

**ROMANS SERIES TWENTY-THREE**  
**LADIES FIRST**  
**Dr. Roger Barrier**  
**Romans 16:Gen. 3:14-17; I Cor. 11:11-13**

Paul sent numerous greetings to the Christians at Rome as he concluded his letter. No doubt behind each of these names is a story of romance with Christ. The number of people in Paul's network was impressive. Paul alive today would certainly have a site on *My Space*. He would text message, blog, and cell phone continually. After all, he had a lot of friends to keep up with.

Of the many things that jump out at us from these greetings, the number of women mentioned is astounding. Of the twenty-nine people referenced, nine are women. That is worth remembering, for often Paul is accused of belittling the status of women in the church. If we really wish to see Paul's attitude to women, it is a passage like this that we should read, where his appreciation of the work that women were doing glows through his commendations.

**PAUL'S PRAISE OF CHRISTIAN WOMEN IS SURPRISING BECAUSE MANY CONSIDER HIM CHAUVENISTICALLY SEXIST.**

1 Corinthians 14:33-35

1 Timothy 2:9-15

1 Corinthians 11:5

Deciphering these verses is not easy. One of my biblical interpretation principles is to focus more on—and to give more credence to—the verses that are unambiguously clear than to argue over the ones that seem to have multiple complex interpretations.

Scores of other verses testify to Paul's undying affirmation of the role of women in life and in the church.

**PAUL'S ENTHUSIASTIC COMMENDATION OF HIS IMPRESSIVE WOMEN FRIENDS HARDLY SEEMS SEXIST.**

Phoebe

Priscilla

Mary

Junias

Tryphena and Tryphosa

Persis

Rufus' Mother

Nereus' Sister

Pliny The Younger (AD 62-113): "I thought it the more necessary to inquire into the real truth of the matter by subjecting to torture two female slaves who were called *deacons*, but I found nothing more than a perverse superstition which went beyond all bounds. Therefore, I deferred further inquiry in order to apply to you for a ruling...because of the number of those who were accused. For many of every age, every class, and of both sexes are being accused."

Careful research demonstrates that during the early centuries of Christianity women were active in the leadership of both churches and religious communities comprised of both men and women. In fact, they functioned in each of the four areas mentioned in Ephesians 4:7-13.

So revolutionary was the power of the Gospel in early church times that Libanius, the heathen philosopher, exclaimed, "What women these Christians have!"

*The Acts of Paul and Thecla*

**PAUL YEARNED FOR THE RESTORATION OF WOMEN TO THE POSITION THEY HAD BEFORE THE FALL.**

Galatians 3:28 Is An Eternal Principle: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus."

1 Corinthians 11:11-12: "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."

Genesis 1-3 Reveals Man's departure from God's Original Design—and hope for restoration.

One result of the Fall is the broken relationship between men and women all over the world.

Paul leaves no doubt in 1 Timothy 2 that because of the work of Christ he has every intention of helping restore the male-female relationship.

The goal of the church in every generation is to restore men and women to the position they had before the Fall.

Ephesians 5:21: "... submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ."

Ephesians 5:22-33: "Wives, submit to your husbands ... Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her ..."