



The Apostle Paul's Untold Celebration of Women Romans 16:1-7

Let's look at the untold celebration of Phoebe.

Verses 1-2:

Text Message:

- The way Phoebe is introduced has led scholars to [rightfully] conclude she was the carrier of the letter to the Romans.
- This was a significant role in the oral culture of the ancient world, which valued a “living voice” over a written document.
- Phoebe has been called “the first interpreter of Romans,” as her role as letter carrier included oral

performance of the letter, answering questions, and being a go-between for Paul and the church at Rome.

- In essence, she became the voice of the Apostle Paul.
- She is described by Paul in two significant terms:
 - 1) Servant (διακονος, *diakonos*), “deacon.”
 - 2) Patron (προστατις, *prostatis*), occurs only here and indicates Phoebe was a leader and wealthy. She may’ve financed the cost of the letter she carried to the Romans.
- Therefore, she was to be welcomed and assisted “in whatever she may need from you” (Verse 2).
- Not much is known of her post-biblical story, but St. Phoebe is celebrated in the Orthodox Church on September 3rd.

Let’s look at the untold celebration of Prisca.

Verses 3-5a:

Text Message:

- Prisca is referred to six times in Scripture, as both Prisca and Priscilla (in the book of Acts).
- In four of these six references, she is named before her husband, which was unusual in the ancient world.

- We don't know why, but it is possible that she had a higher social status or that her gifting was more prominent.
- She and her husband are seen in Acts 18 as instructing Apollos, who is recognized as an apostle in the early church.
- Paul speaks highly of her and Aquila as “fellow workers” and those who “risked their necks for my life.”
- What an example of Body-of-Christ friendship!

Let's look at the untold celebration of Junia.

Verse 7:

Text Message:

- There are two interpretive issues that have led to Junia's “demotion” in current debate (not ancient debate!):
 - 1) Is Junia a female name or a male name?
 - 2) What does “well known to the apostles” mean?
- As to Junia's sex, the name appears only here in the Bible, and it's argued that the name could refer to a male.
- However, the name appears in ancient Roman inscriptions over 250 times and refers to a

feminine name! No one known prior to the 13th century regarded Junia to be a male name.

- The phrase, “well known to the apostles,” could equally be translated, “prominent among the apostles,” an indication that both Adronicus and Junia were apostles in the early church.

- The latter was the view of the earlier church leaders:

“Oh, how great is the devotion of this woman that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!”

John Chrysostom, fourth-century bishop of Constantinople

- Andronicus and Junia are celebrated in Orthodox history for preaching of the Gospel, working miracles, and martyrdom.