

“Women of the Bible” (#4)
“PHEBE”

Paul wrote the Book of Romans from Corinth where the church met in the home of Priscilla and Acquila (Rom.16:3-5). Phebe is one of nine women mentioned by Paul in Romans Ch.16. These nine women are characterized as servants, helpers, hard workers, mother to us, and fellow-workers in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, Phebe (Phoibe) is the only woman given this special salutation – “I **commend** (sunistemi / p.a.ind.1ps) to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea.” (Rom.16:1)

All the other salutations use the Greek word (**aspazo**/ a.m.impv.2pl/ GREET). The only time GREET is not (a.m.impv) is - “All the churches greet (p.a.ind.2pl.) you.” (Rom.16:16b)

**This lesson will study five things Paul recognized about Phebe
which caused him to acknowledge her as Phoebe: Patron Saint.**

Phoebe was a wonderful reminder of the importance of the ministry of spiritually mature Christian women in the local Church.

1. Paul acknowledged that Phebe was known as a spiritually mature believer of the church of Cenchrea.

Paul set Phoebe apart from all the other spiritually mature believers listed in Romans Ch.16. Paul listed her first and with a different salutation (Rom.16:1-2).

Most Bible scholars believe she was selected by Paul to carry the Epistle of Romans from Corinth to Rome. She was the product of foreign missionary evangelism (Matt.28:18-20).

“Phoebe, who belonged to the church at Cenchrea near Corinth (Rom.16:1) probably carried the letter to Rome.” (Ryrie Study NASB, Introduction to Romans)

2. Paul recognized Phebe as a trophy of missionary evangelism and discipleship.

All the names listed in Romans Ch.16 are Latin and Greek. This shows how important the Call of Macedonia was to Paul (Acts 16:6-15; Matt.28:18-20).

The second missionary trip changed the direction of Paul’s ministry westward in the Roman Empire. It also changed the direction of Phebe’s life. (Acts18:6b) “From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” (Rom.15:23-24)

(Rom.16:25-26) “Now to Him who is able to establish you **according** to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, **according** to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, **according** to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith.” (Col.1:24-29)

3. Paul recognized the service of Phebe’s spiritual gift in the church of Cenchrea.

Cenchrea was the eastern harbor for Corinth (see Bible map of Achaia / Greece) (Col.1:24-29).

Paul identified her spiritual gift as a title (diakonos) [Ministry] (Rom.12:7) in the church at Cenchrea to the church at Rome (Rom.16:1). This has led some to make this an official title of deaconess. However, we do not have Scriptural guidelines for deacon ordination of women unless we interpret (gune) of (1 Tim.3:11-12) as women rather than wives. (1 Tim.3:8-13).

Women or Wives: “Most likely reference to the wives of the deacons, rather than to a separate office of deaconess, since the qualifications for deacons is continued in verse 12. If he had a different group in mind, it would seem more natural for Paul to have finished the qualifications for deacons before introducing the office of deaconess.” (Ryrie Study NASB, 1 Tim.3:11)

4. Paul knew her reputation as a Patron Saint for her charitable grace ministry through the church of Cenchrea.

(Rom.16:2) “That you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper (prostatis) of many, and of myself as well.” (1 Tim.5:10)

“**Prostates** was the title of a citizen who had the responsibility of seeing to the welfare of resident aliens who were without civil rights, among Jews it signified a wealthy patron of the community.” (Vine’s Expository Dict. of Biblical Words, pg.607)

5. Paul encouraged the church at Rome to receive her in the Lord in a manner ‘worthy’ of saints (Rom.16:2a)

NOTE: The title “Saint” is one of twenty status privileges of union with Christ (Rom.1:6-7).

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- **Worthy (axios) of the saints (ton hagios)** was the title Paul gave her to reflect her spiritual growth maturity.
 - (Col.1:10) “So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” (1 Thess.2:10-12)
- **Worthy saint** was used as a functional title of a spiritually mature believer. This title was greater than a dignitary title of a position in the Christian Way of Life (Walk). **What we have been called to be and to do is greater than what we are called in CWL (Eph.4:1-3).**

(2 Cor.8:1-3) “Now brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the **churches of Macedonia**, that in a great ordeal of affliction their **abundance of joy** and their deep poverty overflowed in the **wealth of their liberality**. For I testify that according to their **ability, and beyond their ability**, they **gave of their own accord.**”

Paul’s personal request: “You help (paristemi / a.a.subj 2pl) her in whatever **matter** (pragma) [business or legal case] (1 Cor.6:1) she may have need of you.”(Rom.16:2)

Phoebe was a wonderful reminder of the importance of the ministry of spiritual mature women believers in the local church.

PHOEBE:

**A PATRON SAINT OF CENCHREA WHO WAS SPIRITUALLY GIFTED
TO MINISTER TO OTHERS.**