

Phoebe, A Woman Deacon

Romans 16:1-2

May 21, 2017

Main Point

God has specially gifted women to serve in the body of Christ. Thank God for the faithful servants He has given you and support one another in His work.

1. God has gifted the church with some extraordinary women
2. There are both formal and informal ways for women to serve in the ministry of the church
3. There are also some limitations to the service of women in the church
4. A woman in ministry can have real authority within the sphere of her ministry
5. Thank God for the faithful servants that He has given your congregation and support one another in His work

Cross References and Quotations:

Matthew 20:26 (NKJ): “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.”

John Calvin: “...in the first place, [Paul] commends her on account of her office, for she performed a most honorable and a most holy function in the Church... And since it behooves us to embrace in love all the members of Christ, we ought surely to regard and especially to love and honor those who perform a public office in the Church.”

Matthew Henry: “[Phoebe was] a servant by office, a stated servant, not to preach the word (that was forbidden to women), but in acts of charity and hospitality.”

RP Magazine (November 1888): “The principle is plain. To a woman belong all corporate rights in the church unless specifically excepted, as is the case as regards the ministry and eldership, whilst it cannot be shown that the diaconship is excepted but the contrary is established. In fact her rights here are fuller and plainer than her right to the Lorde’s table.”

1 Timothy 2:11-12 (NKJ): “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹² And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.”

1 Corinthians 11:5 (NKJ): “But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.”

1 Timothy 5:17 (NKJ): “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”

Robert Strimple: “The authority to be exercised by any church officer is that (kind of) authority which that particular office includes... the authority of the deacon is not to be equated with the authority of the elder.”

John Owen: “This office of deacons is an office of service, which gives not any authority or power in the rule of the church; but being an office, it gives authority with respect unto the special work.”

RPCNA Directory for Church Government: “The Diaconate is a spiritual office responsible for the ministry of mercy and stewardship of the congregation. It is neither a ruling nor a teaching office. Its exercise, like the whole life of the church, is under the oversight of the session and its function is administrative.”

Galatians 3:28 (NKJ): “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”