Intro: 1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, 2 that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

• This lady is *mentioned* in Romans chapter 16, which is a fascinating chapter containing some names which are very difficult to pronounce! Her name means, “The shining one”, and she certainly appears to have lived up to it. Not all those of whom Paul wrote were like Phoebe; for example – v. 17! Some people can be a hindrance in the church; but others, like Phoebe can be a blessing! There are three things to note:

I. Paul’s Instruction to The Church – “I commend to you our sister Phoebe”

Paul was writing to the church in Rome and see what he said in verses 1and 2a. Phoebe almost certainly carried with her a letter of commendation from Paul, in which he asked the Christians in Rome to receive her. He mentioned three ways in which they were to do this, for there are different ways of receiving a person!

a. They were to receive her in the Lord

• This means that they were to receive her because, like them, she was “in the Lord”, that is, a believer. But it may also mean that they were to receive her as they would receive the Lord Himself. If the Lord Jesus came to your church or your home, how would you receive Him - Luke 10:38?

° 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” 6 So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. Luke 19:5, 6

b. They were to receive her in a way worthy of the saints

• That is, they were to receive her in a worthy manner; as believers should receive one another always – into their hearts, into their homes and into their churches. That is how saints must treat other saints with respect. In the way Paul said this was like Christian’s already knows what and how to treat other Christians. This is a gift that has been forgotten for years now, and it is slowly killing our churches.

° 12 Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Colossians 3:12, 13

c. They were also to give her any help she may need

• She would be a stranger in a strange city, and Paul wanted the believers in Rome to give her all the help she needed; indeed, he put his request very strongly – “... to give her any help she may need from you.” She would need the help, comfort, guidance, and support that they could give. What ministry was it that had the apostle Paul so concerned about the need of Phoebe? It may have been that Paul sent her to minister to the church of Rome whom he never started, but was involved in. Imagine that a woman ministering to a church. I don’t know but it sounds like Paul might be bias towards women. Of course not, the church has always given leadership roles to men and women. It is just in different capacities.

° 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” Acts 2:10, 11

II. Paul’s Respect of Phoebe – 1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae

The apostle commended Phoebe by mentioning three important things about her.

a. He described her as our sister

• This meant that she was in the family of God. She was not a second-class citizen, she was not looked down upon, but looked at as being a part of the ministry and the family of God, and that she was just as much the sister of the Christians in Rome as she was to Paul’s. – look up Galatians 3:28; sister – 1 Cor 12:12-14.

° 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise. Galatians 3:28, 29

b. He described her as a servant of the church

• She was an active member of the assembly of believers which met at Cenchrea. How indebted our churches are to such godly women! Just because she was a woman, and she was seen at that point and at this point in time, a second-class citizen, she was still called to be a servant to the Church of Christ.

° 10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. Galatians 1:10

c. He described Phoebe as a great help to many people

• This is what servants do, help people. Someone who is a great help is one who goes to the aid of another to give encouragement and support. Paul included that she was a great help to his ministry. It was Pual telling the Roman church about her importance to him first, but it was Phoebe who was shining her ministry of servitude to Paul first.

° 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:27, 28

III. Let’s consider ways in which we may all match Phoebe

 a. By nurturing the new converts

• These were babes in Christ – look up 1 Peter 2:2; and just think what help new converts would need in Corinth of all places! – look up Acts 11:19-23. And what scope there is today for “Nurture Groups” and for individual believers to “mentor” new converts.

° 1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation 1 Peter 2:1, 2

b. By comforting those suffering

• Maybe Phoebe was a widow, or perhaps she had never been married, but whichever way it was she was qualified to help and encourage others in their special circumstances. There are so many in our churches who are carrying heavy burdens – Gal 6:2, 10.

° 1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:1, 10

c. By helping the sick and weak

• There are many of such in our churches, and what great souls they are! But they are often over-looked and neglected; some need financial assistance, some are lonely, and others just need to be loved.

° 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. James 5:14, 15

d. By the ministry of prayer

• Do you have a prayer list? Many who are in the front lines of gospel work are dependent upon those who, like Phoebe, pray for them. How about making a list right here of your six most wanted loved ones and friends – that is, the six for whose salvation from now on you will pray regularly? Prayer for six people for salvation and other needs regularly, then watch God move.

° 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. John 17:9

e. By opening our home to others

• Your home may be very small, or it may be large, but it could be a veritable heaven to some who feel lonely and perhaps even unwanted. This is called hospitality.

° 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Romans 12:10-13