



Was Paul a *restrictor* or a *releaser* of women?

A releaser! Paul passionately wanted the entire world to know Jesus. As the Church’s most fruitful missionary, he wanted more laborers. As an on-fire evangelist, Paul desired to INCREASE Good News going out. As a spirit-led equipper, he refused to dishonor and quench the Holy Spirit’s gifting in any believer. As a brilliant thinker and strategist, Paul would *not* foolishly “sit down half the football team.” As a heavily-persecuted future martyr, he rejoiced when the Gospel advanced, even from those with bad motives who “stir up trouble” for him. While wearing prison chains, Paul concluded in Philippians 1:17-18:

“But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.”

As a trained theological writer, Paul used his words carefully to praise workers, honor laborers, close the door on false teachers, and open doors for the godly. Paul wanted MORE reliable and multiplying teachers! (See One-Pager, *Does “The 2-2-2 Principle” open wide the door?*)

What words did Paul use when speaking of male or female ministers?

In his writings, Paul identified 39 people who work in ministry. He mentioned 22 men and 17 women in IDENTICAL ways. He called them either *synergos* (co-workers) or *kopiao* (laborers), using the same words to refer to his male and his female co-workers.

Romans 16:3

*“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my **co-workers** (synergos) in Christ Jesus.”*

Romans 16:12

*“Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who **work hard** (kopiosas) in the Lord.*

*Salute the beloved Persis, who has **worked very hard** (ekopiasin) in the Lord.”*

Philippians 4:3

*“Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my **co-workers** (synergon), whose names are in the book of life.”*

Phoebe... only a *helper*, or much more?

Paul described the *deaconas* Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2) with a word most commonly used to describe a magnanimous leader, like Caesar. Because of her *significant* influence, Paul described her as a *prostatis*. Other definitions for this word include: champion, benefactor, patron. Paul publicly honored her service to himself and the Cenchræe church.

Conclusion

Paul did *not* hate or limit women. He honored, encouraged, and trusted them. He used the same words to describe them as he did male ministers. We cannot wait to meet Paul in person!

Female colleagues and friends mentioned positively by Paul

Aphia (Phlm. 1:2), Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11), Claudia (2 Tim. 4:21), Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5), Euodia (Php. 4:2-3), Julia (Rom. 16:15), Junia (Rom. 16:7), Lois (2 Tim. 1:5), Mary (Rom. 16:6), Nereus’ sister (Rom. 16:15), Nympha (Col. 4:15), Persis (Rom. 16:12), Phoebe (Rom. 16:1-2), Priscilla (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19, Acts 18:1-3, 18-19, 26), Rufus’ mother (Rom. 16:13), Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3), Tryphena (Rom. 16:12), Tryphosa (Rom. 16:12). Plus, Lydia is mentioned in Acts 16:13-15, 40.

Key Term

συνεργός

syn = same, *ergos* = energy co-worker

Key Term

ΚΟΠΙᾶΩ

kopiao = laborers

Key Term

προστάτις

prostatis = great help, benefactor

4 Crucial Questions

1. What does this teach us about **GOD**?
2. What does this teach us about **PEOPLE**?
3. What command should I **OBEY**?
4. With whom can I **SHARE** this?