

BIBLICAL REF – 1 & 2 Thessalonians – Elias

Jacob W. Elias. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995),

In Rom. 16:1-2, Paul commends **Phoebe** to the church at Rome, urging them to receive her “in the Lord.” Phoebe likely carried Paul’s letter to Rome. Paul’s commendation was designed to help clear the way for the Roman Christians to accept both Phoebe and his letter. Phoebe is described using three titles: “our sister”; “a minister [RSV: deaconess: NRSV: deacon] of the church at Cenchreae”: and “a leader [RSV: helper; NRSV: benefactor] of many and of myself as well.”¹

Elias wrote that “my rendering of two of these descriptions of **Phoebe** departs from that given in most translations.” According to Elias, The Greek word *diakonos* (for the second title) can have the general meaning “servant” (Rom. 15:8) or the more specific meaning “deacon” (Phil. 1:1; 1Tim. 3:8, 12) or “minister” (2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:7; 4:7); it is often difficult to know which word best conveys the intended meaning. Translations have tended to relegate Phoebe to the lesser role of deaconess rather than recognized her as a “minister” in Cenchreae with leadership responsibilities. **The third title “leader” (*prostatis*, the noun form of the participle *proistamenos*, in Rom. 12:8 and 1 Thess. 5:12) confirms that indeed Phoebe was a leader in her congregation and beyond. In short, Phoebe is an early example of a servant leader, “one who stands before” her people.**

¹ Richard B. Gardner. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), 230.