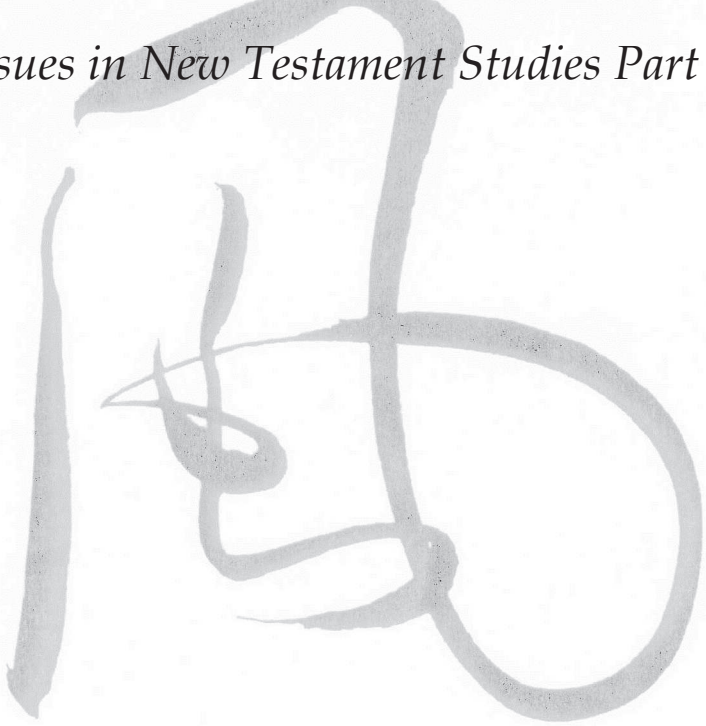


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## **The Role of Women in Ministry: Is There a Disconnect between Pauline Practice and Pauline Instruction?**

by Waldemar Kowalski

### **Introduction**

There seems to be almost universal agreement that Paul restricted women's role in ministry, largely based on two texts—1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-15.<sup>1</sup> Pauline authorship is not crucial to the interpretation of these texts on the role of women. In fact, one of the significant obstacles to authenticity and Pauline authorship is the traditional reading of the 1 Timothy passage as antagonistic to ministry roles for women. This makes many scholars uncomfortable—as perhaps it well should.

I'd like to tell you how I got to this place. One of my favorite courses to teach has been Corinthian Correspondence. It is encouraging to see that a body of believers with the many problems that the Corinthians had could still be addressed as "saints." Maybe there's hope for us today.

Tracing back in my teaching notes, I ran into a problem the first time I taught this course. The class studied the books in sequence; and while there are problems to be resolved in 1 Corinthians 11 as related to worship, it is also clear that women fully participated in prayer and in prophecy. Then came 1 Cor 14:34-35, which seems to say that women are not to speak at all in the assembly. In fact, some translations split v. 33 in the middle, making silence for women a universal rule. Was Paul confused or forgetful of what he'd written earlier in the same letter? Or was my reading of one or the other of these passages incorrect? I expect God's Word to agree with itself and certainly expect coherence within the work of a single writer, especially in the same letter.

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<sup>1</sup>Opinions on Pauline authorship for the Pastoral Epistles differ widely, with a majority of modern scholars rejecting Pauline authorship entirely or at least expressing significant doubt. For a survey of these, see Mark Harding, *What Are They Saying About the Pastoral Epistles?*, Watsa Series (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2001), 9-27, or any recent commentary. There are substantial reasons to accept Pauline authorship, as proposed by scholars like Spicy, Towner, Luke Timothy Johnson, and others. I also favor Paul as author of the Pastoral Epistles.

So I asked myself what I shall also ask you. If someone's instructions are at odds with their practice, what is the more accurate statement of their belief? If someone insists that they love dogs but you see them kicking and throwing stones at a dog, what do you think about their alleged affection for dogs? Or if a wife insists that her husband is loving and kind but becomes silent and afraid every time he is near, what do you suspect? Even more so, if I tell you to do something but you observe that I do something very different, what will you conclude about what I value?

Thus, before we explore the Pauline instruction, let us examine Pauline practice. If our investigation reveals that Pauline practice is indeed at odds with Pauline instruction, so be it. We are trying to discern Paul's true belief. Let's look more closely at these well-understood texts, re-reading them. The first recipients and the early church seem to have understood these texts without the consternation that we display—so maybe it's time to re-read them. This is God's Word and we are not to change its meaning to suit ourselves.

### **Pauline Practice and Instruction in 1 Corinthians**

We will begin with the context of congregational worship in 1 Corinthians, an obvious place to start being 1 Cor 11:1-16. This passage deals with women's role in and their permission to participate in worship. The reader encounters some important material well before Chapter 11, however.

The 1984 edition of the NIV begins 1 Cor 1:10 with "*I appeal to you, brothers*;" while the 2011 revision renders this as "*I appeal to you, brothers and sisters*." Between these, the 1984 is textually more accurate, while the 2011 is contextually more accurate. As a scholar with strong feelings about alteration to the text, I do not approve of altering the text to make it gender-neutral. Note that Paul is clearly addressing an audience that is not exclusively male. In fact, 1 Cor 1:10 is the beginning of his exhortation to unity and against divisions, of which he was informed by someone connected with Chloe, a woman. There will be twenty uses of "brothers" in 1 Corinthians, several being in contexts that explicitly address women as well as men.<sup>2</sup> None of the word "brothers" in 1 Corinthians is used in a context that excludes women. We could debate whether males or females are more inclined to engage in divisive behavior, but Paul addresses both males and females as

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 7:24, 29 and 14:6, 20, 26, 39.

needing to curtail divisiveness.<sup>3</sup> It is probable that the Corinthian divisiveness involved women as well as men.

Ancient and modern scholars consider the term *adelphoi* (“brothers”) to refer to family members or siblings, without being gender-specific. In fact, Thiselton states, “It would be more misleading to translate ἀδελφοί as ‘brothers’ (NJB, NIV) than as ‘brothers and sisters’ (NRSV, Collins, and Fee).”<sup>4</sup> My personal approach is to read the text as it stands, including in my translation. I note to my students that the original audience did not hear this as being gender-specific any more than the classic meaning of “mankind” refers only to males.

1 Corinthians 7 confronts the original hearers with culturally revolutionary ideas. Paul addresses marriage and especially sexual relations within marriage with a radically egalitarian perspective. We will not be exploring this right now, as my focus is a woman’s role in ministry rather than her role in her family. The discussion of divine design and familial relations will have to wait for another occasion.

At the same time, Paul emphasizes his own unmarried state, considers it God’s gifting, and touts the desirability of singleness for others (1 Cor 7:6-8).<sup>5</sup> He is not removing marriage from its key role in Jewish or Christian life but is talking about purposeful singleness. Generally, marriage is still God’s ideal.

So, in what situation is singleness preferable? Paul centers his focus on communicating the gospel, on doing the work of the ministry. He mentions a “present crisis” (v. 26) and a need for focused devotion on the Lord by both men and women (vv. 32-35). Just how singleness improves one’s ability to focus in this way is a topic of discussion among scholars. Early in this chapter Paul points out that “*to burn with passion*” can be a great hindrance to the life of a single believer (v. 9).

In the end, we can affirm that Paul saw singleness as a benefit to his life of ministry. We cannot, however, state that he was calling men and women specifically to a ministerial role similar to his. It may be that “*undivided devotion to the Lord*” is purely personal and internal, but my feeling is that so strong an appeal for singleness has as its goal more than

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<sup>3</sup>Cf. references to division among men in 1 Tim 2:8; 3:3 and women in Phil 4:2 (Euodia and Syntyche).

<sup>4</sup>Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 114. Thiselton cites Fee, Collins, and especially Lightfoot, who notes that classical Greek uses this word to refer to siblings (i.e., a brother and sister. Cf. also Scott Munger, “Women, the Church, and Bible Translation,” in *SIL Bible Translation Conference* (Dallas, TX: 2013), 3. Munger stresses that *adelphoi* meant “siblings in a family.”

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Fee, pp 284-88.

a private expression. I do not think Paul's ultimate concern was that the Corinthians be free of anxiety; rather, my guess is that more is going on here. But we have little besides Paul's zeal for the gospel to suggest what his ultimate goal may have been.

Before we move to Chapter 11, note in Chapter 9 Paul mentions that the other apostles, the Lord's brothers, and Peter traveled with their believing wives.<sup>6</sup> We don't know whether he refers here to the right to be married or (more likely) the right of Christian leaders to be supported with their families rather than only themselves. In any case, although singleness was seen by Paul as a better state for himself, that does not seem to have been the perspective of most of the other leaders and ministers of the early church.

Thiselton takes the approach that "The communities expect to support the married couple, on the assumption that the wife shares her husband's Christian concerns and will support him, in turn, in these concerns."<sup>7</sup> This suggests an active role together in ministry, although the text does not explicitly state this.<sup>8</sup>

The surprise in 1 Cor 11:2-16 for some scholars might be that this passage clearly assumes that women have a role in ministry. The debate is not whether they are to pray and prophesy. A careful reading shows instructions on *how* both men and women are to participate in the worship service. Please don't miss this point. Although some approaches to this passage read as if only women are being addressed, Paul is instructing both men and women. In fact, men are addressed in 1 Cor 11:4 before he turns his attention to women.<sup>9</sup> If this passage only deals with women's hair length and head coverings, Paul used too many words, and we are in danger of missing his intention.

If you are re-reading the text to see if I am fairly presenting this passage, you may want to know what Paul means in a few of his statements. For instance, what does "head" mean in vv. 3-7, 10, 13? Why is hair length or hairstyle so important to him? And what's with the angels in v. 10? I will not focus on these topics now, as, again, our job is to determine Paul's real stance on women in ministry.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup>1 Cor. 9:5.

<sup>7</sup>Thiselton, 680.

<sup>8</sup>The pastor's wife has wielded enormous influence, as can be seen already with Katherine von Bora, Luther's wife, who was an active participant in theological conversations.

<sup>9</sup>Thiselton draws attention to this with some bemusement over the propensity of commentators to focus on women to the exclusion of men. Thiselton, 825.

<sup>10</sup>There are excellent resources on dress and head covering in virtually all recent commentaries, especially Thiselton, NIGTC. But I would recommend most highly Bruce Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows* for his insightful and thorough handling of this topic.

The task is to explore what Paul believes by investigating Pauline practice. We will explore several tough questions in 1 Corinthians 11 to determine whether they are relevant to Pauline practice. If not, we will note this and continue. Most of the difficult material in this passage does not change its subtext (and our main text)—i.e., that both men and women participated in congregational worship.

The definition of κεφαλή (*kephalē*, “head”) is part of another discussion. Whatever it means in this passage does not change the core idea—that a literal demand for total silence by women in church (as 1 Cor 14:34-35 suggests) is at odds with Paul’s normal and approved congregational practice in 1 Cor 11:2-16.

Our passage starts with a commendation: “*I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you*” (v. 2). What a contrast between this statement and the introduction to the next section, starting at v. 17: “*In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.*” Paul is saying here that it would be better if they did not meet, specifically in regard to how they conduct the Lord’s Supper (i.e., Communion). He is not instructing the Corinthians to cease observing the Lord’s Supper; rather, he is telling them they’re doing it wrong.

What is Paul praising in v. 2? 1 Cor 11:3-16 offers instruction and culminates in a rather annoyed “This is the final word on this!” in v. 16. What is the apparent activity addressed in this passage? What are they doing? Men and women are praying and prophesying together, which is what Paul praises. If you can find another focus for Paul’s commendation, please tell me, for I do not see another candidate in the text.

Thiselton considers this “the eschatological inclusion of men and women as active participants in prayer and prophetic speech, in contrast to the issue of clothing, which Paul believes must still generate signals of gender distinctiveness on the basis of the order of creation, which still holds sway even in the gospel era.”<sup>11</sup> This makes good sense. Paul praises them for something they’re doing, while correcting how they do it. He sets the stage for more severe correction regarding Communion with a commendation for what they are doing well (i.e., praying and prophesying together) but tells them to adjust their practice.

From there we go directly into contentious territory. What does Paul mean by “head,” κεφαλή, in v. 3? In following verses, “head” is literally anatomical—the end of the human body farthest from the feet. But in v. 3, “*the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man,*

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<sup>11</sup>Thiselton, 811.

*and the head of Christ is God.*” This is not about the upper end of a human body.

My focus here is not on male-female relationships in Pauline teaching and congregations but on Paul’s consistency. Did he permit—even promote—a role for women in ministry? This discussion on clothing, hair styles, and demeanor of both men and women (NB this mutuality is important) may blind us to the most glaring fact. There is NO debate here on whether women are to pray and prophecy, just on *how* they (and men) are to do so.

### **Paul’s Greetings (and Commendations) of Women in Romans 16**

Let us turn our attention now to the final chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans, generally considered to have been written shortly after his letters to the Corinthians. While 1 Corinthians 11 stimulated my interest in Paul’s apparent inconsistency, Romans 16 made me angry over historic cases of assumed understanding and refusal to read the text. That chapter has an extensive list of friends and co-workers in ministry, including women—and more than a little bit of controversy. The controversy centers on these women and how they are described in the text as historically interpreted by the church.

#### Phoebe

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 (Rom 16:1-2).

In these verses, Paul commends Phoebe, “*a deacon of the church in Cenchreae.*” She is named as “*the benefactor of many people, including me.*” Cenchreae was one of the two seaports serving Corinth and was only thirteen kilometers from Corinth proper. Paul may not have mentioned Phoebe elsewhere, but he speaks highly of her to the Romans and places her in the first position in these greetings. He introduces her to the Roman congregation with a letter of commendation, a common practice in the ancient world.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Paul refers to this practice in 2 Cor 3:1 and asks whether the Corinthians now need a letter of introduction commending him, who “gave them birth” so to speak. For more on such letters of commendation, cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 786; and Chan-Hie

I realize that using the term “assumption” is risky. However, in the process of re-reading the text, we do our best to lay aside our pre-existing assumptions and either come back to our first conclusion or to a different one. We will make a few assumptions here. Paul is giving Phoebe an introduction which suggests that she is planning to visit Rome. Many scholars think she may have carried his letter from Corinth (where he wrote to the Romans) to Rome. Otherwise, there is not much reason for him to start his list of greetings by mentioning an unknown person from another city. Perhaps many of you, like myself, value Paul’s letter to the Romans very highly. Considering the cost of producing an epistle like this, he probably chose his courier carefully; thus, we may all owe a significant debt to Phoebe.<sup>13</sup>

Phoebe could have read (and performed) the letter to the Romans. Col 4:16 and 1 Thess 5:27 give instructions to “*have this letter read*” to the congregation. Jankiewicz suggests that “It is also probable that Phoebe read the letter to many Roman congregations and was able to provide commentary on everything that could have been misunderstood, thus providing needed clarifications.”<sup>14</sup> Who better to explain things than the individual who had just recently been with the writer and was trusted by them?

Another reasonable assumption is that she holds an official position of deacon in the congregation of Cenchreae. *Diakonos* can mean “helper,” which is the word used in a few translations. However, in a church context, virtually all more recent commentaries agree the word should be rendered “deacon” (not “helper” or “deaconess”). Paul uses this term of himself (e.g., Col 1:23, 25) and his fellow workers. The phrase “*deacon of the church*” argues for an official role whose precise scope and responsibility we do not know. This does not prove that Phoebe occupies a role like Paul’s.<sup>15</sup> It may mean “leader and preacher,”

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Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation*, Dissertation Series (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972).

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 1. Keener cites Richards, who estimated the cost of producing Romans at \$2,275 US in 2004. The cost and difficulty of producing letters in antiquity meant that most were much shorter: “The average ancient papyrus letter was 87 words; the orator Cicero was more long-winded, averaging 295 words (with as many as 2,530 words); and the philosopher Seneca averaged 995 words (with as many as 4,134). The extant letters attributed to Paul average 2,495 words, while Romans, his longest, has 7,114 words.” *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>14</sup>Darius Jankiewicz, “Phoebe: Was She an Early Church Leader?,” *Ministry* 85, no. 4 (2013): 11.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 914, esp. his comments in n. 9.



or it may indicate some other position—but it does not mean “housemaid.”

Things become even more uncertain with the description of Phoebe as “benefactor.” The word Paul uses, *προστάτις* (*prostatis*), is a noun used only here in the NT. Elsewhere, it is a verb, Moo saying that “Paul seems to use the verb only to mean ‘direct,’ ‘preside over.’”<sup>16</sup> The word can be used to speak of one’s superior. A paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) some years ago argued that Paul’s letter of commendation was not only requesting help for Phoebe, but also was, in fact, written to present to the Romans a person who was over Paul himself.<sup>17</sup> Moo states that Paul uses the verbal form specifically to indicate leadership but ends up rejecting that sort of meaning here. He points out that, while Phoebe is a “*deacon of the church*” in v. 1, here she has been the “*benefactor of many people*” rather than “of the church.”<sup>18</sup> (Moo may be reading too much into a stylistic variation.)

We can reasonably conclude that Phoebe held an official role as a deacon in the church at Cenchrea.<sup>19</sup> What we do not know is her position relative to Paul and what help she rendered him. The ESV calls her a “patron,” the NIV and others a “benefactor,” and the CEV and YLT call her a “leader.”<sup>20</sup> In re-reading Paul’s words about Phoebe, we must be careful not to assign her a role that exceeds the truth; but at the same time, we should also not lower her to the level of “domestic help.” Many English translations leave the impression that Phoebe was simply hired help. Paul implies that her status was much higher.

#### Priscilla

Greet Priscilla and Aquilla, my co-workers in Christ Jesus.  
They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 916.

<sup>17</sup>Unfortunately, as far as I can find, that paper has not been published where it could otherwise have received either support or correction.

<sup>18</sup>Moo, 916.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Esther Yue L. Ng, “Phoebe as Prostatis,” *Trinity Journal* 25, no. 1 (2004): 13. Ng concludes that Phoebe provided hospitality to Paul and that this was the extent of her role in relation to him.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Jankiewicz, “Phoebe,” 12. Jankiewicz states: “A careful reading of Romans 16:1, 2 thus offers us a new glance at this remarkable woman who appears to be a close associate of Paul in spreading the gospel of Christ; who served as a leader of her house church in Cenchreae; who, despite all the dangers associated with travel on Roman roads, accepted the task of carrying the message of salvation to the Roman church; and who was recognized by Paul and others as a Christian leader in her own right.” Jankiewicz renders plausible assumptions as firm assertions. It is clear that the extent of Phoebe’s role, ministry, and position is in dispute.

of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house (Rom 16:3-5a).

Paul talks at some length in vv.3-5a about Priscilla (or Prisca) and Aquila, co-workers who have risked their lives for him. All the Gentile churches are indebted to them, and they have a house church. Both were involved in ministry, Priscilla's role being substantial. They together (with Priscilla named first) "*explained the way of God more adequately*" to Apollos (Acts 18:26), who subsequently had a significant teaching ministry, including in Corinth.

It is remarkable that Priscilla is named first in most texts naming them as a couple.<sup>21</sup> Many scholars see this as an indication of her lead role in their shared ministry—or perhaps her higher social status. Significantly, both Luke (Acts 18:18-26) and Paul (Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19) give Priscilla precedence in naming before Aquila, although this could simply be a case of authorial variation (i.e., avoiding saying the same thing over and over again). However, I believe that naming the most significant person first was a usual and deliberate practice, at least for Luke and Paul.<sup>22</sup>

Luke seems to do this intentionally, as in the case of the team of Barnabas and Saul/Paul. Up to Acts 13:42, Barnabas precedes Saul,<sup>23</sup> whose name changes to Paul with his encounter with Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:9-12). Luke then characterizes the team as "*Paul and his companions*" in Acts 13:13. We also learn that John (Mark) left them, which would later lead to breaking up the duo. From that point on, with few exceptions, Paul is identified as the main speaker and named before Barnabas.<sup>24</sup> In Acts 14:12, when the crowd in Lystra wants to honor what they see as a visitation of the gods, Barnabas is named first. The crowd explicitly identifies Paul as the "*chief speaker*," as recorded by Luke. Commentators differ on why Barnabas is named first in vv. 12, 14. Kistemaker suggests that, because Paul was speaking and "doing all the work," he was considered an underling to Barnabas, who must be served

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<sup>21</sup>Cf. Acts 18:18, 26; Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19. The two exceptions are Acts 18:2 and 1 Cor 16:19, where Aquila is named first.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. James Choung, "May Women Teach?" [www.jameschoung.net/may-women-teach.pdf](http://www.jameschoung.net/may-women-teach.pdf) (accessed March 16, 2016). Choung points out the examples of Paul over Barnabas and of James over Peter and John in Gal 2:9.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:1, 2, 7.

<sup>24</sup>The exceptions are Acts 14:12, 14 and 15:12, 25. Acts 14:12 names Barnabas first but then names Paul as the "chief speaker." In Acts 14:14, it may be that Barnabas tore his clothes first or that his misidentification as the chief God factored into Luke's giving him precedence in naming.

as the highest deity.<sup>25</sup> In Acts 15:12, 25 at the Jerusalem Council, Barnabas is again named first, as he had more influence in this setting.<sup>26</sup> Keep in mind that Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch. He took Paul under his wing and led delivery of relief funds to Jerusalem (Acts 11:22, 25-30). In the Jerusalem context, Barnabas was their trusted person.

An additional example of deliberate naming precedence (this time by Paul) is in Gal 2:9, where James is named before Peter and John. While Peter and John are undoubtedly more significant in the whole Christian story, James has status as the leader of the Jerusalem church in this context.<sup>27</sup>

A clear pattern emerges in the writings of Luke and of Paul—that the more significant individual is named first in the context of the work of a group. If our only example were Priscilla and Aquila, we might dismiss it as an intriguing coincidence. Considering the other examples, however, naming precedence seems to indicate ministry importance. As a closing comment on Priscilla and Aquila, we must not diminish the importance of Aquila as a part of the team. They are always named together, whether in ministry or socially.

### Mary

Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you (Rom. 16:6).

Mary, a common name at the time, is commended as one “*who worked very hard*” for the saints (v. 6). In our English translation, we have no indication of what this work was. Instead, we need to look at the Greek word, κοπιάω (*kopiaō*, labor) and the typical Pauline use of this verb. Perhaps most significantly, Paul used it often of his own ministry<sup>28</sup> and explicitly of ministry by others.<sup>29</sup> The word appears three times in Romans 16. It is also used in a non-ministry context in 1 Cor

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<sup>25</sup>Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 514, 516.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Richard N. Longenecker, “Acts,” in *Luke-Acts*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (rev. ed.) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 945; and F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 338.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 56; and F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 121-22.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 15:10; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; Col 1:29; 1 Tim 4:10.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 16:16; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17.

4:12;<sup>30</sup> Eph 4:28; and 2 Tim 2:6. Paul generally used this term, however, with an explicit meaning of church ministry (1 Cor 15:10; 16:16; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; Col 1:29; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 4:10; and 1 Tim 5:17).<sup>31</sup>

In Rom 16:3-13, Paul commends individuals and couples with more detail than in the vv. 14-15. For most of these early commendations, Paul notes how their effort was benefitting the church. Mary, as with Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (v. 12), are probably laboring in ministry. Schreiber notes that this word “probably denotes missionary work” and “What these women did specifically is not delineated, but we cannot doubt that they were vitally involved in ministry.”<sup>32</sup> The warnings of Moo and Osborne against assigning a semi-technical sense for labor, κοπιάω, are appropriate. We cannot establish that Mary had a leadership role.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, Paul names Mary very early in this list of people to be greeted and commended. He describes her work with the same term that he applies to his own ministry; thus, she is not to be dismissed as simply a “worker.”

1 Cor 16:15-16 is especially interesting as a parallel among Paul’s other uses of the word “labor.” He commends the household of Stephanas for their devotion “to the service (διακονία, *diakonia*) of the Lord’s people” (v. 15). Then he urges the Corinthians “to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors (κοπιάω, *kopiaō*) at it” (v. 16). Most commentators have no hesitation in referring to Stephanas and his household as leaders or to their “service” as leadership.<sup>34</sup> Commentators less frequently make this connection to women as leaders when the same terms are used of them.

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<sup>30</sup>An argument could be made that Paul’s work to support his ministry was itself ministry, but our interest in use of the term κοπιάω is to explicitly denote direct ministry of teaching, preaching, and leading the church (cf. 1 Tim 5:17).

<sup>31</sup>The most unequivocal of these are underlined. Dunn and Schreiner offer the same lists. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Bible Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), 893-94; and Schreiner, 793-94.

<sup>32</sup>Schreiner, 794.

<sup>33</sup>Moo, 921; and Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*, The IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2004), 406.

<sup>34</sup>Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 857-58; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 829-31; Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 316-19; Richard L. Pratt and Max E. Anders, *I & II Corinthians*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 287-88; Thiselton, 1337-39; and Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,” in *Romans-Galatians*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, Expositor’s Bible Commentary (rev. ed.) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 411-12. Others argue for a less defined service, so that leadership is not explicitly expressed. Cf. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 767-770;

## Junia

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was (Rom. 16:7).

The story of Junia and Junias (v. 7) raises my ire. “Junias” is a masculine name, while “Junia” is a woman’s name. Their differentiation in Greek is subtle, as we shall see, and that is part of the story. Before the 13th century, the Greek word “Junia” was rendered exclusively as a woman’s name, with one arguable and unlikely exception.<sup>35</sup> From the 13th through the mid-20th centuries, the name was often translated as a man’s name, Junias.<sup>36</sup> Current convention is rather mixed. The NIV84, RSV, NASB, ASV, and The Message (among popular translations and paraphrases) opt for the male variant, Junias; whereas the NIV, KJV, NKJV, NRSV, ESV, NET, and NLT opt for the female version, Junia.

The problem is this—No early literature contains the name Junias. It could possibly be a contracted form of Junianus, which is a known name; but such a contracted form is not found anywhere in Greek literature.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, the feminine name Junia is well known. Lampe records over 250 known uses of the name Junia and only 21 of Junianus, while there are none whatsoever of Junias in the Roman empire.<sup>38</sup>

There are other questions of note. What does Paul mean by the statement that they were his kin (rendered, probably correctly, as “*fellow Jews*” by the NIV)? What about that they were in prison with him? And that they were in Christ before him?<sup>39</sup> The answers to those questions do not affect our topic of whether women may minister and even lead, so

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and Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd ed., The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 233. NB. While Garland cites Thiselton to reject expression of hierarchy, Thiselton is explicit in using “leaders or ministers” and “leadership and service” of Stephanas and his household.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. Moo, 922 n. 32. Epp offers an expanded discussion; cf. Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 33-34. Origin is sometimes stated to have identified Junia as Junias, but this is considered to be a mistranslation into the Latin by Rufinus. The “unlikely exception” comes from Epiphanius, who does render the name as Junias, but also identifies Prisca as a male.

<sup>36</sup>Cf. Moo, 922.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.; Schreiner, 796. Cf. also the extensive treatment in Epp.

<sup>38</sup>Peter Lampe and Marshall D. Johnson, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (London, UK: Continuum, 2003), 169. Lampe’s arguments for reading the name as Junia and feminine are extensive and persuasive; cf. especially n. 39, pp. 165-66.

<sup>39</sup>This may well reflect that they were among those directly commissioned by Christ as apostles (cf. 1 Cor 15:5, 7). If such was the case, this would have put their status just after that of the Twelve; cf. Dunn, 894-95.

we will leave that for another paper. The vital issue for us is the meaning of “*They are outstanding among the apostles.*” A few scholars argue that this should read “They are respected *by* the apostles.” Although the latter reading is possible, Paul could have found better ways to say this without ambiguity. Most scholars agree that the natural reading is “*outstanding among the apostles,*” identifying this team (probably husband and wife) as apostles.

Andronicus and Junia were not the only husband and wife team. Remember Peter and the other apostles in 1 Corinthians 9 who traveled with their wives? However, this is the only place that both husband and wife are labeled as apostles. While Paul does use the word “apostle” in the sense of a messenger, emissary, or “commissioned missionary,”<sup>40</sup> the context here suggests that he is praising them and expressing respect beyond low-level Christian service. He notes not only they are apostles, but also they are outstanding among the apostles. I realize that most scholars argue that Paul is not here referring to Andronicus and Junia as filling an apostolic role in the same way that he himself does.<sup>41</sup> In many cases, their evidence is that the instruction of 1 Tim 2:11-15 shows they could not be apostles in the same manner as Paul. But we do have that troublesome “outstanding” label, which makes it clear that they were not run-of-the-mill or average.<sup>42</sup> Given Paul’s stringent defense of his right to the title of “apostle” in 2 Corinthians, his application of “outstanding” to Andronicus and Junia suggests that their role was significant.

Considering the early unanimous recorded agreement that Junia is a woman and an apostle, we must conclude that Junia is a woman in a role of leadership. Chrysostom, who is far from a proponent of women in leadership in his own day (c. 349-407), observes the following in his *Homilies on Romans*:

Then another praise besides. “Who are of note among the Apostles.” And indeed to be apostles at all is a great thing. But to be even amongst these of note, just consider what a great encomium this is! But they were of note owing to their works, to their achievements. Oh! how great is the devotion

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<sup>40</sup>Moo, 924. Moo notes that “When Paul uses the word in the former sense [apostle], he makes clear the source and purpose of the ‘emissary’s’ commission.” His conclusion is that “traveling missionary” is the best translation, but I would counter that the mention of being “in Christ” and suffering on his behalf makes the source of these apostles’ commission adequately clear. Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid; Schreiner, 796-97.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity, 1988), 534. Morris labels them “notable apostles.”

(φιλοσοφία) of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle! But even here he does not stop, but adds another encomium besides, and says, “Who were also in Christ before me.”<sup>43</sup>

Dunn states, “We may firmly conclude, however, that one of the foundation apostles of Christianity was a woman and wife.”<sup>44</sup> The evidence seems to support this strong statement.

How then does a woman in Paul’s world become a man in ours? Eldon Epp’s work on Junia offers some clues, bringing us back to that troublesome “story of Junia and Junias.” The difference between Junia and Junias in Greek is an issue of accents.<sup>45</sup> The oldest manuscripts do not use accents. Once these came into use, they indicated that Junia was the right reading—“To put the point sharply: there is no Greek manuscript extant that unambiguously identifies Andronicus’s partner as a male.”<sup>46</sup> In the 13th century, Aegidius of Rome presented the idea of Junias being a male. This was followed much more influentially by Luther’s translation in the 16th century.<sup>47</sup> But even the KJV/AV and all early English translations have this person as Junia!

Early in the 20th century, something changed. Critical editions of the Greek New Testament, as well as many English translations, changed the gender identity of Junia to Junias by changing the accents. In most cases, they did so abruptly, with no indication that the issue was in doubt or that previous editions had identified this person as a woman. The Nestle 13th edition of the Greek text started this switch in 1927, with no textual evidence to support the change.<sup>48</sup> The textual apparatus that scholars use in their research to decide what the correct reading should be was itself misleading in this case.<sup>49</sup> This is incredibly troubling, as this is what scholars use to determine what the original text said. It is

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<sup>43</sup>John Chrysostom, “Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans,” in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. B. Morris, W. H. Simcox, and George B. Stevens, vol. 11, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 555.

<sup>44</sup>Dunn, 895.

<sup>45</sup>Ιουνιᾶν is the putative accusative masculine form of Ἰουνιάς, Junias, a name that appears in no other source but could be a contraction of Junianus. Ἰουνία is the accusative feminine form of the same lemma, Ἰουνιάς, but rendered Junia in the feminine.

<sup>46</sup>Foreword by Beverly Roberts Gaventa, in Epp, xi.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 50. Epp labels the {A} certainty rating assigned in the UBS (pre-4th corrected edition) as “misleading.”

rare that scholars have opportunity to bypass the textual apparatus and handle the original manuscripts themselves.

Metzger's *Textual Commentary* offers an insight into what happened:

Some members [of the Committee], considering it unlikely that a woman would be among those styled "apostles," understood the name to be masculine Ἰουνιᾶν ("Junias"), thought to be a shortened form of Junianus (see Bauer-Aland, *Wörterbuch*, pp. 770 f.). Others, however, were impressed by the facts that (1) the female Latin name Junia occurs more than 250 times in Greek and Latin inscriptions found in Rome alone, whereas the male name Junias is unattested anywhere, and (2) when Greek manuscripts began to be accented, scribes wrote the feminine Ἰουνίαν ("Junia").<sup>50</sup>

In other words, the decision of the Committee was not based primarily on linguistic scholarship, but rather on the more modern conviction (since Aegidius) that women could not have been leaders of any of the Pauline communities. This text (and the unanimous witness of the early church) must, therefore, have been in error.<sup>51</sup>

In the 1970s, quiet controversy about this change of gender started to surface. The Jubilee Edition of Nestle-Aland and UBS appeared in 1998, with Junia restored textually as a woman. Epp calls the change "an about-face in which the seven-decade reign of the masculine 'Junias' in the Erwin Nestle and Nestle-Aland editions has ended abruptly and, almost without notice, to be replaced by the feminine 'Junia.'"<sup>52</sup> He further notes, "Regardless of how it came about, this was an admirable and even courageous decision."<sup>53</sup> I applaud Metzger's courage. He pointed out the textual/historical basis for a feminine reading and revealed a cultural male bias in selecting the masculine reading, even before the change in the critical texts was effected.

Why do we assume that our understanding is correct whenever we encounter women in potential ministerial or leadership roles, rather than comprehending what we are reading? Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-15 are engrained in our minds as the definitive expression of Paul's belief

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<sup>50</sup>Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition)*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, DE: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 475.

<sup>51</sup>Foreword Gaventa, Epp, xi-xii.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 52.



and teaching. Over and over, I read in the commentaries that Junia could not *really* be an apostle in the same sense as Paul and the Twelve, since she was a woman and we all know that Paul told women to “be silent” and forbade all teaching and authority over men. This is an example of the liability of understanding the text and underscores the urgency of continual re-reading of our text. Dunn correctly notes, “The assumption that it [the name] must be male is a striking indictment of male presumption regarding the character and structure of earliest Christianity.”<sup>54</sup>

Epp chooses two statements by female scholars to summarize this shameful episode in textual criticism. Bernadette Brooten observed in 1977, “Because a woman could not have been an apostle, the woman who is here called apostle could not have been a woman.”<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Castelli points out, “The reference to Junia the *apostolos* in 16:7 has inspired remarkable interpretative contortions, resulting ultimately in a sex-change-by-translation.”<sup>56</sup>

So, in summary, Junia was a woman who was also an apostle. Every single writer of the first millennium, including a number who did not permit ministry by women in their day, acknowledged her to be a woman who had been singled out by Paul, together with her (probable) husband, as “outstanding among the apostles.” To cap it off, while there is much support for Junia as a known name in the Roman Empire, there is not a single case of a man named Junias, at least not until scholars invented him in the second millennium A.D.

### Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis

Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord). Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord (Rom 16:12).

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<sup>54</sup>Dunn, 894.

<sup>55</sup>Bernadette J. Brooten, “Junia . . . Outstanding Among the Apostles,” in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration*, ed. L. Swidler and A. Swidler (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1977), 142.

<sup>56</sup>Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Romans,” in *Searching the Scriptures, Vol. 2: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1994), 279.

The rest of the list in Romans 16 may seem anticlimactic, but it should not be, as we have more women of note. And yet, after what seems to be deliberate changing of the text to support a theological and cultural bias, we can relax and celebrate Paul's admiration for co-workers. Tryphena and Tryphosa, both women, are designated as ones "*who work hard in the Lord.*" Paul again uses κοπιάω, "labor," one of the terms he uses mostly with a connotation of ministry. In addition, there is "*my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.*" Tryphena and Tryphosa seem to both still be working in ministry, while Persis has done so in the past and earned Paul's address as "my dear friend" or "my beloved."

#### Other Women Extended a Greeting in Romans 16

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them (Rom 16:13-15).

Other women singled out for greetings include *the mother of Rufus* "*who has been a mother to me [Paul], too,*" **Julia** (probably the wife of Philologus), and the *sister of Nereus*. These may be mentioned because of hospitality offered to Paul.<sup>57</sup> They are not, however, identified as having labored or worked hard in the Lord nor given titles or labeled as co-workers in ministry. Keener notes of this section of Romans:

Particularly significant and different from some churches in the east is the dominance of women explicitly involved in some forms of ministry (16:1–7, 12). This is not surprising, since women exercised much more freedom in Rome (and in a Roman colony in Macedonia, Phil 4:2–3) than in much of the Greek east. Although Paul greets over twice as many men as women, he commends more women than men for ministry, perhaps partly because even in Rome their ministries still faced more challenges than men, hence invited more affirmation.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Moo, 926. Moo suggests the pairing of Philologus and Julia, with Nereus and his sister as their children, as well as the offering of hospitality as likely.

<sup>58</sup>Keener, 185.

In summary, seventeen men and only nine women receive greetings in Rom 16:1-16, in addition to the commendation of Phoebe.<sup>59</sup> The situation changes when we look at those mentioned as contributing to the church—seven women, and five men.<sup>60</sup> Schreiner notes, “It is clear from this list that women were actively involved in ministry.”<sup>61</sup> A few pages later, however, he argues, “One should scarcely conclude from the reference to Junia and the other women co-workers named here that women exercised authority over men contrary to the Pauline admonition in 1 Tim. 2:12.”<sup>62</sup> Again we see the assumption that Pauline instruction neutralizes Pauline practice. Although of Junia, Munger points out, “Regardless, this prominent woman was a prisoner like Paul. The Romans could be brutal, but it’s doubtful they imprisoned Junia for her cooking.”<sup>63</sup>

Some argue that Paul was antagonistic to women in ministry and, indeed, in leadership. If Phoebe, Priscilla, and Junia are any indication, this contention becomes extremely tenuous in re-reading Rom 16:1-12. If we have already decided that Paul never permitted women to take that sort of a role, these textual errors must be dismissed as phantasms and corrected by modern scholarship, regardless of what Paul actually did.

### **Additional Women Named in Pauline Practice and Context**

Is the argument for Pauline practice confined to 1 Corinthians 11 and Romans 16? No, it is not. Luke and Paul mention at least three households or household churches attached to women.<sup>64</sup> We will not assume that these must be led by women, but it is worth seeing if we can learn more.

#### **Lydia**

The first woman listed in connection with a household is Lydia. Her conversion is the first in Europe. She likely was instrumental in founding the Philippian church (Acts 16:13-15, 40). Lydia probably was a person of status because she was named, had a lucrative and prestigious

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<sup>59</sup>The women are Priscilla (v. 3-5), Mary (v. 6), Junia (v. 7), Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis (v. 12), the mother of Rufus (v. 13), Julia (v. 15), and the sister of Nereus (v. 15). If we add Phoebe, the count is ten women, but she receives commendation rather than a greeting.

<sup>60</sup>Epp, 21; and Lampe and Johnson, 166.

<sup>61</sup>Schreiner, 793.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 797.

<sup>63</sup>Munger, 11.

<sup>64</sup>Tabitha, mentioned in Acts 9:36-41, is named as an active disciple. While she was apparently a person of significance, there is no indication that she was leader of a household or a household church or involved in liturgical ministry.

business, and her house apparently could accommodate a number of guests.<sup>65</sup> Her husband is not mentioned, leading most commentators to speculate that she was a widow or single. Peterson adds the possibility of divorce, and considers this more likely than “a single woman of means.”<sup>66</sup> We do not know much beyond that she was named in the start of the church in Philippi and that the church met in her house (v. 40). She was clearly the household leader, given that her household followed her in baptism (v. 15). It is a stretch to assert that “Priscilla and Lydia took an active role in the ministry of their churches.”<sup>67</sup> This assumption may be reasonable but is not stated in the text. Beyond Acts 16, we cannot prove that Lydia played a role in ministry in Philippi or in the life of Paul.<sup>68</sup>

### Chloe

Chloe was already mentioned in the context of 1 Cor 1:10-11. Although the NIV refers to “*Chloe’s household*,” most commentators agree that a better translation would be “Chloe’s people” (literally “those of Chloe”). These may have been her slaves, agents, or business associates. She may not have even been a Christian or from Corinth, although her people almost certainly were, given their interest in the situation occurring in the Corinthian congregation and Paul’s trust in their testimony.<sup>69</sup> Chloe is thus a very tenuous potential “woman in ministry” and must be removed from certain consideration as a leader.

### Nympha

Lastly, we have Nympha. Paul greets her in Col 4:15, along with “*the church in her house*.” Again, she was probably a widow or currently unmarried, as it would not have been “*her house*” otherwise.<sup>70</sup> Dunn infers that she “was probably the leader of the church there, or at least she acted as host for the gathering and for the fellowship meal

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<sup>65</sup>Cf. Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 491-92.

<sup>66</sup>David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 461.

<sup>67</sup>John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 349.

<sup>68</sup>As Polhill notes, “It is surely to go too far with such speculations, however, to argue that Paul married Lydia and that she was the ‘loyal yokefellow’ of Phil 4:3.” Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>Cf. Fee, 54; Garland, 43-44; and Thiselton, 121.

<sup>70</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 285.

(including, on at least some occasions, the Lord's Supper).<sup>71</sup> He cautions that this is an inference, but one without countering evidence in the NT. Some textual evidence suggests that the name may have been Nymphas, thus a man; but there seems to be little support for this (although more than for Junias). This is not a key element in establishing Pauline practice.<sup>72</sup>

Although the above-named women are listed as head of their household or having a church in their house, this does not prove their active ministry leadership. However, their presence in the text does argue more for than against the idea of women in ministry.

### Daughters of Phillip

The four unmarried daughters of Philip who prophesied, according to Acts 21:9, receive terse mention. It is difficult to discern why they are mentioned. Witherington suggests that Luke wants "to show that the prophecy of Joel reiterated and reinterpreted by Peter in Acts 2 had come true."<sup>73</sup> Luke establishes that women exercised prophetic roles in Caesarea as well as in Corinth and that such roles by women were accepted beyond the Pauline context. Philip is named as "*the evangelist, one of the Seven*," a person of influence in the early church. His daughters' prophetic ministry, referred to without negative connotations, must have been accepted as valid. Polhill notes, "Perhaps the most significant observation in the present narrative is the testimony that there were women in the early church who were recognized as having the gift of prophecy."<sup>74</sup>

### Euodia and Syntyche

Our final example of Pauline practice regarding women and ministry is found in Phil 4:2-3. Euodia and Syntyche "*have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel*." Paul names them as "*co-workers*" and ones "*whose names are in the book of life*." They were of some note in the Philippian congregation and (apparently) in disagreement with each other, as Paul pleaded with them "*to be of the same mind in the Lord*." Although some scholars speculate that these were patronesses rather than church leaders, the structure of this section does not support

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Cf. Robert W. Wall, *Colossians & Philemon*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993); and N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 1986), 163.

<sup>73</sup>Witherington, 633.

<sup>74</sup>Polhill, 435.

this, as Paul will deal with financial matters in vv. 10-20.<sup>75</sup> In addition, Paul labels them co-workers who have contended with him for the gospel.

Euodia and Syntyche are not adversaries of Paul, even if there was friction between them. His tone is friendly in commending their work, and he names them, which he tends not to do with adversaries.<sup>76</sup> Witherington points out that “In Greek and Roman oratory, women were not mentioned by name unless they were notable or notorious. This is an important rhetorical signal that likely tells us something about the prominence of these women that Paul calls by name here.”<sup>77</sup> Their disagreement with each other is probably not theological, for Paul addresses theological disputes directly and deals with the issues involved.<sup>78</sup> His tone here is gentle and does not elevate one above the other, seen in the repetition of “*I plead with . . .*” and the commendations offered for their work. “He does not tell them to quit causing trouble and listen to the men. . . . They played meaningful roles in the work of the gospel and its spread.”<sup>79</sup>

Witherington writes, “Were these women not prominent co-workers of Paul, and thus leaders in Philippi, the previous exhortations to the congregation would have sufficed to deal with the problem.”<sup>80</sup> Rather, they are addressed as co-workers and not dismissed as subordinates. Paul uses the term “co-worker” (συνεργός, *synergos*) 12 times in his writing. There is only one other use of the term in the NT.<sup>81</sup> Other co-workers are prominent partners in ministry, including Priscilla and

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<sup>75</sup>Ben Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 234.

<sup>76</sup>Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 389-90; Jerry L. Sumney, *Philippians: A Greek Student's Intermediate Reader* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 99; and Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 235. Paul generally does not name individuals, and especially not enemies, in public letters. However, cf. 1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 1:15; 4:14-15, these appear in a somewhat more private letter, not addressed to a congregation. Even in this context, most adversaries are not named but rather categorized.

<sup>77</sup>Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 233-34.

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1991), 146.

<sup>79</sup>David E. Garland, “Philippians,” in *Ephesians-Philippians*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (rev. ed.) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 251.

<sup>80</sup>Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 233.

<sup>81</sup>Rom 16:3, 9, 21; 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 1:24; 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; Col 4:11; 1 Thess 3:2; Philem 1, 24. The non-Pauline use is 3 John 8.

Aquila, Timothy (three times), Titus, and Epaphroditus, among others. This term seems to be “reserved for various early Christian leaders.”<sup>82</sup>

“Contending” (συναθλέω, *synathleō*) was used “of gladiators who fought side by side.” This military imagery is applied to Epaphroditus, named in Phil 2:25 as a “*fellow soldier*.”<sup>83</sup> The root word in 4:3 is found in Phil 1:27. There it seems to be used for the corporate struggle of the Philippian congregation, with encouragement to stand firm and strive for the faith. In the case of Euodia and Syntyche, the focus is more narrowly on them and their previous struggle at Paul’s side for advancing the gospel.

We know that Euodia and Syntyche were women of importance in the church who are urged to lay aside differences for the well-being of the church. They are Paul’s co-workers who have struggled beside him for the advancement of the gospel. There is no question that they are permitted to work in ministry. Paul does not suggest that their involvement was inappropriate. In fact, because of their standing, disagreement between them is harmful to the body, so Paul urges them to settle these differences. Their specific role, title, or position is not defined in the hierarchy that existed at the time, but they are most likely leaders in some way. They are not the only leaders in Philippi, given the reference to *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* (“*overseers and deacons*”) in Phil 1:1 and the appeal to a “*true companion*” (lit. “loyal yokefellow”) in v. 3 to assist in mediating. More likely than not, they occupy some leadership role in Philippi.

### **Women in Pauline Practice and Context—A Summation**

When we started, I proposed that the practice of an individual is a more certain indicator of their true beliefs than apparent statements or instructions. Paul intimates this himself when he tells the Corinthians that as their spiritual father:

I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church (1 Cor 4:16-17).

He urges their imitation of himself and stresses his “ways of life” (literally, as “ways” is plural) as an example for them. He expects

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<sup>82</sup>Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 237.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 238.

congruence, and he insists that his way of life agrees with what he teaches everywhere in every church.

Paul urges adherence to his life as well as his teaching.<sup>84</sup> 1 Cor 11:1<sup>85</sup> urges the Corinthians to “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*” Phil 4:9, much like 1 Cor 4:16-17, explicitly connects Paul’s life and teaching as example. The Philippians are to “*put . . . into practice*” what they have learned, received, and heard from and what they had seen in him.<sup>86</sup> The materials passed on to them through his oral and written instructions, along with what they observed in Paul’s life, informed how they were to worship. He highly valued his practice and presented what he did alongside what he taught as instructive for the Christian community.

So, what about Paul’s instructions in 1 Cor 14:34-35 found in a context of (dis)orderly worship? Does his command for women to be silent in the congregation contradict his approval of women’s participation in prayer and prophecy in 1 Corinthians 11? What about the many women he commends for their work in ministry, teaching, and leadership? We need to re-read 1 Cor 14:34-35.

### **Viewing Pauline Practice in the Context of Bandung, Indonesia**

My wife Rosemarie and I have lived in Bandung, Indonesia, since August 2014, with the goal of planting an international English church. The idea of silencing all women in congregational settings and removing their speaking, teaching, and leadership contribution is a non-starter on many levels. First and foremost, the Bible does not teach that either men or women are to stifle God’s call and empowerment for ministry. Paul’s practice did not model nor did his teaching command that women were to be excluded from speaking, teaching, or leading in the church. In the era of the Spirit, all are empowered (Acts 2:17-18) and all are expected to contribute to the worship of God in the congregation (1 Cor 14:26). The difficult passages of 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-15 need to be

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<sup>84</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 4:16-17; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 2 Thess 3:7-9; etc.

<sup>85</sup>1 Cor 11:1 belongs with the material of 1 Corinthians 10 (especially vv. 31-33).

<sup>86</sup>O’Brien argues that it should be learned and received from and heard about and seen in, so that the first two elements speak of Paul’s teaching, while the remaining two address the testimony of what is said about Paul by others and what they have seen for themselves. Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 510. Hansen concurs: “The verbs heard and seen refer to the paradigmatic value of his life.” G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 300.



re-read. My study shows that these do not say what our English translations typically indicate.

Historically, the role of women in missions is well documented. From the inception of the Assemblies of God, single female missionaries served and ministered with distinction in roles that were not accessible to them at home and did so with God's clear favor in the harvest.

Culturally, Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. Men are in a privileged position in Islam. However, in the Sundanese culture (dominant in Bandung), women play significant roles. Most young couples end up living with the bride's family, women generally "manage and make decisions for the household," and the "older women often function as the heads of the extended household."<sup>87</sup> Sundanese men and women occupy differing but egalitarian roles without preference in birth for sons over daughters. Males and females have equal access to education and work roles.<sup>88</sup>

Even within Sundanese Islamicism, women are accepted as "leaders and decision-makers for the Islamic elements within the *adat* rituals, since they have the competence to recite Quranic verses and pray fluently."<sup>89</sup> This is accepted by men without feelings of being threatened, "since knowing and passing on ritual knowledge has traditionally been the women's role. In addition, many men do not feel they have the ability or desire to take on this responsibility."<sup>90</sup> In the context of the Sundanese people group, restricting women from teaching and speaking would be an alien concept.

My wife and I are a team. We preach together by preference and find strong positive response in almost all cases. Rosemarie leads our team in church planting, as that is how God has gifted her. This has not created issues with my "frail masculine ego." I am delighted that God has called her to this. I serve the church with my own gifts in theological research and teaching.

If the Bible taught that God does not empower women for ministry and that he restricts them from exercising these gifts, then this document would not exist. Our ministry would look very different. God has called Rosemarie (along with me) to plant a church in Bandung. We build on the work of many men and women that God has previously equipped and called, and we are excited to be a part of his work in Indonesia.

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<sup>87</sup>Linda Lentz, "Sundanese Lifecycle Rituals and the Status of Women in Indonesia" (diss., University of Wales, 2011), 294.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 301-304.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 306.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.