

Road Trip Devotion - Romans 16:1-5

by Jake Christian, Adult Ministries Pastor

"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me.

Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquilla, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches. Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home." (Romans 16:1-5; NLT)

The last chapter of Romans is an interesting one. It is different from every chapter that comes before it in that it is primarily a listing of friends and associates of Paul. We must remember that Romans is a letter to the church in Rome - and it is clear that although Paul had not yet been to Rome himself, he already knew many people involved in the Christian community there. So he takes this opportunity to greet many of his associates.

It is interesting that among this list are two prominent female leaders in the church - Phoebe and Priscilla. Phoebe is a deacon (or deaconess, depending on your translation). Priscilla and her husband Aquilla are house church leaders, and in Acts 18:26 we learn that they helped a man named Apollos understand "the way of God even more accurately."

The subject of women and their role in ministry has unfortunately been a contentious one in church history, and still is today. Sadly, the Bible has often been used to prevent women from exercising their God-given gifts to serve the church. But this passage - and others in Paul's writings - demonstrate that there is a place for *everyone* to use their gifts in the church. To paraphrase Galatians 3:28, it does not matter if are Jew or Gentile, slave nor free, or male or female - there is a place for all in the work of God. I encourage you to consider how God wants to use your gifts and abilities to serve the church. No matter who you are, God wants to use you to reach out to a world that desperately needs his love.