reason why all saints in this life and in the next life could not be meant, as the manner would not depend on where they are]; Sanday-Headlam seems to see “of the saints” as “of the Church” [though that expression also could be on earth or earth and heaven], but Sanday-Headlam goes on to comment, “Not only to provide for her wants, but to admit her to every spiritual privilege as “in the Lord”; Cranfield comments that what is translated “in a way worthy of the saints” adds no content beyond “in the Lord” but brings into consideration “the motive of Christian self-respect, of respect for one’s own dignity as that of someone who belongs to Christ”; Luther points out that the saints in view are those doing the receiving and not the people being received, for, with reference to Matthew 5:46, he says, “the saints ought not receive only other saints but anyone”) ... **and help her in whatever she may need from you**, (the usual coordinating copulative conjunction connects the two parallel compound parts of the purpose clause; the ESV might have better translated “you may” help to better reflect the parallel compound construction [maybe even translating the “that” again, especially given the ESV’s punctuation that essentially separates the two coordinated verbs despite the conjunction]; the particular verb used is a compound of a Greek preposition meaning such things as “from” or “besides” or “near” and a Greek verb meaning “stand” [confer the root verb of the verb for commending in v.1 and the root of the noun for “patron” later in this verse; Cranfield refers to “stand by” or “to defend” or “to help”], which verb in this case ultimately gives the sense of standing by to help [note the interesting subtle shift from standing with to standing along side]; the third-person singular pronoun “her” is in the dative case arguably as the recipient of the help or reflecting the help being to or for her advantage; next in the Greek clause are a preposition for “in”, a neuter singular dative relative pronoun for “what” [or, if by itself, “what thing”, though in this instance the “deed” or “matter” is supplied], a usually untranslated modal particle for uncertainty [fitting for the subjunctive mood of the finite verb and the purpose/result construction], the genitive second-person plural pronoun “of you”, the subjunctive verb for her maybe having need [“she” is implicitly the subject of the third-person singular verb], and finally the singular noun for “deed” or “matter” [from which Greek root comes our English word “pragmatic”]; the ESV notably changes the order from the hearers first to the hearers last in the phrase, which in a sense disrupts the flow to what follows; one might also note some reciprocity in Phoebe’s receiving help as she had arguably “helped” others; Grothe suggests she needs hospitality only temporarily and will return to Cenchreae soon) ... **for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well**. (the Greek subordinating causal conjunction translated “for” can be used to express cause, explanation, inference, or continuation; the Greek text next has a word that would that in this case could be translated “also” or “even”, which may be reflected by the ESV’s “as well” at the end of its clause, which otherwise would have no basis in the Greek; next is the feminine-singular

nominative pronoun “she”, likely with some degree of emphasis [since the subject could be expressed simply by the conjugated verb], so “she herself” [perhaps parallel to St. Paul’s “of me myself” at the end of the Greek clause]; next in the Greek clause is the noun for “patroness” or “protectress” [ultimately deriving from a compound of a Greek preposition “before” and a Greek verb for “stand”, the latter of which is also at the root of the words translated “commend” and “help”]; Sanday-Headlam says the word means “succourer” or “helper” and refers to a sense of a legal representative or wealthy patron]; next in the Greek clause is the genitive masculine plural adjective translated “of many”, followed by the third-person singular simple past tense aorist passive verb translated implicitly “she” “has been” [though I wonder about that translation of a verb that more usually is “to come into being” or “to happen” or “to become”]; Franzmann says, “It would be interesting to know just how this woman had been ‘a helper of many’ and continues, “One can conjecture, but guesses are not history”]; then in the Greek text is a coordinating copulative conjunction that could be “and” or “even” or “also” [Cranfield suggests the sense “including”]; Grothe translates “indeed”], followed by the genitive first-person singular pronoun “of me” and another pronoun that intensifies the preceding one, giving us “myself” [or perhaps better “me myself” and perhaps parallel to “she herself” at the beginning of the Greek clause]; *TLSB* comments, “She may have given financial support or other assistance to Paul; Grothe refers to other generous women of the church carrying on the tradition of Joanna and Susanna in Luke 8:3 [and we might think of the LWML and other faithful women in our time]) ...