

PHOEBE

How faithful service changes the world!

In *Romans 16*, Paul offers personal greetings and commends a number of fellow saints who have laboured in the work of Christ.

Jesus accomplishes His work not just through the more famous leaders like Paul, Peter and John, but also through the supposed 'lesser lights.'

God does not rank people, but sees all equally, and judges all equally. **Don't discount yourself!**

Phoebe makes a cameo appearance in this letter of Paul's to the Romans.

*Romans 16:1-2 (niv) I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a **deacon** of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the **benefactor** of many people, including me.*

Paul introduces Phoebe as one with high credentials, commending her with three accolades: She is **Sister, Servant, and Succourer**.

Sister. *Adelphe*

Paul was always quick to draw attention to the common bond the saints have in Christ (***Romans 16:17***).

Phoebe wore several hats, but first to last she was a sister in Christ. And not just by name. She had proven her loving commitment to the family of God in Chenchreae and to the wider body.

We are all called to do the same. “*Do good to all, especially the family of faith*” (***Galatians 6:10***)

Servant (Deacon. *Diakonos* - servant, minister)

Contrary to the demeaning place servants occupy in many cultures, God elevates the role of a servant among His people.

God refers to people such as Abraham, Job, Moses, and Joshua, as ‘my servant’ indicating a certain intimacy He had with them, and the special role they had.

And of course, we only need look to the greatest of servants, The Messiah, Jesus, to see how God views servanthood.

So, when Paul commends Phoebe as servant – deacon of the church in Chenchreae, his readers

knew to offer her great respect. *How do we view servanthood?*

Phoebe was entrusted with the task of '**letter carrier**'. But little did Phoebe know at the time the astonishing importance of that one letter.

Think of what she carried!

Revolution: Romans is said of some to be the clearest manifesto of Christian belief and of the gospel (not to diminish the rest of scripture).

And that GOSPEL, '*the very power of God unto salvation to all who believe*' (***Romans 1:16***) has transformed countless lives, communities, and nations and brought Kings humbly to their knees before the throne of grace: not through a revolution of power but of love, the very love of Christ!

Reformation: Martin Luther's revelation of ***Romans 1:16-17***, sparked astonishing world change, and healing for the church.

Revival: Wesley, upon hearing Luther's preface to Romans, was saved! England, and the whole world has never been the same.

Revitalisation: How many discouraged saints have been lifted from the depths of despair to the heights of great hope simply by reading *Romans 8:35-39*.

Redemption: Think of how many people have been saved reading Romans.

So, there is Phoebe travelling along the tracks and Roman roads with that precious parchment under arm. And as we look back, I wonder, what message we could send to her down the centuries - what would it be?

PHOEBE! Don't lose that letter.

What do we carry? What are we doing with it?

Succourer. (Benefactor: *Prostatis*—patron, benefactor, helper, succourer of many.

Phoebe was obviously a woman of uncommon means, perhaps through a successful business in Chenchreae, a strategic city for trade.

Her love for Christ and Her vision for His mission led her to utilize what God had given her to fund and further the spread of the gospel and to assist the apostolate. Paul himself was deeply grateful for her aid.

Phoebe means pure, radiant, bright. She is mentioned once, but she is no 'lesser light' or 'second', not to God.

Her example of humble faithful service is something for us all to admire and to emulate.

She reminds us that faithful service IS the way of God.

And perhaps, by the grace of God, our faithful service can also change the world.