

Encouragement from Paul

by Marlys Taege Moberg

Open with Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for all the blessings You shower on us, especially for the encouragement You offer to us in Your Word. Send Your Holy Spirit to guide us now as we learn from the writings of Paul. In Christ's Name we pray. Amen.



Introduction

As the feminist movement gained momentum in the United States during the previous century, students on a California university campus burned a Barbie® doll (adult sex symbol), a Norman Mailer book (sexually violent content), and the Bible (including the epistles of Paul), which they saw as hostile toward women.¹

But people who view Paul only through the lens of his few gender restrictive verses miss the many positive attitudes that his writings and activities demonstrate toward women.

Paul Acknowledges Women's Faith and Abilities

- a. Paul's letters are usually addressed to "all the saints" (believers). Women are among those to whom he sent personal greetings. See, for example, **Romans 16:3, 6, 12, 13, 15** and note his compliments for each women mentioned.
- b. Paul's first European convert was Lydia, a businesswoman originally from Thyatira, who had evidently taken her lucrative business to Philippi. How did the friendship of Paul and Lydia develop? See **Acts 16:13–15**. How did the church in Philippi progress? See **Philippians 1:3–6**, noting especially v. 5.
- c. In **1 Corinthians 11:5–6**, Paul acknowledges the fact that women are publicly praying and prophesying. What is the purpose of the requirements he sets for them in this section on propriety in worship?
- d. In Caesarea, Paul stayed with Philip. What gift did the Holy Spirit give Philip's four daughters? See **Acts 21:8–9**. What is the purpose of prophecy? See **1 Corinthians 14:3–4**. How does the information about Philip's four daughters fit what was said in **Acts 2:16–18**? How do these words apply to us today? See **1 Corinthians 14:1**.
- e. What is the difference between prophesying and preaching? See **Ephesians 4:11** and **2 Peter 1:21**.

Paul Includes Women as Co-laborers

Among them were the following:

- a. **Priscilla** — How did she and her husband, Aquila, work with Paul? Why is Paul indebted to them? See **Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19;** and **2 Timothy 4:19**. In which passages is Priscilla's name mentioned ahead of her husband's? In Bible times, mentioning a wife's name first was not customary, so Paul's citing her name first in four of six instances indicates the great respect he had for her abilities and partnership in the Gospel.²
- b. **Phoebe** — What is Paul's request to the Romans regarding Phoebe? See **Romans 16:1–2**. Historians believe she carried Paul's letter to Rome. Paul describes her as a *diakonos* and a *prostatis*. *Diakonos* in v. 1 is translated "servant" or "one who ministers" to others. *Prostatis* in v. 2 is translated "great help" or "good friend" but usually referred to a leader of the church who cared for the members (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume VI, pp. 700-703). Paul and the church in Cenchrea recognized her skills and utilized them. Phoebe's ministry was to assist the saints by providing material assistance or moral support ("Women in the Church" CTCR 1985, pp. 10-11).
- c. **Euodia and Syntyche** — How does Paul acknowledge their service in **Philippians 4:2–3**? How can we help avoid divisions in our church, especially in regard to the service of women?

Paul Supports Partnership in Marriage

- a. **Ephesians 5:22–25** How ought a wife relate to her husband (vv. 22–24)? How should a husband relate to his wife (v. 25)? What did Christ do for the church? How does this challenge husbands to act today? How will mutual love and respect in Christian marriages set an example for others and provide an opportunity for witness?
- b. How does Paul's statement in **1 Corinthians 7:4** support partnership in marriage?
- c. How does **1 Corinthians 11:11** describe the mutual dependence of men and women for each other in life?

Paul Offers Great Encouragement to All Believers — Including Women!

- a. How does he demonstrate our equality in the eyes of the Lord? See:

Romans 2:11

Galatians 3:28

2 Corinthians 5:17

Galatians 5:1

b. As believers, what blessings can we be sure of receiving? See:

Romans 8:28, 39

1 Corinthians 2:12, 16

1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19

1 Corinthians 12:6

Galatians 5:22

c. What is Paul's desire for us? See:

Ephesians 4:13

2 Corinthians 5:20

Ephesians 5:18b

1 Cor. 14:12

Galatians 5:6b, 14

Galatians 6:10

Ephesians 5:15–16

These verses are only a sample of the great encouragement Paul offers to women! Let's thank the Lord now for the assurances of Paul's epistles.

Closing Prayer

Dearest Lord, Thank You for giving us Your Word so that we may learn from it and become mature Christians who desire to be Your ambassadors. Fill us with Your Spirit and work in us to fully use our abilities as we serve You with gladness. Amen.

If a hymn is desired, sing the LWML song, *"Serve the Lord with Gladness."*

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¹ *Time Magazine*, "Who's Come a Long Way, Baby?", Aug. 31, 1970.

² Alvin J. Schmidt in *Veiled and Silenced* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1989) makes this statement (page 178) and then offers corroboration by St. John Chrysostom (AD 347-407), "who was no feminist, to be sure. He wrote: 'It is good to look at Paul's motive, when he greets them, for placing Priscilla before her husband...He did not do so without reason: the wife must have had, I believe greater piety than her husband...this woman took him [Apollos], instructed him in the way of God, and made him an excellent teacher' (*In Illud, Salutate Priscillam et Aquilam 191-92*)." He also quotes Adolph von Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, vol. 2, trans. James Moffat (G.P.Putnam's Sons, 1905) page 219, making the same point.